Lesson 4

CONCEPT
OF
BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION

Concept of Communication

The word 'communicate' has been derived from the Latin word 'Communis', which means to 'share'. Communication is a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs or behaviour. It is the expression of facts, opinions, ideas or feelings. A number of definitions have been given to the term "Communication". A few important ones are:

"Communication in its simplest form of conveying of information from one person to another"
- Hudson

"Communication is the transfer of information from one person to another whether or not it elicits confidence"- Koontz and O'Donell

"Communication is an exchange of facts, ideas, opinions or emotions by two or more persons."
-George Terry

"Communication is the sum of all things, one person does when he wants to create understanding in the mind of another. It is a bridge of meaning. It involves a systematic and continuous process of telling, listening and understanding."- Allen Louis

Communication is an essential condition of our existence and the most important activity of human beings. Communication is a two way process. There must be at least two persons to allow the completion of the process. One takes up the role of a sender the other that of the receiver. Webster's dictionary states that "communication is the act of exchanging information and understanding from one person to another". For communication to be successful, the exchange of ideas and information must result in imparting and understanding its intended meaning. Its purpose is to effect desired changes in the behaviour of the receiver of the message. Thus communication is the transfer of information from one person to another person. Its goal is to have the receiver understand the message as it was intended. Whether we communicate through writing or speaking, language continues to play an important role. The increasing use of telephone, mobile, recording devices, such as dictaphone, answering machines, live broadcasting and telecasting, and video conferencing have nowadays, shifted the focus from writing to speaking.

Business Communication

When one communicates to transact some commercial activity, that is, providing goods or services, with the intention of generating profits, it is termed as business communication. According to Scott, "administrative communication is a process which involves the transmission and accurate replication of ideas ensured by feedback for the purpose of eliciting action which will accomplish organization goals". The importance of communication to an organization, all the more so to a business organization, cannot be over emphasized. It links not only the various components of the organization but also its internal world with the external world. In order be proficient in business communication, it becomes imperative to acquire skills of effective writing and speaking. In fact, lack of these may result in loss of business opportunities. Therefore, curriculums of most business schools the world over cover the subject of business communication extensively. It is also common for the prestigious companies to insist upon excellent communication skills as a requirement at the time of recruitment.

Features of Communication

(1) Communication is essentially a two-way process. The success or the failure of communication is decided by the feedback we get. Hence, feedback is essential to communication.

(2) Communication is an ongoing process. Communication is essential in all kinds of organizations and at all levels of management. No manager can be effective in his role unless he is able to communicate. Professional and result oriented organizations are always looking for managers who can communicate persuasively and competently.

(3) Communication consists not only of facts but ideas and emotions too. Communication is much more than words. The tone and facial expressions often carry a greater meaning than words. We can communicate a lot through signs, symbols and gestures. For example, a victory sign made by two fingers communicates better than words.

(4) Communication is a dynamic process. It incorporates the changing shape of the participants and the environment.

(5) Communication is a goal-oriented process. Communication can be effective if both the sender and the receiver are aware of the goal of communication and there is congruence of their goals.

(6) Communication is an inter-disciplinary science. Knowledge derived from several sciences is used in communication. Anthropology (study of body language), Psychology (study of persuasion, perception and attitudes), Sociology and Political science (study of voting behaviour) have provided insights to make communication effective.

Importance of Communication

Effective communication has always been essential for success in business. In recent times, communication has become all the more essential due to the following reasons:

(i) *Increase in Size* : Business firms have grown tremendously in scale of operations. A large business firm today employs thousands of people and has operations in different parts of the world. An efficient system of communication is required to carry out its activities across successfully.

(ii) *Growing Specialization* : Narrow division of work results in different activities being handled by different departments. Sound communication is essential for ensuring mutual cooperation and understanding among different departments without which no organization can function smoothly. If, for example, there is no communication between production and sales departments, the sales department might book such orders that the production department fails to supply.

(iii) *Cut-throat Competition* : Liberalization and globalization have resulted in severe competition among public sector, private sector and foreign banks. Persuasive communication in the form of advertisements, personal contacts and publicity becomes essential to survive in the race of competition.

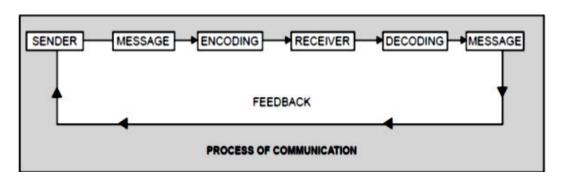(iv) *Trade Union Movement* : In organisations, employee's unions are very strong and powerful.

Management must consult union leaders on several matters. Regular exchange of information and ideas between managers and union officials helps them to maintain healthy relations with one another.

(v) *Human Relations* : Effective communication between management and employees is necessary to develop mutual trust and confidence. Participation of employees in the decision-making process and other activities helps to develop among them a sense of belonging and loyalty to the organization.

(vi) *Public Relations* : Society expects a sense of responsibility from managers. Business has to keep the Government, distributors, suppliers, investors and other sections of society well-informed about its contribution to society. Public relations help business to improve its image in society, and big enterprises employee professional experts for this purpose.

(vii) *Personal Asset* : Communication skill is essential for success in every job. Managers are required to deliver speeches, write documents and conduct interviews. Teachers, advocates, journalists, receptionists need high degree of communication skill. The ability to communicate effectively is equally essential for promotion in career.

Communication Process

The communication process consists of a series of steps by which a sender reaches a receiver with a message. It involves six steps:

(1) *Develop an Idea* : It is an idea or thought which the sender wishes to transmit. This is the key step. Unless there is a worthwhile message to communicate all further steps are rendered useless.

(2) *Encode* : In this, the idea is encoded with suitable words, charts, or symbols for transmission. At this point, the sender determines the method of transmission.

(3) *Transmit* : The finally developed message is transmitted by the method chosen. Senders also choose certain channels and communicate with careful timing, but they try to keep their communication channels free of barriers.

(4) *Receive* : Clear reception of message is a condition precedent to its effective interpretation, storage and use. In an interpersonal mode, it would involve attentive listening too.

(5) *Decode* : Step five is to decode the message so that it can be understood. The sender wants the receiver to understand the message exactly as intended. But, due to different perceptions of two different people, the receiver sometimes does not understand exactly what the sender intends. Hence, the sender must before land assess the abilities of the receiver to make the communication happen.

(6) *Feedback* : Feedback is the receiver's response to the sender's message. Feedback enables the sender to know whether or not his massage has been received and interpreted correctly. The exchange of information through feedback can be very helpful in improving the communication process.

(7) *Noise* : Most of the time communication failure is caused by noise. Noise is distracting and

interferes with the communication process. If the channel medium we are relying upon is faulty the message may be at times encoded wrongly. Sometimes distortion in sound or a speech defect also hampers the process of effective communication. Besides noise, sometimes sender's attitudes, personal prejudices, certain assumptions, frame of mind or use of wrong tone interfere with the communication process. Similarly, on the other end the receiver's background, prejudices, his ability to understand the message as intended, influence the effective communication. Apart from these factors speech defects, distracting body language, illegible hardwiring, etc. bring about the failure of communication.

SENDER → MESSAGE → ENCODING → RECEIVER → DECODING → MESSAGE

FEEDBACK

PROCESS OF COMMUNICATION

Principles for Effective Communication

As the key to efficient business lies partly in communicating effectively, we must therefore make a conscious effort to master it. Effective communication depends mainly on three things: "understandable messages, credibility of the sender, and how the message is affecting the receiver." 1 Effective communication can be achieved by having a thorough knowledge of the communication process in an organisation. And also being aware of the various barriers that exist and taking relevant steps to overcome the same while keeping in focus the objective of the communication, whom it is meant for and under what circumstances it is being made.

The Seven C's of Effective Communication

- Clarity of expression,

- Completeness of information,

- Conciseness of message,

- Concreteness in presentation,

- Courtesy towards recipient,

- Correctness of facts, and

- Consideration for receiver.

1. *Principle of Clarity*

    A communication should be clear so the recipient can understand what the sender really wants to communicate. The sender always desires how the recipient interprets the particular meaning while using the exact same meaning. For this, the sender ought to help to make the particular meaning free of ambiguity and also vagueness. The following tips are offered for making meaning clear:

    •   Picking out the brief, acquainted and also effortless words and phrases.

    •   Picking out conversational words and phrases rather than poetic types.

    •   Constructing successful paragraphs and also grammatical construction.

    •   Supplying illustrations, cases along with visual supports while appealing.

    •   Staying away from techie words and phrases and also jargon's.

2. *Principle of Completeness*

    The communication must be complete. It should convey all facts required by the audience.

The sender of the message must take into consideration the receiver's mind set and convey the message accordingly. A complete communication has following features:

- Complete communication develops and enhances reputation of an organization.

- Moreover, they are cost saving as no crucial information is missing and no additional cost is incurred in conveying extra message if the communication is complete.

- A complete communication always gives additional information wherever required. It leaves no questions in the mind of receiver.

- Complete communication helps in better decision-making by the audience/readers/ receivers of message as they get all desired and crucial information.

- It persuades the audience.

3. *Principle of Conciseness*

Conciseness means wordiness, i.e, communicating what you want to convey in least possible words without forgoing the other C's of communication. Conciseness is a necessity for effective communication. Concise communication has following features:

- It is both time-saving as well as cost-saving.

- It underlines and highlights the main message as it avoids using excessive and needless words.

- Concise communication provides short and essential message in limited words to the audience.

- Concise message is more appealing and comprehensible to the audience.

- Concise message is non-repetitive in nature.

4. *Principle of Concreteness*

Concrete communication implies being particular and clear rather than fuzzy and general. Concreteness strengthens the confidence. Concrete message has following features:

- It is supported with specific facts and figures.

- It makes use of words that are clear and that build the reputation.

- Concrete messages are not misinterpreted.

5. *Principle of Courtesy*

Courtesy in message implies the message should show the sender's expression as well as should respect the receiver. The sender of the message should be sincerely polite, judicious, reflective and enthusiastic. Courteous message has following features:

- Courtesy implies taking into consideration both viewpoints as well as feelings of the receiver of the message.

- Courteous message is positive and focused at the audience.
- It makes use of terms showing respect for the receiver of message.
- It is not at all biased.

6. *Principle of Correctness*

   Correctness in communication implies that there are no grammatical errors in communication. Correct communication has following features:

   - The message is exact, correct and well-timed.
   - If the communication is correct, it boosts up the confidence level.
   - Correct message has greater impact on the audience/readers.
   - It checks for the precision and accurateness of facts and figures used in the message.
   - It makes use of appropriate and correct language in the message.

7. *Consideration for Receiver*

   Consideration implies "stepping into the shoes of others". Effective communication must take the audience into consideration, i.e, the audience's view points, background, mind-set, education level, etc. Make an attempt to envisage your audience, their requirements, emotions as well as problems. Ensure that the self-respect of the audience is maintained and their emotions are not at harm. Modify your words in message to suit the audience's needs while making your message complete. Features of considerate communication are as follows:

   - Emphasize on "you" approach.
   - Empathize with the audience and exhibit interest in the audience. This will stimulate a positive reaction from the audience.
   - Show optimism towards your audience. Emphasize on "what is possible" rather than "what is impossible". Lay stress on positive words such as jovial, committed, thanks, warm, healthy, help, etc.

Apart from the above Principles the following guidelines ensure effective communication:

Choose the right means and mode

It is most important to choose the right means and mode of communication. This would depend on, the organisation, its size, its policy, cost involved, urgency, distance, resources available, confidentiality, safety, security, necessity for official record of the communication, the recipient and the resources available.

Own your messages

It is important to take responsibility for what we say. It is common to come across instances where the sender chooses vague or general terms to denote the sender. When you state that many shareholders

are unhappy with the proposed merger of the company, you may or may not be speaking the truth. You do not specify who those shareholders are. Therefore the officials of the company may not accept your statement at face value. Your message may be taken seriously if you are willing to own it. So use personal pronouns to lend credibility to your messages. Long business reports, commercial terms and conditions or legal provisions are an exception since they may be drafted using passive verbs and employing a formal tone.

Offer complete and relevant information

Messages must offer complete and relevant information in order to become effective. Incomplete information makes it necessary to begin another cycle of communication to issue clarifications. For example, it is not enough to just say that the register will remain closed from 28th to 30th March. It does not become clear to the receiver which register we are talking about and why it will be closed. Our message must state clearly that the register of shareholders will remain closed in order to determine the names of the shareholders entitled to receive the dividend.

Obtain feedback

Feedback is the culmination of the communication-process. It confirms that the receiver has correctly understood our message. We may get a feedback through an appropriate closing. The closing line of a business letter often invites such a response. When sending out a cheque, we often ask the receiver to acknowledge its receipt. Similarly we ask the other party to confirm that the appointment is suitable to it when we proposed an important business meeting.

Think of the recipient

Effective messages are invariably "You-centered". We do not address the President of our company in the same manner as we speak to a fellow manager. The rank of the former demands careful thought and respect. Familiarity with the latter may make us feel more at ease. A doctor may discuss a case with a specialist in medical terms but switches over to a layman's language when talking to the patient. A lawyer does not use the legal jargon with a client: he reserves it for the court-room. Therefore, we must take into account the attributes of the receiver before drafting the message.

Verbal and Non-verbal congruence

As explained earlier, meanings are often communicated in more than one way. For example, our words as well as gestures simultaneously send out signals. A message of welcome should ideally be uttered with a smile. Angry words are spoken with a frown. To put it in another way, our words and facial expressions must send out the same message. A reprimand administered with a smile would send out wrong and conflicting signals. It will leave the receiver guessing whether the sender is actually annoyed or is just pretending to be so.

Repeat if necessary

Repetition is generally avoided in order to save time and space. However, in exceptional circumstances, repetition ensures that the crucial part of the message is not ignored or overlooked. Telegraphic messages, which by nature are brief, often use repetition to good effect. DO NOT REPEAT DO NOT DESPATCH GOODS TILL FURTHER NOTICE. In ordinary communication, we may state the same fact using different words to get the benefits of redundancy and ensure comprehension. Use of different

channels of communication also ensures successful communication. For example, a telephonic message may also be sent in writing later just to confirm the same.
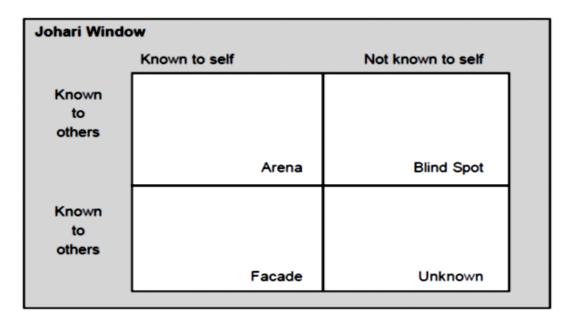
Do not judge

Unfavourable judgments provoke reactions and are better avoided. If a subordinate has not finished the work allotted to him on time, then the boss has two options. He may either point out this fact in a plain and matter of fact tone or may reprimand him for being lazy, good-for-nothing guy who should be fired immediately. The first option is clearly preferable and strengthens the credibility and trustworthiness of the sender.

Rely on facts

Facts lend credibility to our communication since it is not possible to refute them. If a candidate claims that he has a typing speed of fifty words per minute, then it is possible to verify this claim. Opinions on the other hand are subjective. A claim that one is a good typist is at best vague. It depends on what the claimant expects a good typist to be like. While it is not possible to exclude opinions from our messages, we can make them acceptable by quoting facts in their support. However, reliance on selective facts will only affect our trustworthiness.

JOHARI WINDOW

The Johari Window, named after the first names of its inventors, Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham, is one of the most useful models describing the process of human interaction. A four paned "window," as illustrated below, divides personal awareness into four different types, as represented by its four quadrants: open, hidden, blind, and unknown. The lines dividing the four panes are like window shades, which can move as an interaction progresses. In this model, each person is represented by their own window.

Johari Window

	Known to self	Not known to self
Known to others	Arena	Blind Spot
Known to others	Facade	Unknown

Adjectives selected by both the participant and his or her peers are placed into the Arena quadrant. This quadrant represents traits of the participant of which both they and their peers are aware. For example, I know my name, and so do you. It may also be called "open" quadrant.

Adjectives selected only by the participant, but not by any of their peers, are placed into the Façade quadrant, representing information about the participant of which their peers are unaware. It is then up to the participant whether or not to disclose this information. For example, I have not told you, what one of my favorite ice cream flavors is. This information is in my "Façade" quadrant. As soon as I tell you that I love "Ben and Jerry's Cherry Garcia" flavored ice cream, I am effectively pulling the window shade down, moving the information in my façade quadrant and enlarging the arena quadrant's area. Façade quadrant also called "hidden" quadrant.

Adjectives that are not selected by the participant but only by their peers are placed into the Blind Spot quadrant. These represent information of which the participant is not aware, but others are, and they can decide whether and how to inform the individual about these "blind spots". For example, we could be eating at a restaurant, and I may have unknowingly gotten some food on my face. This information is in my blind quadrant because you can see it, but I cannot. If you now tell me that I have something on my face, then the window shade moves to the right, enlarging the arena quadrant's area.

Adjectives which were not selected by either the participant or their peers remain in the Unknown quadrant, representing the participant's behaviors or motives which were not recognized by anyone participating. This may be because they do not apply, or because there is collective ignorance of the existence of that trait. For example, I may disclose a dream that I had, and as we both attempt to understand its significance, a new awareness may emerge, known to neither of us before the conversation took place.

The process of enlarging the open quadrant is called self-disclosure, a give and take process between me and the people I interact with. Typically, as I share something about myself (moving information from my hidden quadrant into the open) and if the other party is interested in getting to know me, they will reciprocate, by similarly disclosing information in their hidden quadrant. Thus, an interaction between two parties can be modeled dynamically as two active Johari windows. For example, you may respond to my disclosure that I like "Cherry Garcia" by letting me know what your favorite ice cream is, or where a new ice cream shop is being built, kinds of information in your hidden quadrant.
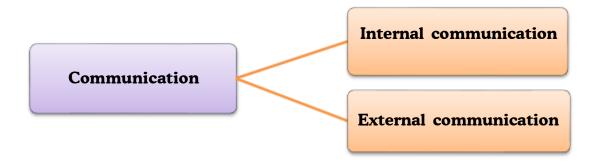
A Johari Window consists of 55 adjectives used to describe the participant, in alphabetical order:

• able	• accepting	• adaptable	• bold	• brave
• calm	• caring	• cheerful	• clever	• complex
• confident	• dependable	• dignified	• energetic	• extroverted
• friendly	• giving	• happy	• helpful	• idealistic
• independent	• ingenious	• intelligent	• introverted	• kind
• knowledgeable	• logical	• loving	• mature	• modest

• nervous	• observant	• organized	• patient	• powerful
• proud	• quiet	• reflective	• relaxed	• religious
• responsive	• searching	• self-assertive	• self-conscious	• sensible
• sentimental	• shy	• silly	• spontaneous	• sympathetic
• tense	• trustworthy	• warm	• wise	• witty

Types of Communication

Communication may be divided into two types : Internal and External.

Internal Communication

When people within the organisation communicate with one another, it is said to be an internal communication. Employees of an organisation do so to work as a team and realise their common goals. Internal communication could be official or unofficial. It could be individual to individual, individual to group, group to individuals, department to department, etc. Most of the internal communication is in the oral form and the tone is generally informal.

People also communicate within the organisation at a personal level. This is known as informal communication. A good example is that of grapevine, which is present in some measure everywhere. If the atmosphere is secretive, it encourages the spread of rumors and half truths. Intelligent managers use this human weakness to their advantage by sharing favourable information with the employees.

Of the various modes of visual communication the most likely ones to be used in internal communication are slides, internet without use of multimedia and pager.

All modes of non-verbal communication may be used in internal communication.

Some of the modes of written communication are Memo, Report, Office order, Circulars, Staff Newsletter, Email, Fax, Notice, Agenda, Notes on Agenda, Minutes of Meetings, Manuals, etc.

Other than the Radio, all other modes of oral communication stated earlier, could be used in internal communication.

Internet with multimedia, video conferencing and presentations either electronic or with visual aids are the likely modes of audio-visual communication that can be used in internal communication.
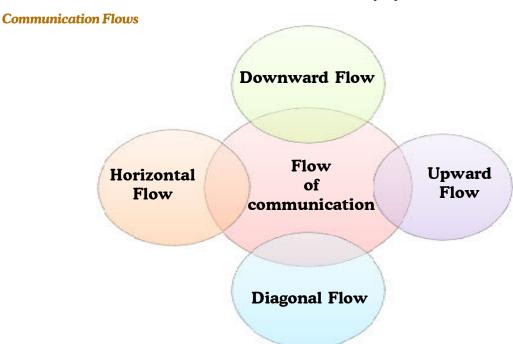
External Communication

When the people in an organisation communicate with anyone outside the organisation it is called external communication. These people may be clients or customers, dealers or distributors, media, government agencies, general public, regulatory bodies, authorities, etc. Letters and circulars, Price-lists, Manuals, Purchase Orders, Customised reports, Brochures and service calls, Tender documents, Advertisements, Customer' feedback material are all external communication methods. Modern business houses spend considerable time, money and effort on improving their public image since they realise that they are dependent on external support. External communication has been mainly formal and largely documented, but there is an increasing trend to make it informal.

Some of the modes of written communication that may be used are Circulars, Graphs/Charts, E-mail, Fax, Form/Questionnaire, Letter, Advertisement, Customer Newsletter, Press Release, Invitation, Leaflet/Brochure/Handbills, Manuals, Telegram, etc.

Other than intercom, dictation, teleconferencing, brainstorming sessions and grapevine, all other modes of oral communication stated earlier can be used in external communication.

All modes of visual and audio-visual communication too may be used in external communication.

All modes of Non-verbal communication may also be used in external communication depending on the circumstances and means of communication chosen for the purpose.

Communication Flows

The flow of communication in an organisation depends on its size, structure and philosophy. Smaller organizations, with fewer levels of hierarchy and people may be having fewer communication problems. In larger organisation with many hierarchical levels, the process is more complicated. However, a comprehensive organisational chart will help in clearly marking out the lines or channels of communication. The flow or pattern of communication may be downward, upward, diagonal or horizontal.

Downward Flow

Traditional organisations have a vertical structure. All the important decisions are taken at the top. These are communicated through different levels of hierarchy to the workers. The disadvantages of such a chain of command are many. Firstly, it creates an authoritarian atmosphere in the workplace. Secondly, the message is often distorted as it comes down through different levels. Thirdly, it also consumes a lot of time and leads to avoidable delays.

Upward Flow

With the passage of time, management styles have also undergone a change. The role of workers in the progress of industry has begun to be appreciated. Workers' empowerment and their participation in management are the buzz-words. It is natural for the workers to feel involved in their organisations once they realise that their interest coincides with that of the management. The result has been an increase in the flow of upward communication.

Diagonal Flow

Often there arise situations where tasks to be completed involve more than one department in the organisation and there is more often no obvious line of authority. In such circumstances the insistence on the use of proper channels in communication may affect the efficiency of management and may cause undue delays in the completion of the task.

Sometimes, it is just not possible to give or seek crucial information only through the right channel. It has also been found that information is suitably distorted or filtered by superiors before it is allowed to reach the decision makers. Therefore, one has to enable people to talk to lower or higher ranks freely rather than wait indefinitely. Diagonal communication is based on cooperation, goodwill and respect between the parties concerned.
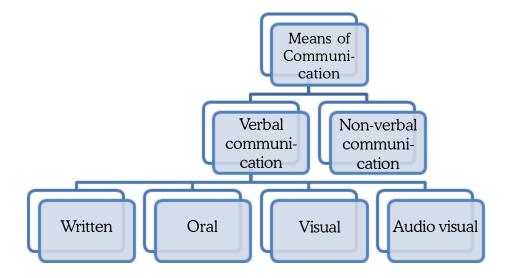
Horizontal Flow

This type of communication flow usually takes place between people of the same status/level of hierarchy in the organization. However, as flatter organizational structures have now become the order of the day, people of different ranks now manage to converse with less reserve and formality. There are many advantages of such openness. Policy decisions are no longer shrouded in mystery. Workers are encouraged to ask questions and understand the compulsions of hard decisions. There is better understanding and coordination. However, it is important to continue to respect the authority, use appropriate language and show good behavior.

Means and Modes of Communication

Business communication is generally interpersonal since discharge of business functions requires interaction with others.

Means of Communication

The means or methods of communication, as is evident from the Figure above, are broadly classified into (i) verbal communication entails use of words to convey messages either in speech or through writing; and (ii) Non-verbal communication where messages are communicated through body language (i.e.) facial expressions and gestures. There are a variety of Modes through which one can communicate most of which you may be familiar with and may have also used or been the recipient of at some point of time.

Verbal Communication

It is a written or a spoken message that uses words to exchange ideas/ information. Words are selected in phrases, sentences and paragraphs depending upon the results the verbal communication is trying to achieve.

The means of verbal communication are:

- Written communication
- Oral communication
- Visual communication
- Audio-visual communication.

1. **Written Communication**

   In the written form, it may require drafting of letters and circulars, proposals, memos and business reports of varying kinds and includes:

   - Memo

- Report
- Office order
- Circulars
- Graphs/Charts
- Staff Newsletter
- E-mail
- Form/Questionnaire
- Letter
- Notice, Agenda, Notes on Agenda
- Minutes of Meetings
- Advertisement
- Customer Newsletter
- Press Release
- Invitation
- Leaflet/Brochure/Handbills
- Manuals

Advantages and Disadvantages of Written Communication

Written Communication has several advantages, although the disadvantages of written communication are equally serious.

Advantages

1. It allows us sufficient time for planning the document we propose to create, taking into account the purpose for which it is being written.

2. It also enables us to revise the contents if we find them unsuitable for the recipient from the point of view of clarity or interest.

3. To display what we have written, we have a variety of recent and traditional trends to choose from. There is also a scope to use tastefully designed stationery for the purpose.

4. The use of headings and bullets enable us to organise the material for better understanding.

5. Information in the written form may be filed or retrieved at our convenience. Its permanence facilitates prolonged correspondence.

Disadvantages

1. It takes much more time to compose a message in writing. Therefore it is expensive.

2. It also tends to suffer from the limitations of the sender, like the assumptions or prejudices, and the delayed feedback makes it worse.

3. The inadequacies of the first message may only be revealed when the reply arrives.

4. Communication in writing suffers from lack of congruence with non-verbal communication

2. **Oral Communication**

Research studies have shown that 80% of communication by executives of a company is in the oral form. The modes of Oral Communication include:

- Telephone/Cellular phone

- Messages

- Intercom

- Face-to-face discussion

- Meetings/Conferences

- Presentation

- Dictaphone/Dictation

- Conversation

- Radio

- Teleconferencing

- Speeches

- Brainstorming sessions

- Grapevine

- Interview

Importance of Oral Communication in Business

Speech is one of the earliest as well as the widely used medium of communication. We can retrace our memory to the days of Socrates, Demosthenes and others who were great and renowned orators. In fact, talking has achieved bringing into being great institutions. The world-renowned insurance company Lloyds is the brain child of some merchants and ship owners who used to meet and discuss the matters of mutual interest at a coffee house on the banks of the river Thames.

The Bank of England, the oldest in U.K. was born out of the deliberations the goldsmiths had amidst themselves. There were and there are great personalities who hold the audience spell-bound.

Everyday in business, people come into conversation-the superior with the subordinate, superiors among themselves, subordinates among themselves, the customers with the suppliers and suppliers with clients and so on and so forth. Effective oral communication is a passport to success in business. No fixed norms can be set for effective oral communication. Factors like the audience,

size of audience, the degree of significance attached to the information to be spoken out, fear of the boss, fear of status, fear of one's own self-advancement, all affect oral communication. Often the Chief of a Corporation appearing on television or radio or at a meeting picks his words as if he is a tight rope walker knowing that a single word wrongly uttered may shatter his image or that of the corporation which he heads.

It is true that all business managers should be adept at communication since they have to communicate to various people at various places, various facts and figures, financial or non-financial, implication of which may have significant impact upon the management of the business. Business communication itself is a difficult subject, it is also very difficult to separate it from every day activity of business people as it has acquired special significance in the life of the people in business. It is said a successful businessman should be first of all well conversant with the techniques and the art of communication in order to make his assignment a successful one.

In the early days, much time was spent in generating data of all kinds. However, not much attention was given to quality of transmission of information. It depends upon the presentation of information by using appropriate words and medium, which upgrades the value of the information by the receiver.

As stated earlier, oral communication is the most frequently used means of transmitting messages in business. It is resorted to more often than any other type of communication. The reasons for the popularity of oral communication are its advantages. They are:

1. Oral communication saves time. It is said time is money. Wherever and whenever action needs to be taken instantly or immediately, the best way to expedite action is to transmit necessary messages orally. Oral communication helps busy people to reassign their workload quickly by giving necessary instructions, guidance and providing information to subordinates. It thus saves time and quickens the action.

2. Oral communication provides the opportunity for feedback and clarification. This process of communication helps the sender of the message to clarify each and every point instantly. The receiver, at the same time, can also express his opinion, views or emotions on the spot. He can ask for clarifications wherever required and get himself satisfied. Thus, clarity is better ensured and makes the communication more effective and purposeful.

3. Oral communication helps to convey the message more appropriately with suitable tone, voice and use of words. It can instantly make the receiver of the message understand the content of communication and significance thereof assigned to any particular matter of communication.

4. Oral communication is an effective tool of persuasion in management. It gives a personal touch to the communication. For this reason, supervisors and executives in all sorts of business enterprises prefer to communicate their views, ideas and opinion orally.

5. Oral communication is very effective in communicating with groups. It helps the speaker to establish personal contact with a group of people and make the group understand his opinion and views at a single point of time. The speaker can also hear about the group's reaction subsequently.

6. Oral communication is economic also. It saves manhours to be spent in preparing notes, explanation, circulars, etc. It also saves the stationery of the organisation.

7. Withdrawal of oral communication is comparatively an easy task. There are at times situations in business where oral communication is preferred to written communication for, the latter may create an official record which may be used as evidence against the person on any legal matters arising later in point of time.

Disadvantages of Oral Communication

The disadvantages of oral communication also deserve equal mention, as oral communication by itself, is not effective always. It mainly depends upon the attitude of the sender and receiver of messages. It should always be kept in view that communication is not a one sided activity. The communicator will have to use appropriate words to convey the message as well as develop ability to receive and react to the communication spontaneously. The use of right words specially in oral communication makes the communication more effective. Saying the right word at the right time to the right person will receive best possible response from the receiver. It is not what you say but how you say it that matters in oral communication, only the right word will get right response. People especially in business should develop a habit to listen to the whole message with meanings, ideas, feelings, intentions and facts conveyed, including things that are unpleasant and unwelcome.

Oral communication is totally dependent on listening. Therefore bad or partial listening may affect the comprehension of the message. Since the feedback is instant, therefore the process may become extremely lengthy. Some meetings go on endlessly without producing proportionate results. Oral communication generally has no record or legal liability. Therefore, it is strongly recommended to confirm important oral messages in writing. Similarly, the economy of oral communication is dependent on control. Telephone calls, unless kept brief, may also cost a lot of money. Unfamiliar accents and pronunciation caused by regional variations and mother-tongue interference often lead to temporary difficulties for the recipients. In short, it is important to exercise control in order to derive the benefits of oral communication.

3. **Visual Communication**

Visual communication could be with words or pictures or a combination of both and includes:

- Graphs

- Tables/charts

- Maps

- Models

- Demonstrations

- Slides

- Flipcharts

- Neon Hoardings

- Printed/Painted Pictures (Posters etc.)
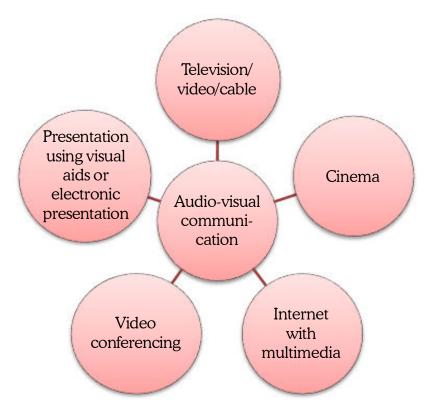
- Internet without use of multimedia

The modes of visual communication are useful tools for conveying information in a manner that makes the data and any relationship between variables clearer and easier for the receiver to follow. They can be used on their own. But the maximum benefit can be gained from them if they are used as a complement of the main message because they are more capable of attracting and retaining the attention of the receiver than speech or written words.

The main advantage of using visual communication is that the message conveyed using this mode is easily remembered by the receiver and for a long period too. However, using this mode is also expensive which is its major disadvantage.

4. **Audio-visual Communication**

The rapid advancements taking place in the field of information technology have brought about unprecedented changes in the communication systems the world over. In this scenario the modes of audio-visual communication assume more importance.
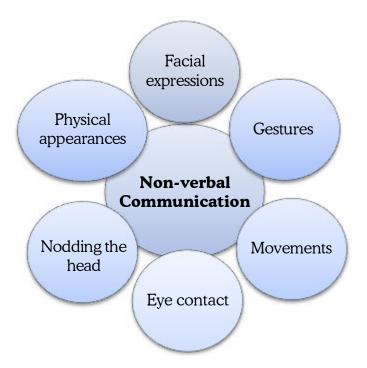
The means of audio-visual communication include:

The greatest advantage of this mode is that it aims at stimulating the senses of both sight and hearing simultaneously and thus enhances the effectiveness of the message. The other advantages are its wider reach and the fact that the message is remembered for a much longer time than it would be if it had been conveyed by any other mode of communication. Here again the high cost factor involved is its greatest disadvantage.

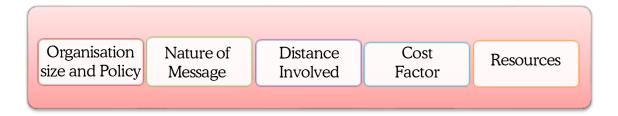### Non-verbal Communication

Non-verbal Communication includes:

It is an unspoken or unwritten message that uses body language. This may be used by itself e.g., frowning or smiling at someone or along with oral communication. In a situation involving the use of oral communication, non-verbal signs play an equally important role. While listening to someone, one may also be looking at the person. Their facial expressions such as a smile or a frown may strengthen the verbal message. The entire body language, from large gestures to proximity with the listener, may help emphasise the contents of the message.

Alternatively, if the non-verbal communication is absent, it leaves the recipient guessing. The "British stiff upper lip" which looks down upon display of emotions in public is a good example. Similarly in the case of verbal and non-verbal incongruence, the result may be confusion and even a communication failure. It is important to note two things. In simple situations, non-verbal communication may suffice in itself. For example, it will be perfectly in order to smile at a guest and escort him in without speaking a word. Second, this form of communication has a strong cultural content. The Arabs and Latin Americans

are prone to move closer to the listener as well as maintain more eye-contact than the Europeans do. Similarly, physical contact is considered a powerful tool of communication. But touching an acquaintance, the handshake excepted, is almost taboo among the British, insignificant in America and common in Latin America.

Choice of Means and Mode of Communication

Organisation size and Policy	Nature of Message	Distance Involved	Cost Factor	Resources

Choosing the right means and mode of communication plays a vital role in the effectiveness of the message being communicated and such choice depends on various factors such as:

1. *Organisation size and Policy*

    If the organisation is small, probably more communication will be oral, than in larger organisations where it may be in writing. The policy for communication also would play a major part in influencing one's choice of mode of communication.

2. *Cost Factor*

    The main point to be considered here would be to evaluate whether the cost involved in sending the message would be commensurate with the results expected.

3. *Nature of Message*

    Whether the message is confidential in nature, urgent or important etc., and whether a matter would require hand-delivery or be sent by registered post etc. also influences the choice of mode and means of communication.
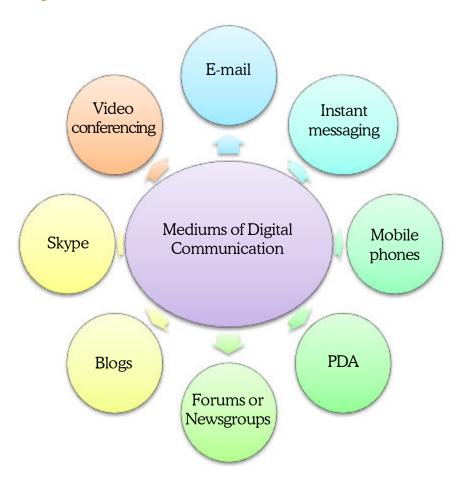
4. *Distance Involved*

    Where the message is to be sent is also another vital factor which could influence the choice of means and modes of communication. For example, if a letter is to be sent to a partner in a joint venture in Japan and it is urgent, you would not think of sending someone to personally deliver it.

5. *Resources*

    The resources available to both the sender and receiver would also influence your choice. You can only send a fax if the other person/organisation has a fax machine.

Therefore we can see that the choice of a particular mode and means of communication will depend on a case to case basis and is influenced by various factors.

Mediums of Digital Communication

We are living in the Information Age, and the digital technologies have revolutionized communication in the modern world. The Internet and cell phones are two of the most prominent examples of the influence of the Information Age, but there are many other types of digital communication technologies used nowadays. There are many different ways of communicating digitally. Most of them are used in everyday situations. Some of the most common mediums of digital communication are:

Electronic mail (or e-mail)

It is a method of creating, sending, storing and receiving messages over an electronic communication system. It uses a protocol (a rule) for sending messages called Simple Mail Transfer Protocol (SMTP for short). One can send e-mail over an internet connection or over an intranet (a collection of computers within a specific area like an office building). E-mail users can communicate to each other by sending and receiving messages. Sometimes you want to store messages to read later and your email software will allow you to do this.

Instant messaging

Instant messaging (IM) is like e-mail but it is done in real time (get a response very quickly). The instant messaging software installed on the computer and in the software a contact list of people is set-up with whom one wants to connect. Most IM software lets you know who is on-line and available to chat. You can send text, pictures and even video using IM and whoever you are communicating with can respond as soon as they see the text appear in their IM software.

Mobile phones

Mobile phones are used by lots of people today to talk, send text messages, take and send pictures, listen to music, or surf the internet. In fact you can do so much with a mobile phone it can be a complete communication tool. The Short Message Service (SMS) allows text messages to be sent and received via your subscriber service. If the phone you are sending the text message to is out of range or turned off, the service provider will store the text message until it can be delivered.

PDA

PDAs (Personal Digital Assistants) are hand-held computer devices that can perform a number of different things, like receiving e-mails, sending messages, writing text (in a word processor). Newer PDAs are also telephone devices, receiving both audio and video. A PDA connects either through a local telephone network, or a local intranet or an internet connection.

Forums or Newsgroups

A forum or newsgroup is an online discussion group where people can subscribe (join) a group and post messages to that group. They can take part in discussions with other people in the group and reply to messages posted by other members of the group. The group can be closed (private) which is often used for communication between project groups working on a project together, like a survey or sharing project documents. An open (public) group is often used by people sharing a common interest. When you join a group you will need to register your details. This creates an account for you so you can post e-mail messages to the group.

A thread is just a group of related messages on a particular topic, for example pruning roses, or the latest film, everyone in the group has seen.

Emoticons are little graphical pictures that represent how people are feeling, like a smiley face for happy, or a face to say you agree with something.

Blogs

A blog ('web log') is a form of online journal that allows text, images and video clips (and links to websites) to be displayed as a webpage but also allows comments to be posted by readers of the blog. Some blogs ask you to register with the site first before allowing you to post anything. There can be moderation of posts as with forums but that is determined by the owner/administrator. Blogs often contain information about a particular topic like food, politics or local news. A blog contains text, images and links to other blogs, forums or other web pages related to the blog topic.
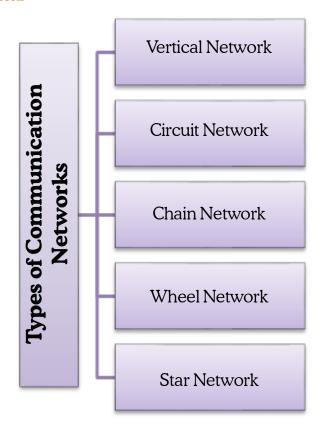
Skype

Skype is not new to communication. It has been around since 2005, but has become very popular. Skype users receive calls on their computers dialled by regular phone subscribers to regular phone numbers. Skype permits users to subscribe to numbers in many countries including the UK and USA. Callers pay only local rates to call a number. Skype supports voicemail, chat, video calling, SMS messaging to mobile phones and skype casting. Multiple users can access Skype. A user will need a headset and a microphone or a Skype handset, which looks very like a mobile phone to talk to other Skype users.

Video conferencing

Video conferencing provides two-way video transmission between different sites. It could be between two buildings, or even across different countries. Every video conferencing facility allows for call set-up, call coordination and display of participants. It is normally used with a video conferencing screen so you can see the people in each of the video conferencing rooms. Video conferencing makes use of specialist equipment like a computer, video camera and a network like an intranet or internet connection to connect the two sites together. Video conferencing can save people time, and the expense of travelling between sites for meetings.

Communication Networks

Types of Communication Networks

- Vertical Network
- Circuit Network
- Chain Network
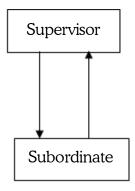- Wheel Network
- Star Network

The pattern of contacts among the members of the organisation and flow of information among them is communication network. Network helps managers to establish contacts in different patterns through communication flows. The network depends upon the magnitude of the organisation, nature of communication channels in the organisation and the number of persons involved in the process. There can be many patterns of communication network.

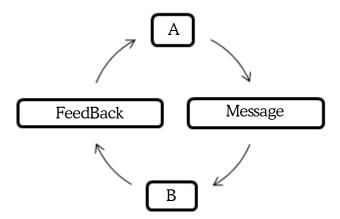The most frequently followed networks are the following:

1. **Vertical Network**

   The vertical network is usually between the superior and subordinate and vice versa. It is two-way communication. The immediate feedback is possible in this type of communication network. It is formal network.
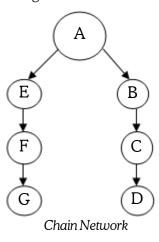

Vertical Network

2. **Circuit Network**

Under this network two persons communicate with each other. Say Mr. 'A' sends message to Mr. 'B'. After receiving message Mr. 'B' communicates the feedback message to Mr. 'A'. So communication takes the form of a circuit. Therefore it is known as circuit network. It is similar to vertical network but in circuit network 'A' and 'B' are not necessarily superior and subordinates.
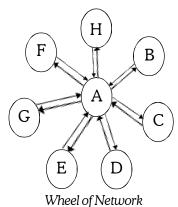
3. **Chain Network**

This network of communication follows the organisational hierarchy and chain of command. All subordinates receive commands or instructions from their superior. B, C, D and E, F, G are the subordinates to A in the organisational hierarchy and receive commands from 'A' which follows the way shown in the diagram.
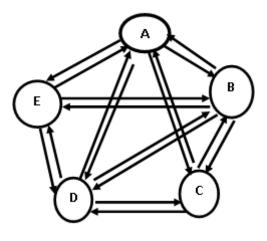
Chain Network

4. **Wheel Network**

Here all subordinates receive commands from one superior. This is highly centralized type of communication network where each subordinate receives commands or instructions from a single authority or superior 'A' and wants the immediate feedback.

Wheel of Network

5. **Star Network**

Under star communication network all members of the group communicate with each other and exchange information. This network is a must for group communication or where teamwork is involved. This network channel of communication is open to all members of the group. The members communicate with each other without hesitation.

Star network

The effectiveness of the above networks of communication channels depend upon their users i.e. the managers at all levels, their subordinates and other members of the organisation and above all the seriousness with which all these human resources make use of the facilities provided to them by the organisation to accomplish its objectives.

Barriers to Communication

There are certain barriers that cause communication failures. Communication failures may have serious effects. They affect personal or professional relationship to the extent of causing a rupture. At the personal level, such failures may cause low self-esteem. As the confidence level falls, the productivity graph also plunges lower and lower.

Failure to communicate effectively within the organisation, may cause disruption or delays in achieving targets. From the point of view of finances, a communication failure may mean higher project cost and thus affect profitability. In business, the role of communication is even more important. A failure to communicate effectively may result in financial loss. For example, a failure to explain the terms clearly may lead to the cancellation of an order. There may even be loss of goodwill if an aggrieved customer is not handled tactfully.

Communication failures may be caused due to many reasons. A few of them are as follows:

(i) *Lack of Planning* : Every message is conveyed with a specific purpose in mind. One needs to know one's own abilities to express the message well. Simultaneously, the personality and

attributes of the recipient and the limitations of the medium also have to be considered. If a message is communicated without adequate planning, the desired result would not be obtained.

For example, an invitation to potential investors to deposit money in a mutual fund may not offer all the relevant details, such as entry and exit points and all the risks involved. This would lead to a loss of interest of the investors in the scheme. While drafting a message, one has the option of revising it. In oral communication, the words are comparable to arrows, once released, they do not return. Therefore, one must choose one's words with care.

(ii) *False Assumptions* : In many communication situations, the sender starts with several assumptions, which may not be true. The receiver may also wish to be understood in a certain way and encourage false assumptions by the sender. Therefore, the result will be anything but along the expected lines.

For example, a Quality Control Manager should first check whether the workers are familiar with the Six Sigma Standards before pulling them up for non-adherence. Their silence during the verbal onslaught may only mean that they do not want to admit their ignorance.

(iii) *Ambiguity* : We must remember that our intentions are strictly private. They are only known to us. Therefore, the receiver may not accurately understand the meaning intended by us. A wrong inference is often drawn when the message yields more than one meaning. For example, the instruction that relevant details must be submitted for preparation of order by Saturday is ambiguous. It does not clarify whether the details are required by Saturday or that the order must be prepared by that day.

(iv) *Distortions* : many distortions in communication do not register because the receiver is busy or preoccupied with other things. While the sender believes that he has delivered the message correctly and the desired action will follow, the truth is that the receiver has not understood it at all; or he may have done so in part only. It is also common for a receiver to distort the meaning to suit his expectations.

'Productivity linked bonus will be paid on the 7th of next month subject to realisation of outstanding payments 'has a conditional clause. The workers could conveniently forget this when they storm the office to claim the money on the 7th.

(v) *Passing Judgments* : Many communication failures are caused because the message tends to pass a judgment against the receiver. Therefore, it is not received at its face value. Giving precedence to expression of opinion over the facts and use of offensive or annoying expressions ensure that the receiver becomes guarded and defensive.

For example, a supervisor was aghast when he found a worker using a welding torch close to where the inflammable material was stored. He showered abuses at the worker, pushed him away and accused him of trying to destroy the factory. When he returned after ordering the removal of the material, the workers had proceeded on a spontaneous strike. It took half a day to assuage the feelings of the striking workers and to restore normalcy.

Had the supervisor only stated the facts and explained the risks, the communication failure and the repercussions could have been avoided.

(vi) *Implied Meanings* : Messages may not always convey a meaning in a straightforward manner. If the background of the sender and the receiver is not similar. In such a case it is possible for the latter not to uncover the implied meaning. For example, a reference to weather is often indicative of a desire to change the topic of discussion. Lack of familiarity with slang or colloquial expressions often causes communication failures.

(vii) *Lack of Trust* : The relationship between the sender and the receiver plays an important role in a effective communication. If the two of them do not share trust and understanding, there is a strong possibility of a communication failure. The information shared by them will be minimal. Both of them will also tend to treat the information received with suspicion.

For example, even a compliment paid by a hostile boss is likely to be received by a subordinate with caution. He may wonder what the actual intention of the boss is.

(viii) *Problem of Semantic Distortion* : Messages communicated through words may be distorted intentionally. However, there are words that often mean different things to different people and thus cause non-deliberate distortions. The senior selects the words according to his own frame of reference which he thinks appropriate to convey the meaning intended to be communicated. The receiver, on the other hand, reads or listens to the message and interprets it within his own frame of reference.

Ways to Overcome Barriers to Communication

In order to remove hindrances in the way of communication the following steps are worth consideration:

(1) *Clarify Ideas before Communication*

The person sending the communication should be very clear in his mind about what he wants to say. He should know the objective of his message and, therefore, he should arrange his thoughts in a proper order.

(2) *Communicate According to the Need of the Receiver*

The sender of the communication should prepare the structure of the message not according to his own level or ability but he should keep in mind the level, understanding or the environment of the receiver.

(3) *Consult Others before Communication*

At the time of planning the communication, suggestions should be invited from all the persons concerned. Its main advantage will be that all those people who are consulted at the time of preparing the communication plan will contribute to the success of the communication system.

(4) *Be Aware of Language, Tone and Content of Message*

The sender should take care of the fact that the message should be framed in clear and beautiful language. The tone of the message should not injure the feelings of the receiver. As far as possible the contents of the message should be brief and excessive use of technical words should be avoided.

(5) *Convey Things of Help and Value to the Listener*

The subject matter of the message should be helpful to the receiver. The need and interest of the receiver should specially be kept in mind. Communication is more effective in such a situation.

(6) *Ensure Proper Feedback*

The purpose of feedback is to find out whether the receiver has properly understood the meaning of the information received. In the face-to-face communication, the reaction on the face of the receiver can be understood.

But in case of written communication or some other sort of communications some proper method of feedback should be adopted by the sender.

(7) *Consistency of Message*

The information sent to the receiver should not be self-contradictory. It should be in accordance with the objectives, policies, programmes and techniques of the organisation. When a new message has to be sent in place of the old one, it should always make a mention of the change otherwise it can create some doubts.

(8) *Follow up Communication*

In order to make communication effective the management should regularly try to know the weaknesses of the communication system. In this context effort can be made to know whether to lay more stress upon the formal or the informal communication would be appropriate.

Similarly, suggestions can be invited in respect of the medium of communication (oral, written and gestural) to know as to which medium would be more effective and appropriate.

(9) *Be a Good Listener*

It is the essence of communication that both the sender and the receiver should be good listeners. Both should listen to the each other's point of view with attention, patience and positive attitude. A sender can receive much relevant information by being a good listener.

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