

Business Communication

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Introduction:

- Developing good business communication skills is as much about the ability to develop good content as it is about good form. Business documents must maintain certain standards and should be , at most, recognizable internationally.
- Documents can be classified into two types: internal and external. Internal documents circulate within the organization and may include memos, reports and proposals.
- External documents circulate outside of the organization. Examples include: letters, tenders, proposals and reports. The external environment may include clients, suppliers, stockholders, government, media and the general public.

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Importance of Business Communication?

- Strong business communication skills are critical to the success of any organization despite its size, geographical location, and its mission.
- Business communication is intertwined with the internal culture and the external image of any organization.
- It determines what is communicated, by whom, and at what level in the organization.
- Ultimately, good business communication practices assist the organization in achieving its objectives by informing, persuading and building good will within both the internal environment and, the external environment.

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- If organizations are to survive and prosper in the rapidly changing global environment, they must continually change the way communication processes are structured and delivered.
- This global environment forces us to think about communication issues against the backdrop of culture, technology and competition, which continually raise legal and ethical concerns.

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Meaning of Communication:

- The word “Communicate” comes from the Latin verb ‘Communicare’ that means to impart, to participate, to share or to make common.
- By virtue of its Latin origin it is also the source of the English word “Common”.
- Thus, communication is defined as the process of conveying or transmitting a message from one person to another through a proper channel

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Elements of Communication:

- For communication to exist there must be at least four basic elements:
 - A Sender/Encoder
 - A Receiver/Decoder
 - Message
 - Channel and Medium

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- Encoder/Sender:
 - Encodes Message
 - Chooses Appropriate Channel
 - Chooses Appropriate Medium
 - Solicits Feedback
 - Attempts to minimize barriers
- Decoder/Receiver:
 - Decodes Message
 - Practices Active Receiving (written/oral)
 - Provides Feedback
- Note: For Communication to be more effective there should be Common Background and Purpose, Interest, Cooperation between Sender and Receiver.

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Medium vs Channel

- These two terms are often confused in Business Communication.
- Understanding the distinction is essential.
- Consider the following examples:

- | | |
|-----------|----------|
| • Channel | Air |
| • Medium | Airplane |

- | | |
|-----------|-------|
| • Channel | Water |
| • Medium | Boat |

- | | |
|-----------|----------|
| • Channel | Air |
| • Medium | Language |

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- The choice of Channel and by extension the Medium should therefore be determined by the following:
 1. Purpose of Communication
 2. Ability of Encoder to effectively use the Medium
 3. Effectiveness of the medium to deliver the message

Other Elements:

- Response:

When the sender transmits the message, he expects a response. The response may be immediate or deferred, favourable or unfavourable.

- Feedback:

Feedback is essential to the communication process. It tells the sender that the message has been received and understood and the purpose fulfilled, whether it is to persuade or inform or for good will reasons. Feedback also reassures the sender and indicates that the receiver is involved in active listening. Feedback should always be solicited by the sender, and in the best case built into the process of communication.

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General Guidelines for Effective Communication:

- Clarity of Purpose: This requires careful planning. Lack of planning becomes the first major barrier in communication. Communication does not take place on its own but rather we have to make all possible efforts to understand the why's and how's, the when and where, and above all the 'what' of our message.
- George Bernard Shaw said, "The major mistake in communication is to believe that it happens."

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- Shared Activity:
- Lets not forget that effective communication is the responsibility of all persons in the organization. At any level – managerial or non managerial. They are all working towards a common goal. It means that all of them have a share, directly or indirectly, in many different ways, in the process of communication.
- Whether communication is effective can be judged on the basis of the intended results.

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- Common Set of Symbols:
- The encoding and decoding of the message should be done with symbols that are familiar to the sender and the receiver. It is an immutable condition of communication that the code or set of symbols be mutually understood/intelligible.
- Register or Jargon (as barriers later)

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- Focus on the Need of the Receiver:
- Whenever we communicate we must keep in mind the needs of the receivers of the message/information. It should be our endeavour to see that whatever we communicate should be of value to the receiver, both in the short run and in the distant future. Our awareness of the needs of the receiver will make him more receptive.

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- Active Listening:
- Active or “participative” listening is as important as any other element in the process of communication. It shows, again, that communication is a joint responsibility of both the sender and the receiver.

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- Controlling Emotions:
- Emotions play an important role in interpersonal relationships between superiors, subordinates and colleagues in an organization. It should be, therefore, an important aim of communication to create an environment in which people are motivated to work towards the desired goals of the enterprise by which they achieve their personal goal.

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- Politeness:
- This leads us to the tonal aspect of communication. There is a saying, “The tone makes the music”. In the same way, the tone of voice, the choice of language and the congruency or logical connection between what is said and how it is said influence the reactions of the receiver.

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- Eliminate Noise:
- Every possible effort must be made to eliminate the element of noise that distorts communication at the transmission stage. It becomes especially important in the wake of modern technological advancement. Anything going wrong with the equipment or any disturbance in the transmission line is bound to defeat the very purpose of communication

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- Avoiding Connotations and Ambiguities:
- Semantic problems can be solved by using language and avoiding connotations. Care must be taken to see that the receiver of the message does not have to go beyond the text of the message. It is also necessary to avoid all ambiguity, which means to avoid using words with double meaning.

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- Socio-Psychological Aspect:
- As communication is a two-way process involving both the sender and the receiver, both should make conscious efforts to understand each other's cultural and socio-psychological background. As a golden rule for effective communication one must remember, "First understand, then be understood." An effective communicator is an informed communicator.

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- Completeness:
- One must also endeavour to send a complete message, furnishing all necessary facts and figures. Incomplete communication annoys the receiver as a result of which proper feedback will not come. The message should be so organized that the receiver is not left in doubt about any aspect of the message.

- Conciseness:
- Completeness does not mean inclusion of unnecessary details or diversions. An effective communication is concise and crisp. The sender should be clear headed and properly focused in his vision.
- Review Questions

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