

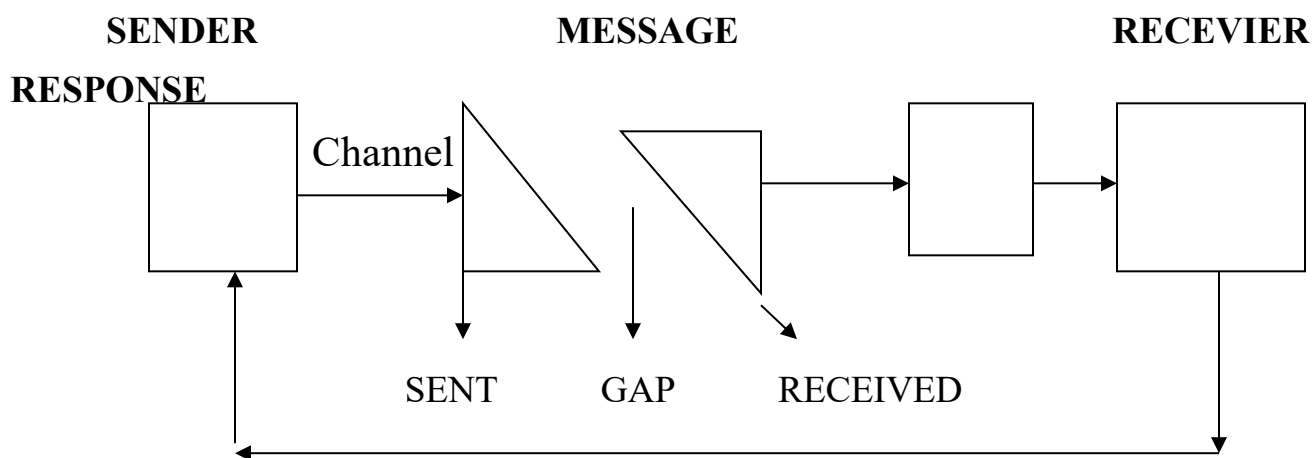
Competence -15 Utilize Specialized Communication Skills

Introduction

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 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.

Elements of Communication:

- Sender/Encoder
- Receiver/Decoder
- Message
- Channel and Medium



Encoder/Sender

- Encodes Messages
- Chooses appropriate channel
- Chooses appropriate medium
- Solicits Feedback
- Attempts to minimize noise

Decoder/Receiver

- Decodes Message
- Practices Active Listening
- Provides Feedback

The difference between Medium and Channel

The two terms often confused in business communication. Understanding the distinction is essential for business communication. Consider the following examples:-

Channel air

Medium..... air plane

Channel.....water

Medium.....boat

The choice of the channel and by extension the medium should therefore be determined by the following:

1. Purpose of communication
2. Ability of the 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, favorable or unfavorable.

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

General Guidelines for effective communication

1. **Clarity of purpose:** It requires careful planning. Lack of planning becomes the first major barrier in communication. Communication does not take place. We have to make all efforts to understand the why's and how's of our message.
2. **Shared Clarity:** Effective communication is the responsibility of all persons in the organization.
3. **Common Set of Symbols:** The encoding and decoding of symbols of the message should be done with symbols that are familiar with the sender and receiver.
4. **Focus on the Need of the Receiver:** Whenever we communicate we must keep in mind that the needs of the receivers of the message or information.
5. **Active Listening:** Active or Participative listening is as important as any other element in the process of communication.
6. **Controlling Emotions:** Emotions play an important role in interpersonal relationships between superiors, subordinates and colleagues in the organization. It should be therefore, an important aim of communication is to create an environment in which people are motivated to work toward the desired goals of the enterprise by which they achieve their personal goal.
7. **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 the voice, the choice of language and congruency or logical connection between what is said and how it is said influence the reaction of the receiver.
8. **Eliminate Noise:** Every possible effort must be made to eliminate the elements of noise that distort communication at the transmission stage.
9. **Clarity Assumptions:** No effective communication can be based on assumptions. The sender's message must clarify his assumptions and then go ahead with proper encoding of the message.
10. **Avoiding Connotations and ambiguities:** Such problems can be solved by using simple language and avoiding connotations (additional meaning). 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.

11. **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 back ground. As a golden rule for effective communication one must remember, "***First understand, and then be understood***".
12. **Completeness:** One has to try hard to send a complete message, furnishing all necessary facts and figures.
13. **Conciseness:** Completeness does not mean inclusion of unnecessary details or diversions. An effective communication is concise and crisp(energetic and decisive). The sender should be clear headed and properly focused on his vision.

Lo. 1 Meet common and specific communication needs of clients and colleagues

Why plan communication strategically?

- Planning contributes greatly to success.
- Some key questions to consider at the start of the process are:
 - Where are you now and where do you want to be?
 - What will you need to do to get there?
 - What role can communication, education and training play to achieve your goals?
 - How will you learn from your experiences en route?

Communication is part of the entire policy and strategy implementation process

To implement the NBSAP there are many projects to be prepared and undertaken. Even though most CBD focal points and NBSAP coordinators know the importance of a project's inception phase, this stage often receives little attention. Especially the role of communication is often not well considered in the inception stage. Usually communication is considered only after plans, policies or projects are prepared. Practice shows that this is a pitfall and strongly reduces the potential for successful project implementation.

There is an enormous difference between communication strategically planned and that without strategic planning. How often do we hear people say "lets make a video to inform everyone" before any thought about what is the result to be achieved?

No strategic planning	Strategic planning
Focus on deciding the media before the message	Targets, audience and message clarified before deciding on the media to choose for the message.
Creative people come up with a 'cool' and fun idea	Creative people plan to achieve desired outcomes
Focus on media	Focus on audience, message & content
Content and message are secondary to media and often cannot answer 'why' or 'what' questions	Media is considered as a tool to achieve objectives

What is strategic communication?

Strategic communication is planned and accomplishes a purpose.

Strategic communication is targeted to a particular audience or audiences.

Strategic communication is designed and delivered to produce the desired outcomes which may be changes in policy, practices of an organization or individual behavior.

Strategic communication aims to achieve results with the best possible use of time and resources.

There are two broad approaches to communication.

Instrumental communication: The communication plan is organized to raise the interest of the public, politicians and other special groups for a particular issue, or to generate support for policies or plans. Communication may be used alone or with other policy instruments like financial incentives or regulations.

Interactive communication: The communication plan establishes an active dialogue with certain interest groups to fully involve them in planning, implementing or evaluating a policy or NBSAP component.

The 10 steps for communication planning are:

1. Analysis of the issue and the role of communication.
2. Selecting target groups/audiences and stakeholders.
3. Determining the communication targets.
4. Developing the strategy and selecting partners.
5. Determining the messages.
6. Selecting the communication means.
7. Organizing communication and briefing partners.
8. Planning (in terms of milestones and activities)
9. Budgeting of activities.
10. Monitoring and evaluation

Lo.2 Contribute to the development of communication strategies

Communication strategies are plans for communicating information related to a specific issue, event, situation, or audience. They serve as the blueprints for communicating with the public, stakeholders, or even colleagues.

Communication strategies should:

- outline the objective/goals of the communication,
- identify stakeholders,
- define key messages,
- pinpoint potential communication methods and vehicles for communicating information for a specific purpose, and
- specify the mechanisms that will be used to obtain feedback on the strategy.

Why do we develop communication?

The first step toward developing a communication strategy is to determine the reason why the communication is necessary and defining the desired objectives. You, as the Community Involvement Coordinator (CIC), should ask yourself, “What is the issue to which EPA is responding?” or “What is the action that EPA is taking that warrants development of a communication strategy?” before determining the need for the communication. CICs should then ask themselves, “What do we want to accomplish by communicating this information?”

Objectives may include:

- providing information;
- increasing awareness;
- encouraging action;
- building consensus;
- changing behavior;
- promoting community participation;
- resolving conflict, or
- asking for input.

Who is responsible for this purpose?

Once your reason for communicating is determined, you can focus on defining the audiences you need to reach and how you want to reach them.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Who is involved, affected, interested?
- Is there an obvious audience?
- Are there others who may be affected?
- Are there traditionally underrepresented groups that need to be reached?
 - What information does each stakeholder already have?
 - What information does each stakeholder need?
 - What are their concerns?
 - How is each stakeholder likely to react?"

What must be done?

Once the previous steps are complete, you may schedule a meeting with the site RPM or OSC and other members of the site team to discuss the communication challenges facing them. This discussion could involve coordinating with all Site Team members about community involvement goals and objectives and might involve brainstorming and prioritizing potential messages. Focus on two or three key messages and rank them by importance, timeliness, or other factors. It is possible that you have key messages that are only constructed for one or two of your identified audiences.

How to do it?

Once you have identified your key messages, you need to determine the vehicle for delivering your messages. Keep in mind that you may choose different mechanisms to meet different stakeholder needs.

Here are a few options:

- Availability session/open house
- Celebrations/special events
- Electronic media, including email, e.g., list serves or website
- Face-to-face meetings with key stakeholders
- Focus groups
- Media, including cable TV, display ads, news releases, and press conference
- On-scene activities
- Public hearings
- Public meetings
- Public or private schools
- Social media tools, e.g., YouTube, Facebook, Twitter
- Workshops

As a CIC, you should be able to determine how you want to deliver your message to produce the best results. Note that the reach and impact of your message will increase if the same message is distributed several times and via multiple methods. Keep in mind you may have different communication goals and therefore may need to use different communication tools for different groups of people.

Delivery methods can include:

- Briefings
- Exhibits
- Fact Sheets
- Internet
- Mailings
- Presentations
- Public notices
- Responsiveness summaries
- Telephone
- Translation of documents into other languages spoken by community members
- Videos

Delivering Your Message

In assessing your total communication strategy, ask yourself, “What resources are readily available to me to communicate my message?” Once you have identified your needs and resources, review potential constraints you might face and develop strategies for overcoming these challenges.

Determine when the communication will be best received. Determining the best timing involves thinking about whether your audiences prefer to be reached on weekdays or weekends, mornings or evenings, at work, or at home. Keep in mind that community demographics play an important role in determining the best methods for message delivery. Older populations or communities in remote locations may not be comfortable with or have access to the Internet, and some ethnic groups may prefer radio or a community newspaper to television as a news source. Build in time for producing materials and advance notice of events.

Media

The media can play an important role in the communication process. Therefore, if your communication strategy includes use of the media to convey your message, you should work closely with your regional site press officer to ensure that the local media has the most important and accurate information about the issue or event that you want to communicate to your audience. Know the media deadlines in advance and take these into consideration when timing your communication.

Budget Considerations

Many of the best communication strategies also are the most cost-effective, but sometimes a communication strategy will require communication methods that take considerable resources. Therefore, it is important for CICs to know the resources that are available to them and to take possible resource limitations into consideration when developing the communication strategy. While simple word-of-mouth information exchanges can be free and effective for communicating some messages, you may determine that your message will be more effectively delivered via a vehicle that will require resources. For example, while holding a televised press event or a press conference may be much more resource-intensive, it may end up being the more effective strategy if television coverage is the preferred medium for conveying your message. Similarly, you may determine that you cannot rely on e-mail to notify stakeholders of an upcoming event, and will have to mail notices.

Feedback

When delivering your key messages, ensure your messages are clearly communicated and have integrity. Encourage your audience to provide feedback after the message is delivered. This feedback will help you to evaluate the implementation of your strategy, its strengths and weaknesses, how it can be improved, and how your strategy should be revised to ensure continued effectiveness. Some simple feedback methods include taking note of how many people attended a public meeting; television station viewership numbers during the time your story ran; or how many “hits” there were on your website news posting. Finally, review the feedback and continue to refine your communication strategy in response to the feedback you receive. Consider following up, in a one-to-one fashion, with a few members of the audience for their feedback.

Tips

- Your communication strategy should define the most important ideas to communicate.
- Consult with the site’s Community Involvement Plan (CIP) to help characterize the community, including their needs, concerns, interests, and expectations.
- Work with your press office to develop and implement the communication strategy, particularly at milestone events in the Superfund process.
- Document successes and shortcomings to learn how your strategy might be improved.
- Revise your communication strategy if it is not producing results.
- Consult your communication strategy often to remind yourself of your goals, messages, and audiences
- Consider adding formal communication strategies as addendums to the site’s CIP.

Lo.3 Represent the organization

Effective Presentation Skills

Is the topic presented clearly and logically?

Is the presentation clearly organized with an introduction, middle, and conclusion?

Does the speaker have a thorough knowledge of the subject?

Did the speaker gather information from a variety of sources?

Did the speaker use visual aids to support the presentation?

Did the speaker use appropriate tone and language for a classroom presentation?

Did the speaker use effective eye contact with the audience?

Did the speaker talk fluently without false starts?

Did the speaker vary the volume of speech?

Did the speaker vary the rate of speech?

Did the speaker articulate clearly?

Did the speaker use conjunctions effectively?(e.g., *and*, *then*, *because*)

Did the speaker explain unfamiliar terms to others?

Did the speaker talk for the appropriate amount of time?

Did the speaker avoid unnecessary movements such as shuffling, toe tapping and shaking?

Did the speaker involve the audience in the presentation?

Did the speaker engage and inspire the audience?

How can I improve my presentation skills?

- Understand and explain your content.
- Organize with a beginning, middle, and end.
- Emphasize key ideas (repeat, rephrase).
- Use strong, convincing language.
- Use visual aids.
- Repeat, rephrase key ideas.
- Practice.
- Prepare for questions.

Lo.4 Facilitate group discussion

Discussion Etiquette

Teacher Resource

These are some of the etiquette rules that you may wish to have on your class list. Although this list should be created by students, you may want to guide them to ensure your class list is complete.

1. Participate fully.
2. Take turns speaking - one person speaks at a time.
3. Let others know that you have not finished speaking by using phrases such as I have one more thing to add, furthermore, in addition, etc.
4. Wait for your turn – don't interrupt.
5. Use supportive gestures and body language:
 - Maintain eye contact with the speaker.

- Nod to show you are listening.
- Use encouraging facial expressions.
- Don't use inappropriate gestures.
- 6. Use respectful phrases when disagreeing with another speaker.
- 7. Listen carefully and attentively to other speakers.
- 8. Encourage and support those around you.
- 9. Avoid sarcasm and put-downs.
- 10. Stay on topic.
- 11. Remain open to new ideas.
- 12. Use inclusive language.
- 13. Ask questions when you don't understand.
- 14. Don't monopolize the conversation.

Speaking Out

Phrases for respectful disagreement include:

I disagree with... because...

I can't agree with... because...

On the other hand...

I doubt that because...

Examples of inappropriate disagreement include:

You're wrong.

No way!

Come on!

What!

That's crazy/stupid/ridiculous.

Are you kidding?

I hate that.

_____ doesn't know what he/she's talking about.

Phrases for politely expressing an opinion include:

In my opinion...

I believe...

I think...

Personally, I feel...

Not everyone will agree with me, but...

Phrases for politely making suggestions include:

Why don't you/we ...

How about...

Why don't we/you try...

One way would be...

Maybe we could...

I suggest we...

Tips for Enhancing Student Discussions

Create a respectful, positive, comfortable classroom climate.

Add wait time to allow students to gather their thoughts.

Rephrase and restate questions for students.

Encourage students to elaborate and give them time to do so.

Ask pointed questions.

Restate the students' points to confirm and clarify them.

Call on other students to extend their classmates' responses.
Use praise that gives specific feedback.
Give students many opportunities to practise speaking.
Limit teacher talk to maximize participation by students.

Lo.5 Conduct interview

How to Conduct a Strong Interview

Whether you are interviewing to discover someone's life story, or investigating a specific issue such as what's causing so much asthma in your neighborhood, you will learn even more than you set out to find out. This is the wonderful, adventurous nature of interviewing: You can learn about any subject or person that interests you, just by asking questions.

GETTING READY

The interviewer is a guide into the unknown—and, like a good guide, you come with tools, a map, and a plan.

Pack your tools

Have all of your equipment at the ready—whether it is pen and paper, a survey, a tape recorder and tapes, or a video camera. Pack extra batteries, tapes, pens, film, and copies of forms. Practice ways of explaining your project in a confident voice.

Make your map

If you are interviewing people on a specific topic, read and research as much about the subject as possible. You will want to know what's important to you and come informed. If you are interviewing people to find out their stories, learn a little bit about them beforehand, if possible. Think ahead and try to plot out the possible path of an interview.

Create your plan

Have a list of questions on paper—but also keep a list in your mind, so that you can have the most natural conversation possible. Make a date and time to meet your interviewee in a quiet place. If your method is spontaneous (talking to homeless folks on the street, for example), set up a starting and ending time and place for yourself, and maybe a buddy system. Then, stick to your plan.

DESIGNING GOOD QUESTIONS—AND GOING WITH THE FLOW

Organize and group your questions in the order that makes the most sense. For example, a chronological interview will start at one point in time, and follow an event or change. A thematic interview will focus around selected issues, and explore each one in turn. There are many ways to organize questions for specific inquiries, and a little experimenting will help you craft a structure and flow.

There are also many styles of questions—as many as there are personalities of people. Avoid questions that can be answered with a simple yes or no. Try to include some of all of the kinds of questions below, for a thorough interview.

Open-ended. Short, simple, open-ended questions have many possible answers, and are a good

backbone for an interview. Instead of, “Did you have a hard childhood because of the economic downturn and Federal wrongdoing of the Great Depression?” ask, “What was your childhood like?” “Did you have enough to eat?” “Tell me about the buildings in that block.”

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Specific. Specific questions examine historical details. For example, “How many times did this happen exactly?” “When and where were you born?” “When did you start thinking about dropping out of school, and what was the trigger?” Use specific questions to establish the framework of facts.

Sensory. Sensory questions bring an interview to life. “What did the tornado sound like?” “How did the city smell?” “Was it hot or cold?”

Meaning-seeking. Questions that seek meaning are best asked after you and your subject have built some trust during the interview. They reveal feelings, long-term insights, and unique personal viewpoints. For example: “How did your feelings about the school change when your school broke up into smaller schools?” “What did you draw on in your spirit to survive the loss of your first-born child?” “What will it mean to you to get a college diploma?”

Elaboration and clarification. These little questions go a long way. “Can you tell me more about that?” and “Is there anything else you would like to add?” elicit greater detail and encourage more information. At the conclusion of an interview, encourage a speaker to tell you anything you might have missed in your questions.

IN THE MOMENT: INTERVIEW DYNAMICS

Some interviews cover well-worn territory; others involve entering the wilderness of a story that has never been heard before. Wherever you go, the dynamics between the interviewee and the interviewer will influence what you find. Below are key points to keep in mind during the interview.

Make your approach polite and respectful.

Explain what you’re doing. Be confident. Assume your subject will want to talk to you. The way people respond depends on how you approach them. The trick is to make people realize that your project is both fun and important.

Listening is the key.

A good interview is like a conversation. Prepare questions, but don’t just follow a list. The most important thing is to listen and have your questions come naturally. If your questions are rehearsed and hollow, the answers will sound that way, too. If you are curious and your questions are spontaneous and honest, you will get a good interview.

Give the interviewee a lot of cues that you are listening and you care about what they are saying. Maintaining constant eye contact, nodding, not interrupting, and offering some facial or verbal encouragement are great ways to listen actively.

Interviewing is a two-way street.

Conducting a good interview depends, in part, on asking the right questions. But it’s also important to establish a relationship with the person you are interviewing. Sometimes it is appropriate to share some information about yourself in an interview. Remember that it’s a conversation. What’s more,

for it to be an honest conversation, people must feel that you care about what they say and will honor and respect their words and stories.

Don't be afraid of pauses and silences.

Resist the temptation to jump in. Let the person think. Often the best comments come after a short,uncomfortable silence when the person you are interviewing feels the need to fill the void and addsomething better.

Dos and Don'ts of Interviewing

Dos:

- (1) Consult counsel once allegations are made.
- (2) Prepare and discuss an interview plan or theme.
- (3) Conduct one interview at a time, unless the situationdictates otherwise.
- (4) Arrange a safe and private interview location.
- (5) Gather and organize pertinent documents beforethe interview.
- (6) Obtain information concerning the person beinginterviewed before the interview.
- (7) Exhibit courteous and professional appearance andbehavior at all times.
- (8) Be punctual.
- (9) Conduct the interview with more than one person.
- (10) Establish rapport during initial contact.
- (11) Maintain control in the interview.
- (12) Close on a positive note for future contacts.
- (13) Prepare reports as close as possible to interview.
- (14) Listen to your instincts.

Don'ts:

- (1) Conduct interview without a plan of action.
- (2) Fail to discuss the interview with partner.
- (3) Argue with interviewee.
- (4) Lose objectivity during the interview.
- (5) Become judgmental during a confession.
- (6) Include personal opinions in notes or writtenreports.
- (7) Provide promises or assurances.
- (8) Threaten interviewee with disclosure of interviewresults, discipline, or job security.
- (9) Discuss interviews with anyone outside of theinvestigation

To summarize the basic interview format:

- Prepare for the interview
- Follow a logical sequence
- Create a proper environment
- Relax the candidate
- Let the candidate do the talking
- Perfect your questioning
- Become a better listener
- Keep your reactions to yourself
- Stay in control
- Take notes
- Sell but don't oversell the role• Close the interview with a positive lasting impression