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ACADEMIC YEAR; 2022/2023

YEAR; 2022

COURSE UNIT; BASIC STUDY & COMMUNICATION SKILLS

COURSE CODE; ELS1 102

INTRODUCTION TO THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNICATION

Communication can be defined as the process of exchanging verbal or non-verbal messages.

THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

These are series of actions or steps taken in order to successfully communicate. The following are the key elements of communication.

- ❖ **The sender.** This is the owner of the message, he takes the first step to initiate for communication. He is the one to decide which form of communication to use and which channel can best bring out his message well. The sender can also be called the encoder.
- ❖ **Encoding.** Before the sender sends out the message to its destined audience he has the obligation to convert the message into symbols, words, or pictures that he is sure the receiver will be able to interpret. For the message to make its desired purpose the encoding part should be done well.
- ❖ **Message.** This is the subject matter of communication. It may be an idea, an opinion, a feeling, a view or even a suggestion.
- ❖ **The channel/medium.** This is the mode of transmission of the message from the sender to the receiver. The mode may be oral or written, it may be verbal or non-verbal, and it may even be visual. When choosing the mode of communication a few things should be considered, if the message is urgent and or requires immediate feedback, then it is better to use an oral medium like a phone call rather than a written form like messaging. However if the message is to be sent to a large number of people then a written form is better of when used, if the message requires some demonstrations the best medium to use should be visual. Choosing the right medium also saves you of the costs which may be involved.
- ❖ **Receiver.** This is the audience to which the message is made for. One of the principles of communication is that both the sender and the receiver must be active. If the communication is oral, the receiver must be a good listener, he must therefore pay much attention to ensure that he decodes the message accurately. To achieve this the receiver should focus on the message by avoiding the surrounding interruptions (physical or psychological noise).
- ❖ **Decoding.** Decoding is done the same way as encoding but this time by the receiver. The receiver is ought to listen attentively to the message and assign meaning to it. This ensures that the meaning he perceives is the meaning the sender intended to mean, for example was the sender joking? Was he expressing anger, spite or any other emotion? Was he giving an order, making a requestor merely giving a take it or leave it piece of advice. Remembering is a key of information retention also because a receiver is ought to make a feedback basing on that.
- ❖ **Feedback.** If the message was properly packaged and encoded by the sender, sent through the right channel, and to the right audience, properly decoded by the receiver, the best way to confirm this is through feedback. Communication is therefore said to be complete if a feedback is obtained.

FORMS OF COMMUNICATION

There are two main forms of communication,

1. Verbal communication
2. Nonverbal communication

1. VERBAL COMMUNICATION

This is the form of communication where we express our views, information and ideas in the form of sounds and or words. This may include communication through radios, TV, mobile phone, newspapers, letter etc.

TYPES OF VERBAL COMMUNICATION

We can have up to five types of verbal communication,

- ❖ Intra-personal communication
- ❖ Inter-personal communication
- ❖ Group communication
- ❖ Public communication
- ❖ Mass communication

1. **Intra-personal communication.** This is communication within oneself using internal vocalization or reflective thinking, analysis, assessments etc. it is triggered by internal or external stimulus. Internal stimulus may be hunger, anger. External stimulus may be a reaction to an event we witness. Intra-personal communication helps us to achieve social adjustment, helps us to come down, or even build self-confidence.
2. **Inter-personal communication.** This is the communication between at least two people whose lives mutually influence one another, it builds maintains and also ends relationships. It may be planned or unplanned but since it is interactive it is usually more structured and influenced by social expectations than intra-personal communication. It aims at achieving instrumental or relational needs. The need may be as minor as getting someone or as major as conveying your desire to be in a committed relationship with someone. Interpersonal skills are important for this case as they determine how well a person can communicate, behave or relate to others. However unlike intra-personal communication, inter-

personal is usually faced with miscommunications and or communication conflict. To manage it you need to possess good conflict management skills and listening skills to maintain a positive relationship.

3. **Group communication.** This is usually between three or more people interacting to achieve a shared or common goal e.g. when you are assigned to achieve a certain objective as a group. It is associated with having more complicated interactions which may include a few disagreements on who will complete each part of a larger project. Examples of group communication can include school meetings, board meetings, press conferences, office meetings, team meetings, family gatherings etc.
4. **Public communication.** This is a sender focused form of communication in which a person is typically responsible for conveying the information to the audience. It is important part of our academic, professional and civic lives it is more sender focused than the above three other types, though a public speaker still has a chance to build individual relationships with audience members and probably receive verbal or non-verbal feedback. Examples may be election campaigns, public speeches, the president's state of the nation address etc.
5. **Mass communication.** Public communication becomes mass communication when it is transmitted to many people through print or electronic media. The technology required to send mass messages distinguishes it from the other types of verbal communication. Mass communication also differs from the other types in form of personal connection between participants. There is no immediate feedback (verbal or nonverbal), although you could write a letter to the editor, send an email etc., it is not immediate like the other three previous types. However with new technologies like twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp, feedback is becoming a bit more immediate as radio and TV hosts can invite feedbacks from viewers via these sites and read online. But still this is not as immediate as it is in the other three types above.

ORGANISATION COMMUNICATION

Organization communication can also be looked at as one of the verbal forms of communication but in this case in an organization. The two main types of communication in an organization are,

- Formal communication
- Informal communication

FORMAL COMMUNICATION

Formal communication refers to the exchanging of official information between two or more people within the same organization, by following the predefined rules and using official channels of communication. It is mostly done in written format.

Formal communication can be further categorized into,

- I. Upward communication

II. Downward communication

III. Horizontal communication

- i. **Downward communication.** Under this system the information flows from the top management downward to the operating level. It may also be called communication from the superior to the subordinate. It follows the line of authority from the top to bottom of the organization hierarchy. It usually consists of plans, policies, orders and instructions, procedures, rules etc. it may be written or oral depending on the importance of the message and also the status of the individuals involved in the communication process. Reports, emails, letters, manuals etc. are commonly used tools.
- ii. **Upward communication.** it means flow of information from the lowest levels of organization to the higher level of authority. It passes from subordinate to the superior as that from worker to foreman or from foreman to manager, from manager to general manager and so on. This communication includes opinions, ideas, suggestions, complaints, grievances, appeals, reports etc. it is very important as it serves as the feedback on the effectiveness of downward communication. Management is also able to know how well its policies, plans and objectives are followed by those workers at lower levels of the organization. It keeps the management informed about the progress of the work and difficulties faced in performance. On the basis of upward communication, management is able to revise its plans and policies for effective progress of the organization.
- iii. **Horizontal communication.** Horizontal communication is when the co-workers with different areas of responsibilities, but at the same level in the organization communicate with each other. The communication between managers of different departments, such as marketing, finance, production is the best example of horizontal communication.

Reference: www.google.com/bussinessjargons.com

INFORMAL COMMUNICATION

Informal communication is the casual communication between co-workers in the work place. It is un-official in nature and is based in the social relationships that are formed in a work place outside of the normal hierarchy of business structure. An example of this can be seen when one employee interacts with another employee in a casual and conversational way, either discussing about organization matters like policy change or anything else outside.

Informal communication can also be called grapevine communication. Informal communication can be classified into four categories.

- ❖ Single strand. This is where one person communicates with one person and they go and communicate with one other person
- ❖ Gossip chain. This is a group communication where everyone is talking to each other informally.
- ❖ Probability chain. Each individual randomly tells another individual the same message.
- ❖ Cluster chain. One person shares information with a group of selected individuals and in turn each of these individuals shares that information each other's.

All of these different types of informal communication are all about how informal information flows between employees outside of a professional and formal meeting scenario.

Reference: www.bamboohr.com

2. NON VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Unlike verbal communication, this form of communication makes use of unspoken words. While it is true that what is said in communication is important what is not said may be even more important. This means that both sender and the receiver of any message ought to pay attention to avoid nonverbal cues like facial expressions, body stance, dress code, tone of voice among others. Nonverbal communication helps in establishing and maintaining the interpersonal relationships while the verbal only help to in communicating external events. The following are some of the types of nonverbal communication,

- **Body language.** Our bodies have a way of communicating messages which are understood differently according to our social setting. A nod of the head may show agreement in one culture while it may show disagreement in another culture. A firm handshake given with a warm, dry hand, is a great way to establish trust, while a weak, clammy handshake conveys a lack of trustworthiness. A thumb up sign can be used to show support or thumb down to show disagreement.
- **Eye contact.** In business, style and duration of eye contact is considered varies greatly across cultures. In the US looking someone in the eye is considered a sign of trustworthy while in Japan it is considered rude especially if a junior does that to a senior. In other aspect, in most cultures when a person addresses you while looking in your eyes, he is considered to be speaking the truth but if he blinks rapidly or keeps looking in other directions, he is considered to be telling lies.

- **Facial expressions.** Facial expression is another way of passing on messages silently. The human face can produce a thousand facial expressions with a thousand meanings, there are different facial expressions to show happiness, sadness, disappointment, anger, and shock among others.
- **Posture.** The position of our bodies relative to a chair or one another is another powerful silent message that conveys interest or disinterest, boredom, tiredness, head up, back straight (but not rigid) usually implies an upright character. We are advised to be careful of the postures we adopt in order not to send out wrong messages.
- **Touch.** This is another key aspect of passing out silent messages. It also varies according to different cultures, gender and individuals. According to some societies touching someone on the head or touch someone with a foot is considered rude, in other societies greeting is usually accompanied with a handshake and in others with a hug.
- **Space.** This is the distance people should give in an organization. According to anthropologists, different kinds of distance between people convey meaning. They also vary between cultures for example in some Ugandan cultures, a mother in law should keep a good distance between herself and the son in law and so does the father in law and the daughter in law. In the social setting standing close to a colleague implies trust and standing a distance implies mistrust of a colleague.
- **Appearance.** Your clothing, hairstyle, jewelry, also play part in nonverbal communication. There are different dressing cords that people adopt for different social appearances eg for wedding, work, beach, an interview, students also have their standard dress cord of a uniform. The best dress cord should be chosen according the social setting or event.

IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION

Communication is an indispensable part of the process of management. The success of an enterprise depends upon the levels of effective communication. A good communication system offers the following benefits.

- **Basis of decision making.** Communication is essential for decision-making and planning. It enables the management to secure information without which it may be impossible to take any decision. The quality of managerial decisions depends on the quality communication, further the plans and decision made by the management need to be communicated to the subordinates.
- **Smooth and efficient working.** Communication makes possible the smooth and efficient working of an enterprise. It is through communication the management changes and regulates the actions of the subordinates in the desired direction.

- **Facilitates coordination.** Management is the art of getting things done through others and there is no way this can be achieved minus effective communication. Communication through exchange of ideas and information brings about unity of action in the pursuit of the common goal.
- **It increases managerial efficiency.** It is rightly said that nothing happens in management unless communication has taken place. The efficiency of a manager depends on his ability to communicate effectively with the members of the organization. Through this management is able to issue instructions, orders, allocate jobs and responsibilities and also evaluate performance of subordinates.
- **Sound industrial relations.** Effective communication creates mutual understanding and trust among the members of the organization. It promotes co-operation between the employee and employer. Through this employees can sound out their complaints, grievances and any suggestions to the management.
- **Motivation and morale.** Communication is the means by which the behavior of the subordinates is modified and change is effected in their actions. Through effective communication, workers are motivated to achieve the goals of the enterprise and their morale is boosted.
- **Job satisfaction.** Effective communication creates job satisfaction among employees as it increases mutual trust and confidence between management and the employees. The gap between the employees and management is reduced through the efficient means of communication and a sense of belongingness is created among employees. They hence work with zeal and enthusiasm.
- **Public relations.** In the present business world, every business enterprise has to create and maintain a good corporate image in the society. It is only through communication that management can present a good corporate image to the outside world. Effective communication helps a management in maintaining good relations with workers, customers, suppliers, shareholders, customers, suppliers, shareholders, government and community at large.

Reference: communication skills/business module pdf