

Notes Business Communication and Behavioural Studies
Principles of Effective Business Communication

INTRODUCTION

CONCEPTS OF COMMUNICATION

The word "communicate" is derived from the Latin word "communicare" – to share, exchange, send along, transmit, talk, gesture, write, put in use, relate. A number of definitions have been given to the term "communication". A few important ones are:

Communication is 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 in its simplest form is conveying of information from one person to another. (Hudson)

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

Important characteristics of communication are:

- 1) Communication is a two way process.
- 2) Communication always happens between or among two or more parties – sender and receiver.
- 3) Communication involves an exchange of facts, ideas, feelings or thoughts.
- 4) Communication uses verbal ways like words spoken or written, or non-verbal ways like gestures, postures, etc.
- 5) Communication needs a mutuality of understanding between sender and receiver.

PURPOSES OF COMMUNICATION

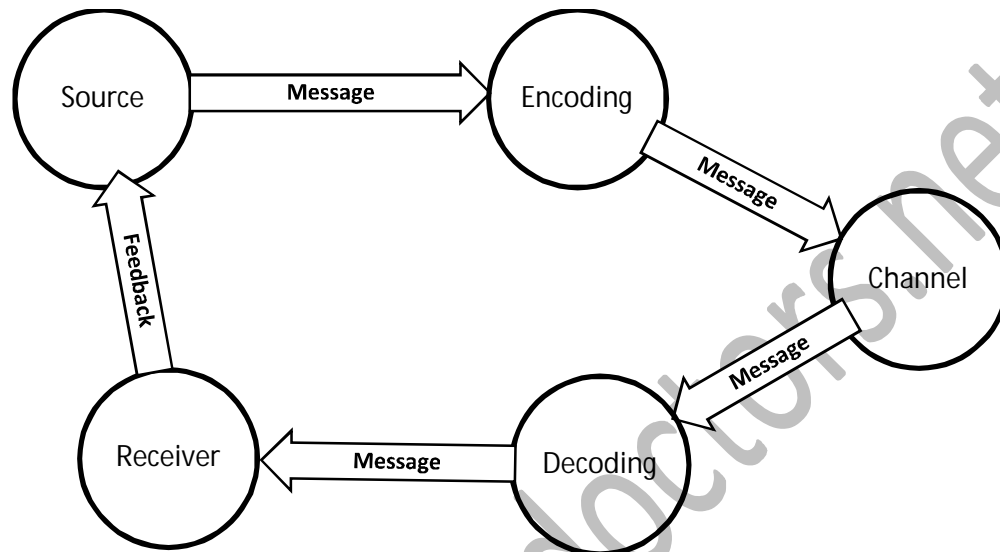
The purpose of communication may be to:

- 1) Initiating action
Initiating action may be achieved by two basic categories of communication.
 - (a) Expressing needs and requirements
 - (b) Persuading and motivating others
- 2) Imparting information
Imparting information, feelings, ideas, and beliefs may have any number of specific purposes.
 - (a) Creating awareness
 - (b) Creating understanding
 - (c) Persuading others
 - (d) Influencing others
- 3) Establishing relation
Establishing, acknowledging and maintaining relations with other people, is a vital function of communication.

THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS / CYCLE

Before communication can take place, a purpose, expressed as a message to be conveyed is needed. It passes between a source (the sender) and a receiver. The message is encoded (converted to a symbolic form) and passed by way of some medium (channel) to the receiver. Who retranslates (decodes) the message initiated by the sender. The result is the transfer of meaning from one person to another.

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Communication cycle diagram

Components of communication cycle are:

- 1) The Source
The source is the place or the person from where the message being communicated emerges.
- 2) Encoding
In communication the, the act of producing message, for example, speaking or writing – is termed as encoding.
- 3) The Message
The message is the actual physical product from the source encoding. When we speak the speech is the message.
- 4) The Channel
The channel is the medium through which the message travels. It is selected by the source, who must determine whether to use formal or informal channel.
- 5) Decoding
The act of understanding messages is known as decoding. When the sound waves are translated into ideas thus, listeners and readers are often regarded as decoders.
- 6) Receiver
The receiver is the object to whom the message is directed. But before the message can be received, the symbols in it must be translated into a form that can be understood by the receiver.
- 7) Feedback
The final link in the communication process is a feedback loop. Feedback is the check on how successful we have been, in transferring our messages as originally intended.

NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Numerous articles and books have been written on the importance of non-verbal messages. Some studies suggest that from 60 to 90 percent of a message's effect comes from nonverbal cues. This section presents a brief overview of nonverbal communication:

- ü Body language
- ü Sign language
- ü Paralanguage
- ü Circumstantial language – space, surroundings and time

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Body language

Body language is the way the body communicates by its physical movements. When we study body language, we specifically look for inner states of emotion as expressed through different parts of the body and their physical movements. Body language mainly includes following subparts:

- a) Facial expressions:
The facial expressions can divulge hidden emotions – anger, annoyance, confusions, enthusiasm, fear, hatred, joy, love, interest, sorrow, surprise, uncertainty and others. They can also contradict verbal statements.
- b) Eye contact:
Within the facial area, the eyes tell us much than other facial features. The eyes, along with the eyebrows, upper and lower eyelids, and size of pupils, convey some inner body state. In fact, eye contact may be the best indicator of how involved a person is in the situation.
- c) Posture:
Posture is the way we carry ourselves. Like we may choose to stand or sit erect, or lean forward or backward, or slouch haphazardly. Postures non-verbally convey impressions of self-confidence, status and interest.
- d) Gestures:
Gestures are the physical movements of the arms, legs, hands, torso and head. When you are speaking some gestures have standard meanings – for example, touching and tapping your forefinger to the top of your head means you are thinking, a slight variation with a single rapid tap means you have an idea.
- e) Body shape:
The physical shapes of our body also communicate to others. Like tallness usually equates with dominance. We cannot do much about the shape of our body, but by adopting right kind of postures and dressing style, we can improve the impact of our physical appearance.
- f) Smell and touch:
Various odors and artificial fragrances on human beings can sometimes convey emotions and feelings better than words. Similarly, touching people in different ways can silently communicate friendship, love, approval, hatred, anger or other motives and feelings.
- g) Silence:
Silence can be a positive or negative influence in the communication process. It can provide a link between messages or sever relationships. It can create tension and uneasiness or create a peaceful situation.

Sign language

The most basic element of communication is the sign. A sign is a symbol. A symbol is something that stands for something else. Everything in our world that we can visualize or sense has symbolic meaning and can be used in communication. For example, a map is a symbol that represents an actual physical geographic territory, and the 21 gun salute is a symbol of respect.

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Paralanguage

Another type of non-verbal communication is known as paralanguage or paralinguistic. Of all non-verbal types, it is the closest to the actual communication. 'Para' means 'like'; thus paralanguage literally means 'like language'. This 'like language' is the where we use our voice in uttering words. It is everything other than words-intonation, pitch, regional accent, sarcasm, hesitations, truthfulness, emotion, etc.

- a) Pitch variation – how high or low your vocal tones are.
- b) Volume – refers to the loudness of the voice.
- c) Speed and pause – speaking in a very high speed may make the matter incomprehensible and at too low speed may make the matter boring. Thus a speaker should use normal pace.
- d) Stress on words – by emphasizing different key words in a sentence you can purposely indicate your feelings about what is important.

Circumstantial language

One of the very interesting aspect of communication is that its not the person only who communicates. Actually everything about him and his surroundings communicates. Some of the circumstantial factor which communicates about the person are discussed below:

- a) Space language (proxemics):
Proxemics is "personal space language". Countless messages are communicated by the way people use space around them, the way they claim that space for themselves, or the way they share it.
- b) Surroundings:
Surroundings convey status. Aspects of surroundings include room size, location, furnishing, wall decoration, floor (carpeted or bare), lighting, windows, the way you arrange objects in your work area.
- c) Time (chronemics):
The way we use our time provides a number of silent messages. Most rules about informal times are not taught and are generally practiced unconsciously. For example – Punctuality of a person, time given to a task by a person, etc.

LISTENING

Johnson defines listening as "the ability to understand and respond effectively to oral communication".

Listening requires more than hearing. It requires the understanding of the message received. Davis states it in this way "hearing is with the ears, but listening is with the mind". Thus, we can say that hearing is not listening.

Steps to improve listening capability:

The ability to listen more effectively may be acquired through discipline and practice. For a good listening a listener must be physically relaxed and mentally alert to receive and understand the message. Here are some steps for effective listening, if followed, can appreciably increase the effectiveness of this communicative skill:

- 1) Realize that listening is a hard work
- 2) Prepare to listen
- 3) Have positive attitude
- 4) Resist distractions
- 5) Listen to understand, not refute
- 6) Keep an open mind
- 7) Find an area of interest
- 8) Concentrate on the context
- 9) Capitalize on thought-speed
- 10) Combine verbal delivery with non-verbal clues
- 11) Show some empathy
- 12) Be patient
- 13) Listen critically and delay judgment.

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Different ways of listening:

Listening may have a number of purposes, which should be borne in mind as you listen.

- a) Listening for content – if you trust the source of the message and want to know the source's viewpoint, listening for content will be a straight forward receiving activity.
- b) Critical listening – if you require an accurate information and you have not absolute confidence that the source is able to give it to you, you will need to listen critically.
- c) Empathetic listening – is the power of understanding and imaginatively entering into another person's feelings'.

LEVELS OF COMMUNICATION

- 1) Intrapersonal communication – communication with oneself.
- 2) Impersonal communication – 'mass' communication, in which the message is directed to a large, diffuse audience.
- 3) Interpersonal communication – individual to individual, individual to group and group to individual.

PROBLEMS OF COMMUNICATION

Problems of communication include:

- 1) Failure to plan for communication
- 2) Omission or overload of information
- 3) Misunderstanding due to technical jargon
- 4) Non-verbal signals confusing the recipient.
- 5) Difference in social, racial or educational background
- 6) Perceptual or selectivity
- 7) Poor reading or listening skills
- 8) Failure to seek or offer feedback
- 9) Lack of credibility
- 10) Noise and distortion in communication channel

Noise:

Noise refers to distractions and interference in the environment in which communication takes place.

- a) Physical noise – noise in surroundings
- b) Technical noise – failure in the channel or medium of communication
- c) Social noise – difference in personality, culture or outlook of the sender and receiver.
- d) Psychological noise – excessive emotion, prejudice or nervousness
- e) Semantic noise – use of different language, not understandable to receiver.

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Distortion:

Distortion refers to the way in which the meaning of a communication is lost in handling.

Problems of communication can be overcome by:

- 1) Proper planning of message
- 2) Not to omitting or overloading of information
- 3) Avoiding technical jargon and non-verbal cues
- 4) Checking the recipient's status
- 5) Using appropriate channel or medium
- 6) Trying to make the source credible
- 7) Using free from bias language

BASIC PRINCIPLES

SEVEN C's OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

To compose effective written or oral messages, you must apply certain communication principles. These principles provide guidelines for choice of content and style of presentation, adapted to the purpose and receiver of your message. Called the "seven C's" they are *completeness, conciseness, consideration, concreteness, clarity, courtesy and correctness*.

1. Completeness:

Your business message is complete when it contains all facts the reader or listener needs for the reaction you desire. As you strive for completeness, keep the following guidelines in mind:

- a) Provide all necessary information – answering the five W's helps make messages clear: who, what, when, where and why.
- b) Answer all questions asked – look for questions: some may even appear buried within a paragraph. Locate them and answer them precisely.
- c) Give something extra, when desirable – use your good judgment in offering additional material if the sender's message was incomplete.

2. Conciseness:

Conciseness is saying what you have to say in the fewest possible words without sacrificing the other C qualities. A concise message is complete without being wordy. To achieve conciseness, observe the following suggestions:

- a) Eliminate wordy expressions – use single word in place of phrases. For example, use 'now' instead of 'at this time'.
- b) Include only relevant material – delete irrelevant words and rambling sentences.
- c) Avoid unnecessary repetition – it leads to dullness.

3.Consideration:

Consideration means preparing every message with the message receivers in mind, try to put yourself in their place. Three specific ways to indicate consideration are:

- a) Focus on "you" attitude instead of "I" and "we" – using "you" does help project a you-attitude. But overuse can lead to a negative reaction.
- b) Show audience benefit or interest in the receiver – readers may react positively when benefits are shown them.
- c) Emphasize positive, pleasant facts – because of past connections with words, readers will react positively or negatively to certain words.

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4.Concreteness:

Communicating concretely means being specific, definite, and vivid rather than vague and general. Often it means using denotative (direct, explicit, often dictionary-based) rather than connotative words (ideas or notions suggested by or associated with a word or phrase). The following guidelines should help you compose concrete, convincing messages.

- a) Use specific facts and figures – whenever possible, use an exact, precise statement or a figure in place of a general word to make your message more concrete.
- b) Put action in your verbs – active verbs help make your message more specific, personal, concise and emphatic.
- c) Choose vivid, image-building words – business writing uses less figurative language than does the world of fiction.

5.Clarity:

Getting the meaning from your head into the head of your reader ----accurately---- is the purpose of clarity.

- a) Choose precise, concrete and familiar words – when meaning of words is in doubt, use more familiar words; audiences will understand them better.
- b) Construct effective sentences and paragraphs – important characteristics to consider are length (between 17 and 20 word for an average sentence), unity, coherence and emphasis (put main ideas up front within a sentence).

6.Courtesy:

Knowing your audience allows you to use statements of courtesy; be aware of your message receiver.

The following are the suggestions for generating a courteous tone:

- a) Be sincerely tactful, thoughtful and appreciative
- b) Use expressions that show respect – omit irritating expressions and questionable humor.
- c) Choose nondiscriminatory expressions

7.Correctness:

At the core of correctness is proper grammar, punctuation and spelling. However, a message may be perfect grammatically and mechanically but still insult or lose a customer. The term correctness, as applied to business messages, also means the following three characteristics:

- a) Use the right level of language
- b) Check accuracy of figures, facts and words – a good check of your data is to have another person read and comment on the validity of the material.
- c) Maintain acceptable writing mechanics.

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION (IPC)

COMPONENTIAL DEFINITION

By Harold (5 components)

Who says → What → In what channel → To whom → With what effect.

By George (10 components)

Someone → perceives an event → And reacts → In a situation → Through some means → to make available material → In some form → And context → conveying contents → of some consequence.

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UNIVERSALS OF IPC

Features those are present in all interpersonal communication acts are called universals. These are as follows:

- 1) Source-Receiver – at least two persons must be present for an IPC to take place.
- 2) Encoding-Decoding – reducing a message to the written or the spoken word.
- 3) Competence and performance – performance depends upon the language used in encoding-decoding and communication techniques.
- 4) Messages and their channeling – messages sent are signals that act as a stimulus for a receiver and channel is the medium through which a message is conveyed.
- 5) Noise – in exchange of message an element of distortion enters through noise. It may be physical, psychological and semantic.
- 6) Feedback – it may be a self feedback or feedback from others.
- 7) Context – communication performance takes place in a context. It may be a:
 - a) Physical dimension – the place where communication takes place.
 - b) Social/psychological dimension – the status relationship amongst the participants.
 - c) Temporal dimension – this may include not only time but also the fitness of communication in the sequence of surrounding events.
- 8) Field of experience – effective communication takes place to the extent that the participants share the same experiences. The larger the difference between the fields of experience the more difficult the communication would become.
- 9) Effects – the effects of communication are not always visible and therefore are personal.
- 10) Ethics – personal philosophy of one's life, they are therefore not prone to formalization.

AXIOMS OF IPC

- 1) Inevitability of communication:
We are communicating even though we might not think we are or might not even want to communicate. Whether she or he wishes to or not; we cannot not communicate. Our silence in response also communicates.
- 2) Irreversibility of communication:
IPC is an irreversible process. We can never undo what has already been done. What has been communicated remains communicated. Although we may try to qualify, negate, or somehow reduce the effects of our message, the message itself, once it has been sent and received, cannot be reversed.
- 3) Contents and relationship dimensions of communication:
A number of problems in IPC arise by a lack of balancing between the contents and the relationship dimensions of a communication. Contents of the communication may generally

relate to the speaker or the listener and the communication may also be indicative of the relationship existing between the speaker and the listener.

4) Communication involving a process of adjustment:

We realize that no two persons share identical signal systems. Parents and children, for example, not only have different vocabularies to a very great extent but, even more important, have different meanings for the terms they have in common.

5) Defining relationship by punctuation:

Communication events are continuous transactions. They are broken up into short sequences only for purposes of convenience. What is stimulus and what is response is not very easy to determine when we, as analysts of communication, enter after the communication transaction is under way.

6) Symmetrical and complementary view of interactions:

In a symmetrical relationship, the two individuals mirror each other's behavior. If one express jealousy, the other will also express jealousy. In a complementary relationship, the two individuals engage in different behaviors, with the behavior of one serving as the stimulus for the complementary behavior of the other.

TYPES OF IPC

This includes:

- a) Individual to individual
- b) Individual to group
- c) Group to individual
- d) Between groups

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