

Chapter 04 Removing Barriers to Communication

SUMMARY

We have understood how free flow of meaningful communication enhances our personal as well as organizational wellbeing. Constant efforts are called for to ensure that the flow of information is not interrupted and messages transferred are not misunderstood by the receiver on any occasion. Unfortunately there are several factors present in our day to day life that create barriers to effective communication.

Barriers in personal communication:

Perceptual and Language Differences: Perception is generally how each individual interprets the world around him. All generally want to receive messages which are significant to them. But any message which is against their values is not accepted. The linguistic differences also lead to communication breakdown. Same word may mean different to different individuals.

Information Overload: Managers are surrounded with a pool of information. It is essential to control this information flow else the information is likely to be misinterpreted or forgotten or overlooked. As a result communication is less effective. At any given time a person can hold only a certain quantum of data in his brain. If you shower a number of statements on the listener, there is certainty that some of them will not be correctly interpreted and hence understood by the listener in the way you intended.

Inattention: Effective communication cannot happen if the receiver is mentally preoccupied. At times we just not listen, but only hear.

Time Pressures: In a haste to meet deadlines, the formal channels of communication are shortened, or messages are partially given, i.e., not completely transferred. Listeners in such situations are not tuned to listen to you; naturally communication is incomplete, incoherent, and unsuccessful. Select convenient time for effective communication; sufficient time should be given for effective communication.

Emotions: Emotional state at a particular point of time also affects communication. Many times a person is under tension, worried and therefore, unable to concentrate on what is being communicated. In such emotional situations a message can neither be received fully nor correctly.

Poor retention: Human memory cannot function beyond a limit. One cannot always retain what is being told specially if one is not interested or not attentive. Hence organizations start a work day with morning meetings when individuals are fresh and their minds are not pre-occupied.

Chapter 04 Removing Barriers to Communication

Barriers in organizational communication:

Complexity in Organizational Structure: Greater the hierarchy in an organization (i.e. more the number of managerial levels), more is the chances of communication getting destroyed.

Distraction / Noise: Communication is also affected a lot by noise and distractions. Physical distractions are also there such as, poor lighting, uncomfortable sitting, even unhygienic room also affects communication in a meeting.

Media used for communication: Many organizations use notice and bulletin boards to disseminate information that affects all employees working together in a group. These need to be placed at easily visible and approachable location so that each employee has access to them. Use of the electronic communication within the organization requires careful planning and staff training. An overload of information stemming from the tendency to send copies to everyone in their anxiety to keep others informed must be avoided. Emails are not to be simply sent to all. Internal communication policy, therefore, has to be drafted and subsequently implemented to prevent such spread of needless communication.

Overcoming barriers to communication:

Ability to speak effectively does overcome communication barriers in personal communication. Having effective communication skills is imperative for your success. Positive communication will certainly increase the opportunities you find in your career and business. To practice the fine art of communication keep your eyes on body language, speech and attentiveness, communication consistency, and effective communication skills. Further develop ability to listen effectively. Whereas speaking raises blood pressure, listening brings it down. Remember listening is not the same as hearing. Hearing refers to the sounds that you hear, whereas listening requires more than that: it requires focus. You need to pay attention not only to what is being said, but also to what is left unsaid or only partially said. Do not talk, listen. When somebody else is talking listen to what they are saying, do not interrupt, talk over them or finish their sentences for them. Relax. Focus on the speaker. Prepare yourself to listen. Remove distractions and empathize. Wait and watch for non-verbal communication

The results from a *360-degree evaluation* can often be used by communicators receiving the feedback to plan and map specific paths in their methods of communication. Results are also used by some organizations in making administrative decisions related to corporate communication program. Those who cultivate feedback skills; both in providing and receiving, reap rich benefits.

Chapter 04 Removing Barriers to Communication

Suggestion scheme is one more means of establishing constructive communication in an organization. The scheme generates cost savings, improvements to customer service, increased efficiencies and improves employee morale. It provides a vital communication channel between employees and management. Normally suggestion scheme is an integral part of total quality. The employee suggestion scheme is next to the continuous improvement process (CIP) and employee inventions, a part of innovation or idea management.

"Culture" is often at the root of communication challenges. Our culture influences how we approach problems, and how we participate in groups and in communities. When we participate in groups we are often surprised at how differently people approach their work together. Culture is a complex concept, with many different definitions. But, simply put, "culture" refers to a group or community with which we share common experiences that shape the way we understand the world. It includes groups that we are born into, such as gender, race, or national origin. It also includes groups we join or become part of.

Six fundamental patterns of cultural differences include 1) Different communication styles - major aspect of communication style is the degree of importance given to non-verbal communication. Non-verbal communication includes not only facial expressions and gestures; it also involves seating arrangements, personal distance, and sense of time. 2) Different attitudes toward conflict - Some cultures view conflict as a positive thing, while others view it as something to be avoided. 3) Different approaches to completing tasks- caused by different access to resources; different judgments of the rewards associated with task completion, different notions of time, and varied ideas about how relationship-building and task-oriented work should go together. 4) Different decision-making styles- The roles individuals play in decision-making vary widely from culture to culture. 5) Different attitudes toward disclosure- in some cultures, it is not appropriate to be frank about emotions, about the reasons behind a conflict or a misunderstanding, or about personal information. and 6) Different approaches to knowing (Notable differences occur among cultural groups when it comes to epistemologies -- that is, the ways people come to know things).

In addition to helping us to understand ourselves and our own cultural frames of reference, knowledge of these six patterns of cultural difference can help us to understand the people who are different from us. An appreciation of patterns of cultural difference can assist us in processing what it means to be different in ways that are respectful of others, not faultfinding or damaging. We can also learn to collaborate across cultural lines as individuals and as a society. Awareness of cultural differences

Chapter 04 Removing Barriers to Communication

does not have to divide us from each other. It does not have to paralyze us either, for fear of not saying the "right thing."

DO NOT COPY