Types of Communications in Organizations

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:≡ WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson you will learn about the types of communication in organizations. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. The Three Types of Communication

In the Basic Communication Model described in the last tutorial, three types of communication can be used by either the communicator in the initial transmission phase or the receiver in the feedback phase. These three types are discussed next.

1a. Oral Communication

This consists of all messages or exchanges of information that are spoken, and it's the most prevalent type of communication.

1b. Written Communication

This includes e-mail, texts, letters, reports, manuals, and annotations on sticky notes. Although managers prefer oral communication for its efficiency and immediacy, the increase in electronic communication is undeniable. As well, some managers prefer written communication for important messages, such as a change in a company policy, where precision of language and documentation of the message are important.

> **IN CONTEXT**
>
> **Dealing With Information Overload**
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> One of the challenges in many organizations is dealing with a deluge of emails, texts, voicemails, and other communication. Organizations have become flatter, outsourced many functions, and layered technology to speed communication with integrated communication programs such as Slack, which allows users to manage all their communication and access shared resources in one place. This can lead to information overload, and crucial messages may be drowned out by the volume in your inbox.

Add the practice of "reply to all" that many coworkers use, which can add to the volume of communication; this means that you may get five or six versions of an initial email and need to understand all of the responses as well as the initial communication before responding or deciding that the issue is resolved and no response is needed. Here are suggestions for dealing with email overload upward, horizontally, and downward within your organization and externally to stakeholders and customers.

One way to reduce the volume and the time you spend on email is to turn off the spigot of incoming messages. There are obvious practices that help, such as unsubscribing to e-newsletters or turning off notifications from social media accounts such as Facebook and Twitter. Also consider whether your colleagues or direct reports are copying you on too many emails as an FYI. If yes, explain that you only need to be updated at certain times or when a final decision is made.

You will also want to set up a system that will organize your inbox into "folders" that will enable you to manage the flow of messages into groups that will allow you to address them appropriately. Your system might look something like this:

1. **Inbox**: Treat this as a holding pen. Emails shouldn't stay here any longer than it takes for you to file them into another folder. The exception is when you respond immediately and are waiting for an immediate response.
2. **Today**: This is for items that need a response today.
3. **This week**: This is for messages that require a response before the end of the week.
4. **This month/quarter**: This is for everything that needs a longer-term response. Depending on your role, you may need a monthly or quarterly folder.
5. **FYI**: This is for any items that are for information only and that you may want to refer back to in the future.

This system prioritizes emails based on timescales rather than the emails' senders, enabling you to better schedule work and set deadlines.

Another thing to consider is your outgoing email. If your outgoing messages are not specific, too long, unclear, or are copied too widely, your colleagues are likely to follow the same practice when communicating with you. Keep your communication clear and to the point, and managing your outbox will also help make your inbound emails more manageable.

Sources: (Gallo, 2012) (Chingel, 2018) (Seely, 2017)

🌀 **BRAINSTORM**

1. How are you managing your emails now? Are you mixing personal and school and work-related emails in the same account?
2. How would you communicate to a colleague that is sending too many FYI emails, sending too many unclear emails, or copying too many people on his or her messages?

1c. Nonverbal Communication

There is also the transmission of information without speaking or writing. Some examples of this are things such as traffic lights and sirens as well as factors such as office size and placement, which connote something or someone of importance. As well, things such as body language and facial expression can convey either conscious or unconscious messages to others.

2. Major Influences on Interpersonal Communication

Regardless of the type of communication involved, the nature, direction, and quality of interpersonal communication processes can be influenced by several factors (Jablin & Putnam, 2005).

2a. Social Influences

Communication is a social process, as it takes at least two people to have a communication episode. There are a variety of social influences that can affect the accuracy of the intended message.

➔ EXAMPLE Status barriers between employees at different levels of the organization can influence things such as addressing a colleague at a director level as "Ms. Jones" or a coworker at the same level as "Mike." Prevailing norms and roles can dictate who speaks to whom and how someone responds. The diagram below illustrates a variety of communications that illustrate social influences in the workplace.
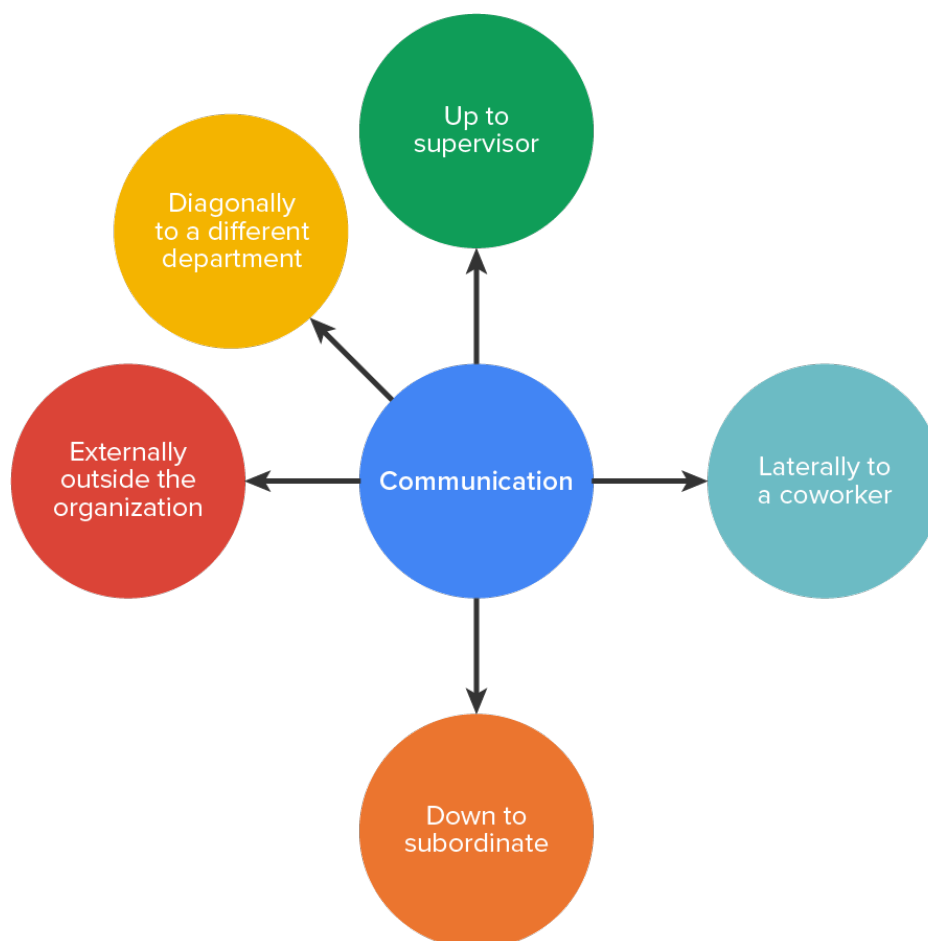
2b. Perception

In addition, the communication process is heavily influenced by perceptual processes. The extent to which an employee accurately receives job instructions from a manager may be influenced by his or her perception of the manager, especially if the job instructions conflict with his or her interest in the job or if they are controversial. If an employee has stereotyped the manager as incompetent, chances are that little of what the manager says will be taken seriously. If the boss is well-regarded or seen as influential in the company, everything that he or she says may be interpreted as important.

2c. Interaction Involvement

Communication effectiveness can be influenced by the extent to which one or both parties are involved in conversation. This attentiveness is called **interaction attentiveness** or **interaction involvement** (Worthington & Bodie, 2018). If the intended receiver of the message is preoccupied with other issues, the effectiveness of the message may be diminished. Interaction involvement consists of three interrelated dimensions: responsiveness, perceptiveness, and attentiveness.

> 📄 **TERMS TO KNOW**
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> **Interaction Attentiveness/Interaction Involvement**
> A measure of how the receiver of a message is paying close attention and is alert or observant.

2d. Organizational Design

The communication process can also be influenced by the design of the organization. It has often been argued to decentralize an organization because that will lead to a more participative structure and lead to improved communication in the organization. When messages must travel through multiple levels of an organization, the possibility of distortion can also occur, which would be diminished with more face-to-face communication.

Smart managers understand that not all of a company's influential relationships appear as part of the organization chart. A web of informal, personal connections exists between workers, and vital information and knowledge pass through this web constantly. Using social media analysis software and other tracking tools, managers can map and quantify the normally invisible relationships that form between employees at all levels of an organization.

> ⸮ **REFLECT**
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> 1. What are the three major types of communication?
> 2. How can you manage the inflow of electronic communication?
> 3. What are the major influences on organizational communication, and how can organizational design affect communication?

> 🗒 **SUMMARY**
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> In this lesson, you learned about **the three types of communication** that can be used by either the communicator in the initial transmission phase or the receiver in the feedback phase: **oral communication**, **written communication**, and **nonverbal communication**. Integrated communication programs and the practice of "reply to all" can lead to information overload—and missing crucial messages—so it is important to deal with email overload both within your organization and externally to stakeholders and customers by managing the flow of messages into and out of your inbox. You also learned about the **major influences on interpersonal communication** that impact the nature, direction, and quality of interpersonal communication processes: **social influences, perception,**

interaction involvement, and **organizational design**.

Best of luck in your learning!

Source: Access for free at **https://openstax.org/books/principles-management/pages/1-introduction**

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📄	TERMS TO KNOW

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