Segment: Basic Principles of Communication

Topic: Classification of Communication

Classification of Communication

Table of Contents

Introduction

In the previous topic, we discussed some of the general problems that come in the way of smooth communication and ways of overcoming these problems.

In this topic, we shall discuss the different categories of communication and the importance of communication in the workplace.

Learning Objectives

At the end of this topic, you will be able to:

- explain the various types of communication
- recognise how good communication contributes to managerial success.

1. Classification of Communication

Experts categorise communication into different types based on the following factors:

- Number of people involved in the communication
- The physical proximity of the communicators
- The immediacy of the communication
- The context of the communication

The various types of communication are:

- Interpersonal communication
- Intrapersonal communication
- Group communication
- Mass communication

Let us now discuss the features of these classes of communication.

- **Interpersonal communication:** Interpersonal communication usually involves direct face-to-face contact between the sender and the receiver. It can be both in a verbal and non-verbal form. Feedback is an important concept of interpersonal communication. We can classify interpersonal communication, based on the number of people involved as:
  - o **Dyadic communication** – This involves two people.
  - o **Group communication** – This involves three or more persons. The communication takes place usually for problem solving or decision making.
  - o **Public communication** – This involves a large number of people. The communication takes place usually for information sharing and persuasion.

Mediated interpersonal communication makes use of technology for sending and receiving messages. For example, two business colleagues communicate using a telephone or e-mail. By using mediated communication, we can communicate over large distances or in different time spans. Mediated communication can be formal or informal in nature.

- **Intrapersonal communication:** Intrapersonal communication is self-communication. This is the most basic form of communication. It occurs for clarifying ideas or for analysing a situation. It involves the following activities:
  - o **Internal discourse** – This involves analysis, concentration, and contemplation.

Classification of Communication

- o **Vocal communication** – This involves talking aloud to oneself and is done for clarifying or rehearsing messages.

- o **Written communication** – This involves making entries in journals or diaries.

We can thus use intrapersonal communication to process data, to encode data before sending a message, and to decode data when we receive messages.

- **Group communication:** Group communication usually takes place between three to twenty individuals. The basic resource of any group is its members. Hence, communication is very important for a group to achieve its goals. Group communication can be achieved in any of the following forms:
  - o Verbal
  - o Non-verbal
  - o Written
  - o Electronic

  The factors that affect group communication are:
  - o The nature of the task
  - o The personalities and abilities of the group members
  - o Environmental factors

Communication is very essential for creating and sustaining groups. Generally, groups need a facilitator to ensure that the group achieves its goals. The facilitator establishes rules and guidelines for communication within the group. Facilitators can provide feedback to the group members and make suggestions to remedy problems in group communication.

The advances in electronic and digital technology have influenced the way in which groups function in contemporary organisations. The group communication processes result in a group outcome like a decision or a plan.

- **Mass communication:** Mass communication is the communication that employs some form of media like the television, radio or the Internet to communicate to a very large audience. The characteristics that distinguish mass communication are:

- o **Source** – The source is generally a person or a group (like a news editor or a reporter) operating in an organisational setting. The message communicated is the result of the work of many persons (such as writers, directors, editors, graphic designers).

- o **Message** – The messages conveyed are complex and elaborate. For example, a magazine article, a television programme or a billboard advertisement.

- o **Channel** – The channel employed involves more than one technology. For example, the radio makes use of microphones, transmitters, tape machines, and receivers.

- o **Audience** – The audience are self-elected people who tune in to the radio programme or who read a magazine. Mass audiences are from a diverse background and have dissimilar socio-political characteristics. They are spread over a large geographical area.

- o **Feedback** – As the message flow is usually one-way, the feedback is minimal and delayed.

- o **Noise** – The noise can be caused due to semantic, mechanical, or environmental reasons.

Businesses employ mass communication to send out a company-wide message, messages to other companies, or the general public. Memos and e-mails are used to send company-wide mass messages. Mass communication messages are sent to other companies to persuade them to use the company's products or services. Mass communication messages are sent to the general public to inform them of the company's policies or goals and for marketing purposes.

2. Importance of Communication in the Workplace

Communication is the nerve centre of business today. As you go up the corporate ladder, you will find that communication skills are required, more than technical skills. Communication research has revealed that among the factors most important for managerial success, communication skills rank above technical skills. According to the survey conducted by National Commission on writing, American businesses spend $3.1 billion per year to provide training for people on writing skills-a type of communication. Several surveys conducted among people who have been successful in their professions have indicated that communication skills are more vital to job success than subjects taken in college.

Communication is also required all the more in this age of information and technology. Without communication and human skills, technology will overwhelm an organisation. Communication helps to make sense of technology and to manage all this information. For example,

communication is required to explain a new computer program or software. While computers can perform routine tasks, jobs like responding to customers' needs require a high degree of communication skills.

Effective communication serves the following specific purposes in an organisation:

o **Greater awareness of organisational goals and teamwork** – When there is open communication between superiors, co-workers, and subordinates, there is a smooth flow of information regarding the goals of the organisation. Coordination between the different departments, in particular, leads to greater motivation to work together towards achieving a common organisational goal, rather than working in isolation.

o **Better employer-employee relationships** – By listening to employees, showing empathy, and giving them the freedom to express their opinions without fear of being repressed, a manager can create a climate of openness that leads to better work relationships. Employees will then feel more comfortable in approaching their superiors and discussing any matter with them.

o **Problem solving** – Effective communication can help resolve conflicts between co-workers, work related, and performance related problems. Face-to-face communication is especially suited for achieving this task since it is one to one and highly personalised in nature.

o **Improved performance** – Effective communication by managers at the time of appraising the performance of their employees can point out areas for improvement. A constructive review of performance, through which a manager gives positive feedback and counsels the employee, instead of criticising him for poor performance, can motivate the employee to perform better.

o **A Stronger link between managers and the external environment** – Apart from internal communication within the organisation, effective communication by managers with external audiences such as customers, government, bankers, media and suppliers lead to a better rapport with them. A manager will be able to understand the needs of his customers, be aware of the presence of quality suppliers of material, of government regulations, and of the expectations of the community at large, only through proper communication.

Communication has assumed even greater importance today since the new model of business is based on teamwork, rather than on individual action. Teamwork requires greater coordination and communication.

Common mistakes made in communication:

- Spelling

- Punctuation

- Grammar

For example, if Meena sends the following e-mail to Sheela:

Thanks Sheela, I have received your **massage**. Let us have the meeting next **weak**.

Sheela, on receiving the message, will get a wrong impression about Meena. Hence it is always better to check the spelling, grammar and punctuations in a message.

---

3. Summary

Here is a quick recap of what we have learnt so far:

- The various types of communication are:
  - Interpersonal communication – Interpersonal communication usually involves direct face-to-face contact between the sender and the receiver.
  - Intrapersonal communication – Intrapersonal communication is self-communication.
  - Group communication – Group communication usually takes place between three to twenty individuals.
  - Mass communication – Mass communication is the communication that employs some form of media like the television, radio or the Internet to communicate to a very large audience.
- Effective communication serves the following specific purposes in an organisation:
  - Greater awareness of organisational goals and teamwork
  - Better employer-employee relationships
  - Problem solving
  - Improved performance
  - A Stronger link between managers and the external environment.