

Chapter Outline

3.1 Introduction

- (1) Completeness**
- (2) Conciseness**
- (3) Clarity**
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- (5) Concreteness**
- (6) Consideration**
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Seven C'S of Communication

3.1 INTRODUCTION

For transmitting effective written or oral messages, certain principles must be followed. These principles advocated by Francis J. Bergin provide guidelines for choice of content and style of presentation adapted to the purpose the receiver of the message. They are also called the 'Seven Cs' of communication. One has to understand it thoroughly to complete task of transmitting communication effectively. They are:-

1. Completeness.
2. Conciseness.
3. Clarity.
4. Correctness.
5. Concreteness.
6. Consideration.
7. Courtesy.

(1) COMPLETENESS

Every communication must be complete and adequate. Incomplete messages keep the receiver guessing, create misunderstanding and delay actions. Every person should, therefore, be provided with all the required facts and figures. For example, when the factory supervisor instructs workers to produce, he must specify the exact size, shape, quality and cost of the product. Any assumptions behind the message should also be clarified. While answering a letter, all the questions raised in the letter must be replied.

A complete message offers the following benefits:-

- (i) Complete messages are more likely to bring the desired results without the expense of additional messages.
- (ii) They can do a better job of building goodwill. Messages that contain information the receiver needs show concern for others.
- (iii) Complete messages can help avert costly lawsuits that may result if important information is missing.
- (iv) Communications that seem inconsequential can be surprisingly important if the information they contain is complete and effective.

While striving for completeness, the following guidelines should be followed:-

- (a) Provide all necessary information.
- (b) Answer all the questions asked.
- (c) Give something extra, when desirable.

While writing any paper or letter make it sure that you have answered all the questions. If your reader or customer has four queries and you answer only two of them, it will not bring the desired result. While answering the letter, devote a paragraph each to all his questions and number the paragraphs. This practice will save your answer from getting lost in a jungle of words.

Messages must offer complete and relevant information in order to become effective. Incomplete information makes it necessary to begin another cycle of communication to issue clarifications. For example, it is not enough to just say that the register will remain closed from 28th to 30th March. It does not become clear to the receiver which registers we are talking about and why it will be closed. Your message must state clearly that the register of shareholders will remain closed in order to determine the names of the shareholders entitled to receive the dividend.

(2) CONCISENESS

In business communications, you should be brief and be able to say whatever you have to say in fewest possible words without sacrificing the other C qualities. A concise message is complete without being wordy. Conciseness is desired because of the following benefits:-

- (a) A concise message saves time and expense for both sender and receiver.
- (b) Conciseness contributes to emphasis; by eliminating unnecessary words, you let important ideas stand out.
- (c) When combined with a 'you-view', concise messages are inherently more interesting to recipients as they avoid unnecessary information.

There is no hard and fast rule for the length of a letter. A letter should be as long or as short as is necessary to tell the story effectively. A two-page letter may seem short, while a ten-line letter may seem all too long. There are two tests to ascertain whether a letter is too long. Ask yourself these two questions: "Does it say more than need be said?" Does it take too many words for what it must say?"

Conciseness in business communications can be activated by observing the following guidelines:-

- (a) Avoid wordy expressions.
- (b) Include only relevant material.
- (c) Avoid unnecessary repetition.

- (d) Organize your message well.

(3) CLARITY

The message must be put in simple terms to ensure clarity; Words must mean the same thing to the receiver as they do to the sender. Complex issues must be compressed into themes, slogans or stereotypes that have simplicity and clarity. In order to ensure clarity in oral communications, you should use accurate and familiar words with proper intonation, stresses and pauses. Your language should consist of simple words and short sentences. Thoughts should be clear and well organized. Thus, you should know what you want to say and why.

The important considerations in attaining clarity are as follows:-

- (a) Choose precise, concrete and familiar simple words.
- (b) Construct effective sentences and paragraphs.
- (c) Don't use jargons, with the assumption that people are well familiar with it.

To a layman, the terms home, pay, invoice and advocate are more familiar than the terms domicile, remuneration, statement of account and lawyer respectively.

(4) CORRECTNESS

The term 'correctness' as applied to business messages means right level of language and accuracy of facts, figures and words. If the information is not correctly conveyed, the sender will lose credibility. Transmission of incorrect information to superiors will vitiate decision-making process. Transmission of incorrect information to outsiders will spoil the public image of the firm. To convey correct messages, grammatical errors should also be avoided. Thus, you should be sure that you are transmitting correct facts in correct language. You should not transmit any message unless you are absolutely sure of its correctness. If you are not, you should immediately verify it from an encyclopedia, an office file, a colleague, a

dictionary, or even a grammar book. If your message involves any legal matter, you should know the correct legal position before you commit anything.

All messages must be transmitted and responded to all the most appropriate time. Outdated information is useless. Since communication is an expensive process, transmitting outdated information involves wastage of time, money and human resources. The principle for correct timing also stipulates that you communicate your message at a time when it is likely to prove most effective.

(5) CONCRETENESS

Concreteness of message is an essential requirement of effective communication. It means being specific, definite and vivid rather than vague and general. In oral communication, we cannot draw tables, diagrams, or graphs to make our statements vivid, but we can choose precise words to convey the correct message and support it by relevant facts and figures. If the message is specific, there would be increased likelihood that the message is interpreted by the receiver as intended by the sender.

For sending concrete message, the following guidelines should be followed:-

- (a) Use concrete expressions.
- (b) Use specific facts and figures.
- (c) Put action in your verbs (Do not speak in passive voice).
- (d) Choose vivid, image-building words.

Facts lend credibility to our communication since it is not possible to refute them. If a candidate claims that he has a typing speed of 50 words per minute, then it is possible to verify this claim. Opinions on the other hand are subjective. A claim that one is a good typist is at best vague. It depends on what the claimant expects a good typist to be like. While it is not possible to exclude opinions from our messages, we can make them acceptable by quoting facts in their support. However, reliance on selective facts will only affect our trustworthiness.

(6) CONSIDERATION

Consideration means preparing the message with the receiver in mind. In order to communicate effectively, the sender should think and look from the receiver's angle. He should adopt a humane approach and understand the emotions and sentiments of the receiver. He should understand and focus on the needs of the receiver. The socio-psychological background of the receiver must be understood. The golden rule 'First understand then be understood' should be followed.

It should be noted that consideration underlies the other six Cs of good business communication. You adapt your language and message content to your receiver's needs when you make your message complete. Four specific ways to indicate consideration are as follows:-

- (a) Focus on 'you' instead of 'I' and we.
- (b) Show audience benefit or interest in the receiver.
- (c) Emphasize positive, pleasant facts.
- (d) Show empathy. Ask how you would feel if you were to receive this message.

Every person is interested in himself/herself. Often the readers respond to our letters well when we write from their point of view. So to make our letter more effective, we must avoid I's and we's and have as many you's as possible. In any case we should not forget the reader's point of view.

Consideration also requires emphasizing positive and pleasant facts. To say 'no', 'sorry' 'regret' or 'disagree' in plain words and a straightforward style is not difficult, but its effect on the reader's mind and the repercussions on the firm are bad and far-reaching. People swallow

sugar-coated pill without any grumble. Similarly in a business letter, the reader accepts calmly and coolly the entire no's, regrets, and sorry's if they are expressed in a positive manner. An approach with a negative beginning or a negative connotation irritates the reader and makes him feel that you lack business manners and gentlemanliness. A positive approach, on the other hand, convinces the reader of your helplessness, or your genuine difficulties, etc. In other words, a positive and pleasant approach says 'no' but retains the customer's goodwill.

The business world is now no longer dominated by men; it is extremely important to avoid gender bias. Using he when a message is going to a lady may cause offence. So take the following precautions:-

- (a) Use words free from gender bias (e.g. The chairperson handled the situation tactfully (and not chairman) The police was deputed (and not policemen).
- (b) Use a slash to include both the alternatives (e.g. Dear Sir/Madam, Gentlemen/Ladies)
- (c) Use plural forms inclusive of both the genders (e.g. The members expressed their opinion freely (Don't write Each member cast his vote, Write All the members cast their votes).
- (d) Use 'the' for 'his/her' (e.g. Don't write The manager talked to his customers. Write The manager talked to the customers.)

(7) COURTESY

Courtesy stems from a sincere you attitude. It is not merely politeness with mechanical insertions of 'please' and 'thank you', although applying socially accepted manners is a form of courtesy. Rather, it is politeness that grows out of respect and concern for others. In business discussions, you should say things with force and assertiveness without being rude. It is necessary that you respect the other person by listening to him patiently.

Politenesses beget politeness and encourage participative communication. This can be done from the first phase of drafting the ideas. It is always beneficial to show final draft to

someone to avoid subtle mistakes. The following guidelines should be observed to ensure courtesy:-

- (a) Thank generously for a favor. When someone does a favor to you, acknowledge it promptly and thank the person generously for being kind to you.
- (b) Apologize for an omission. If you have committed a mistake, express your regrets promptly and sincerely.
- (c) Avoid irritating expressions. Words and expressions having negative connotation should not be used in the message.
- (d) Use non-discriminatory expressions that reflect equal treatment of people regardless of gender, race, ethnic origin, and physical features. In western culture there is more concern than in other cultures about using the term man as part of a compound noun. For example, the term 'manpower' has been replaced by terms like workers, employees, workforce, personnel, human resources, etc.