

COMMUNICATION

INTRODUCTION

Communication is an important aspect of human behaviour. Communication is central to everything that we do. Without communication an organization can't function at all. No managers can be successful without communicating effectively. Communication has been derived from the Latin word "communis" which means common. Communication stands for sharing of ideas in common.

According to Keith Davis, "communication is a process of information and understanding from one person to another."

ELEMENTS OF COMMUNICATION

The process models of communication contain six main elements such as i) sender, ii) message, iii) receiver, iv) feedback, v) channel, vi) noise or interference.

As communication occurs, sender and receiver interact by encoding/sending and decoding/receiving messages. Encoding means putting the message into words or diagram or nonverbal signals so that it can be transmitted. The receiver hears, reads or looks in order to decode or interpret the message.

Sender: Communication begins with sender, the individual who reacts to situations from a unique vantage point, interpreting ideas and filtering experiences through their own perception. Sender conceives his ideas based on the accumulated attitudes, experiences, skills and cultural conditioning.

Message: The message is the idea of feeling transmitted from the sender to the receiver to achieve understanding. It makes a connection between the sender and the receiver and may be made up of signs, words and movement. The tone of voice, inflection, the rate of speech, facial expression, touching and body movement may be misinterpreted by the receiver, or poorly constructed message may lead to misunderstanding. The message the sender meant to send is not always the message received.

Receiver:

The receiver decodes or interprets the message to achieve understanding. In doing this, the receiver also acts as an individual from a unique vantage point, interpreting the idea according to a particular personal perception of the message. This perception is also the result of the receiver's unique background of experiences, beliefs and concerns. Interpretation of the same message may vary between people.

Feedback: Feedback is an essential part of successful interpersonal communication. It is the receiver's response to the sender's message, telling the sender how their message is being received and helping the receiver confirm whether their perception of the message is correct. It can be intentional or unintentional.

Feedback:

- Provides continuity in the communication
- Indicates effective understanding or misunderstanding of the message

- Stimulates further communication and discussion.

Channel: A communication channel is the means of techniques used to signal or convey a message – for example, a conversation, letter, telephone call, e-mail or television program. Sometimes these channels are internal to the organization; other channels are outside the organization and are thus external channels. An appropriate channel suits the communication purpose, the need of the sender, the message and the needs of the receiver. Different lines or channels of communication are used inside an organization. Horizontal channels operate between colleagues at the same level within the organization's structures, while vertical channels move communication up and down between different levels in the organization.

Noise:

The message received is not necessarily the same as the message sent. Something other than the intended message is received because noise or interference interrupts the intended message. Noise or interference that interrupts the message or communication flow between sender and receiver can lead to misunderstanding or to confused or ambiguous communication.

TYPES OF COMMUNICATION:

There are nine patterns of communication:

Downward communication:

It refers to the flow of communication from supervisor to the subordinate. To improve downward communication, managers can present job instructions clearly to subordinates, explain why things need to be done in a particular way so that people who perform the jobs understand better. For example, clear staff regulations, rules, handbooks, procedures manual etc. are the good examples of downward communication.

Upward communication:

It refers to the flow is from the subordinate to the superiors. To improve upwardcommunication, screen upward messages so that the more relevant aspects of the information are received by top management, provide the climate in which members can communicate both positive and negative messages, detect biases when they occur, reduce status difference and wherever possible, require quantified data to be submitted rather than provide subjective information for decision making. For example, instituting suggestion scheme, union leader voicing their demands to management, etc..

Lateral/Horizontal Communication:

It takes place between or among members who are at the same level in the organization. For example, two supervisors of the same department or different department are discussing work matters with each other.

To improve lateral communication, it is desirable to establish openness and trust among members of various department, develop reward systems that facilitate inter-departmental cooperation, learn that what the other departments are doing by getting involved in interdepartmental meetings and, if

possible design the organization structure in such a way so that greater opportunities of interdepartmental contact exist.

Diagonal Communication:

It refers to the flow of messages between persons who are in position at different levels of the hierarchy and also in different departments. This type of communication takes place under special circumstances.

Formal Communication:

The channels of communication established formally by the management are called formal communication. These are used for the transmission of official messages within or outside organization. However, it suffers from delay and also chances of distortion.

Informal communication:

Communication which takes place on the basis of informal or social relations among people in an organization is known as informal communication. It is otherwise known as grapevine communication.

The grapevine has three main characteristics.

- i) It is not controlled by management.
- ii) It is perceived by most employees as being more believable and reliable than formal communication issued by top management.
- iii) It is largely used to serve the self interests of those people within it and it is one of the quickest means of communication.

Verbal Communication:

When the message is conveyed orally, it is called verbal communication. It is most economical in terms of time and money.

Written Communication:

Communication that takes place between people in written form is called written communication. For e.g. memos, reports, bulletins etc.. It is permanent, tangible and verifiable. But it is time consuming.

Nonverbal/Gestural communication:

Communicating nonverbally with body movements ,with some gestures is known as nonverbal communication. The types of nonverbal communication can be classified into seven categories:

- i) Body movements or kinesics
- ii) Physical characteristics
- iii) Touching behaviour
- iv) Vocal qualities or paralanguage
- v) Use of space or proximity

vi) Artefacts

vii) Environment

FUNCTIONS OF COMMUNICATION

There are four major functions of communication. They are: Emotive, Motivation, Information and Control.

Emotive:

Through communication, employees can express their frustrations and satisfactions to each other and to management. In addition, communication provides a mechanism for individuals to compare attitude and resolve ambiguous about their jobs, their roles and areas of conflict between groups and individuals. If an employee is dissatisfied with his pay, he will often communicate with others informally, to determine whether the feelings are justified or not.

Motivation:

A second major function of communication is to motivate, direct, control and evaluate the performance of organizational members. Leadership is an influence process by which supervisors attempt to control the behaviour and performance of subordinates. Communication is the major vehicle of such control available to leaders. Hence, leadership activities, such as issuing orders, rewarding behaviour and performance, reviewing and evaluating performance, making job and task assignments, and training and developing subordinates all involve communication.

Information:

Communication serves a vital information function for decision-making. It is based on technological orientation and facilitates information processing activities and ways to improve the accuracy with which communication channels carry information going into individual, group and organizational decisions.

Control:

Organizations are attempting to control the activities of individuals through the design and use of formal communication channels. Most types of programs or standard operating procedures have a large communication component to them. Hence, formal communication channels represent a major structural means of control within organizations.

BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

1. Physical/ Environmental Barriers-

These barriers are caused due to some technical defects in the medium used for communication and/ or due to certain disturbances in the surrounding environment.

Noise, wrong selection of medium, lack of acoustics, poor lighting, frequent movement of hands, or even serving of tea during an important conversation- all of these are responsible for creating physical barriers in the communication process.

2. *Physiological/ Biological Barriers-*

These are related to a person's health and fitness. These may arise due to disabilities that may affect the physical capability of the sender or the receiver. Flawless functioning of the body organs is inevitable for effective communication to take place.

3. *Semantic/ Language Barriers-*

Semantics is the systematic study of the meaning of words. Thus, the semantic barriers are barriers that arise during the process of encoding and/ or decoding the message into words and ideas respectively. Misinterpretation of words, use of technical language, ambiguity are some of the most common semantic barriers.

4. *Personal Barriers-*

Communication is interpersonal in nature. Thus, there are certain barriers that are directly linked to the persons involved in the communication process i.e., the sender and the receiver, which influence the accurate transfer of the message. These are called personal barriers. They have to do with the age, education, interests and needs or intentions that differ from person to person. Attitude also plays an important role in determining the success of communication.

5. *Emotional/ Perception Barriers-*

These can be considered as one of the offshoots of personal barriers. These arise from sentiments and emotions. Biased evaluation of the receiver; over enthusiasm of the sender, indolence, apathy, or the tendency to procrastinate, either on the part of the sender or the receiver; extreme emotions such as euphoria, excitement, anger, stress, depression, etc lead to the withholding or misinterpretation of important information.

6. *Socio- Psychological Barriers-*

Psyche means mind. Psychological barriers arise in the minds. Human mind is a very complex thing to understand. We face many times some conflicts due to situations or surrounding events. So, these barriers are bound to arise. But the real problem is that people do not accept that these barriers exist in their minds. Due to status, old age and ego problems many times psychological barriers are created. These are difficult to overcome. Because people do not accept that they face barriers or they lack proper understanding to face the world. Difference in perception, prejudices and information overload, etc. lead to such barriers in the process of communication.

7. *Cultural Barriers-*

These give rise to a great deal of complexity in the encoding and decoding of messages. People belonging to different cultures attach different meanings to words, symbols, gestures, behaviours, etc very differently. Thus, cultural barriers arise as people tend to preserve their own cultural identities and, in the process, judge other cultures as inferior to them.

8. *Organizational Barriers-*

Organizational structure greatly influences the flow of information within an organization. These barriers arise due to loss or distortion of messages as they pass from one level to another in an organization. It also arises due to filtering of information according to one's understanding/ interpretation.

Overcoming Barriers of Communication:

1. Regulate the flow of information.
2. Feedback: Acknowledgement of message.
3. Level of knowledge: It is always advantageous to speak in the receiver's language (level of knowledge, his/her educational qualification and fluency of language).
4. Listen carefully: Hearing is passive, whereas listening is an active and intellectual process. While listening, one should stop talking, should be patient, hold his/her temper, ask questions, remove distractions, should immensely concentrate on what the speaker is saying.
5. Control emotions: emotion can be in any form, like anger, disgust and being upset. Emotions severely cloud and distort the meaning of the message. The best thing is to defer or postpone further communication until calmness is established.
6. Watch for non- verbal cues or body language: In case of oral communication, the sender should observe the actions of the receiver and find whether they go along with the understanding.