

Communication

Communication occurs wherever life exists.

The transmission of any meaningful message is communication. It is as natural a phenomenon as existence itself. Whether we recognise it or not, we have no option but to communicate.

The 'we' here stands for all things living. A baby cries to convey its Communication is an integral part of human existence. Communication contributes enormously to the success or failure of every human activity. Communication is essentially the ability of one person to make contact with another and to make himself understood. Since man is a social animal, it is vital that he expresses his feelings and emotions, receives and exchanges information. It is here that communication comes into play. hunger. A dog barks to warn his master of an intruder. *Communication occurs wherever life exists.* The word communication has been derived from the Latin word 'communis,' which means to share or to participate. Thus, communication stands for sharing or transmission of information, an idea, an opinion, an emotion, a fact or an attitude. *It includes both, the act of communicating as well as the message to be communicated.*

Business Communication: Though business communication is a specialized branch of general communication there is no basic difference between the two. The process is the same and so are principles that regulate them. The difference lies only in the application to the situations. Whereas, general communication plays many roles in the world at large, business communication is specifically concerned with business activities, which are well-defined.

Business activities are of two types, internal and external. Among the internal activities are: maintaining and improving the morale of employees, giving orders to workers, prescribing methods and procedures, announcing policies and organizational changes, and keeping the management informed. The external activities relate to selling and obtaining goods and services, reporting to the government and shareholders on the financial condition and business operations, and creating a favourable climate for conducting business. Every activity, internal, leads to some result. Therefore the main purpose of every communication in business is to obtain some result that is to secure an action by the receiver. The sender expects him to do something on receiving the message – purpose, the language used is direct, plain, concise, and to the point.

The main feature that lends business communication a distant identity are as follows:

- 1) It deals with various commercial and industrial subjects.
- 2) It is impartial and objective as extreme care is taken to convey information accurately and concisely.
- 3) It has comparatively a high concentration of certain complex writing techniques and procedures.

To sum up, we may define business communication as the use of the effective language for conveying a commercial or industrial message to achieve predetermined purpose.

PROCESS OF COMMUNICATION

The process of communication involves seven major elements –sender, message, encoding, channel, receiver, decoding and feedback.

Sender: The sender is the person who transmits a message. He is the communicator. He is the one who gets the entire process of communication started. He wants to get his opinions, ideas, facts, thoughts or information across to the receiver. He is, therefore, also said to be the transmitter of a message.

Message: A message is the actual information that has to be conveyed. Communication is unthinkable of without a message. A message triggers a response from the receiver. Messages can broadly be divided into verbal and non-verbal. The message must be clear, complete, unambiguous and courteous.

Encoding: The seeds of communication are sown the moment the sender thinks of transmitting a certain message. These thoughts have to be converted into suitable words, pictures, charts or symbols so that they can be delivered to the receiver. This process of converting thoughts into suitable words, charts, symbols or any other form in which they can be understood by the receiver is called encoding. The choice of the method of communication is made here – will the message be verbal or non-verbal?

Channel: How does one communicate? This is what a ‘channel’ deals with. Communication is achieved through a ‘channel’. The channel can be a letter, an e-mail, a fax, a telephone or memos, reports, bulletins, posters and manuals. The choice depends on the relationship between the sender and the receiver as well as on the message that has to be communicated. Other factors that tend to influence the choice of channel include the gravity of the message, the number of receivers, the costs involved and the amount of information.

Receiver: The person who receives the message, decodes it and understands it or attaches some meaning to it is the receiver. The receiver has to perform three functions:

- i) Reception of the message – This is the stage when a message sent by the sender is received by the receiver.
- ii) Decoding the message – After receiving the message, the receiver has to attach some meaning to it.
- iii) Understanding the message – He then has to interpret it in the same way and in the same sense as the sender intended.

Feedback: The return of communication from the receiver to the sender is known as feedback. It is the response, reaction or reply to the communication. It is always directed towards the sender. This completes the cycle of communication. Thus, in feedback, the receiver sends his reply or response to the sender, indicating that he has understood the message received.. In face-to-face communication, the feedback is quicker than in written communication.

Purposes of communication

- To inform
 - To reassure
 - To teach
 - To deliver news, whether good or bad
 - To understand
 - To explain
 - To persuade
 - To transact
 - To organise
 - To control
 - To co-ordinate
 - To direct...
- among other things.

Characteristics of communication

- i) **Simplicity:** It is very important to keep the receiver in mind while communicating. The communicator must use words appropriate for the receiver’s level. It is essential that the thoughts to be communicated should be clear so that they can be articulated properly. For a message to be conveyed with simplicity, the communicator must try and present his ideas in a rational and uncomplicated manner so that they can be followed easily.

- ii) **Face-to-face communication:** Face-to-face communication lets the communicator to 'read' the non-verbal signs. Of course, face-to-face communication is neither possible nor feasible all the time, but should be used whenever possible for optimum advantage.
- iii) **Use feedback:** Feedback helps a communicator understand whether his ideas have been received in the manner intended. Feedback is the reaction to a message. Without feedback, it is impossible for a sender to gauge whether the recipient has received the entire message and grasped its meaning. Feedback actually helps to correct the wrong and ensure that what is right is being transmitted or followed.
- iv) **Listen with understanding:** Inattentiveness is the biggest block to effective communication. People are generally more interested in talking than in listening. You must develop the habit of empathic listening. You must understand the content of a message without making an attempt at criticizing, approving or disapproving it unless you have fully heard and understood the remarks. For this, it is essential to develop concentration and self-discipline. Patience will help you in good listening. Empathizing helps a communicator to understand the needs of others. This helps tailor a message according to the needs of the receivers. It will make things simpler, both for the communicator and the receiver.
- v) **Environment conducive to communication:** One of the most important factors for successful communication is an environment of trust. It has to be generated by management through its actions and policies. It is essential to get to the root of the 'noise' that creates barriers to communication. Only then can such barriers be removed and an atmosphere conducive to better communication be created.
- vi) **Mindful of non-verbal communication:** Actions speak louder than words. Therefore, our actions must be in harmony with our words if the message has to be effective. It is essential to use proper body language. A proper posture, pleasing gestures and a positive attitude should be maintained.
- vii) **Use the 'YOU' factor:** As far as possible, a communicator should use 'you' rather than 'I'. It removes the feeling of vested interest and builds credibility.
- viii) **Bias awareness:** A communicator must try to wipe out all pre-conceived ideas about different groups of people. He should resist the temptation to stereotype or generalise an individual or a group.
- ix) **Overcoming differences in language:** Problems arising out of semantics or sheer difference in language can be solved to some extent by understanding the text as well as the context of a message. The meaning of unconventional or technical terms should be explained. The best practice is to go over the basic import of the message once again with the receiver to ensure that it has been received in the same sense that it was meant to be.

BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION

Nature of barriers

If the sender's message does not reach the receiver as it is meant to, then there must be some barrier or hindrance. What can it be? And how to avoid such barriers?

For convenience of analysis, we may classify the barriers into five types:

- I. Mechanical barriers
- II. Physical barriers
- III. Psychological barriers
- IV. Semantic and language barriers
- V. Status barriers

I. Mechanical barriers

A communication may not reach properly if the mechanism that carries it breaks down.

Some possible mechanical failures are:

- i. A weak microphone or poor sound spread (acoustics) of the meeting place
- ii. Defective telephone lines
- iii. Electricity/computer breakdown
- iv. Poor printing quality or paper, spread of ink, overlap of colours
- v. Atmospherics on radio or TV, especially in cloudy weather

II. Physical barriers

Sometimes background noise, whether in a face-to-face meeting or at either end of the telephone, reduces the audibility of the spoken word. Also, if the listener is too far from the speaker, he may not be able to hear him, in which case distance is the barrier. Similarly, the time taken for the message to reach its destination can become a barrier, e.g. a telegram delivered too late.

III. Psychological barriers

These are numerous and require greater effort to overcome.

- a) A person of weak hearing or eyesight cannot always receive the communication in full.
- b) The age of the listener puts its own limitations on his ability to receive messages. One may be too young or too old to understand certain things.
- c) A person's educational level governs his understanding. Some background knowledge is required to understand certain messages.
- d) A wandering mind cannot fully gather the inputs given to it. While roving is a natural tendency of the mind, there may be other causes of inattention too. These may be visual or audio distractions – gaudy pictures or songs in the neighbourhood.
- e) Emotional states of a person can act as barriers. If one is in a fit of anger, he may not listen to reason.
- f) One's prejudices act as a hindrance to reason. A prejudice is a judgment formed without proper information. A liberal education is meant to remove irrational notions which stay on as prejudices.
- g) Fixed images about other people stand as barriers to see them in a new role. A comedian coming in as a hero of a film may not be acceptable to an audience which sees him typed in comedy roles.

IV. Semantic and language barriers

Semantics is the study of how words convey meanings. What happens if the speaker/writer means one thing and the listener/reader takes it in another meaning? An advertiser offered to sell a “big, bad dog”. While the word “bad” is meant to convey its attacking power to guard a house, some readers may take it otherwise. The words generate different meanings in different minds, according to people's previous associations and language levels.

If the sender knows the receiver's level of understanding, fine. If not, there is a barrier. As a receiver, a good communicator tries to read the words and between the lines.

Semantic barriers arise when:

- a) The sender's and receiver's experience with words differ.
- b) Opinions are given as facts. “XYZ bike is the most reliable.”
- c) Complex phrases and long constructions are used.

- d) Speakers with different accents find it hard to understand each other. The American accent is insufficiently understood in India while Americans may have a hard time making sense of Indianised English.
- e) Inadequate vocabulary in a new language is a handicap to communication. Hence the need for word power. Short of words, one may straightaway use a native language word in a foreign language: “Today I met an *aamdaar*”. What the speaker means is an MLA, but the listener may try to associate the word with a *mango* and get nowhere. Symbols (non-verbal) create the problems as languages. The swastika is revered by Hindus but the reverse swastika was a Nazi Symbol

V. Status barriers

This again is a kind of psychological barrier, where the higher or lower social status of the other party disables one from expressing one’s meaning fully. A modest farmer, asked to express his problems to a high-ranking official or politician, may feel nervous or ill at ease.

Status symbols (e.g. luxury of the surroundings) may halt communication. A candidate from a modest background may be awestruck to see the glitz and glamour of a multinational company where he has to appear for an interview. A boss who is conscious of status finds it difficult to receive favourably, any suggestions from subordinates. People in senior positions often develop the feeling that they know everything about how to run the business. They do not agree that junior may have some good ideas. Many good ideas are waited only because they come from junior employees who are considered to be too young an inexperienced subordinate may be too nervous to speak to a very senior manager. Social distances sometimes make workers too shy or frightened to speak to their senior bosses. Social and official statuses distance can raise a difficult barrier which may both be unable to overcome.

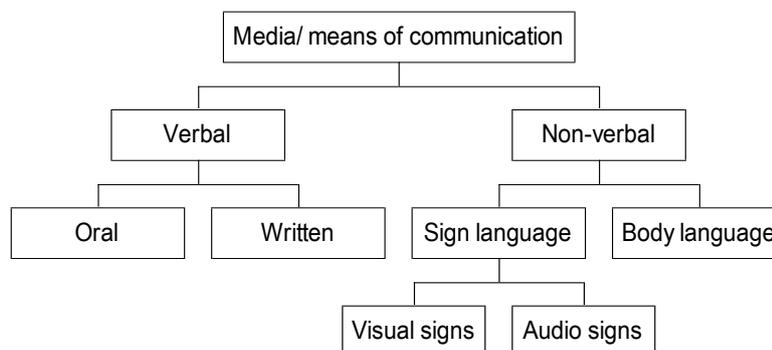
Suggestion schemes are meant to overcome this status block. Good managers personally try to overcome it by developing friendly contact with their subordinates or by maintaining an office which does not frighten them by its status symbols of expensive decor and furnishing, or by following an “open door” policy.

c) Resistance to the written word exists as a barrier. The written word demands a commitment. People prefer to listen (if possible in their regional language) and act. Letters remain unreplied while personal visits or telephone calls serve the purpose.

Forms of communication

For communication to be effective, the communicator has to be very careful in the choice of the media. Media here means the method adopted by the communicator to convey his message. This choice of media depends on several factors, such as the urgency of the message, the time available, the costs involved and the intellectual and emotional level of the receiver.

The following diagram shows various media and means of communication:



Verbal communication – written, oral

The word verbal means ‘connected with words and use of words.’ Any communication using words is verbal communication. Words are the most precise and powerful sets of symbols. Words denote as well as connote meanings. That is why all serious or formal communication is usually in words. Words, as we are all aware, can be written or spoken. Thus, verbal communication can further be divided into two types:

(a) Oral (b) Written

Oral communication: *“A wound inflicted by speech is more painful than a wound inflicted by a sword.”*

As the term itself suggests, communication through the spoken word is known as oral communication. Of the working time spent in verbal communication, 9 % is in writing, 16 % in reading, 30 % in speaking and 45 % in listening. In oral communication, words should be chosen very carefully so that what they connote is the same as what they denote. The sender of the message or his representative is usually the speaker, while the receiver or his representative, the listener. Listening is also an important aspect of oral communication.

Factors in oral communication

- The speaker
- How he speaks
- What he speaks
- Whom he speaks to
- Whether he receives a feedback

Merits of oral communication

- i) Saving of time and money: Oral communication saves money as well as time. No money needs to be spent for producing oral communication since it involves only the spoken word. Oral communication is, therefore, economical. Secondly, there is hardly any delay from the time when the sender sends the message and the receiver receives it. The words are received and understood as soon as they are spoken. Oral communication, therefore, saves time, too.
- ii) Immediate feedback: The feedback in most oral communication is immediate. The words are received as soon as they are spoken, and the receiver can also give his reaction immediately. The speaker can gauge the mood and the response of the listener. The immediate feedback is an advantage for the speaker.
- iii) Saves paperwork: Paperwork is minimal since communication is in the form of spoken words.
- iv) An effective tool for exhortation: When the communication is oral, you can try to persuade the listener. Doubts can be cleared immediately.
- v) Builds a healthy climate: A friendly atmosphere is created when you communicate orally since there is less formality. You can also make modifications in the communication immediately on the basis of the feedback and response from the listener.
- vi) Best tool during emergency: Oral communication is the quickest tool during an emergency. It is the best method of communication when an immediate and fast response is critical. Best tool during emergency: Oral communication is the quickest tool during an emergency. It is the best method of communication when an immediate and fast response is critical.

Demerits of oral communication (limitations)

- i) Greater chances of misunderstanding: Unless it is recorded, you cannot refer to an oral message again. There are, therefore, greater chances of a message being misunderstood or misinterpreted. In fact, there is also a chance that the message may not be understood at all.

- ii) **Bad speaker:** Only an individual who can satisfy all the requisites of effective oral communication can produce good results. More often than not, a bad speaker may send the wrong message. When speaking, one communicates through the articulation, voice modulation and body language to. A message may be misunderstood if there is a disharmony among these components. Also, as mentioned earlier, what the words connote and what they denote should be the same, else the message may lead to a conflict in understanding.
- iii) **Ineffective for lengthy communication:** Oral communication is not useful for lengthy communication. Because of human limitations, there is every likelihood that something important will be missed out.
- iv) **Lower retention rate:** Oral communication suffers from the drawback of a low retention rate. A listener may absorb only some part of an oral message since the attention span differs from person to person. People also tend to forget an oral message quickly.
- v) **No legal validity:** Oral communication lacks proof of record. There is no permanent record or proof of what has been said. An individual who has given a message may deny it later; similarly, an individual who has been given an oral message or instruction may say he never received it. Hence, oral communication has very little value from the legal point of view.
- vi) **Difficult to fix responsibility:** Since a message is transmitted orally, it is difficult to fix responsibility. This may also lead to carelessness in the implementation of a message.

Written communication

A message constitutes written communication when it is put in black and white. It is a formal type of communication. The sender of the message or his representative constitutes the writer. Written communication is usually considered binding on business organisations and is often used as evidence. Technological advancement has enlarged the gamut of written communication through email and other such facilities.

Factors in written communication

- The writer
- The content
- The language used
- The purpose of the communication
- The style adopted - formal or friendly

The receiver

Merits

- i) **Precise and accurate:** Written communication is generally prepared with great care and precision. The very prospect of writing makes a person conscious. You have to be very serious and organised while communicating in the written form, because written communication is open to verification.
- ii) **Easily verified:** Since written communication is on paper, it can be read and re-read. It also offers itself to verification. There is also, thus, less chance of someone twisting the message to his or her own advantage.
- iii) **Permanent record:** Written communication constitutes a permanent record. It also acts like evidence. It proves very useful for future reference as it can be preserved for years. For example, old orders and decisions can serve as the basis for new ones.
- iv) **Suitable for lengthy and complicated messages:** Lengthy and complicated messages can be understood better when they are in the written form rather than in the oral. There is less chance of misinterpretation and misunderstanding. Also, the language used is less subject to change.
- v) **Responsibility can be easily fixed:** In written communication, responsibilities of sender and receiver can be fixed easily. People have the tendency of shifting responsibilities for mistakes, but this is difficult if the onus is obvious in black and white.

- vi) Has legal validity: Written communication is acceptable as a legal document. Written communication has been used as evidence since time immemorial.

Demerits

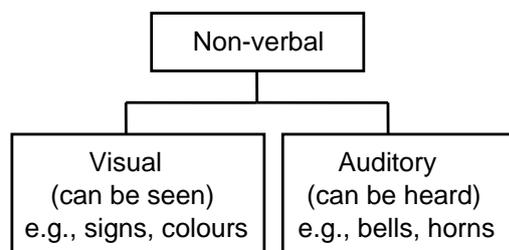
- i) Slower method of communication: Written communication can be time-consuming since it may take even two or even three days to reach the receiver (by letters, for instance). By contrast, oral communication is immediate.
- ii) Further delay if clarifications are required: Written communication hampers quick clarifications. The receiver may write back for clarifications and wait for a reply, making the process tedious. Even if clarifications are not needed, there is still a delay between the time the sender writes a message and the receiver receives it.
- iii) Leads to too much of paperwork: Since written communication is basically done on paper, one may tend to use it as an escape mechanism Paper-free offices remain a dream. Always a possibility of ambiguity or lack of comprehensibility: It is quite possible that the receiver is not able to comprehend the exact meaning of a written message that he has received. The clarity of a written message also depends upon the skill, or the lack of it, in the sender. If the message has not been written properly, it will not be understood either.
- iv) Costly in terms of money and man-hours: Writing letters is a costly process not only because you need to spend money on postage, but also because several persons are involved in the process of sending out a letter from an organisation. Their time costs an organisation money. While oral communication can be short and quick, written communication, because of its very nature, tends to be lengthy.
- v) No flexibility: The written word is not subject to instant change after communication. Therefore, conveying an
- vi) Afterthought may prove very lengthy, and, at times, even impossible.

Notwithstanding its limitations, it can be safely concluded that written communication remains the spine of an organisation. Almost all formal communication is in the written form.

Non-verbal communication

Scientific analysis has shown that body movements and gestures constitute 55% of effective communication. Hence, non-verbal communication merits some earnest and thoughtful consideration.

Non-verbal communication involves things such as gestures, posture, and physical appearance, and, in general, all bodily movements. It takes place without written or spoken words. Non-verbal communication is those messages that are expressed by means other than linguistic. While you can refuse to speak or write, it is impossible to avoid behaving non-verbally. Different types of non-verbal communication are:



- Body language or kinesics – body movement, facial expressions, posture, etc.
- Vocal characteristics – paralanguage
- Space proxemics

- Surroundings
- Silence

The study of bodily movements that form a part of non-verbal communication is known as kinesics. It is an integral part of our communication. Existence as a receiver is supposed to observe non-verbal communication 55% of the time. Our body consciously as well as unconsciously, conveys messages, moods, attitudes, etc. in the same way as language uses sets of symbols to convey meaning.

- i) Facial expressions: The face is said to be the mirror of the mind. Whatever we feel is reflected on our face. The face can convey energy, anger, grief, sincerity and a host of other feelings and emotions. A smile means friendliness, while a frown means anger. A creased forehead shows worry while a raised eyebrow shows surprise. Hence, it is very important to exercise a check and control over our feelings. Although this is a difficult task, you can get positive results with continuous efforts.
- ii) Gestures: Gestures are small body movements that transmit some message. It can even be the transmission of specific information. Some gestures may be conscious while others may be involuntary. Some gestures have an almost universal meaning, such as a headshake for a "no" or a handshake as a "hello". Then there are other gestures that may have regional meanings. Strictly speaking, gestures are a part of body language because our head and hands are part of our bodies.
- iii) Posture: Posture is the position adopted by the body. It helps in conveying a message. Each movement or position of the body has expressive or defensive functions. Thus, the posture is an important element in non-verbal communication. It reveals a great deal about an individual. Posture concerns the overall bearing of the body. It includes the angle of inclination and the position of the arms and the legs. A raised head indicates openness, while a tilted head indicates curiosity. However, one should remember that none of these postures have any specific meanings of their own. They acquire meanings in association with other symbols and in the context of communication.
- iv) Tone and pitch of voice: The tone and pitch of the voice are important aspects of communication. Tone means the manner of speaking, while the pitch means the level of the voice.

Pitch has to do with inflection - the rise and fall of your voice;

Tone has to do more so with the expression in your voice. What emotions you want the listener to feel, based on how you deliver your speech; your attitude towards a certain subject. These can be feelings of sympathy, anger, ridicule, sarcasm, empathy, happiness; being docile, candid, humble, indifferent, subjective, etc.

The volume in which communication is made has the potential of revealing the sender's attitude. The pitch can spell out the urgency, while the tone indicates the mental condition.

- v) Clothes: A man is often judged by his appearance. His clothes play an important role in enhancing his personality. Shabbily dressed people may cut a sorry figure. It is vital for one to look professional and efficient. Accessories also play a major role in non-verbal communication. Clothes and accessories relate to physical as well as socio-cultural characteristics. Sometimes, clothes and accessories manage to live up to the expectations of the receiver, while at times they send a message through a violation of these expectations.
- vi) Proximity: The space and distance between the speaker and the listener are an important part of non-verbal communication. These decide what our actions and expressions should be. The amount of space indicates the importance or the degree of formality between two individuals. You do not sit too close to a stranger, but can close in distances with a friend. There are certain rules or social expectations regarding the distance to be maintained. Subtle messages are communicated when we follow them or even if we flout them.

- vii) Eye contact: Eyes are the windows to the soul. Eye contact constitutes a very important factor of face-to-face communication. Through eye-contact, the speaker gets signals whether the channel of communication is open. Discomfort or nervousness results only in a brief eye contact; on the other hand, a long and fixed gaze shows interest. Depending on our feelings, we have smiling eyes, angry eyes, painful eyes, evasive eyes, and so on.
- viii) Silence: Silence speaks louder than words. It lays down the relationship between communicators and their attitude towards each other. Silence shows the inability to converse further. A student who has not done his homework will stay mum when the teacher asks him for it.

Body Language

Body language stands for the way the body communicates without words, through the movement of its parts.

The nodding of our heads, blinking of our eyes, waving of our hands, shrugging of our shoulders, etc., are expressions of our thoughts and feelings. All these movements are the signals that our body sends out to communicate. That is why this area of study has been called body language.

Just as language uses sets of symbols to convey meaning, our body, consciously as well as unconsciously, conveys messages, attitudes, moods, status relationships, etc.

The body language is very important. It has been observed that we may play fast and loose with words, but our body speaks out the truth. Even if we try to hide the truth or anything that we want to suppress, our body, our eyes, our gestures may speak out loud and clear.

Dimensions/Directions of Communication

What are the directions of communication?

Every organisation has a multidimensional or multidirectional communication. The directions in which communication is carried out are:

- i) Downward
- ii) Upward
- iii) Horizontal or Lateral
- iv) Diagonal or Crosswise

Downward communication

Traditionally, the emphasis in business organisations has been on downward communication. This is because of the hierarchical nature of organisations where all communication basically and naturally flows from top to bottom. It is the communication that comes from superiors and flows down to the subordinates.

Methods Of Downward Communication

Downward communication can be written as well as oral. The oral communication is mostly through information channels. The written downward communication takes the form of orders, circulars, policy statements, memos and procedural documents.

Example, a CEO (Chief Executive Officer) or a General Manager issuing instructions or sending letters to various departmental heads.

Objectives

1. To give specific directions about a job
2. To explain procedures
3. To apprise subordinates of their performance

To explain the significance of a job given to a subordinate with respect to the organisation's goals

Upward communication

As the term suggests, this channel of communication pushes information upwards. It starts from the people at the lowest level of an organisation and reaches the top. An open-door policy, social gatherings, reports, direct correspondence, counselling, etc. are some common methods of upward communication. Managers have now recognised the importance of this channel of organising communication. Until now, it was felt that the right to communicate had been vested only in the top management.

Methods of upward communication

- a. Periodical meetings: There are regular meetings with the staff and subordinates conducted to invite suggestions, opinions or other ideas.
- b. Written representation: An example of upward communication is a written representation given by employees to their superiors as regards what they feel about the work environment and suggestions regarding improvement.
- c. Informal gatherings: Informal parties and get-togethers provide opportunities for the employees to share their feelings and have an interaction with the superiors.
- d. Suggestions: The employees are encouraged to give suggestions on the practices and the systems being followed in the organisation. For this purpose a suggestion box may be kept.

Objectives

- (i) Feedback: This channel provides the management with the necessary feedback. On the basis of the feedback, the management can ascertain whether the subordinates have understood a given set of directions properly.
- (ii) Outlet for held-up emotions: The employees get an opportunity to vent their problems and grievances when they communicate with the management.
- (iii) Positive suggestions: Quite often, this channel brings forward some very useful suggestions from the employees, which can be implemented for the organisation's benefit.
- (iv) Harmony: Upward communication creates a congenial atmosphere and brings the management and the employees closer to each other. It creates a positive psychological factor as employees feel involved.

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Lateral or horizontal communication

This communication takes place between departments or people on the same level in an organisational structure. It is one of the most frequently used channels of communication.

Face-to-face discussions, telephonic talks, periodical meetings, memos, etc. are the ways of carrying out this type of communication. It is very important for the smooth functioning of every organisation as it promotes understanding and coordination between various departments. Embarrassing situations can arise when there is a lack of proper horizontal communication.

For example, the production and the marketing departments must interact with each other because marketing tactics and production planning go hand-in-hand.

Objectives

- (i) To create a friendly atmosphere in an organisation
- (ii) To cut across departmental barriers
- (iii) To ensure quick feedback

Diagonal or crosswise communication

Diagonal or crosswise communication envisages a *horizontal flow* of information as well as interaction across different levels of an organisation's hierarchy. Communication flows across different levels in an organisation among people who may not have direct reporting relationships. Diagonal communication is used to speed up the flow of information. It makes effective efforts for achieving organisational goals. A great deal of communication does not follow the organisational hierarchy, but cuts across the well-drawn lines. Channels of such communication are general notices, informal meetings, formal conferences, lunch hour meetings, etc.

Objectives

- i) To help in proper co-ordination
- ii) To communicate effectively whether laterally, horizontally and diagonally
- iii) To improve mutual understanding and co-ordination
- iv) To boost the morale of lower level staff through interaction across all the levels in the organisation ..

Formal and Informal Communication

All communication has to take some way. All communication in an organisation passes through some well-defined stages or positions. These are known as channels of communication. The word channel means the position or point through which communication passes. These positions exist at different levels in a system.

Channels of communication can be divided into two broad categories:

- (a) Formal
- (b) Informal

Formal channel of communication

A formal channel of communication is the means of communication normally controlled by people in positions of authority in an organisation. Hence, it has also been referred to as an organisation's 'main line of operational communication'. All the reports, records and other forms that supply working information to various parts of an organisation are included in the formal channel of communication. A good business organisation will ensure that these are carefully planned and designed to its needs.

The channel of communication under formal network is narrow but it allows for flow of essential information. Moreover it is easy to maintain, orderly in nature, supports the authority of superiors and provides for closeness of contact. It has certain limitations such as bottlenecks in the flow, greater possibilities of transmission errors, screening at various filter points etc.

INFORMAL CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION / GRAPEVINE

The informal channel of communication is situationally derived and spontaneously creates an organizational structure of its own. It is the result of operation of social forces at workplace. Informal channel of communication is the method by which people carry on social non-programmed activities within formal boundaries of the system. It operates at much greater speed. This channel also satisfies the communication needs of the various persons in the organization.

The informal channel of communication is often discouraged or looked down upon in an organisation, and is not officially sanctioned. It is popularly referred to as the 'grapevine.' This is because it runs in all directions irrespective of the formal structure. The origin of the term *grapevine* can be traced to the way the botanical grapevine grew over telegraph wires, making telegraphic messages go in unintended directions. In business life, grapevine owes its existence to man's sociable nature. Man always looks forward to an opportunity to get together with others.

As people go about their work, they have casual conversation with their friends in the office. These conversations deal with both personal and business matters. This results in the generation of a rumour mill, which is a grapevine.