

Unit- II

Chapter 4 – Communication: Concept, Types, Process and Barriers

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Objectives: Objectives of this chapter are to make the students aware of:

1. The concept and importance of Communication;
2. Process of Communication;
3. Channels of Communication;
4. Mode of Communication;
5. Barriers to Effective Communication; and
6. Measure to Improve the Effectiveness of Communication

Introduction

Man is a social being so his need to communicate with other social beings is paramount to any human/social/organizational situation. If people in organizations share their feelings and thoughts and have a shared understanding of the total-work situation then the productivity of the organization also increases. The term Communication derived from the Latin word “Communis” that means ‘common’. People in organizations need to have a shared understanding of situations to achieve shared purposes for which they have come together.

Definitions

The term ‘Communication’ is defined as the use of words, letters and symbols or some other means to have ‘common’ information about any object under consideration. Following are some definitions of ‘Communication’:

1. **J. D. Millet:** “Communication means a shared understanding of a shared purpose”.
2. **Herbert Simon:** “Communication is the process through which decisions are transmitted from one person to another in an organization”.
3. **Keith Devis:** “Communication is a process of passing information from one person to another”.
4. **The American Society of Trained Directors:** “Communication is the interchange of thoughts or information, to bring about mutual understanding and assurance of good human relations”.
5. **Ordway Tead:** “Communication is the process whereby one person makes ideas and feelings known to another. The underlying aim of communication is a meeting of minds on common issues”.
6. **Peter Drucker:** “Communication is hearing what isn’t said”.

An analysis of the definitions of communication reveals it is a means by which people connect with each other in an organization to achieve a desired common purpose. Communication is fundamental to a shared understanding and effective functioning of the organization.

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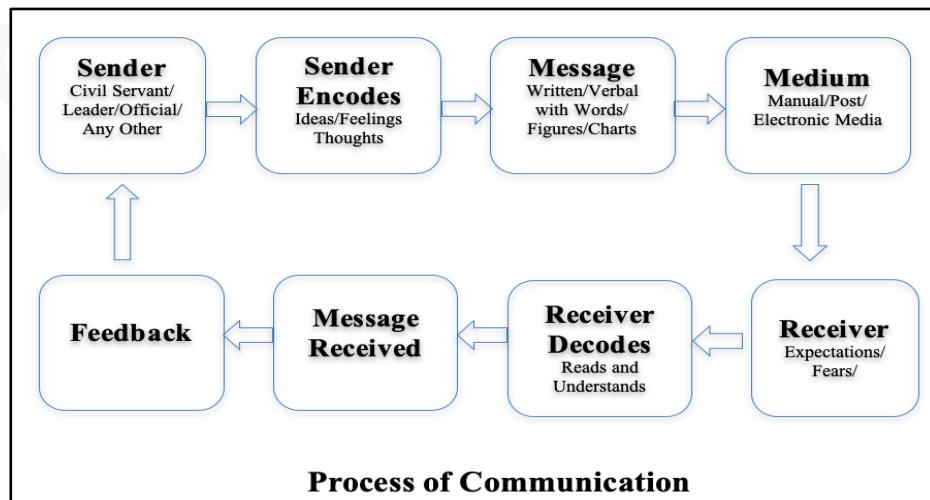
Importance of Communication

Communication is a means through which different functionaries of an organisation share their knowledge and ideas to achieve their common purpose/objectives. It helps in the planning, decision-making and other processes of the organisation. Chester I Barnard believes that communication is a means by which different people of the organisation are unified as a whole to attain its objectives. The importance of communication is as follows:

1. It helps the functionaries in ascertaining and propagating the objectives of the organisation.
2. It helps in the decision-making process of the organisation by providing information.
3. It enables the functionaries to share thoughts with their superiors methodically, thereby improving the effectiveness of the organisation.
4. It plays an important role in the formation of highly productive and successful teams due to their shared understanding of the issues or problems confronting the organisation.
5. It helps in bringing the functionaries closer to each other, wherein they discuss plans, policies, goals and procedures.
6. It also enables the employees to train and learn from each other, thereby increasing the efficiency of their team.
7. A shared understanding of the goals and objectives by all involved inspires the team to excel.
8. Shared understanding and effective communication also help in raising their level of motivation and morale.
9. It is an important tool not only for planning and coordination but also for supervision.
10. It helps in fostering good interpersonal relations between the members of the organisation.

PROCESS OF COMMUNICATION

Communication is an important aspect of the functioning of organisations. It involves at least two people, though nowadays the number of people receiving communication can be very large due to the use of Information and Communication Technologies. Communication as a process is as shown in the diagram.



1. **Sender:** The Sender is the person who has to send an important message to the receiver. He has certain ideas, feelings, emotions and information that he intends to share with one or more persons.

The Sender can be the government/leader/official/senior/general public/anyone who is the affected party. The Receiver can be the government/leader/official/senior/general public/anyone who is the affected party.

Example:

- A Deputy Commissioner wants to send directions/command/information to the Superintendent of Police regarding the maintenance law and order of his district.
- A senior wants to send directions to his subordinates to perform a specific assignment.

2. **Encoding:** The sender encodes the message and formalises it by including the right words/figures/images. He then sends this encoded message to the receiver.

Example:

- Office of Advisor to the Administrator, UT-Cum-Chairperson, State Executive Committee of State Disaster Management, UT, Chandigarh encodes directions/command/information to the people about the imposition of curfew due to corona in the district by an office order. While encoding he makes sure to include all the relevant information.

3. **Message:** Once encoded the feelings/emotions/ideas become a message. A message may be verbal or non-verbal. In the case of formal organisations, messages giving directions/orders are in written form. After the message is encoded, then an appropriate medium is selected to send it to the receiver.

Example: A typical order - message - by the Government of India

4. **Medium:** An appropriate medium is selected by the sender to send the encoded message to the receiver at the right time. In case a wrong medium is selected then either the information may not reach or may reach late. Medium to send a message may be a meeting, telephone, electronic device, e-mail or video conferencing.

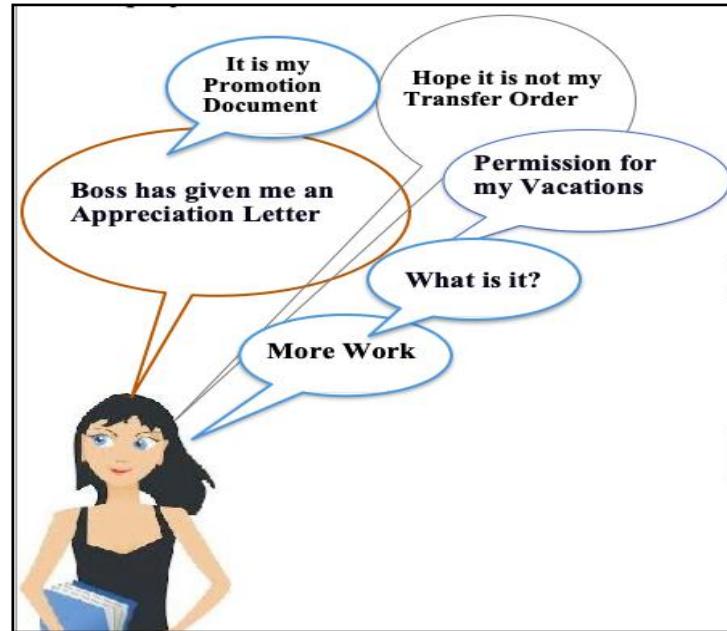
Examples:

- Meetings conducted at the higher levels to decide on policies and programmes.
- Message given on telephone, mobile and video-conferencing.
- Website, E-Mail and other forms of electronic communication.

5. **Receiver:** The medium delivers the message to the receiver. The receiver receives the encoded message with certain expectations, values and fears.

Examples: After receiving message from the superior/leader/government the receiver has expectations, fears, anxiety and other feelings.

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6. **Decoding:** Generally, after receiving the message, the receiver at first glances through it. Later on, he reads the message in detail i.e. he decodes the message. While decoding the message, the receiver interprets its objectives and intent.



7. **Message Received:** After decoding the message, he goes through it again to understand the real intent of the message.



8. **Feedback:** The receiver's response to the message after understanding its intent constitutes its feedback and also communicates to the sender whether the receiver has understood the message or not. Feedback enables the sender to take the required action to improve the efficiency of the organisation.

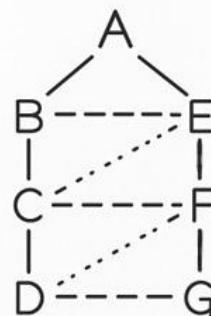


Channels/Flow of Communication

Every organisation provides for channels or paths through which organisational communication flows and reaches its members in different departments. There are two types or channels of communication in organisations – formal and informal channels of communication. The formal channels of communication act as linkages among the employees and flow along the scalar chain of command. They aim at facilitating the effective performance of work in a coordinated manner. Following are the different channels/types/flow of communication:

Formal Communication and Informal Communication

Formal channels of communication are official channels that are made use of by the officials to communicate with members of different departments at various levels. Informal channels of communication are through the informal relations between the functionaries of the organisation. Following are the different types of formal and informal channels of communication:



— Vertical Communication
 - - - Horizontal Communication
 Diagonal Communication

Channels of Communication

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1. **Vertical Communication:** Vertical Communication is a formal channel of communication that includes both the Downward Communication, that is from the top to the bottom of the organisation and Upward Communication, that is, from the bottom to the top of the organisation. Following is a brief description of Vertical Communication:

i. **Downward Communication:** Downward communication is the organisational communication that flows from the top of the organisation to the lower levels. It is a means through which the senior functionaries of the organisation inform/communicate the organisational objectives, including policies, plans, directions and procedures to the functionaries situated at different levels in the organisation.

Downward Communication helps the top-level functionaries in influencing the behaviour of the lower-level personnel and inspiring them to achieve organisational objectives. It also helps in administering rewards, reprimands, approval and punishment.

ii. **Upward Communication:** Organisational communication that flows from the bottom to the top of the organisation is Upward Communication. Both Upward and Downward Communication are important for the effective functioning of the organisation. Upward communication is a means through which the top-level functionaries come to know about the effective/ineffective implementation of the decisions made at the senior levels, the performance of the subordinates, as well as employees' attitudes towards organisational decisions. Upward communication provides information to the top-level functionaries to enable them to make decisions. It also enables the senior functionaries to take timely corrective measures in case required.

Upward Communication may be distorted due to a more hierarchical levels, as every level may tend to weigh information and may end up deleting important information. Sometimes, seniors may ignore timely information given by the lower-level functionaries. Sometimes, lower-level functionaries do not transmit unfavourable information to the seniors.

2. **Lateral/Horizontal Communication:** Lateral/Horizontal Communication is a formal channel of communication that takes place between the functionaries at the same hierarchical levels. Classical theorist Henri Fayol supported this form of communication while discussing 'gangplank' and recommended allowing functionaries at the same level of hierarchy to communicate with each other directly. He stated that the functionaries should have the required permission from their respective superiors to do so, and also keep them informed about their communication. 'Gangplank' does not undermine or violate hierarchy but helps reduce the time taken in the decision-making process.

3. **Diagonal Communication:** Diagonal Communication is the formal channel of communication between functionaries located at two different levels of hierarchy or functionaries from different organisational units located at different levels. It helps in coordinating and integrating as well as bypassing the chain of command. Communication between the Line and Staff agencies is diagonal communication. There is a possibility of confusion as it bypasses the scalar chain of command. Timely information to the superior is instrumental in removing confusion.

4. **Unofficial Communication:** Unofficial Communication is a communication between the superior and the subordinate wherein the superior informs his subordinates about a forthcoming change in the rules and regulations, plans and policies of the organisations. A superior may also inform the subordinate about his expected promotion or increase in remuneration before it is

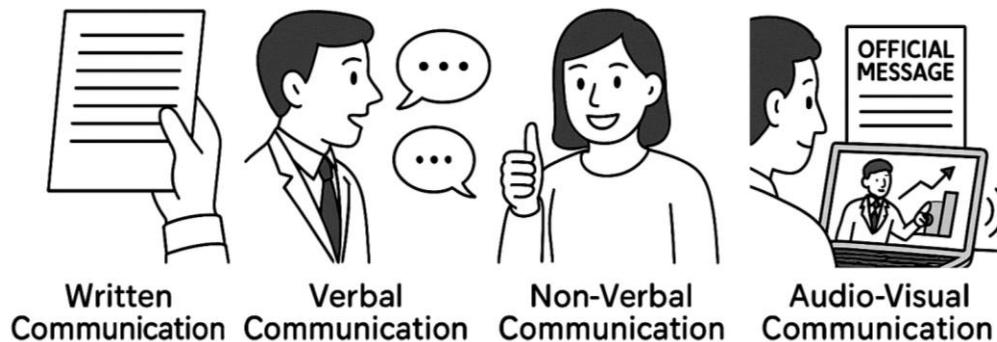
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transmitted to him by the authorities. Unlike informal communication which may or may not be true, unofficial communication is true but not formally announced though a decision has been taken. It helps in preparing the subordinates for the changes in advance as well as earning their goodwill.

5. **Grapevine/Informal Communication:** Informal communication is an intrinsic part of the informal relations between the functionaries of the formal organisation. It is also called 'grapevine'. It is the informal workplace dialogue that is characterized by an exchange of information between different employees and does not follow any formal channels or rules. Communication, both accurate as well as inaccurate, travels with a great speed between members of the informal groups. In informal communication the source of the information may be unknown or unidentifiable. It provides the subordinates with an informal means of expressing their views, attitudes, feelings etc. about the functioning of the organisation.

Modes/Methods/Types of Communication

There are various modes of organisational communication which help in conveying policies, plans, ideas, directions and decisions to the functionaries located at different levels. Following are the different modes/methods/types of communication:



1. **Written Communication:** Written Communication includes policies, plans, decisions, rules and regulations, orders and instructions that are in written or electronic form. Benefits of written communication:

- i It constitutes the memory of the organisation.
- ii Is a source of reference for not only the current but also future functionaries, as functionaries may change in due course and hence oral communication may not stand the test of time.
- iii It is accurate, precise, clear and reliable.

Limitations of written communication include:

- i Is a time-consuming and expensive activity.
- ii It leads to an enormous amount of files that require storage over a period of time.
- iii The language of the people writing may not be refined leading to ambiguous and vague information

2. **Verbal or Oral Communication:** Verbal/Oral Communication is the face-to-face exchange in a meeting, video-conferencing or telephone.

Benefits of verbal communication:

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- i It saves time, provides a personal touch and gives immediate feedback.
- ii It is more effective as there is a free exchange of ideas, questions, fears and apprehensions which can help in removing bottlenecks in the functioning of the organisation. If the functionaries can express themselves clearly and accurately then it helps in promoting a better understanding of ideas and objectives.
- iii It also helps in the participation of the functionaries in the decision-making process.

Oral/Verbal Communication has some limitations including:

- i It is not a record for the future as it is not in written form;
- ii It may not be able to give an accurate picture of the total situation and people may not express freely and clearly; and
- iii It may be difficult to assemble the required functionaries to discuss the issues at hand.

3. **Non-Verbal Communication:** Non-verbal communication is an important part of the day to day interaction of the superiors and the subordinates. Feelings and ideas are sometimes better conveyed through gestures or other non-verbal actions. Non-verbal communication includes gestures involving hands, eyes, speed of speaking, and pitch of the voice as well as posture. The subordinates need to understand the written, oral as well as accompanying gestures to understand what the superior is trying to convey.
4. **Audio-Visual Communication:** Audio, visual and/or audio-visual communication, popularly known as A/V methods, has become an important mode of communication in the present era of ICTs. This type of communication is suitable while presenting reports, training and addressing a large number of employees as well as publicising the work of the organisation. Understanding is considered to be enhanced as A/V communication leaves a lasting imprint on the minds of the receivers.

Barriers to Effective Communication

Communication travels through different channels within the formal organization from the top to bottom or bottom to top, laterally as well as diagonally. There is a possibility of distortion in communication as people at different levels of hierarchy may have different perceptions. Following are some barriers to effective communication:

1. **Language Barriers:** Language used may be too complex and technical for functionaries at all levels to understand.
2. **Information Overload:** A human mind cannot register all the incoming information and tends to filter out some information which he may consider to be unnecessary and irrelevant. At times some essential information may be left out while communication travels through different levels.
3. **Lack of Interest of the Receiver:** If a receiver has no interest in the message he receives, then it is very difficult to get the message across to him;
4. **Credibility of the Sender:** A person tends to evaluate the credibility of the sender. If in the opinion of the receiver the sender doesn't have much credibility then the receiver may reject that message/information/communication.

5. **Delayed Communication:** If communication doesn't reach the receiver on time, then it may not be of any relevance to him or may even harm the interests of the organization.
6. **Size and Distance:** If the number of personnel in an organization is large and it is spread over a large geographical area then sending timely information to all becomes difficult if done so manually.
7. **Different Perceptions:** Different perceptions of the people due to their educational qualifications, socio-economic backgrounds and levels within the organization is very difficult to overcome.
8. **Medium:** Selection of a wrong and unsuitable medium is a barrier to effective communication.
9. **Cultural Barriers:** Organisations have people from different social and cultural backgrounds that may have an impact on the way they receive and interpret information.
10. **Interpersonal Relations:** If an organization does not have good interpersonal relations then chances of distorted communication are more.

Measures to Improve the Effectiveness of Communication

Barriers to effective communication exist in almost all organizations to some extent. The need is to overcome these barriers to ensure effective communication. Following are some such measures:

1. **Clarity of Purpose:** The purpose of communication must be comprehensible to both the sender and the receiver.
2. **Clear and Simple Language:** The language of the communication must be understandable and uncomplicated rather than full of technical jargon. Communication needs to be in the language of the target group to enable them to can fully comprehend.
3. **Timely:** Communication can be made effective if all concerned to adhere to the given timelines.
4. **Length of the Communication:** The communication should neither be too much nor too less. It should be adequate to retain the attention of the employee/functionary. If the amount of information given is more than it can be given concise titles and subtitles along with a summary at the end of the communication. There is a need to avoid repetition in communication.
5. **Appropriate Medium:** Communication can be made effective by selecting the most appropriate medium to deliver it.
6. **Feedback:** Feedback received by the functionary about the communication should be utilised for future communication.
7. **Channels of Communication:** Communication should be sent through well-thought-out channels so that it reaches the right person at the right time.

Conclusion

Communication is thus a process which enables a person to send a message to another person. It is also a process through which officials send and receive messages through the scalar chain of command in the organisations. Communication has to be timely to be effective, so the right mode of communication needs to be selected.

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Important Terms/Terms/Information

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10. **Formal Communication and Informal Communication:** Formal channels of communication are official channels that are made use of by the officials to communicate with members of different departments at various levels. Informal channels of communication are through the informal relations between the functionaries of the organisation.
11. **Vertical Communication:** Vertical Communication is a formal channel of communication that includes both the Downward Communication and Upward Communication.
12. **Grapevine/Informal Communication:** Informal communication is an intrinsic part of the informal relations between the functionaries of the formal organisation. It is also called ‘grapevine’

Short and Long Questions

Short Answer Type Questions

1. Write one definition of Communication.
2. Write a note on the importance of Communication.
3. Write one note on the barriers of Communication.
4. Write three measures to improve Communication.
5. Give three means of non-verbal Communication.
6. Write a note on any three Media of Communication.
7. Write a note on any two channels of Communication.
8. What do you understand by Formal/Informal Communication.
9. Explain Gapevine.

Long Question

1. Define Communication. Give its Importance and Process of Communication.
2. Define Communication. Give its process. Discuss the hindrances to effective Communication.

Suggested Readings

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