

CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION

There are three main channels of communication:

1. SPOKEN: Advantages: Can provide instant feedback; opportunity for discussion.

Disadvantages: - Often costly to arrange in both time and money; no permanent record.

Methods: Face-to-face meetings, presentation, Interviews, Talks and Annual general meetings.

2. WRITTEN: Advantages: Permanent record; suitable for both simple and complex messages.

Disadvantages: Usually takes some time for the message to arrive; slow feedback, or sometimes none at all.

Methods: Public notices, Memorandums (or memos), Reports, Staff bulletins or magazines, Business letters and Annual Reports and accounts.

3. ELECTRONIC: Advantages: Speed; accuracy; quick and instant feedback; message can be recorded.

Disadvantages: Expensive; Whole systems sometimes crash.

Methods: Telephones, Personal computer (PC), Computer Software, Mobile Phones, Video-conferences, Fax and Internet.

Visual Aids: such as charts, graphs, diagrams, photographs and other illustrations are often used to support messages. They summarise information and present it in a striking way.

Why Communications Fail: Communications fail for a number of reasons. The cause may be the fault of (a) the sender, (b) the receiver and (c) the choice of channel.

The Sender: Sometimes the sender is to blame. The message may not be clear and accurate or simple enough to be understood by the receiver.

The Receiver: Receivers can also cause problems. They may be unwilling to take in the message because they are too prejudiced to hear the message clearly.

The Channel: The Choice of channel may also be the cause. For example, if you try to discuss a very complex contract with a colleague without giving him a written copy of the contract well in advance of the meeting. The written channel is more suitable for complicated matters than the spoken channel.