

Communication

Introduction:

Communication is as old as human civilization. As group life developed, forms of communication also developed. Communication was in the forms of codes, indications, signals and expressions.

Gradually with the increase in population, division of labor, exchange economy, etc., necessitated the development of language. In the present day world, communication is vital need of every Step in any industrial or commercial activity. The term communication has been derived from the Latin word, 'communis', which means common. Literally, communication means, to tell, show, spread the information and inform. The term communication is used to signify the process of transferring ideas or receiving it by any means such as word of mouth, telephone, telegram, letter, message, etc. Thus, communication stands for sharing of information, imparting or conveying ideas and knowledge.

What is Communication?

The English word 'communication' is derived from the Latin word communis, which means common. The term communication refers to the sharing of ideas in common. In other words, it is the transmission and interaction of facts, ideas, opinions, feelings or attitudes. Communication is the essence of management. The basic function of management (planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling) cannot be performed well without effective communication.

In short, Communication is the process of passing ideas, views, facts, information and understanding from one person to another. This process is necessary for making the subordinates understand what the management expects from them.

Communication cannot take place without two parties – receiver and the sender. The information which is sent by the sender must be understandable to the receiver.

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etc., necessitated the development of language. In the present day world, communication is vital need of every Step in any industrial or commercial activity. The term communication has been derived from the Latin word, 'communis', which means common. Literally, communication means, to tell, show, spread the information and inform. The term communication is used to signify the process of transferring ideas or receiving it by any means such as word of mouth, telephone, telegram, letter, message, etc. Thus, communication stands for sharing of information, imparting or conveying ideas and knowledge.

Following are some of the important definitions of communication:

Communication may be defined as “the transfer of information and understanding from one person to another.”

According to Koontz and O'Donnel, Communication may be understood “as the exchange of information at least between two persons with a view to create an understanding in the mind of the other, whether or not it gives rise to conflict.”

Newman and Summer- “Communication is an exchange of facts, ideas, opinions or emotions by two or more persons.”

‘Communication is the sum of all things a person does when he wants to create an understanding in the mind of another’. – Louis A. Allen

‘It is the process of passing information and understanding from one person to another. It is essentially a bridge of meaning between people. By using this bridge of meaning, a person can safely cross the river of misunderstanding that separates all the people’.

What is Communication – Concept?

‘Information’ and ‘Communication’ are often used interchangeably, but they signify quite different things. Information is giving out; communication is getting through. Communication is the exchange and flow of information and ideas from one person to another; it involves a sender transmitting an idea, information, or feeling to a receiver. Effective communication occurs only if the receiver understands the exact information or idea that the sender intended to transmit.

“Sending, giving or exchanging information and ideas”, is defined by Webster’s Dictionary.

Business Communication:

Business Communication is communication that promotes a product, service, marketing, or organization; relays information within a business; or functions as an official statement from a company. It is important to acquire the skills of effective writing and speaking. It is also common for prestigious companies to insist upon excellent communication skills as a requirement at the time of recruitment.

Medium of Communication:

As rightly said by novelist; Salman Rushdie, “The language of a politician obscures the truth. The language of an artist reveals it”.

Medium are the storage and transmission channels or tools used to store and deliver information or data. At times we may even prefer to use signs and gestures. It's important to exchange thoughts and ideas with others if we have to play a meaningful role in society.

Need for Improving English Skills:

It has been well said by Narayan Sehgal that “English has become the global language for business and finance”. To carry out business, we need to interact with a large number of people.

“Colleges teach the one thing that is perhaps most valuable for the future employees to know and that is to express ideas in writing and speaking”. – Peter Drucker.

The USP (Unique Selling Proposition) of Business Communication is its clarity and simplicity. Business English should reveal complete meaning without ambiguity.

The characteristics of communication are as follows:

(i) At least two persons – Communication involves at least two persons—the sender and the receiver. The sender sends the message and the receiver receives the message. There is an exchange of information between two or more persons.

(ii) Two-way process – Communication is essentially a two-way process. It does not merely mean sending and receiving messages. It is not complete unless and until the message has been understood by the receiver in the same sense.

(iii) Form of communication – Communication may take several forms, e.g., order, instruction, report, queries, etc. It may be verbal or written. It may be formal or informal.

(iv) Scope – Communication is present in all human relationships. It is essential in all types of organizations and at all levels of management. It has a very wide scope.

(v) Dynamic process – Communication is influenced by the mood and thinking of the sender and receiver. It keeps on changing depending upon the Level of understanding of the sender and receiver.

(vi) Goal-Oriented – Communication is goal-oriented and is effective only when there is a congruence of goals of the sender and the receiver.

Guidelines for Effective Communication are:

1. Choose the Right Means and Mode:

The right means and mode of communication is chosen after considering various factors like cost, resources, organization size and policy etc.

2. Own Your Message:

It is very important to take responsibility for what we say. Personal pronoun should be used to lend credibility to the message.

3. Offer Complete and Relevant Information:

Message should never be left incomplete. It may create a huge barrier in communication if messages are incomplete. For effective communication, message should be relevant and complete. It should be supported by facts and observations. It should be well planned and organized. No assumptions should be made by the receiver.

4. Obtain Feedback:

Whether the message sent by the sender is understood in same terms by the receiver or not can be judged by the feedback received. The feedback should be timely and in personal. It should be specific rather than general.

5. Think of the Recipient:

Empathy with the listeners is essential for effective verbal communication. The speaker should step into the shoes of the listener and be sensitive to their needs and emotions. This way he can understand things from their perspective and make communication more effective.

6. Verbal and Non-Verbal Congruence:

Meanings are usually communicated in more than one way. For example while saying 'yes' our head should always nod up to down. This shows the verbal and non-verbal congruence.

7. Repeat if Necessary:

Repetition is generally avoided but in many cases message should be repeated for confirmation and feedback and to check whether the important part of the message has not been lost.

8. Do not Judge:

Judgments are usually based on one's own perception. Unfavorable judgments and remarks should be avoided.

9. Rely on facts:

Facts are the best way to persuade the listener in agreeing with the message. An incomplete message with assumptions holds no value. While sending a message, sender should always try to state the facts to support his message.

Barriers to Communication:

1. Lack of Planning:

Good communication seldom happens by chance. Too often people start talking and writing without first thinking, planning and stating the purpose of message.

Furthermore the personality and attributes of the person who is receiving the message also matters cause no matter how nicely the message has been delivered the receiver should be that intelligent to read it correctly.

2. Ambiguity:

Clearly, language and linguistic ability may act as a barrier to communication. If the message sent is not clear and is ambiguous then it may act as a barrier.

3. False Assumptions:

Often overlooked, yet very important, are the un-communicated assumptions that underlie messages. Whenever message is sent it should be checked that there are no assumptions, if something is required from receivers end then it should be mentioned in the message for example, a customer may send a note stating that he will visit a vendor's plant. Then he may assume that the vendor will meet her at the airport. Such assumptions create confusion.

4. Distortions:

Another barrier to effective communication is distortion, which can be accidental or deliberate. Sender must have sent the message but the receiver was too busy to register it. Thus on sender's end message has been sent but actually receiver has not taken a note of it.

5. Implied Meaning:

Sometimes the message may not be clear and straight forward thus does not give true idea of the message.

6. Passing Judgments:

Sometimes the message gives a judgment against, the receiver which acts as a barrier to communication.

7. Lack of Trust:

If the sender and receiver do not trust each other than the communication may lose its true meaning.

Given below are some guidelines that must help us communicate effectively:

1. Clarity of Purpose:

In the first place we must make a careful analysis of what exactly we wish to communicate. As is often the case in business, we may not be able to clarify the issue completely, unless it is by nature very simple. But any effort made in this direction proves to be fruitful. Hence it is absolutely necessary to understand the purpose of our message.

And this requires careful planning. Lack of planning becomes the first major barrier in communication. Communication does not just take place. We have to make all possible efforts to understand the why's and how's, the when and where, and above all the 'what' of our message. As George Bernard Shaw says, "The major mistake in communication is to believe that it happens".

2. Focus the Needs of the Receiver:

Whenever we communicate we must keep in mind the needs of the receivers of the message/information. It should be our endeavor to see that whatever we communicate should be of value to the receiver, both in the short run and in the distant future. Our awareness of the needs of the receiver will make him more receptive.

3. 'Use Feedback':

'Use feedback', exhorts Stephen Robbins, a renowned authority on organizational behavior. Communication is complete only when the message is understood by the receiver. And we can never know whether communication/message is understood unless the sender gets feedback.

Many communication problems arise because of misunderstandings and inaccuracies. They are less likely to occur if we make sure that the 'feedback loop' is utilized in the communication processes. We can achieve this target by asking questions, requesting a reply to a letter, and encouraging the receiver to give his reactions to the message/information.

4. Active Listening:

Active or 'participative' listening is as important as any other element in the process of communication. It shows, again, that communication is a joint responsibility of both the sender and the receiver.

5. Politeness:

This leads us to the tonal aspect of communication. There is a saying, “The tone makes the music”. In the same way, in communication, the tone of voice, the choice of language and the congruency or logical connection between what is said and how it is said influence the reactions of the receiver.

That is why managers are advised to shun authoritarianism, or in other words, to exercise authority with grace. Everybody knows that politeness pays, and it is reflected so very ‘loudly’ both in words and actions. Moreover, in an organization, politeness encourages participative communication involving people at all levels, leading to lateral and diagonal communication from the conventional, hierarchically – structured downward communication.

6. Completeness:

One must also endeavor to send a complete message, furnishing all necessary facts and figures. Incomplete communication annoys the receiver as a result of which proper feedback will not come. The message should be so organized that the receiver is not left in doubt about any aspect of the message.

7. Conciseness:

Completeness does not mean inclusion of unnecessary details or diversions. An effective communication is concise and crisp. The sender should be clear headed and properly focused in his vision.

8. Proper Use of Body Language:

Proper use of body language is of paramount importance, especially in oral communication. No oral communication can be successful or effective if we do not take care of our body language. In the first place there must be good eye-contact with the person to whom we are speaking.

The movement of our hands and feet must be graceful. Every listener observes carefully how we walk and how we talk. Our gait says a lot about us. A warm handshake can do wonders. Holding our head straight on our shoulders shows confidence. In fact, our overall appearance can really make or mar our communication.