



Communication skills

An introduction to



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Introduction

communication is the activity of conveying information through the exchange of ideas, feelings, intentions, attitudes, expectations, perceptions or commands, as by speech, gestures, writings, behaviour and possibly by other means such as electromagnetic, chemical or physical phenomena. It is the meaningful exchange of information between two or more participants (machines, organisms or their parts).

Communication requires a sender, a message, a medium and a recipient, although the receiver does not have to be present or aware of the sender's intent to communicate at the time of communication; thus communication can occur across vast distances in time and space. Communication requires that the communicating parties share an area of communicative commonality. The communication process is complete once the receiver understands the sender's message.

Communicating with others involves three primary steps:

- Thought: First, information exists in the mind of the sender. This can be a concept, idea, information, or feeling.
- Encoding: Next, a message is sent to a receiver in words or other symbols.
- Decoding: Lastly, the receiver translates the words or symbols into a concept or information that a person can understand.

There are a variety of verbal and non-verbal forms of communication. These include body language, eye contact, sign language, haptic communication, and chromatics. Other examples are media content such as pictures, graphics, sound, and writing. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities also defines the communication to include the display of text, Braille, tactile communication, large print, accessible multimedia, as well as written and plain language, human-reader, augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, including accessible information and communication technology. Feedback is a critical component of effective communication

Effective communication

Effective communication occurs when a desired effect is the result of intentional or unintentional information sharing, which is interpreted between multiple entities and acted on in a desired way. This effect also ensures that messages are not distorted during the communication process. Effective communication should generate the desired effect and maintain the effect, with the potential to increase the effect of the message. Therefore, effective communication serves the purpose for which it was planned or designed. Possible purposes might be to elicit change, generate action, create understanding, inform or communicate a certain idea or point of view. When the desired effect is not achieved, factors such as barriers to communication are explored, with the intention being to discover how the communication has been ineffective.

Barriers to effective human communication

Barriers to effective communication can retard or distort the message and intention of the message being conveyed which may result in failure of the communication process or an effect that is undesirable. These include filtering, selective perception, information overload, emotions, language, silence, communication apprehension, gender differences and political correctness

This also includes a lack of expressing "knowledge-appropriate" communication, which occurs when a person uses ambiguous or complex legal words, medical jargon, or descriptions of a situation or environment that is not understood by the recipient.

1. Physical barriers

Physical barriers are often due to the nature of the environment. An example of this is the natural barrier which exists if staff are located in different buildings or on different sites. Likewise, poor or outdated equipment, particularly the failure of management to introduce new technology, may also cause problems. Staff shortages are another factor which frequently causes communication difficulties for an organization.

2. System design

System design faults refer to problems with the structures or systems in place in an organization. Examples might include an organizational structure which is unclear and therefore makes it confusing to know whom to communicate with. Other examples could be inefficient or inappropriate information systems, a lack of supervision or training, and a lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities which can lead to staff being uncertain about what is expected of them.

3. Attitudinal barriers

Attitudinal barriers come about as a result of problems with staff in an organization. These may be brought about, for example, by such factors as poor management, lack of consultation with employees, personality conflicts which can result in people delaying or refusing to communicate, the personal attitudes of individual employees which may be due to lack of motivation or dissatisfaction at work, brought about by insufficient training to enable them to carry out particular tasks, or just resistance to change due to entrenched attitudes and ideas.

4. Ambiguity of words/phrases

Words sounding the same but having different meaning can convey a different meaning altogether. Hence the communicator must ensure that the receiver receives the same meaning. It is better if such words are avoided by using alternatives whenever possible.

5. Individual linguistic ability

The use of jargon, difficult or inappropriate words in communication can prevent the recipients from understanding the message. Poorly explained or misunderstood messages can also result in confusion. However, research in communication has shown that confusion can lend legitimacy to research when persuasion fails.

6. Physiological barriers

These may result from individuals' personal discomfort, caused—for example—by ill health, poor eyesight or hearing difficulties

The Sender-Message-Channel-Receiver Model of communication



Communication noise

In any communication model, noise is interference with the decoding of messages sent over a channel by an encoder. There are many examples of noise:

1. Environmental noise

Noise that physically disrupts communication, such as standing next to loud speakers at a party, or the noise from a construction site next to a classroom making it difficult to hear the professor.

2. Physiological-impairment noise

Physical maladies that prevent effective communication, such as actual deafness or blindness preventing messages from being received as they were intended.

3. Semantic noise

Different interpretations of the meanings of certain words. For example, the word "weed" can be interpreted as an undesirable plant in a yard, or as a euphemism for marijuana.

4. Syntactical noise

Mistakes in grammar can disrupt communication, such as abrupt changes in verb tense during a sentence.

5. Organizational noise

Poorly structured communication can prevent the receiver from accurate interpretation. For example, unclear and badly stated directions can make the receiver even more lost.

6. Cultural noise

Stereotypical assumptions can cause misunderstandings, such as unintentionally offending a non-Christian person by wishing them a "Merry Christmas".

7. Psychological noise

Certain attitudes can also make communication difficult. For instance, great anger or sadness may cause someone to lose focus on the present moment. Disorders such as Autism may also severely hamper effective communication.

Communication can be seen as processes of information transmission governed by three levels of semiotic rules:

1. Pragmatic (concerned with the relations between signs/expressions and their users)
2. Semantic (study of relationships between signs and symbols and what they represent) and
3. Syntactic (formal properties of signs and symbols).

"Seven Cs of Communication"

The "7 C's of Communication" is a much-quoted list, first provided by Cutlip and Centre in 1952 in *Effective Public Relations*. The original list was as follows:

- Completeness and cooperation
- conciseness
- consideration
- concreteness
- courtesy
- clearness
- correctness

Various versions of this list, often modified and unattributed, are listed in many business, communications, marketing and public relations books and courses.

1. *Credibility*: Communication begins in a climate of belief. This climate is built by the performance of the sender who should reflect an earnest desire to serve the receiver. The receiver will then have high regard for the competency of the sender.
2. *Context*: An advertising/communications program must square with the realities of its environment. Your daily business activities must confirm, not contradict, the message.
3. *Content*: The message must have meaning and relevance for the receiver. Content determines the audience and vice versa.
4. *Clarity*: The message must be put in simple terms. Words used must have exactly the same meaning to the sender as they do to the receiver. Complex messages must be distilled into simpler terms, and the farther a message must travel, the simpler it should be.
5. *Continuity and Consistency*: Communication is an unending process. It requires repetition to achieve understanding. Repetition, with variation, contributes to learning both facts and attitudes.
6. *Channels*: Use established channels of communication—channels the receiver uses and respects. Creating new channels is difficult.
7. *Capability of audience*: Communication must take into account the capability of the audience. Communications are most effective when they require the least effort on the part of the recipient.