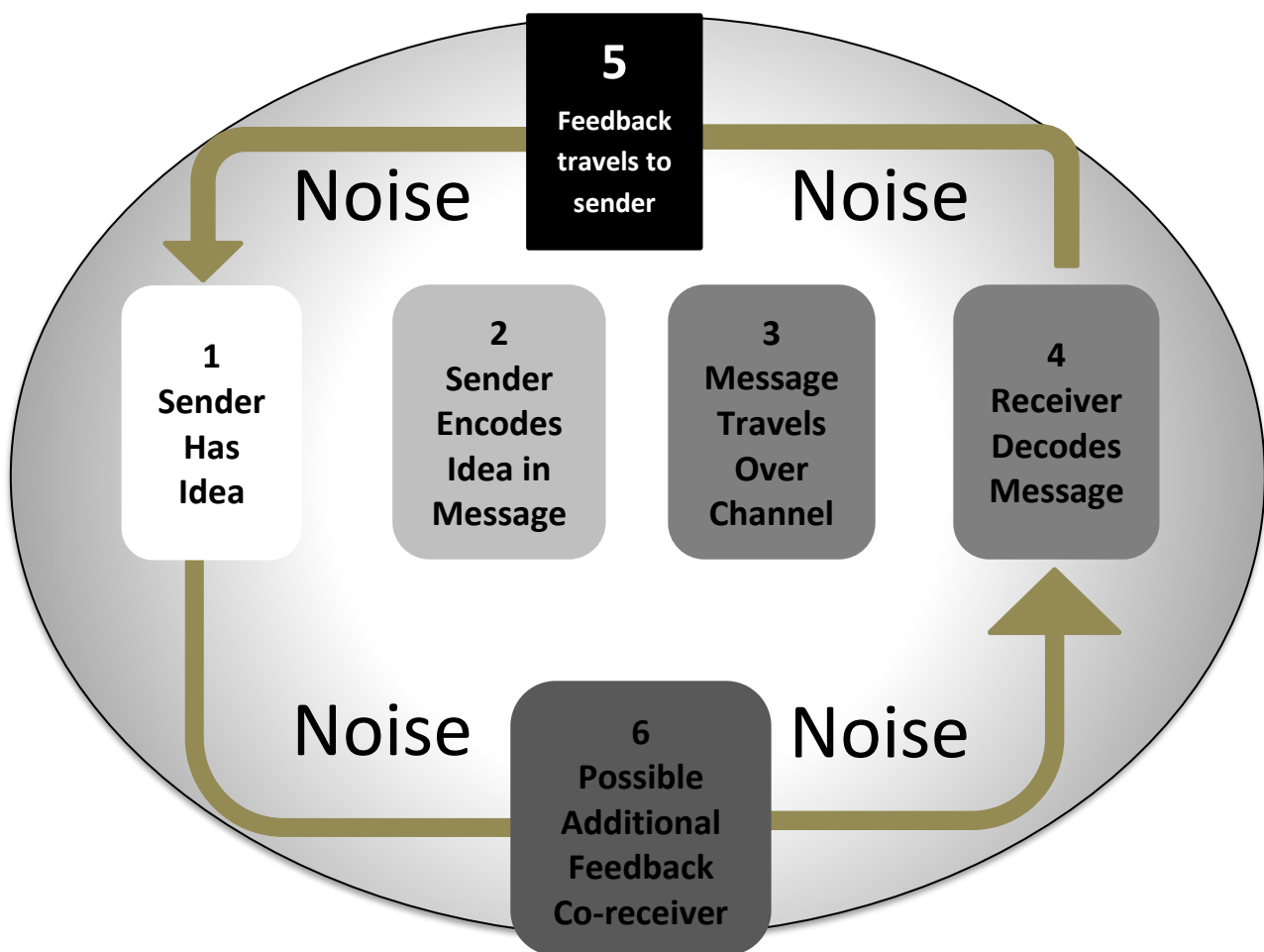


Communication Process

Communication Process Model

Communication process can be defined as a process of message transmission from a sender to a receiver in understandable way. It is very important to master communication skills in our professional as well as personal lives.



Communication process consists of five key steps:

1. Idea formation
2. Message encoding
3. Message transmission (through communication channel)

4. Message decoding
5. Feedback (not necessarily present in a communication process)

Further, we will consider each step separately.

A sender (individual, group or organization) is the one who initiates the communication process. It usually starts when the sender generates an idea of the message he/she would like to communicate to a receiver.

The next step of communication is message encoding process. Encoding here means converting the sender's idea into words and/or gestures with the purpose to convey its meaning to the receiver. In case of verbal communication, the main problem is the tendency of some words to have different meaning for different people

It is important to remember that the idea creation and encoding process are influenced by professional and cultural background, his/her knowledge, experience, and skills, as well as the context of the situation and mood.

Then the encoded message is sent to the receiver through communication channel. The communication channel is a medium for transmitting the message. The channels are usually oral (talk, oral report, telephone talk, etc.) and written (letter, e-mail, fax, etc.). Although with current technology development, visual channels (like video conferences and presentations) became widely used.

The effectiveness and efficiency of various channels depends on the characteristics of a communication. When immediate feedback is necessary, it is useful to choose oral communication channels. On the other side, when reaching several recipients, using e-mail or other written channel is more appropriate.

When the message is transmitted to the receiver the decoding stage of the communication process begins. Decoding process involves accepting and interpreting the message by the receiver. Successful communication takes place when the receiver correctly understands the meaning of sender's message. This is very hard to achieve, not only due to noises in communication channels, but primarily due sender and receiver having various backgrounds, knowledge, experience, etc.

Feedback is the final stage of the communication process. It can take either verbal (spoken comment) or written (written message), or non-verbal (smile, sigh, etc.) form. The feedback is

very important component of communication process, because it allows the sender to evaluate whether the message was interpreted correctly by the receiver or not. The sender can also encourage feedback from the receiver by asking questions, such as “Is what I said clear for you?”, “Do you understand what I meant by....?” etc.

Certain barriers can appear during communication process. The barriers negatively affect the communication. These are some examples of common barriers.

- The use of an inappropriate medium (channel),
- Incorrect grammar,
- Inflammatory words,
- Words that conflict with body language,
- Technical jargon

Forms of communication

It is widely considered that people communicate verbally and non-verbally.

Verbal and nonverbal components of communication can be mutually consistent, but may also be inconsistent or even contradictory (for example, if a person says “I’ll gladly take care of it” , but the tone of his/her voice doesn’t show any willingness). If a person communicates verbally and non-verbally in a contradictory way, it causes complications to an information recipient. As a result, spoken message is perceived as untrustworthy, confusing and incomprehensible. In case the recipient is exposed to such inconsistent communication repeatedly, the communication process would become very frustrating for him/her.

It is important to mention that verbal and non-verbal are not the only ways people communicate. Certain information is communicated through behavior (whether a person answers a question or not, or whether he/she greets you or not, etc.) and appearance (whether he/she is dressed for a particular occasion, etc.). So, from a broader perspective, a person communicates through his/her behavior and appearance as well.

Semantic structure of communication process

To understand better the communication process it is necessary to understand its semantic structure. Semantic structure of communication process includes five basic components:

1. The intention, the goal of communication – the speaker usually has a purpose. With what he/she says, the speaker tries to achieve something, even though sometimes not consciously.
2. The meaning of communication for the speaker – the speaker wants to convey his/her understanding of meaning of individual words and the communication as a whole to the receiver.
3. The factual content of communication.
4. The meaning of communication for the receiver - how the receiver understands what was said, his/her understanding of the meaning of individual words and the communication as a whole.
5. The effect of communication on the receiver of the message – what is the result or consequence of what was said.

Usually no participants of the communication (neither the sender, nor the receiver) understand and control all five components of semantic structure. The speaker can clarify his/her motivation and knows the meaning of individual words he/she uses, but can't define properly the meaning of the message, perceived by the receiver and effect of the communication on him/her.

The receiver, on the other hand, subjectively interprets meanings of the words and sentences. So, the result can be different from the sender's idea. Additionally, the receiver doesn't have to understand an effect the communication has on him/her, especially in the beginning of the communication process. Sometimes only after the effect accumulates by aggregating several messages carrying similar meaning, the receiver realizes the impact communication has on him/her.

Semantic aspects of interpersonal communication

There are defined two aspects of interpersonal communication:

- Factual – factual content of communication, information expressed in words.
- Attitudinal - person's attitude towards the things which he/she talks about; attitude to the person he/she speaks with; his/her current feelings, self-perception.

People usually don't express their attitudes verbally. So, they are usually communicated indirectly through non-verbal expressions.

Although the factual side of the communication should be primary in business relationship, the attitudinal aspects are something that cannot be ignored in a workplace. An atmosphere in a workplace significantly affects quality of employees work and the efficiency of the organization. Mutual understanding of attitudinal aspects is very important for overall functioning of communication process within the organization.