First Edition

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

BBA/BBS (MU)

RESHAM BAHADUR BIST

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UNIT

1

COMMUNICATION

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing this unit, you will understand the meaning, scope, objectives, process, characteristics, and barriers to communication. To achieve this goal, you should be able to:

- *Know the meaning of communication.*
- *Know the objectives, scope, and importance of communication.*
- *Know the process of communication and its elements.*
- *Identify the barriers to communication.*
- *Identify the characteristics and 7C's of communication.*
- *Be familiar with the modern forms of communication.*

Meaning of Communication

The word "communication" is derived from the Latin word 'Communis' that means to share or to make common. Communication may be defined as an interchange of thought or information two or more persons to brings about mutual understanding and desired action. It is the exchange of facts, ideas, and viewpoints, which bring about the commonness of interest, purpose, and efforts.

American Management Association defines, 'Communication is any behavior that results in an exchange of meaning'.

Peter Little defines communication as 'Communication is the process by which information is transmitted between individuals and or organization so that an understanding response result'.

Newman and Summer Jr., state, 'communication is an exchange of facts, ideas, opinion or emotions by two or more persons'.

According to *Keith Davis*, 'Communication is the process of passing the information and understanding from one person to another. It is essentially a bridge of meaning between the people. By using the bridge a person can safely across the river of misunderstanding'.

Crystal says, 'Communication refers to the transmission and reception of information between a source and a receiver using a signaling system.'

Lois A. Allen defines, 'Communication is the sum total of all the things that a person does when he wants to create an understanding in the mind of another. It involves a systematic and continuous process of telling, listening, and understanding'.

From the above definitions, we can say that communication refers to a natural activity of all human being, which is to convey opinions, feelings, information, and ideas to others throw written or spoken words or body language. It is the ability of human beings to communicate the ideas. Communication adds meaning to human life. It helps to build a relationship and fosters love and understanding. It enriches our knowledge of the universe and makes living worthwhile.

Classification of Communication

We receive and send messages through internal and external as well as formal and informal ways. The formality of message depends on its context and persons because some messages are work related and some messages are personal. The communication can be classified in different ways.

Communication can be classified on the basis of the **medium employed** as follows:

- **Verbal communication:** Verbal communication is a type of communication that involves the use of written or spoken words for communicating. It consists of speaking, listening, writing, reading and thinking.
- **Non-verbal communication:** Non-verbal communication includes the use of body language, pictures, signs, gestures, facial expression and various other physical gestures as a means for communicating. It is done through sign language, action language, or object language. It presents in all acts of speaking and writing. It is the wordless message conveyed through gesture, movements, and pictures.
- **Meta-Communication:** The speaker's choice of words unintentionally communicates something more than what the words themselves state is known as the meta-communication. For example, the sentence-' I have never seen you so smartly dressed', could be a compliment and this sentence could also mean that the regular dress of listener needs improvement.

In terms of **the communication flow,** Communication can be classified as follows:

- **Vertical communication:** In this communication, messages flow upward or downward along a path referred to as the "chain of command". Usually, reports and proposals follow an upward path; policy statements, plan directives, and instructions typically follow a downward path.
- **Horizontal communication:** In this communication, message flow occurs between workers or units of the comparable statue who need to share data or coordinate efforts. The role of members or status within the organization will generally have the greatest influence in vertical communication.

In terms of **formality of communication,** it can be classified as follows:

- **Formal Communication:** Informal communication, information moves down the depicted lines of authority, and employees do not go around their bosses when communicating with others in the organization. The employee communicates upward through the direct supervisor, who then will send the message up the chain of command. Certain information is typically communicated more formally, such as common rules, regulations, standard operating procedures, plans, schedules, and forecasts. The written channels are mostly used in the formal communication network. The coordination must exist between the different groups within the organization in order to accomplish the overall goals of the organization. The social communication is usually planned by the organization and it is essential of the effective operation of the business. Three types of communication make up an organization's formal communication network: downward, upward and lateral or horizontal. **Downward Communication** is a flow of information form highest authority of an organization to the lowest level of employees. It is generally used to instruct workers, build and maintain the morale and goodwill of the employees. **Upward Communication** is the flow of information from lower-level employees to upper-level employees or managers. It is used to keep management informed. It provides suggestions for improving the business and information needed for decision-making. Lateral or Horizontal Communication is the flow of information among peers within an organization. It strengthens interpersonal relationships across departments and units within the company. This exchange helps to minimize conflict, promote understanding, and increase coordination between departments or units.

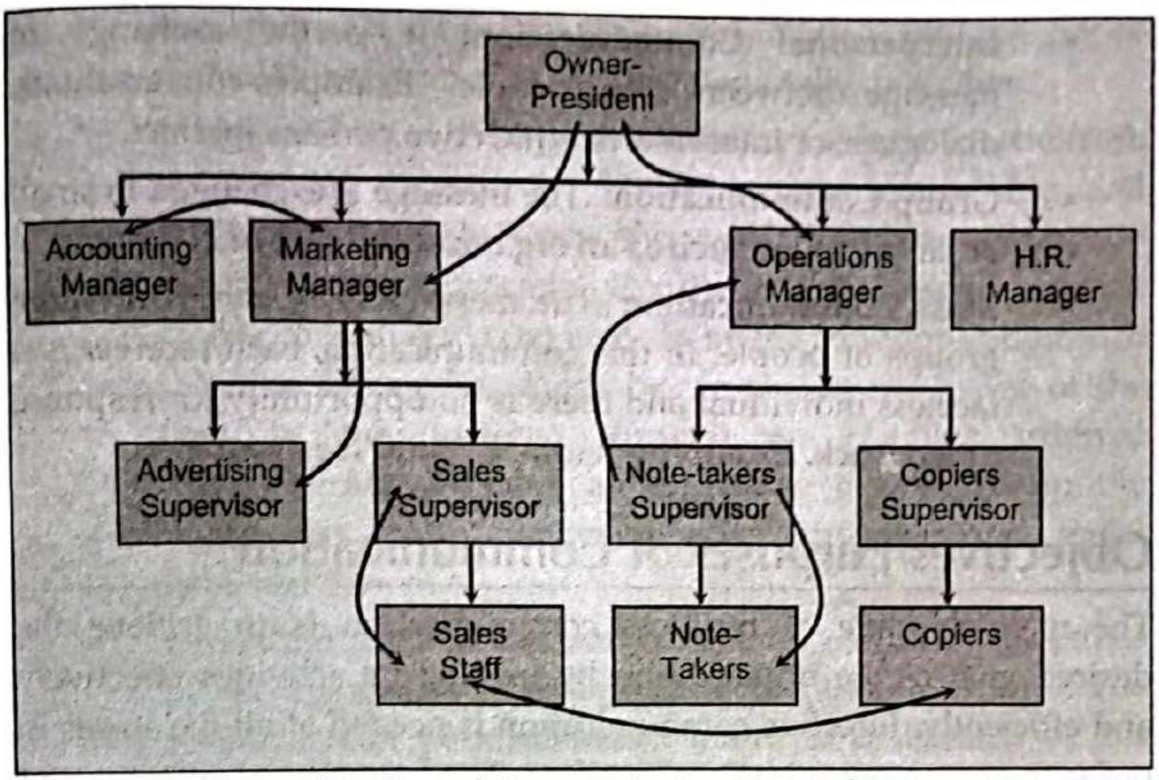
Owner-President
Accounting Manager
Marketing Manager
Operations Manager
H.R. Manager
Advertising Supervisor
Sales Supervisor
Note-takers Supervisor
Copiers Supervisor
Sales Staff
Note-Takers
Copiers

Fig.: Formal Communication Network

Source: Thill, Bovee & Chatterjee: 2013

- **Informal Communication:** The informal communication networks are like spider webs because various areas are interconnected no matter how far they are from the top. Frequent communication between the functional areas and top management will affect both functional and organizational performance. In this communication network, everyone can communicate directly with everyone else. It is known as grapevine or rumor mill, consists of both business-related and personal information. It takes place naturally as a result of employee interaction both on the job and in social settings, and some of it takes place when the formal network does not provide information that employees want.

Four Level of Communication

Another way to classify communication is according to the number of persons who receive the message. This category of communication is also discussed as a four-level of communication.

- **Intrapersonal Communication:** It means talking to oneself in one's own mind. Examples; soliloquies or asides in dramatic works.

- **Interpersonal Communication:** It is the exchange of message between two people. Examples-conversations, dialogues, or interview in which two persons interact.
- **Group Communication:** The message is exchanged in small or large groups such as an organization, club or classroom.
- **Mass Communication:** The message is exchanged in large groups of people. In this communication, each receiver is a faceless individual and there is no opportunity for response or feedback. Examples- Radio, TV, and Newspapers.

Objectives/Purposes of Communication

The main objective of business communication is to achieve the desired goal of the organization by leading its activities effectively and efficiently. Effective communication is needed at all the stages in order to ensure organizational welfare. The purposes or objectives of business communication can be discussed precisely through the following points:

- **Persuading**: Persuasion means an effort to influence the attitudes, feelings or beliefs of others. It is an important objective of business communication. Organizations persuade buyers to buy their products and services. In the office or in the factory, the lazy, incompetent and dissatisfied workers have to be persuaded to their works with the help of communication.
- **Informing:** The main objective of business communication is to share, gather and distribute the information in the organization. It provides information to the employees or persons involved in the management of the business
- **Counseling**: Counseling is an organized and specialized form of advice. Counseling is objective, impersonal and professional. A number of large business organizations have their counseling departments. Service of specialists is engaged for this purpose and employees to receive free medical advice, legal advice, and vocational guidance etc.
- **Warning and Notice**: Warning and notice are given in special circumstances. If employees do not abide by the norms of the organization or violate the rules and

regulations, it may become necessary to warn and notice them. Warning a notice can be given orally or written.

- **Image building:** A business enterprise cannot isolate from the rest of the society. There are interrelationship and interdependence between the society and an enterprise operating in the society. Goodwill is necessarily created among the public. It can be done by the communication with the different media, which has to project the image of the firm in the society. Through an effective external communication system, an enterprise has to inform the society about its goals, activities, progress and social responsibility
- **Directing:** Communication is necessary to issue directions by the top management or manager to the lower level. The employee can perform better when he is directed by his senior. Directing others may be communicated either orally or in writing. An order may be common order, request order or implied order.
- **Motivating Employees:** Motivation energizes and activates a person to direct his/her behavior toward the attainment of desired goals. Managers must constantly try to improve performance in the workplace by motivating the staff. Business communication has been considered as the critical element in motivating employees. Managers use communication to improve employees' sense of self-worth by showing recognition. Appreciating good work providing several other incentives or benefits.
- **Maintaining Coordination and Cooperation:** Every organization is to maintain coordination among its various departments and co-operation must come from every person working in the organization for the smooth functioning of its activities. Business communication helps the maintenance of coordination and cooperation by supplying information on time.
- **Advising:** Another important objective of communication is giving advice to the respective person. By its very nature, advice flows horizontally or downwards or sometimes upwards. Advice may be given on matters related to work

or on personal matters if the relationship permits. Advice is likely to be subjective since it involves personal opinions.

- **Exchanging Information**: Exchange of information (passing or receiving) about a particular fact or circumstance is one of the most important objectives of communication. It can be done either through spoken or written language or by using any system of signs or signals. An organization is to exchange information among the people inside and outside of it. Managers need complete, accurate, and precise information to plan and organize and on the other hand, employees need it to translate planning into reality.
- **Formulating and Implementing of Plans**: Formulating and implementing plans both are important for an organization in this modern world of competition. In addition, information plays a vital role in both cases and business communication is the only way to flow the required information. So, providing information to the management to formulate and execute plans in another important objective of communication.
- **Developing Industrial Relations**: Industrial relation means the relation between the employer and employee. A good Labor-Management relation is a precondition for achieving organizational success. But the harmonious relations between employer and employee can be ensured only by exchanging regular information between them. Therefore, developing a regular good industrial relation is another important objective of business communication.
- **Raising Morale**: Morale is the individual and collective spirit and moral condition of employees with regard to discipline and confidence. Management always tries to raise the morale of employees through business communication so that they think that they are important for the organization.

From the above discussion, we can conclude that business communication serves multi-dimensional purposes in an organization and it is inevitably necessary for each organization.

Scope of Communication

The scope of business communication is an inseparable feature of human life. It includes all the activities of a person from his birth to death. We cannot think of passing even a single day without any sort of Communication. The scope of communication cannot be demarcated; its importance is indispensable for all. The scope of business communication is discussed below in different field:

- **Communication in Business**: Business activities can never be run without effective continuous communication. Communication is personally related to the production of goods and services, purchasing and selling, warehousing, distribution and to other business activities. The nation within and external the business organization might be communicated with proper in sequence so that day can take steps accordingly. Furthermore, the Business organization is to do a few social responsibilities also. Therefore, nowadays every large organization has a "Public Relation Department" to communicate with its environment.
- **Communication in Decision Making**: Person or organization, each is to take a decision on various issues daily. In each case, proper information is vital to make perfect decision and communication play a pivotal role here by supplying relevant information.
- **Communication in Management**: Communication is careful as one of the greatest weapons of Management. Each level of Management like planning, organizing, recruiting, leading, motivation, coordination, and control depends on sound Communication method. Each organization, big or small, is to make a plan to attain the desired goals or objectives and Management is to collect information from a variety of people and organizations to make a correct plan. Later than declaring the plan Management gives essential advice and directions to employees to carry out the plan and it is done by Communication. Co-ordination among and among different departments and branches is also brought-forth from side to side business communication.
- **Communication in Social Life**: Human beings are gregarious and everybody in the society is related to each

other. Business Communication has played a vital role in this social bondage of human beings. People can share their sorrows, happiness etc. because of the presence of communication.

- **Communication in Government's Activities**: The government of a state cannot be run without the flow of info-communication. Business communication plays a vital role in performing the activities of different ministries, departments, divisions, and offices of the state. The government maintains the functions of the state by the different modes of communication. Every government runs a separate ministry name as 'Ministry of Communication.'
- **Communication in International Relations**: This is the age of globalization and due to tremendous development in communication; the entire world is viewed as a single village (global village). Changes are taking place all over the world and in order to cope with the latest developments in the world every person, organization and state are to communicate with different quarters very rapidly. The diplomatic, economic and trade relations between and among nations in the international arena are based on effective and efficient business communication.
- **Communication in Personal Life**: We do various activities from dawn to dusk and we depend on communication for doing that. Nobody can pass his/her daily life without the application of it. Actually, it is a part and parcel of our personal life. Everybody is to communicate with different people and organizations daily.
- **Communication in Industrial Relation**: The good industrial relation that means owner-employee relation is a pre-requisite to bringing success in business. Employees are the mainspring of an organization and their cooperation is necessary to operate business activities. To build a harmonious employer-employee relationship, the department of public relation of each organization acts closely under the directives of top management and communication is indispensable.

In this way, we can conclude that the scope of business communication is so widened that it cannot be expressed shortly. We find the presence of communication in every sphere of our life. Actually, business communication is there where information is needed and there is no person or organization to which information is not necessary. From cradle to the cemetery, we find the scope of business communication.

Modern Methods of Communication in Business

Communication is the key to building relationships. Whether it is with family, business, or loved ones, we have a whole range of modern day tools that allows us to stay in contact. The present world is the world of science and technology. Therefore, advanced science and technology have supported the modern methods of communication. There are several modern-day tools of business communication that are briefly presented below:

There are several **ways of business communication**, including:

- **Social media** channels enable to post open messages for everyone to see. It's an important step for communication because, in present, millions of people are connected in social networks.
- **The text message** is short and a good way to communicate small bits of information that can be received and replied through the mobile devices.
- **Web-based communication** is taken as a better and improved method of communication, which is used anytime anywhere to connect people.
- **Video-conference** allows people in different locations to hold interactive meetings.
- **E-mails** provide an instantaneous medium of written communication worldwide.
- **Reports** are important in documenting the activities of any departments of an organization.
- **Presentations** are a very popular method of communication in all types of organizations usually involving audiovisual material, like copies of reports, or material prepared in Microsoft PowerPoint.

- **Face-to-face meeting** is personal and should be succeeded by a written and follow up.

These are the important methods of communication, which are popular in the present world in business. Business communication is somewhat different and unique from other types of communication because the purpose of business is related to earning money. Thus, to develop profitability, the communicator should develop good communication skills contextualizing them in the present world.

Communication Process

Communication is a process of exchanging verbal and non-verbal messages, which begins with a person's desire to share or exchange an idea, thoughts, or feeling to another person or persons. It basically involves a sender, a message, a medium, and a receiver. Pre-requisite of communication is a message. This message must be conveyed through some medium to the recipient. It is essential that this message must be understood by the recipient in the same terms as intended by the sender. S/he must respond within a time frame. Thus, communication is a two-way process and is incomplete without a feedback from the recipient to the sender on how well the message is understood by him/her.

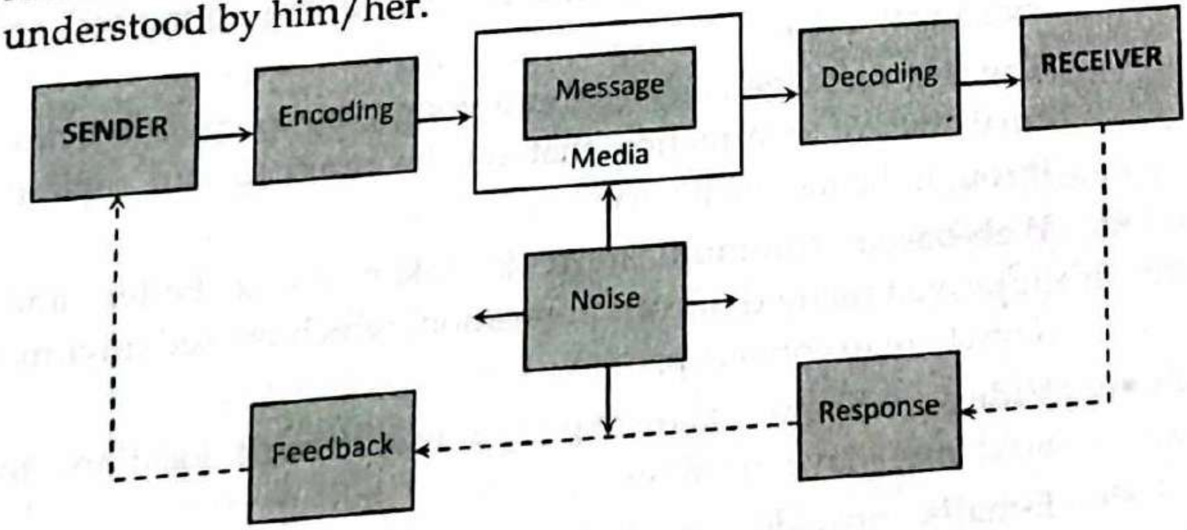

Fig.: Communication Process

The main components of the communication process are as follows:

- **Context** - Communication is affected by the context in which it takes place. This context may be physical, social, or cultural. Every communication proceeds with context. The sender chooses the message to communicate within a context.

- **Sender / Encoder** - The person who desires to convey the message is known as the sender. A sender uses of symbols (words or graphics or visual aids) to convey the message and produce the required response. The sender may be an individual or a group or an organization. The views, background, approach, skills, competencies, and knowledge of the sender have a great impact on the message.
- **Message** - It is a subject matter of any communication. It may involve any fact, idea, opinion or information. It must exist in the mind of the sender if communication is to take place. Communication process begins with deciding about the message to be conveyed. It must be ensured that the main objective of the message is clear.
- **Encoding:** It is the process of changing the message. It means putting ideas, facts, feelings, and opinions into symbols, which can be words, actions, signs, or pictures. The communication symbols are selected by the sender keeping in mind the receiver's ability to understand and interpret them correctly.
- **Medium** - Medium is a means used to exchange/transmit the message to the receiver. The medium of communication can be written, oral, audio-visual, or live. The sender must choose an appropriate medium for transmitting the message as the nature of the message. The choice of an appropriate medium of communication is essential for making the message effectively and correctly interpreted by the recipient. This choice of communication medium varies depending upon the features of communication. For instance - the written medium is chosen when a message has to be conveyed to a small group of people, while an oral medium is chosen when spontaneous feedback is required from the recipient as misunderstandings are cleared immediately.
- **Receiver / Decoder** - Receiver / Decoder is the targeted person for whom the message is intended / aimed / targeted. The receiver understands, interprets, and tries to perceive the total meaning of the message as transmitted by the sender. The decoder's understanding of message is dependent upon various factors such as knowledge of

decoders, their responsiveness to the message, and the reliance of encoder on the decoder.

- **Decoding:** It is the act of translating symbols into their ordinary meaning. It helps the receiver to drive meaning from the message. The total meaning of message depends on the meanings of the words, tone, and attitude of the sender as reflected in the structure of message and choice of the used by him/her (sender).
- **Feedback** - The reaction or response of the receiver is known as feedback, which connects to the receiver with the sender. The sender learns that communication has been accomplished after getting feedback. It helps the sender in confirming the correct interpretation of the message by the decoder. Feedback may be verbal (through words) or non-verbal (in form of smiles, sighs, etc.). It may take written form also in form of memos, reports, etc.

7c's of Communication

There are 7C's of effective communication, which is applicable to both written as well as oral communication. These are as follows:

Correctness

Normally it is assumed that correctness only refers to spelling, punctuation etc. but business Communication is something more than that. The concrete message has the following features:

- It is supported by specific facts and figures.
- It makes use of words that are clear and that build the reputation.
- Concrete messages are not misinterpreted.

Following guideline should be considered for achieving correctness.

- Use the correct level of language
- Include only accurate data.
- Maintain acceptable writing mechanics.

Use the correct level of language: The writer should pay attention the formality of language in the message to be communicated as its nature and audiences.

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Incorrect: We thank you in anticipation of this courtesy and assure you that it will be a pleasure to serve you in similar manners.

Correct: I will appreciate your helping us. Let me know when I can return the favor.

Include only accurate data: The writer of a business message should specifically be careful when he is quoting any fact or figure. The situation is more critical when the reader relies on the accuracy of facts and figures.

***Maintain acceptable writing mechanics*:** The writing mechanics include a number of considerations. For instance, use of grammar rules, sentences structure, composition, punctuation, spelling and all other considerations that form the structure of English language.

Conciseness

Conciseness means wordiness, i.e. communicating what you want to convey in the least possible words without forgoing the other C's of communication. Conciseness is a necessity for effective communication. Concise communication has following features:

- It is both time-saving as well as cost-saving.
- It underlines and highlights the main message as it avoids using excessive and needless words.
- Concise communication provides a short and essential message in limited words to the audience.
- The concise message is more appealing and comprehensible to the audience.
- Concise message is non-repetitive in nature.

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Following points should be considered for achieving conciseness.

- Omit trite expressions.
- Avoid unnecessary repetition.
- Include relevant facts.

Omitting trite expressions: Trite expressions are also called clichés or stereotyped expressions. They are usually longer, formal and relatively meaningless because of overuse.

Trite: In accordance with your request of recent date, we are enclosing herewith our cashier's cheque in the amount of Rs 20,000.00, representing a withdrawal of said saving A/c. No. 3595.

Improved: According to your request of April 25, a cheque of Rs. 20,000.00 is enclosed.

Avoid Unnecessary Repetition: Skillful business writers avoid unnecessary repetition by rewording their message and trying to reduce it by almost 50%. In other words, the first draft of the message is never final and it always requires a second reworded reduced draft before sending to the receiver.

> ***Wordy:*** *I have your letter of October 14 and wish to say that we will be glad to give you a refund for the shirt you purchased here last week.*
>
> ***Improved:*** *You can avail refund for the shirt you purchased last week.*

Include Relevant Facts: Relevant facts refer to those necessary facts, which should be present and should never be compromised for achieving conciseness.

Clarity

Clarity refers to a clear understanding of the message by the receiver. In other words, the receiver should not face any problem in getting the meaning of the message. Clarity in communication has following features:

- It makes understanding easier.
- Complete clarity of thoughts and ideas enhances the meaning of the message.
- The clear message makes use of exact, appropriate and concrete words.

The clarity could be achieved by the following techniques.

- Choose short and familiar words.
- Construct effective sentences and paragraphs.
- Include examples, illustrations etc.

Choose short and familiar words: The vocabulary of the English language is so rich that a number of words are possible for a single occasion. In today's business English, it's better to use such words, which are normally used in day to day conversation. Therefore, it is always better to avoid difficult and high sounding words.

> *The bank statement shows an overdraft of Rs. 10,000.*
>
> *The bank statement shows an excess withdrawal of Rs. 10,000.*

Construct effective sentences and paragraphs: The number of paragraphs for a business message should not exceed more than 3-4 paragraphs. Within one paragraph, a number of sentences should not exceed more than 3-4 sentences and within one sentence, the number of words should not exceed more than 12-15 words.

Include examples and illustrations: Examples and illustrations work as supplementary tools for the writer. Examples help the reader to understand the meaning of the message.

Completeness

The communication must be complete. It should convey all the facts required by the audience. The sender of the message must take into consideration the receiver's mindset and convey the message accordingly. A complete communication has following features:

- Complete communication develops and enhances the reputation of an organization.
- It is cost saving as no crucial information is missing and no additional cost is incurred in conveying the extra message if the communication is complete.
- It always gives additional information wherever required. It leaves no questions in the mind of the receiver.
- It helps in better decision-making by the audience/ readers/ receivers of the message as they get all desired and crucial information.
- It persuades the audience.

Following points are considered for the completeness of message.

- Answer all questions asked.
- Check for five W's.

Answer all questions asked: It is necessary to answer all the questions asked in the message. If a single question is missed and not answered, the communication is breakdown.

Check for 5 W's: The writer should make clear in the message **What** s/he wants, **When** s/he needs it, **Where** it is to be sent, **How** the payment will be needed.

Concreteness

Concrete communication implies being particular and clear rather than fuzzy and general. It strengthens the confidence. The concrete message has the following features:

- It is supported by specific facts and figures.

- It makes use of words that are clear and that build the reputation.
- Concrete messages are not misinterpreted.

Following points should be considered for achieving concreteness.

- Use specific facts and figures.
- Use of action verbs.
- Choose vivid image building words.

Use specific facts and figures: Use of fact and figures play a vital role especially when describing a product or service.

> ***General:*** *These brakes stop car within a short distance.*
>
> ***Specific:*** *The hydraulic pressure brakes stop a car with a distance of two feet as soon as they are applied.*

Use of action verbs: The basic function of the verb is to describe the action of a noun or pronoun. Therefore, the action should always be represented by the verb and an action is found in a noun, it should be converted into a verb.

> ***Noun:*** *They held a meeting in the office.*
>
> ***Verb:*** *They met in the office.*

Choose vivid image building words: The vivid image building words are generally used for creating an impression upon the reader so that the reader should start building an image of the product or service in his mind. Such words are used in sales promotion letters.

> ***Example:*** *This is a very good computer.*
>
> *The P-IV 800 MHz, 20GB HD, 64MB RAM, 500 MB CACHE, Intel genuine processor, in The ATX casing is a computer of the new millennium.*

Consideration

Consideration refers to giving importance to the other person whether s/he is a reading audience, spectator or listener. Features of considerate communication are as follows:

- Emphasize on "you" attitude. (You attitude means writing a business message from the point of view of the customer or at least showing that the customer is very important.)
- Empathize with the audience and exhibit interest in the audience. This will stimulate a positive reaction from the audience.

- Show optimism towards your audience. Emphasize on 'what is possible' rather than 'what is impossible'. Give stress on positive words such as jovial, committed, thanks, warm, healthy, help, etc.

For achieving consideration, the following points are considered.

- You attitude
- Show readers interest
- Apply integrity in the message
- Emphasize the positive.

You attitude: It is one of the writing styles that look at the things form readers' point of view to respect their intelligence. Moreover, their desires, problems, circumstances, emotions, and probable reactions are to be taken into consideration.

I - Attitude: *We allow 5% discount on Cash Payment.*

You - Attitude: *You can enjoy 5% discount on Cash Payment.*

Show readers interest: The business messages should always be drafted to offer something to the customer, which is of interest for him. It should be thought that customers are not interested in the producer or service provider. Their focus of concentration is their own self.

Apply integrity in the message: Integrity refers to a character in the business message. This would come by being honest and truthful with the customer. Never make such a promise, which can be fulfilled never give false hopes to the customer and bluff the customer.

Emphasize the positive: It is always better to highlight positively rather than negatively in the business message.

Negative: *We do not refund if the refund item is soiled and unsalable.*

Positive: *We do refund if the returned item is clean and saleable.*

Courtesy

The sender of the message should be sincerely polite, judicious, reflective, and enthusiastic. The courteous message has the following features:

- Courtesy implies taking into consideration both viewpoints as well as feelings of the receiver of the message.
- The courteous message is positive and focused at the audience.

- It makes use of terms showing respect for the receiver of the message.
- It is not at all biased.

To achieve courtesy following points should be considered:

- Be tactful.
- Omit irritated expressions.
- Answer mail promptly.
- Apologize.

Be tactful: The tactful means handling customer with the right technique. Otherwise, if customers are not handled properly, business activities may not properly perform.

Tactless: Your letter is not complete I cannot understand it.

Tactful: If I understand your letter correctly, you want to say that…….

Omit irritating expressions: The message receivers dislike irritating expressions. So, irritating expressions should be omitted from messages.

You have failed

You have no choice

Answer mail promptly: It is a matter of business courtesy that all emails should be answered promptly. A late reply may give an impression that the manufacturer is not interested in the customer.

Apologies: It is always advisable to give some favor to the customer if s/he asked for it, and if some mistake is committed, it is better to apologize.

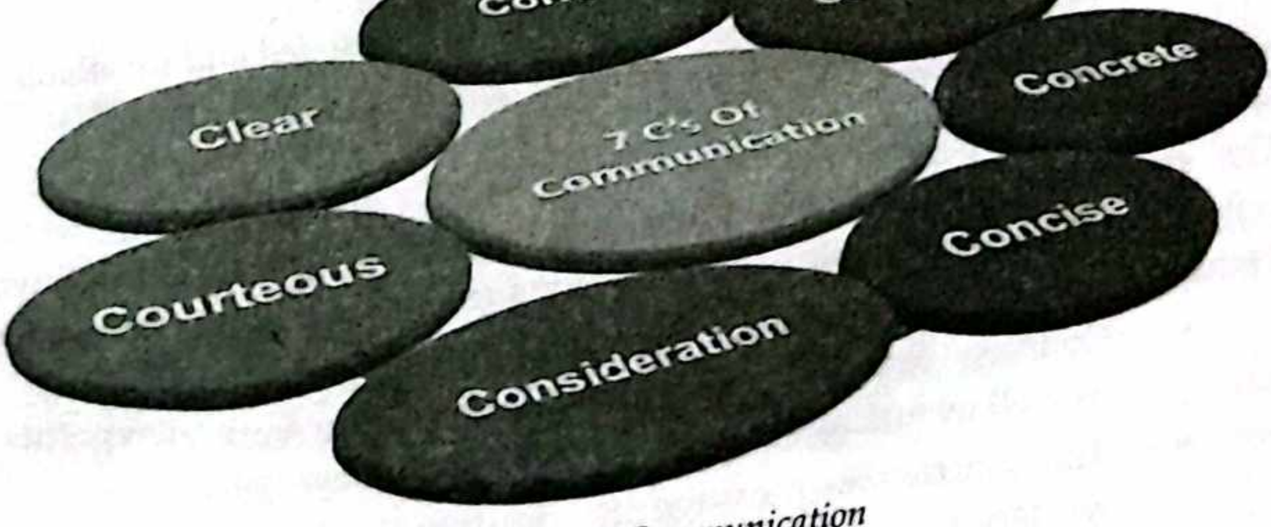

Fig. 7 C's of Communication

Barriers to Effective Communication

The word barrier means an obstacle, a hindrance or simply a problem that comes in a way of transmission of a message and blocks the process completely or partially. The barriers interrupt the flow of communication from the sender to the receiver, so communication becomes ineffective. It is essential for managers to overcome these barriers. Different types of barriers to communication are as follows:

Physical or Environmental Barriers

The message can be distracted by a variety of communication barriers within the communication environment. They are noise distractions, time and distance, mechanical problem, and wrong selection of medium.

- **Noise:** The noise created by physical distractions are poor lighting, uncomfortable seating, unhygienic room, traffic, playing of loud music, the sound of trains and airplanes, or by crowds of people. All of them affect the effective communication in working place.
- **Time & distance**: Time becomes a physical barrier when people have to communicate across different time zones in different countries. The physical distance between people who need to communicate can also cause problems because it does not allow oral or face-to-face communication.
- **Mechanical problem:** Mechanical problems and defects in instruments of communication also create physical barriers, as in a faulty fax machine or typewriter. Similarly, a computer that hangs, or a dead telephone line can lead to non-transmission of messages. eg. No range in mobile, technical problem in mike or speakers.
- **Wrong selection of medium**: The sender selects the medium, which is not familiar to the receiver, can create the barriers of communication.

Language or Semantic Barriers

Language is the main medium of communication and words are its tools. Language proves to be a barrier at different levels, such as semantic (meaning), syntactic (grammar), phonological (pronunciation, intonation, pitch etc.) and finally linguistic (across languages). Semantic is related to the meaning of the word. A single word has different meanings for different persons. If both the sender and the receiver choose different meanings for the same word, then it creates a barrier in the communication. This problem occurs because of differences in educational background or situations. Language or semantic barriers can arise in different ways:

- **Jargon or unfamiliar terminology**: There are some special terms or technical words used by people belonging to a certain group or field of work such as doctors, lawyers, computer software engineers or college students. They use their own specialized jargons, which cannot be understood by anyone outside of their group.
- **Perceptual and language differences:** Unfamiliar language becomes a barrier when people do not know each other's language. It also leads to communication breakdown. Perception is generally how each individual interprets the world around him/her. All generally want to receive messages, which are significant to them. However, any message, which is against their value is not accepted. The same event may be taken differently by different individuals because of the different perception of each individual. The same word may mean different to different individuals.

  Let's consider a word "value".

  What is the **value** of this Laptop?

  I **value** our relationship.

  What is the **value** of learning technical skills?

  "**Value**" means different in different sentences. Communication breakdown occurs if there is the wrong perception by the receiver.

Psychological Barriers

Psyche means mind. Psychological barriers are created in the mind. Communication is a mental activity and its aim is to create understanding. However, the human mind is complex and not all communication can result in understanding. There are several kinds of psychological barriers, which can come in the way of understanding.

- **Emotions**: Emotions are among the most common psychological barriers to communication. The emotion may be connected to the communication received or it may be present in the sender's or receiver's mind, even before the communication takes place. In both cases, it acts as a barrier. Likewise, prejudice (automatically rejecting certain people or ideas), stereotyping (placing individuals into categories), and boredom all hinders effective communication. These emotions tend to close mindset of communicators to new ideas and cause to reject or ignore information that is contrary to communicators prevailing belief.

- **Prejudice:** A prejudice is an opinion held by a person for whom there is no rational basis or valid reason. It can be against something or someone, or in favor of it, but it becomes a barrier to a meaningful communication. Prejudices are based on ignorance and lack of information, e.g., prejudices about certain communities or groups of people.
- **Self-image**: Every person has in her/his mind a certain image of herself/himself. S/he thinks of herself/himself in a certain way. This is their perception of themselves, their self-image. One's self-image is the product of one's heredity, one's environment, and one's experiences thus every person's self-image is unique and different from the others. Self-image can create a barrier because we accept the communication, which is compatible with our self-image. We avoid or reject communication, which goes against our perception of ourselves.
- **Closed mind:** A closed mind is one that refuses to accept an idea or opinion on a subject because it is different from his idea. Such persons form their opinion on a subject and then refuse to listen to anyone who has something different to say about it. A closed mind may be the result of some past experience or just habit. It is very difficult to remove this psychological barrier.
- **Status:** Status refers to rank or position. It could be economic, social or professional status. In any organization, hierarchy creates differences in rank, and this is a normal situation. Thus, status by itself does not cause barriers; but when a person becomes too conscious of his status, whether high or low, then status becomes a barrier. For instance, in a

business organization, a senior executive who is unduly conscious of his seniority will not communicate properly with his juniors, and will refrain from giving them the required information. Similarly, if a junior is acutely conscious of his junior status, he will avoid communicating with his seniors, even when it is necessary

- **Inattentiveness and Impatience**: Sometimes the receiver may not pay attention to the sender's message, or he may be too impatient to hear the message fully and properly. Such barriers are common in oral communication.

Cross-cultural Barriers

Culture is a shared set of values and attributes of a group of people. Cultural diversity within a country and cultural differences between people from different countries are a major cause of barriers. This is because people are conditioned by their cultures, and they develop certain habits of working, communicating, eating, dressing etc. according to their cultural conditioning. They find it difficult to get through to people who come from a different culture, and who have different habits. A simple thing like a greeting to a person is vastly different in India from a greeting in an Arab country, or in Japan. Food and dress habits of a different culture can make a person uncomfortable. Concepts of space and time are also different across cultures; for example, Indians do not mind sitting close to each other and sharing space in offices or in public places. However, a European would not be able to tolerate such intrusive behavior. Similarly, people who come from a culture where time is very valuable will be impatient with those who come from a culture with an easygoing attitude towards time, where everything is done in a slow, unhurried way. These factors create the cultural barrier in the workplace such as cultural diversity, time, space, food, manners, and decision-making.

Personal Barriers

Personal Barriers relate to the sender and receiver and act as a hindrance in the communication process. These factors include the life experiences, emotions, attitudes, behavior that hinders the ability of a person to communicate.

- **Lack of communication skills**: If the speaker is unable to present the message in an effective way, the audience will not give attention to the speaker. Lack of communication skill can break down the communication process.

- **Poor listening skills:** There is a difference between 'listening' and 'hearing'. Active listening means hearing with a proper understanding of the message that is being conveyed. By asking questions, the speaker can find out whether his/her message is understood or not by the receiver in the manner that was intended by the speaker.
- **Selective attention:** This problem arises when the person is impatient and put his objective above all. S/he gives ears to only that part of the information, which is helpful for him/her objective and ignores all the other aspects of message.
- **Lack of knowledge:** The communication process suffers if the sender and receiver have less knowledge about the subject matter to be communicated.
- **Lack of vocabulary:** The communication problem arises when the sender uses some words, which are difficult for the receiver to comprehend correctly.

Organizational Barriers

The Organizational barriers refer to the hindrances in the flow of information among the employees that might result in a commercial failure of an organization.

- **Complexity in Organizational Structure:** Greater the hierarchy in an organization (i.e. more the number of managerial levels), more is the chances of communication getting destroyed. Only the people at the top level can see the overall picture while the people at low level just have knowledge about their own area and a little knowledge about other areas.
- **Organizational Facilities:** The organizational facilities mean the telephone, stationery, translator, etc., which are being provided to employees to facilitate communication. When these facilities are adequately offered to the employees, then the communication is said to be timely, accurate and according to the need. Whereas, in the absence of such facilities, the communication may get adversely affected.

- **Organizational rules and policies:** The organizational policy defines the relationship between the employees and the way they will communicate with each other maintaining their levels of position in the organization. Such as, if the company policy is that all the communication should be done in written from, then even for a small message the medium should be delivered in written form. This leads to a delay in the transmission of the message. Such rule of organization makes the decision-making delay.

Characteristics of Good Communication

The communication should be effective to meet its purpose. The good communication should adhere the certain characteristics to make the message effective and efficient. The essential features of effective communication help for productive communication. The chief principles or characteristics of an effective communication system are as follows:

- Clearness and integrity of the message to be conveyed
- Understanding the recipient
- Accurate plan of objectives
- Reliability and uniformity of the message
- Knowing the main purpose of the message
- Proper response or feedback
- Adherence to the facts
- Awareness of body language
- Provision of proper feedback
- A Positive attitude
- Selection of proper medium to convey the message
- Asking for clarification, when necessary
- Effective listening

Key Points

- Communication is an act of sharing one's ideas, emotions, attitudes, or perceptions with another person or group of persons through written or spoken words, gestures, signals, signs, or other modes of transmitting images.

- The communication can be classified on the basis of the medium, its flow, formality, and a number of people involved in it.
- The objectives or purposes of communications are persuading, informing, exchanging message, building image, counseling, directing, motivating employees, advising, maintaining co-ordination and co-operation, formulating and implementing plans, and developing relations.
- The scope of communication is not only limited in certain filed; it is important in various fields such as business, decision making, management, social life, personal life, government activities, international relations, industrial relations, etc.
- In present advanced age of science and technology, there are various methods of communication using different tools such as social media, internet, emails, telephones, etc.
- The communication process is exchanging verbal and non-verbal messages, which begins with a sender's desire to share or exchange an idea, though, or feeling to the receiver. It involves a sender, a message, a medium, and a receiver.
- The essential elements of the communication process are context, sender, encoding, message, channel, receiver, decoding, and feedback.
- The 7C's of communication are clarity, completeness, conciseness, concreteness, correctness, courtesy, and consideration.
- The barriers to communication can be categorized under the topic of physical barrier, language and semantic barrier, cultural barrier, psychological barrier, personal and organizational barrier.

Review Questions

1. Why communication is important for a good relationship and effective management?
2. What do you mean by an interpersonal communication?

3. Mention the barriers to communication briefly.
4. What are the seven C's of communication?
5. How do you define communication?
6. What is the role of communication in the management of business?
7. What are the different purposes of communication? Briefly explain any five of them.
8. Discuss the different situations when the communication exists.
9. "Communication is an exchange of facts, ideas, opinions, and emotions by two or more persons." Explain the statement and discuss the role of feedback in communication.
10. "Communication is the two-way process." Explain.
11. Discuss the elements of the communication process.

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