

Forms of Communication

The oral and written communication may take a number of shapes or forms depending upon the situation. The following list presents some possible and commonly used ones in communication in different directions.

Forms of communication

1. Downward Communication

Oral

1. Personal instructions
2. Lectures, conferences and meetings
3. Interviews, counseling
4. Social and cultural affairs
5. Grapevine; rumors

Written

1. Orders and instructions
2. Letters, memos, circulars
3. Bulletin and notice boards
4. Posters
5. Hand books and manuals
6. Annual reports
7. House organs
8. Union publications

2. Upward Communication

Oral

1. Face-to-face conversation
2. Interviews
3. Meetings and conferences
4. Social and cultural affairs
5. Grapevine, rumors
6. Union channels
7. Telephone and other devices

Written

1. Reports
2. Personal letters
3. Grievances
4. Suggestions system
5. Complaints system
6. Attitude and moral surveys
7. Union publications

3. Horizontal Communication

Oral

1. Lectures, conferences, meetings
2. Telephone and other devices
3. Social and cultural affairs
4. Grapevine, rumors
5. Grapevine, rumors

Written

1. Letters, memos, reports
2. House organ
3. Handbooks and manuals
4. Annual reports
5. Union publications

Of these, it is not necessary that all of these would be used in a particular organisation, but it will be determined by the organisational needs, its size and resources, management attitude towards these forms, etc.

Direction of Communication

Communication requires two parties, the sender and the receiver, their juxtaposition vis-a-vis each other determining in the organisation context, the particular dimension of the

communication flow. Thus, the communication flow within the organisation may be inter-scalar when two parties are at the different managerial levels or inter-scalar when they are at the same hierarchical level - this is also known as horizontal communication. The inter-scalar communication may again be classified as downward, when the message flows from the higher to lower level, or upward when it is the other way round.

i). Downward Communication

Downward Communication within the organization flows from a superior either in the same line of command or in the different one. It stands out as a great force for controlling, influencing and indicating activities of organization members. Communication in this category includes (1) orders and instructions about job, (2) directions about understanding of job and its relationships with other jobs, (3) organisational policies and procedures, (4) feedback of subordinates' performance, (5) reprimands, criticisms, etc., and (6) questions inviting upward communication. In the organisation, people at lower levels, have a high degree of fear and respect towards such communication, which leads to high degree of acceptance of such communication. Coordination, distortion and resistance are three important problems that characterize the downward communication process.

ii). Upward Communication

Upward communication flows from a subordinate position to a superior position. It includes information about (i) subordinates' work performance (ii) problems relating to work, (iii) performance appraisal of their subordinates, (iv) feedback of understanding of orders, instructions, etc., (v) clarifications of orders, etc., (vi) opinions, attitude, feeling, etc., (vii) procedures, methods, practices followed in doing the work, (viii) criticisms, (ix) new ideas and suggestions, and (x) personal and family problems. Upward communication is more susceptible to various obstructions and bottlenecks discussed later on, because of its special nature. Managers, often times, fail to realise that upward communication cannot be taken for granted, as is the case with downward communication. This is so because, unlike downward communication, upward communication is devoid of any support of managerial hierarchy. On the contrary, it has to flow in a direction directly opposite to the flow of official authority, from the dependent subordinates to the superiors or whom they (subordinates) are directly or indirectly dependent for the satisfaction for their needs. As such, there is a strong possibility of upward information being distorted or coloured. It is interesting to note that colouring takes place primarily in upward communication, because this direction of flow carries managerial control information.

iii). Horizontal Communication

It is the flow of information between persons of the same hierarchical level. Formal organisation provides for horizontal communication by means of right of persons at any level to consult or work with others at the same level. Communication among peers, in addition to providing task coordination, also furnishes emotional and social support to the individual. Horizontal communication is impeded in the organisation that overstresses functional departmentalization. The creation of functional departments or units creates problems of coordination and communication between members of such units. Some companies develop committee structure near the top level of the organisation to assist the chief executive in achieving coordination and better horizontal communication in terms of control function in the organisation. Horizontal communication, if in operation at various levels in an organisation, is a real check on the power of the top leaders.

BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION

In between the communicator and the receiver, certain barriers considerably affect the quality of information transmission. Some of the major barriers are discussed below.

1) Expression

2) Interpretation

3) Response

These are the crucial points in communication. If the expression is not clear, the interpretation will be inaccurate and the response improper, thus one's effort to communicate will not succeed. In other words, if the source does not have adequate or clear information if the message is not encoded fully, accurately, effectively in transmittable signs; if these are not transmitted fast enough and accurately enough, despite interference and competition, to the desired receiver; if the message is not decoded in a pattern that corresponds to the encoding; and finally if the destination is unable to handle the decoded message so as to produce the desired response, then, obviously, the system is working at less than top efficiency.

Other barriers in Communication

1. Filtering

Because of the many other concerns which constantly influence our ability to concentrate on what we hear, the average listener will normally "filter out" certain things that he hears. They will simply ignore a point made by the speaker, as though it had never been presented. This can be deliberate or unintended.

2. Distortion

For the same reason, the human mind can also distort what it hears. It is an unconscious process. Every person tends to remember best what agrees with his own values.

3. Communication Overload

Our minds can receive and retain only a limited amount of information without showing strain. This is called channel capacity. This ability can vary with different audiences. Overloading the system will in effect blow the mental fuse and defensively shut down the communication process.

4. Absence of Redundancy

It is the use of repetition. Even under the best condition an audience can have problems grasping or fully appreciating the significance of something new which has been presented to them. By repeating it, or by illustrating it or by restating the same point in different ways a speaker can make it easier for an audience to understand and retain the information passed on by the speaker.

Barriers to Communication in an organization

- ❖ Lack of communication policy

- ❖ Past attitude and lapses on the part of the management to keep promises. This gives rise to credibility gap.
- ❖ Legal limitations
- ❖ Unfavourable climate
- ❖ Poor listening
- ❖ Poor strategy of communication
- ❖ Allowing the 'grape vine' to go wild
- ❖ Over confidence in one's ability to know what others are thinking
- ❖ Underestimating the intelligence and overestimating the fund of knowledge of the listeners
- ❖ Lack of clarity
- ❖ Too many items in the same message
- ❖ Too many links in the circulation chain resulting in loss of details and in distortion.
- ❖ Lack of motivation
- ❖ Failure to seek an instant response and lack of follow up
- ❖ Neglect in the use or misuse of available media.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AL3iRmVAiiE&feature=player_detailpage