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1. COMMUNICATION BASICS

1.1. Meaning and Definition

We all use the word 'communication' often in our daily lives. We generally say there was a communication gap when misunderstandings occur or when we play the game 'Chinese whisper'. I am sure you must have played this game during your childhood. You must have noticed that when we whisper a phrase for example 'why are you unhappy'; by the time it reaches the last person he might hear it as 'change his nappy'. So you see if communication is not proper the meaning altogether changes. We should be able to convey the exact meaning of what we say.

Now tell me what do you understand by the word 'communication'?
Most of the time we are in one situation or another that involves communication. Even then it is worthwhile to make an attempt to understand the exact meaning and nature of this most important activity of ours. The word 'communicate comes from the Latin verb. 'Communicate' that means to impart, to participate, to share or to make common. By virtue of its Latin origin it is also the source of the English word 'common'. Whatever is common is shared by all. Hence the sense of 'sharing' is inherent in the very origin and nature of communication.

Communication is, indeed, sharing; sharing of ideas and feelings between two or more persons. We, the human beings, being social creatures, do need to convert our ideas to our friends, neighbors, colleagues and subordinates. This activity of sharing our mind with others may take place for several purposes. It may be an order, an advice, a reprimand, an information, a question and so on. Since communication presupposes a definite objective, it has its won science and art. One must learn and practice the skill of effective communication in order to succeed in the modern world.

And, what is it that we share in communication? The one word answer is – 'information', i.e., something to tell, in whatever way we like, or, as the situation demands.

Why is communication important in society?

Social Aspect

It is, in this way, a social activity. In society we share our thoughts, feelings, emotions, reactions, propositions, facts and figures with individuals as well as group at all levels, higher, lower or equal. Communication is, in fact, the most important of all our activities it has helped us to organize ourselves as a civilized society. In a civilized society there are well-defined roles for all and one. The only way to play these roles is through communication. All communications is based on, and is guided by role-relationships. Only when we understand and appreciate these role-relationships can we successfully communicate. In the words of John Adair "Communication is essentially the ability of one person to make contact with another and to make himself or herself understood. Or, if you prefer a slightly more formal version, communication is the process by which meanings are exchanged between people through the use of a common set of symbols".

Ingredients of Communication
The important words to note in the definitions given above are
✓ Process

- ✓ Meaning
- ✓ Exchange
- ✓ People
- ✓ Common set of symbols.

A process, by definition or simple explanation, is 'a systematic series of actions, operation of series of change directed to some end." The process of communication leads to a desired result as, for example, in the execution of an order, production of a report, a telephone conversation, a memorandum etc. If we think seriously about this process and try to isolate its ingredients we get the following picture.

Key Elements	Notes
Participants	The persons who are communicating have to be in touch with each other.
Medium or common language	Both parties to communication must share a common language or means of communication
Transmission of the information	The message has to be imparted clearly.
Decoding or Understanding	The message has to be received properly, understood and interpreted

It means, therefore, that in the process of communication two or more person must participate through a medium that carries the information or message for a particular purpose mutually understood by both the sender and the receiver. Only when these conditions are fulfilled a significant communicative situation will take shape and what transpires between the two parties, viz., the sender and the receiver, whether spoken or written, will be the communicative event. The importance these communicative events cannot be over-emphasized. They are the very lifeline of any organization.
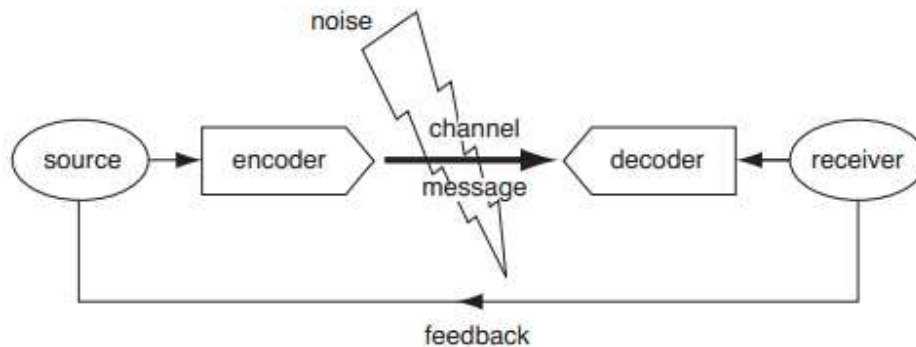
How do we communicate?
The Communication Process although all of us have been communicating with others since our infancy, the process of transmitting information from an individual (or group) to another is a very complex process with many sources of potential error

Communication is the exchange of information, ideas and knowledge between sender and receiver through an accepted code of symbols. It is a two way process. The process is as

- ✓ an information source or sender, which produces a message
- ✓ a transmitter or encoding , which encodes the message into signals
- ✓ a channel, to which signals are adapted for transmission
- ✓ a receiver or decoding, which decodes the message from the signal
- ✓ a destination or receiver, where the message arrives.
- ✓ noise, is any interference with the message traveling along the channel

For the telephone, the channel is a wire, the signal is an electrical current, and the transmitter and receiver are the handsets. Noise would include crackling from the wire. Feedback would include the dialing tone, which tells you that the line is 'live'. In a conversation, my brain is the source and your brain is the receiver. The encoder might be the language I use to speak with you; the decoder

is the language you use to understand me. Noise would include any distraction you might experience as I speak. Feedback would include your responses to what I am saying: gestures, facial expressions and any other signals I pick up that give me some sense of how you are receiving my message. The communication process can be depicted as

Part of the Process of Change

In this connection it is important to note that the world is changing fast, and with it every organization is becoming more and more sophisticated. So, communication has first of all to be given due recognition as an integral part of the process of change. Whenever a change in the direction of technology, structures, objectives etc is called for it becomes easier with the help of communication. Most of the management problems arise because of lack of effective communication. If the communication system is properly devised the chances of misrepresentation or misunderstanding are minimized. If the managers are not ware of the relations and feelings of their subordinates their planning will collapse and numerous obstacles will crop up. Today, technology is highly advanced and the people are supposed to be up to date in every respect. But undue emphasis on profit motive lead to many complication, first and foremost of them being the human problems. They are far more critical than the technological problems. It is communication that helps solve these problems. In the words of Allen, "Communication involves a systematic and continuous process of telling, listening and understanding" There is general agreement that we can't share our thoughts and ideas directly with others. We adopt a process of coding and decoding. It goes like this. I feel like eating jelebies. How do I communicate this to my mother? I put this thought into a verbal code and transmit it through the oral channel:" Momma can you make some roundish?" Momma is the code accepted by everyone at home for "mother". So when I say "Momma" my mother knows I am calling her rather than father or sister or brother. When I say "can you make", I am using one of the codes available to stand for a polite request. And "roundish" is the code we have at home for jelebies. So mother decodes my request accurately. If a guest happens to be around, he will be able to decode only a part of it, that is, I am asking my mother to make something. He can't go much further than that with any certainty because he doesn't know what roundish is a code for at home.

Knowledge of the code – usually language- helps one code ones message for others and decode others messages. Poor knowledge of the code can make the process of coding and decoding defective. This will impair communication. Consider the games we play with communication. Consider the roundabout way in which we generally communicate. Let's see how many different meanings can be projected through the simple sentence " Pankaj the door is open". Here are few. We can read several more meanings into that string of five words if we put it in different contexts.

- ✓ Please come in.
- ✓ Please leave. I am not holding you back.
- ✓ Let's go in.
- ✓ Please close the door.
- ✓ Why didn't you close the door? (How many times I have asked you to?)
- ✓ The maid has been careless again.
- ✓ What a stroke of luck! We don't need to break it.
- ✓ Speak softly; someone might hear what you are saying.

Why do we say 'Pankaj, the door is open', when we can clearly say' Pankaj I am angry that you didn't close the door, or Pankaj, please close the door'? There seems to be something more to communication than coding our message and expecting others to decode it correctly. Perhaps we want our messages to be clear but not so clear that nothing is left to imagination. Perhaps we don't want our messages to be open that there is no escape route if we change our mind. Perhaps we are not very clear about our own messages. We are quite used to vagueness and ambiguities in others and ourselves. Life would be boring if everybody was an open book. Our communicative behavior ensures

That there will always be suspense.
After all this discussion what do you feel is the purpose of Internal and External communication?

Purpose of Internal Communication
Taking all these factors into account we realize that no organization can function satisfactory or achieve its goals without effective communication that operates both internal and externally. Internally it is important because it integrates the managerial functions. The most important of these functions are:
- ✓ Establishing and dissemination of the goals of an enterprise.
- ✓ Development plans for their achievement.
- ✓ Organizing human and other resources in the most effective and efficient way.
- ✓ Selecting, developing and appraising members of the organization.
- ✓ Leading, directing, motivating and creating a climate in which people want to contribute their best, and
- ✓ Controlling performance.

Purpose of External Communication Externally, communication relates an enterprise to the environment outside. It is though information exchange that managers become aware of the needs of customer, the availability of suppliers, the claims of stock-holders, the regulation of governments, and the concerns of a community. It is through communication that any organization becomes an open system interacting with its environment and responds to it fruitfully, purposefully and desirably. Just to take one example, it cannot be forgotten that the customer, who is the most important entity for all business, exists outside a company. It is through the communication system that the needs of the customers are identified. The knowledge of his need enables the company to provide products and services profitably. In the same way, it is through effective communication that the organization becomes aware of competition and other potential; threats and constraining factors. After all, no enterprise can thrive in a vacuum.

Now it must be clear how important effective communication is. It is the very life blood of all business. No communication, no business. Even then very often problems, serious and not so serious, arise because of something going wrong in communication. These are innumerable instances of miscommunication, miscommunication, incomplete communication, misconstructed communication and so on. Managers often complain about communication breakdowns as one of their most important problem. Specialists in the field have made serious studies regarding these problems and come up with useful insights into what have widely come to be known as 'barriers' to communication.

Before we go into these barriers it is worthwhile to have another, closer look at the process of communication. In the very beginning of this book communication has been defined as a "process by which meanings are exchanged between people though the use of a common set of symbols." A schematic or diagrammatic representation of this process is very much in order at this juncture. It can be shown as follows.
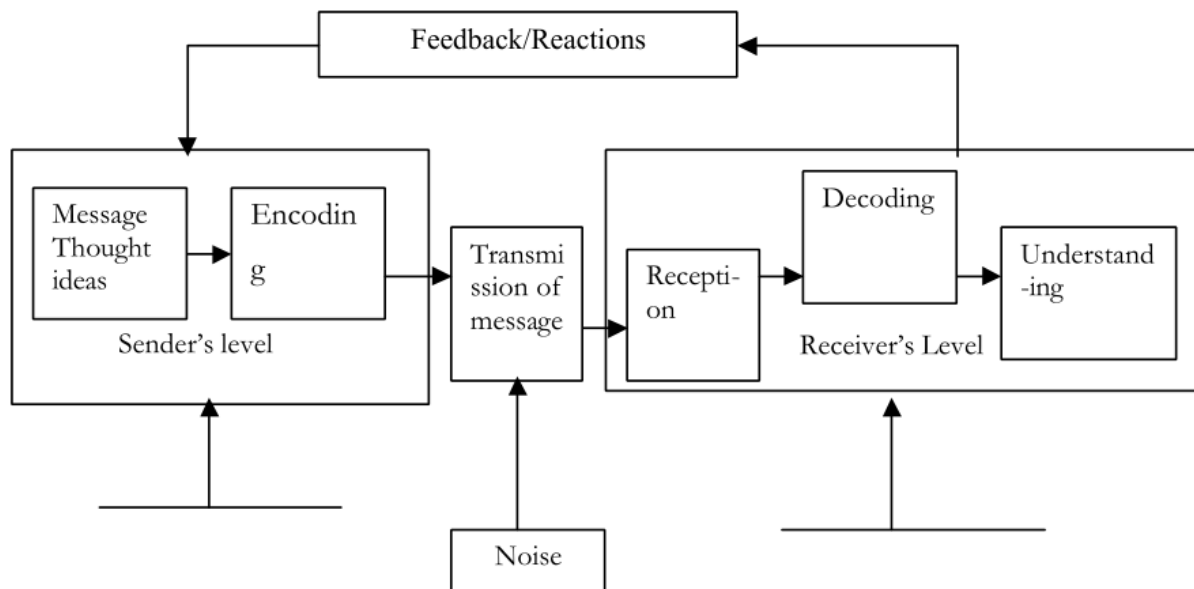
Features of Communication

Whatever the form or situation or event, all communication has some clearly identifiable features that can be stated as follows:

In the first place: communication is meaning-based. As has been very succinctly said by a specialist, "The most immediate need for communication is to be able to refer to a core of basic referents or things in the real world, that is, to be able to name things, states, events, attributes, using the words he or she knows". In addition, we must be able to link words together so as to make propositions. Hence, the need to be clear-headed about what we want to say

Secondly: it is important to note that all communication is conventional and, to a large extent, tradition-bound. As English, for example, dominates business worldwide, it is not only necessary for us to imbibe the conventions of English speech and writing, but also the time-honored traditions' of the organization to which we belong, whether a multinational corporation or traditional Indian family-owned organization or government Administrative Staff College of India,

"The relationship in communication provides a context for interaction. In almost all cases over time, the relationship between people expansively spreads beyond the functional interaction, encompassing other areas of their behavior and life. This leads to communication relationships that begin at the point of function, and then work beyond it".

Thirdly: all communication is interactional. It is the use of language to keep open the channels of communication between people and to establish suitable rapport. It is thus aimed largely at the need of speaker and hearer, or writer or receiver, to feel valued and approved of.

Fourthly: communication is always supposed to be appropriate. In all its forms it must take into account the relationship between speaker/writer and hearer/receiver, and the constraints imposed by the setting and circumstances, and selection of language/style/tone according to the age, rank and status of the participants in the communicative event. This will further depend on such factors as the age, sex, familiarity, and roles of speaker and hearer, or writer and receiver, which will determine whether a speaker adopts 'conversational' strategies implying either 'affiliation' or 'dominance', or in other words, the language he uses gives indications of his hierarchical status.

Fifthly: it must be noted that all communication is structured. Recent studies in communication regard every piece of communication, whether spoken or written, as a genre, look into the pattern of its information-structuring or logical organization and come up with useful inference for the consumption of the corporate world. A classic example is that of administrative or commercial letter-that which communicates an administrative decision. The letter may communicate 'good news' ("Your application for promotion to the higher grade has been put up before the board of directors.") or it may communicate 'bad news' ("Your application has been rejected"). Both letters will probably be written in the same bureaucratic style but they will probably be organized very differently. The 'good news' letter will announce the award early, whereas the 'bad news' letter will prepare the ground by what is known as 'buffer statement' and the 'bad news' will come late.

Equally important is the difference between the purposes of the two letters beyond the shared superficial intent of providing information about success or failure of the application. The 'good news' letter will be constructed in such a way that the continuation of the correspondence is encouraged, whereas the other one will be designed to terminate the correspondence by giving the unlucky recipient the least possible scope for objection or complaint.

There is another level of structure that we may call process structure. When we talk or write, much of what we transmit is made up of words or phrases which indicate how what we arc going to say relates to what has already been said. For example, our reaction to an idea or opinion may be to expand it, to add something to it, to disagree with it, to substantiate it, to give a reason for it, or to explain it. The following are examples of phrases or words which may serve these functions:

✓ When it comes to that
✓ Yes but
✓ And another thing
✓ Well may be
✓ All the same
✓ Consequently
✓ In any case

- ✓ To give you an idea
- ✓ Anyway
- ✓ As a matter of fact
- ✓ To begin with

Conversational in Nature: All communication is by nature conversation, and the examples given above are called 'conversational gambits'. They signal directions and relations within discourse or the communicative event. Evidence suggests that these contribute significantly to an impression of fluency in conversation writing. In simpler words we may say that these words and phrases are the linking devices that help the logical progression of the speaker/writer's intention. They must, therefore, be carefully marked in any piece of writing or speech, business or otherwise. In this way we see that there are two levels of the structure of communication-macro and micro. The macro-structure is seen in the ordering of different or related points of information or message. The microstructure is seen in the ordering of sentences or utterances by means of the linking devices. Anybody aiming at effective communication must be conscious of both these levels imbibe the best of both and try his best to achieve the desired result.

1.2. Dimensions of Communication

Introduction

Communication is multidimensional or multidirectional. There are various directions in which it flows. In order to have an idea of how it works in a typical organization it is worthwhile having a look at its levels of operation. It usually takes the form of a pyramid like the one shown here in a large manufacturing and marketing organization.
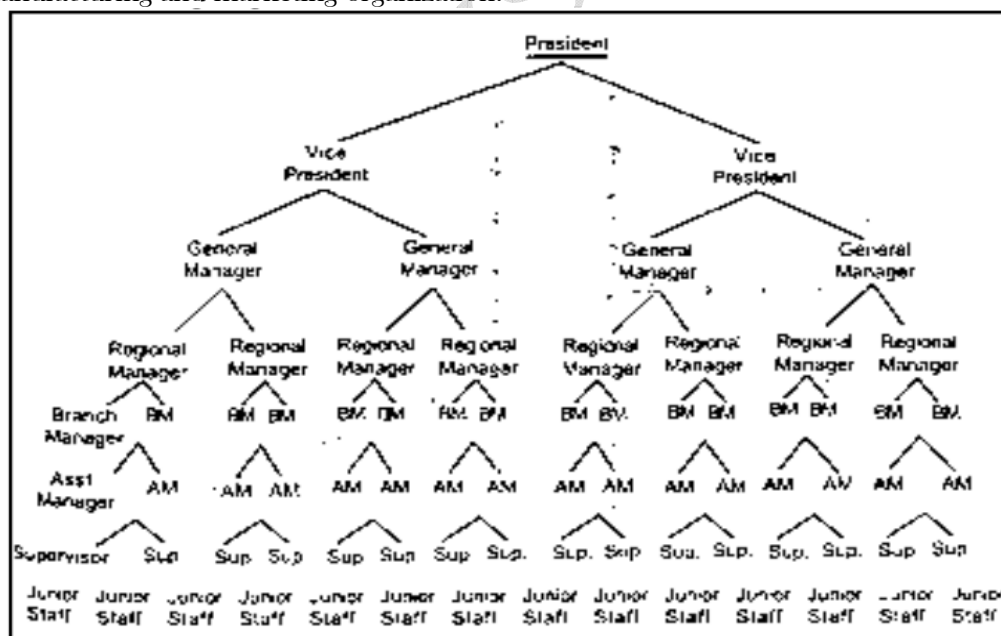
This is a large organization, having eight layers. There may be more layers/levels/tiers or less, all of them being bound or held together by communication. The arrow lines in the pyramid show the following directions of communications:

Downward Communication: Any organization has an inbuilt hierarchical system. In the first instance, communication invariably flows downwards. That is why traditional downward communication was highlighted and emphasized. It originated in the assumption that the people operating at higher levels have the authority to communicate to the people at the lower levels. Hence this kind of communication exists especially in organizations with an authoritarian atmosphere. Whether one likes this kind of atmosphere or not, if would be difficult to conceive of any organization without downward communication. A sample representation of downward communication can be stated as follows:

Problems of Downward Communication

While issuing instructions or sending letters, every CEO or General Manager assumes that what he intends to communicate invariably reaches the persons it is intended for and understood. But unfortunately it is not always so. Information is quite often lost or distorted in the course of its journey down the chain of command. In fact, many directives or instructions are not understood or even read. It is, therefore, to be always kept in mind that mere issuance of policies and procedures do not ensure communication. That is why, a feedback system becomes essential. For any communicative purpose to be served, it is essential to find out whether the receiver of the message or information has understood it, or perceived it, in the same way as intended by the sender.

Another problem that very often comes up is that the down- ward flow of information through different levels of the organization is time-consuming. The more the levels, the more the chances of delay or dilution of information the delay may sometimes be so frustrating that some top managers make it a point to send the information or message or instruction directly to the person or group concerned.

Moreover, downward communication is likely to be filtered, modified or distorted at any or each level as managers decide what should be passed down to their employees.

The accuracy of the information is quite likely to be limited by status and power differences between manager and employee, and lack of trust.

Sometimes managers withhold information in order to keep the employees dependent on them. The net result is that, in the absence of complete information, employees may feel confused, uninformed, or powerless and might fail to carry out their tasks properly. It may lead to unnecessary conflict and spoil the employer-employee, supervisor-subordinate relations.

Upward Communication: The main function of upward communication is to supply information to the upper levels about what is happening at the lower levels. It is just the reverse of the previous dimension. It travels from the people at the bottom and reaches the upper levels of the organization structure. Unfortunately, there is very little appreciation of this form of communication as it does not fit into the traditional concepts of organization behavior according to which the right to communicate was supposed to have been vested in the higher ups only. Upward communication is essentially participative in nature and can flourish only in democratic organizational environment. And only in such an environment it can satisfy the need of the upper levels of management to know specifically about production performance, marketing information,

financial data, what lower level employees are thinking and feeling about the whole or part of the business.

In the words of Koontz, "Typical means for upward communication-besides the chain of command-are suggestion systems, appeal and grievance procedures, complaint systems, counseling sessions, joint setting of objectives, the grapevine, group meetings, the practice of open-door policy, morale questionnaires, exit interviews and ombudsperson".

Problems of Upward Communication: Certain problems do unnecessarily crop up in upward communication. They are primarily psycho- logical in nature. It is quite often seen that higher-ups do not like to be 'told' or even like to hear from their juniors anything against their wishes. Hence the piece of communication may quite often not even be allowed to go up. Or, it may be distorted or misrepresented. It may, in the absence of a healthy open door policy, be misinterpreted, misunderstood or suppressed. The employees may feel let down or become shy and reluctant to express themselves. In such a situation the communication event becomes a non- event. It is increasingly being taken care of by modern management that has come to appreciate the importance and right of the individual/groups of individuals to express.
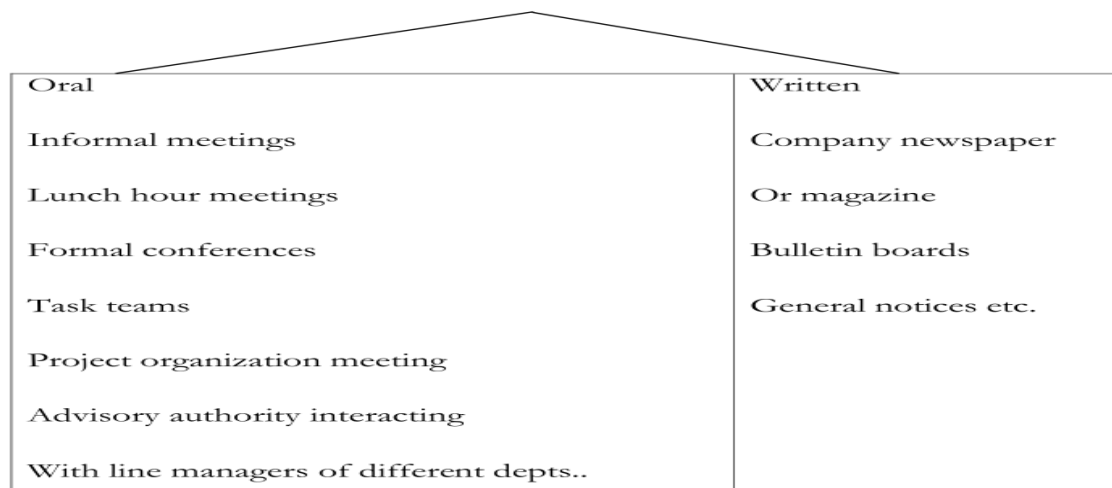
The Concept of Ombudsperson: In this connection it is worthwhile to discuss the concept of Ombudsperson (or Ombudsman that is a Swedish word meaning a commissioner appointed to investigate the com- plaints of private citizens against government officials or agencies). Till quite recent times this concept remained only in Sweden. But now many American companies are making very profitable use of it. They have established a position for a person who investigates employees' concerns. General Electric, Me Donnell Douglas and AT &T are just a few companies that are using the Ombudsperson for promoting upward communication. It provides valuable upward communication link and prevents scandals and legal costs by timely action on the part of the appropriate persons.

Lateral or Horizontal Communication: When communication takes place between two or more persons who are subordinates working under the same person, or those who are working on the same level, it is called lateral or horizontal communication. A good example of this kind of communication is that between functional managers. It is necessary for the reviewing of the activities assigned to various subordinates having identical positions. They are serving the organization in different capacities but their goals are common. Their interaction is necessary to maintain co-ordination. This variety of communication mostly takes place during committee meetings or conferences in which all members of the group, mostly peers, interact. During the course of interaction the views of each other are made known and decisions are arrived at. Here there are no superior subordinate relationships. The best example of lateral communication can be seen in the interaction of production and marketing departments. Strategies of marketing cannot be fruitful unless its plans are communicated to the production department. The marketing chief has to be in constant touch with the production chief in order to meet customer orders as per schedule.

Diagonal or Crosswise Communication: Diagonal or crosswise communication includes the horizontal flow of information as also that among persons at different levels who have no direct reporting relationships This kind of communication is used to speed information flow to improve understanding, and to coordinate efforts for the achievement of organizational objectives. It must be noted that a very great deal of communication does not follow the organizational hierarchy but

cuts across the well drawn lines. Diagonal or crosswise communication usually takes the following oral and written forms

Diagonal or crosswise communication

Oral	Written
Informal meetings	Company newspaper
Lunch hour meetings	Or magazine
Formal conferences	Bulletin boards
Task teams	General notices etc.
Project organization meeting	
Advisory authority interacting	
With line managers of different depts..	

In this type of communication, proper safeguards need to be taken to prevent potential problems. Special care has to be taken that (1) crosswise communication builds up appropriate crosswise relationships, (2) subordinates will refrain from making commitments beyond their authority, and (3) subordinates will keep their superiors informed of important interdepartmental activities. In brief, diagonal or crosswise communication may create difficulties, but it is a necessity in many enterprises in order to respond to the complex and dynamic organizational environment. In other words we may say that in order to secure efficiency in decision-making, all messages do not necessarily route through vertical channels of communication. Organizations also build up environment for cross contacts.

1.3. Formal Vs. Informal

All communication takes some way, or passage through some well-defined, easily identifiable stages. Everyone is familiar with the phrase "through proper channel" that is used in almost all business letters' applications/representations. It means that the sender of the written communication means to pass it on to the addressee through somebody occupying an important position in the hierarchical system of the organization. The word 'channel' therefore, becomes synonymous with the position or point through which the communication passes. These positions or points exist at different levels in the pipeline.

Channels of communication may be classified into two categories:
✓ Formal
✓ Informal

Formal Channel of Communication: A formal channel of communication can be defined as a means of communication that is normally controlled by managers or people occupying similar positions in an organization. Any information, decision memo, reminder etc., will follow this path. For example, an executive 'A', occupying a top position, passé; an order to his immediate subordinate 'B' who, after retaining the useful information up to him, passes the desired order to the next man 'C' for necessary action and so on. In this way the channel is a formal one the same

way, communication may travel from below and pass through stages or points, again reinforcing the formal structure or character of the organization.

The Influence of Format Channels of Communication: The formal channels influence the effectiveness of communication primarily in two ways. In the first place the formal channels cover an ever-widening distance as organizations grow. For example, effective communication is generally far more difficult in a large retail organization with branches spread far and wide that in a small or big department store located at one place.

Secondly, the formal channels of communication can actually inhibit or stand in the way of free flow of information between organizational levels. For example, in a big factory, an assembly- line worker will communicate a problem to a supervisor rather that to the plant manager. Higher-level managers may some- times not even come to know something of vita importance as and when needed. On the positive side, there are many advantages also. The formal channels, by virtue of their tendency to monitor and filter information, keep the higher- level managers from getting bogged down with it

Informal Channel of Communication: By his very nature man cannot always have a highly formalized or regimented living. Logically he cannot and will not always communicate through formal channels alone. Side by side with the formal channel of communication, every organization has an equally effective channel of communication that is the informal channel. It is not officially sanctioned, and quite often it is even discouraged or looked down upon. But, then, it is very much there, and has been given the name 'grapevine' precisely because it runs in all directions- horizontal, vertical, diagonal. As the management experts put it, it "flows around water coolers, down hallways, through lunch rooms, and wherever people get together in groups".

It shows that the people are almost always looking forward to an opportunity to get together. Man is essentially gregarious by nature. The lower we go down the pyramid of the organization the more manifest this gregariousness becomes. There are strong socio-psychological reasons for it. The most important reason is the intense, irrepressible desire to communicate, to talk, to share one's feelings and thought, or just to gossip or to indulge in small talk. This gossip or small talk may, and very often, does, carry some important information. It may even 'manufacture' some piece of information and get the rumor mill working. Every organization has a rumor mill. Every worker, every office goes and above all every manager has to get used to it.

Factors Responsible for the Grapevine Phenomenon
The grapevine becomes hyperactive when the following factors prevail:
- ✓ Feeling of uncertainty or lack of sense of direction when the organization is passing through a difficult period.
- ✓ Feeling of inadequacy or lack of self-confidence on the part of the employees, leading to the formation of groups.
- ✓ Formation of a coterie, clique or favored group by the manager, giving other employees a feeling of insecurity or isolation.

Any worker operating in such circumstances will be filled with ideas and will at least whisper to likeminded friends at whatever level he finds them. Mostly they find them at their own level,

though groupings including other levels are not ruled out. It is a very subtle and interesting phenomenon now being seriously studied and analyzed by psychologists and management experts.

Types of Grapevine Chains

Keith Davis has identified four types of grapevine chains that can be enumerated as follows:

- ✓ **Single-strand chain:** In this type of chain 'A' tells something to 'B' who tells it to 'C' and so on it goes down the line. This chain is the least accurate in passing on the information.
- ✓ **Gossip chain:** In it one person seeks out and tells everyone the information he or she has obtained. This chain is often used when information or a message regarding an interesting but 'non-job-related' nature is being conveyed.
- ✓ **Probability chain:** In this type of chain individuals are indifferent to, or not really interested in, the persons to whom they are passing some information. They just tell at random, and those people in turn tell others at random. This chain is found when the information is somewhat interesting but not really significant.
- ✓ **Cluster chain:** In this type of chain 'A' tells something to a few selected individuals, and then some of these individuals inform a few other selected individuals. Davis is of the opinion that the cluster chain is the dominant grapevine pattern in an organization. Generally only a few individuals, called, liaison individuals', pass on the information they have come upon, and then they are likely to share it with the people they trust or from whom they would like favors. It has been observed that generally the information they pass on is immediately interesting or relevant to them, job-related, and above all, timely. Most of informal communication takes place through this chain.

Merits of the Grapevine

- ✓ **Speedy Transmission:** The greatest feature of the grapevine is that it transmits information at a remarkably fast speed. Everyone knows that a rumors travels or spreads like wild fire. The moment a worker comes to know that something is labeled as 'top secret' or 'confidential' he becomes curious to look into it or have a sniff of it and passes it on to his very first close bosom friend. And then, from him to another, it spreads within minutes. Managers have been known to distribute information through planned "leaks" or carefully used "just-between-you-and-me' remarks.
- ✓ **Feedback Value:** It is above all through the grapevine that the managers or top bosses of an organization get the feedback regarding their policies, decisions, memos etc. The feedback reaches them much faster through the informal channel than through the formal channel. Through the grapevine the managers come to know the pulse of the organization.
- ✓ **Support to Other Channels:** The grapevine functions as a supplementary or parallel channel of communication. The officially recognized or sacred or formal channel takes not only more time in carrying information, but also imposes certain constraints on the process of communication. So, whatever is deemed to be unsuitable for official channel can be very success- fully transmitted through the grapevine.
- ✓ The grapevine gives immense psychological satisfaction and strengthens the solidarity of the workers. While the purely formal channel will put them off, the grapevine draws them near to each other, thus keeping the organization intact as a social entity.

Demerits of Grapevine

- ✓ There is something inbuilt in the very nature of the grapevine that makes it less credible than the formal channels of communication. Since it spreads or transits information by word of mouth it cannot always be taken seriously. On the other hand it is also very likely to be contradicted. So it is not very dependable.
- ✓ The grapevine does not always carry the complete information. As it is very often based on guesswork or 'whispers' in the corridors it may not give the receiver the complete picture of the situation or the whole message.
- ✓ The grapevine may, and indeed often does, distort the information. As it is entirely unofficial, informal and unauthenticated it may cast aspersion on anybody or impute motives to the most well-meaning of the people. As its origin lies in the rumors mill it may spread any kind of stories about highly responsible people, even at the risk of spoiling the image of the organization.
- ✓ The speed with which the grapevine spreads may also at times prove counterproductive. Ideally any message or information or policy decision should take its own course and time. But once it leaks it may damage the reputation of the organization or upset the plans of the managers.

Effective use of the Grapevine

With the above points in mind one can always realize the urgent need to use the grapevine effectively. After all we have to learn to live with it. We cannot wish it away. So, a tactful manager has to take some positive measures to get the best out of this informal channel of communication. Given below are a few important points in this regard:

- ✓ In the first place a tactful manager will keep the employees well-informed about organizational policy matters, plans and prospects. This will check the tendency of speculation that can sometimes assume dangerous proportions because of the elements of fear and anxiety on the part of the employees.
- ✓ Fruitful group activities that enhance self-worth and update knowledge should be held as frequently as possible. This will not only boost the morale and self-confidence of the workers but also check their inclination to indulge in small talk.
- ✓ The manager should, as far as possible, have an open-door policy without giving the impression of cheap popularity or favoritism.
- ✓ The manager should create a healthy environment where there is room for personal talk. But it must be made clear that work is of paramount importance. Nothing should be allowed to interfere with the progress of the organization. For this purpose regular timings should be fixed up for meetings with the employees.
- ✓ The manager must tactfully identify the leaders and win their confidence so as to feel the pulse of their followers.
- ✓ As far as possible the employees, through their leaders, should be associated with decision-making. This will frustrate any negative aspect of the grapevine.
- ✓ The manager must keep trying to get clues about his style of functioning through regular interaction with the employees in as tactful, diplomatic manner as possible.
- ✓ Rumor mongering aimed at character assassination or maligning somebody in the organization should not be encouraged. Showing distaste for such talk will earn praise for the manager's leadership qualities.
- ✓ A manager must learn to be a good listener. In this connection it is worthwhile to enumerate the four types of listening that are as follows:
- ✓ Discriminative listening
- ✓ Evaluative listening

✓ Appreciative listening, and
✓ Empathic listening.

Unfortunately empathic listening is the least practiced by managers. They may be, and mostly they are, too busy to listen empathetically. That means sharing the speaker's feelings. But they should not forget that this is a 'relief-seeking conversation, and therefore very important to build up meaningful human relations. It does not require any regular training as a psychologist. But today's manager can always benefit from the insight of modern psycho-analytical research and learn to practice informal empathic listening.

1.4. Barriers of Communication

A man goes to his doctor and says, "I don't think my wife's hearing is as good as it used to be. What should I do?" The doctor replies: "Try this test to find out for sure. When your wife is in the kitchen doing dishes, stand fifteen feet behind her and ask her a question. If she doesn't respond, keep moving closer asking the questions until she hears you."

The man goes home and sees his wife preparing dinner. He stands fifteen feet behind her and asks, "What's for dinner, honey?" No response. He moves closer to her and asks again: no response. Just five feet behind her; yet no answer finally he stands directly behind her and says, "Honey, what's for supper?" She says, "For the fourth time, I SAID CHICKEN!"

There are a wide number of sources of noise or interference that can enter into the communication process. This can occur when people know each other very well and should understand the sources of error. In a work setting, it is even more common since interactions involve people who not only don't have years of experience with each other, but communication is complicated by the complex and often conflicting relationships that exist at work. In a work setting, the following suggests a number of sources of noise:

✓ **Language:** The choice of words or language in which a sender encodes a message will influence the quality of communication. Because language is a symbolic representation of a phenomenon, there is room for interpretation and distortion of the meaning exists. In the above example, the Boss uses language (this is the third day you've missed) that is likely to convey far more than objective information. To Terry will be interpreted different by each different person. Meaning has to be given to words and many factors affect how an individual will attribute meaning to particular words. It is important to note that no two people will attribute the exact same meaning to the same words.
✓ Defensiveness, distorted perceptions, guilt, project, transference, distortions from the past
✓ Misreading of body language, tone and other non-verbal forms of communication (see section below)
✓ Noisy transmission (unreliable messages, inconsistency)
✓ Receiver distortion: Selective hearing, ignoring non-verbal cues
✓ Power struggles
✓ Self-fulfilling assumptions
✓ Language-different levels of meaning
✓ Managers hesitation to be candid
✓ Assumptions-eg. Assuming others see situation same as you, has same feelings as you

- ✓ Distrusted source, erroneous translation, value judgment, state of mind of two people
- ✓ Perceptual biases: People attend to stimuli in the environment in very different ways. We each have shortcuts that we use to organize data. Invariably, these shortcuts introduce some biases into communication. Some of these shortcuts include stereotyping, projection, and self- fulfilling prophecies. Stereotyping is one of the most common. This is when we assume that the other person has certain characteristics based on the group to which they belong without validating that they in fact have these characteristics.
- ✓ Interpersonal relationships: How we perceive communication is affected by the past experience with the individual. Perception is also affected by the organizational relationship two people have. For example, communication from a superior may be perceived differently than that from a subordinate or peer
- ✓ Cultural differences: Effective communication requires deciphering the basic values, motives, aspirations, and assumptions that operate across geographical lines. Given some dramatic differences across cultures in approaches to such areas as time, space, and privacy, the opportunities for miscommunication while we are in cross-cultural situations are plentiful.

Problems/barriers/breakdowns may arise at any of the following levels:
- ✓ The sender's level in
    - ✓ formulating/organizing thought, idea, message;
    - ✓ encoding the message
- ✓ The receiver's level in
    - ✓ receiving the message;
    - ✓ decoding the received message;
    - ✓ Understanding/interpreting the message.
- ✓ Transmission level where 'noise' occurs.
- ✓ The feedback/reaction level that is necessary condition of the completion of the entire process.

Noise: Unfortunately communication is very often affected/distorted blunted by noise that occurs primarily at the transmission level. Literally the word 'noise' means "interference that occurs in a signal and prevents you from hearing sounds properly". It is, therefore, the first major barrier to communication becomes difficult. Blaring of loudspeaker around is bound to interfere with our conversation, whether face to face or on telephone. In the same way a static in the transmission line, as in a poor telephone connection or faulty TV cable, distorts the sound signals and affects communication. In the same way some technical problem in the ultramodern communication systems or adverse weather conditions interfering with transmission may lead to major communication barriers/breakdowns.

Noise is not just all this. Its wider connotation includes many other factors that are likely to hinder communication. And these factors may exist at the level of the sender as well as that of the receiver. For example, on the sender's part encoding may be faulty because of the use of confusing or ambiguous symbols. The receiver's level reception may be inaccurate because of inattention. Decoding may be faulty because wrong or unexpected interpretation may be attached to words/symbols. Understanding of the message may be warped by prejudices. Desired results may not take place because of fear or inherent resistance to change. In this way we see that noise is not just one single factor but a whole range of factors rolled into one big barricade that we must make every effort to overcome but we cannot wish away.

Lack of Planning: Communication, especially in business environment, is not a casual affair. But unfortunately, some people take it lightly. The result is that ht message to be sent across may not be carefully planned. It may not be properly organized or compose, or may be transmitted though a wrongly chosen medium. For example, giving a long winding narration of events/meetings/ results etc in respect of sales during a particular period where a presentation through table/graphs is needed will lead to miscommunication. In the same way careful choice of time is also very important. And so is the choice of place.

Wrong / Unclarified Assumptions: Communication quite often breaks down or become an embarrassing affair if we keep acting an assumption without caring to seek clarifications. As somebody has lightly but effectively said, "If you assume you make an ass of U (you) and me." If for example, somebody, says a customer, writers to us that he/she would be visiting our office/factory on a particular day without caring to write/telephone that he/she would like to be picked up assuming that we will do all that as routine, it will be regarded as a case of incomplete communication. It leads to loss of goodwill.

Semantic Problems: Communication is primarily concerned with the transmission of meaning the systemic study of which is Semantics. That is why any problems arising from the expression/transmission of meaning are called semantic problems of barriers. Most of the communication is base on words and words are liable to be used in myriad different ways. The number of words, howsoever large, is limited, but the contexts, intended meanings and interpretations, their combination and usages are many times more. "The meaning is in the mind of the sender to be the same as that in the mind of the receiver. It is, therefore, of vital importance for the sender to encode his message in such a way that the receiver decodes it to get the intended meaning. And very often that does not happen. An advertisement, for example, says, "We give you much more". It is an ambiguous statement. The question arises, "More than what?" There are many different interpretations of every other word/sentence/ utterance. One must aim at simplicity, clarity and brevity so as to mini-meaning to a limited group.

1.5. Cultural Barriers

It has been pointed out earlier in this book that, especially in international environment, cultural differences often cause communication problems. The same category of words, phrases, symbols, actions, colours mean different things to people of different countries/cultural backgrounds. For example, in Western countries black colour is associated with death and mourning while in the Far East white is the colour of mourning. In the United people love to be called by their first name while in Britain people are more formal and like to be addressed by their title or their last name. In the hierarchical structure of Indian society and business environment also the last name is important.

Socio-psychological Barriers: The attitude and opinions, place in society and status – consciousness arising from one's position in the hierarchical structure of the organization, the state of one's relations with peers, seniors, juniors, family background – all these factors deeply influence one's ability to communicate both as a sender and receiver, both in encoding and decoding the messages. Status-consciousness is widely known to be a serious communication barrier in organizations. It creates psychological distance leading to breakdown of communication or miscommunication. A man high upon an organization often builds up a wall around himself that the people below find it difficult to break though. Thus is sent that power – centers restrict

participation of the less powerful in decision-making. In the same way one's family background formulates one's attitudes and commutation skills.

Emotions: Encoding and decoding of message depends to quite some extent on one's emotional state at a particular time. Extreme emotions, like jubilation or depression, are likely to hinder effective communication. Anger is the worst enemy of communication. A message received when one is angry is likely to be interpreted in a very different manner than when one is calm and composed. Stress may also lead to building up of negative emotions, further leading to communication breakdown.

Selective Perception: Most of the factors mentioned above lead to selective perception. It means that the receivers selectively see and hear depending upon their needs, motivation, background, experience and other personal characteristics. While decoding the message they project their own interests and expectation into the process of communication further leading to a particular kind of feedback. The fact is that we don't see reality. We interpret what we see and call it reality.

Filtering: Filtering means that a manipulates information in such a way that it will be seen more favorably by the receiver. For example, a manager likes to tell his boss what he feels his boss wants to hear. In this process he is filtering information. The result of filtering is that the man at the top perhaps never gets objected information. The result of filtering is that the man at the top perhaps never gets objective information. In this connection it is worthwhile quoting what a former Vice President of General Motors says "... lower-level specialists... provided information in such a way that they would get the answer they wanted. I know. I used to be down below and do it." In the process of filtering the information for onward transmission to the senior executives, the people at the lower levels condense and synthesize it, thus sometimes holding back/ignoring some important parts of information. The more vertical levels in the hierarchical system, the more chances there are for filtering.

Information Overload Unrestricted flow of information may, and very often does, become another barrier. Too much information is no unmixed blessing. It may stifle the senior executive or bore and frustrate him. People respond to this kind of information in different way. Firstly, they may disregard certain information as, for example, we see that very many letters are ignored. Secondly, people are also likely to make errors, when they become overwhelmed or swamped with too much information. Thirdly people may delay processing/responding to information at least for the time being. Delay may become a habit, causing serious communications problems. Fourthly, people may become highly selective in their response. And selectively may and may not contribute to effective communication.

Loss by Transmission When message passes on from person in a series of transmission they are likely to become less and less accurate. They get diluted on the way.

Poor Retention: As a corollary to the communication problem mentioned above, mention must also be made of poor retention of informant. Human memory being what it is, and depending upon one's mental makeup, one may not always retina what he is told. Thus, the necessity of repeating the message using several channels/media becomes obvious. That is why organization often uses more than one medium to communicate the same message.

Poor Listening: Poor listening causes serious problem in communication. There are too many talker and too few listeners. The importance of listening has already been highlighted. And, of course, every- body knows about it. But even then problems do keep cropping up owing to poor listening and hasty evaluation. One reason is that mostly people are too much involved in their own problems and papering their own egos. The result is that they are really not interested in the speaker. In order to become good listeners otherwise the habit of poor listening is bound to become a major barrier communication

Insufficient Period for Adjustment: As has been said in the beginning the purpose of communication is to effect change. It may concern change in employees' shifts in time, an employee's transfer to another department, change in type or order of work, decisions regarding the skills to be sued and so on. The management may decide to send communications regarding further training, career adjustment etc. People respond to change in different ways, and they require their own time to think about the full meaning, implications, and consequences of the message. It is, therefore, important to give them sufficient time. Only then the communication will be effective.

Goal – conflicts: Various units and sub-units in an organization internalize their own goals, leading to splitting or bifurcation of interests. This internalization of sub-unit goals leads to goal-conflicts while communication can be a conflict-reduction mechanism. Conflict acts as a communication – reduction mechanism. When two parties are in conflict, communication is minimal. When people start competing for the fulfillment of their narrow sectional interests a number of barriers to communication arise.

Offensive Style of Communication
Experts units out, and as we also realize, the greatest barrier to communication is quite often the style of communication used by the manger. When a manger sends a message in such a way that the workers/juniors become defensive he/she contributes to the negative factor of poor interpersonal relationship and if the relationships are already strained, any offensive style adopted by the manager is bound to lead to breakdown.