

# Essay about barriers to communication



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## Barriers to Communication and Causes of Communication Failure in

Businesses Barriers to communication can occur if the recipient has failed to convey the meaning or / and the importance of the message. ·Sender breakdown – too much information is being sent, so the recipient misses key points. Also, language can be difficult to understand, as it can be too complex. ·Method breakdown – when information is very detailed or complicated, then written instructions are better than messages which can be misinterpreted. Recipient breakdown – the recipient deliberately makes a choice to misinterpret the message because of their attitude to either the sender to the message at hand.

Other problems with communication could be: ·Long chain of command.

·Language – complex, and hard to understand. ·Vague purpose – not detailed enough, more explanation required ·Inappropriate medium (method used, e. g.

written, electronically etc). ·Red tape – message gets passed on to many different people before finally reaching the recipient making the process too long and the message changing. Also, actions can be delayed as a result of a late arrival of the message. ·Status of two parties – can be intimidated by the other person's status because of their gender, age etc.

·Location – distance of recipient or where message has to reach. ·Distraction

– Communication channels breaking up. BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE

COMMUNICATION No matter how good the communication system in an organisation is, unfortunately barriers can and do often occur. This may be

caused by a number of factors which can usually be summarised as being due to physical barriers, system design faults or additional barriers.

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 Likewise, poor or outdated equipment, particularly the failure of management to introduce new technology, may also cause problems.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

Whilst distractions like background noise, poor lighting or an environment which is too hot or cold can all affect people's morale and concentration, which in turn interfere with effective communication. System design faults refer to problems with the structures or systems in place in an organisation. Examples might include an organisational structure which is unclear and therefore makes it confusing to know who to communicate with. Other examples could be inefficient or inappropriate information systems, a lack of supervision or training, and a lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities which can lead to staff being uncertain about what is expected of them. Attitudinal barriers come about as a result of problems with staff in an organisation. These may be brought about, for example, by such factors as poor management, lack of consultation with employees, personality conflicts which can result in people delaying or refusing to communicate, the personal attitudes of individual employees which may be due to lack of motivation or dissatisfaction at work, brought about by insufficient training to enable them to carry out particular tasks, or just resistance to change due to entrenched attitudes and ideas.

**OTHER COMMON BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION INCLUDE:**

Psychological factors such as people's state of mind. We all tend to feel happier and more receptive to information when the sun shines. Equally, if someone has personal problems like worries about their health or marriage, then this will probably affect them. Different languages and cultures represent a national barrier which is particularly important for organisations involved in overseas business. Individual linguistic ability is also important.

The use of difficult or inappropriate words in communication can prevent people from understanding the message. Poorly explained or misunderstood messages can also result in confusion. We can all think of situations where we have listened to something explained which we just could not grasp.

Physiological barriers may result from individuals' personal discomfort, caused, for example, by ill health, poor eye sight or hearing difficulties.

Presentation of information Here are the 7 top barriers. 1. Physical barriers Physical barriers in the workplace include: ·marked out territories, empires and fiefdoms into which strangers are not allowed ·closed office doors, barrier screens, separate areas for people of different status ·large working areas or working in one unit that is physically separate from others. Research shows that one of the most important factors in building cohesive teams is proximity. As long as people still have a personal space that they can call their own, nearness to others aids communication because it helps us get to know one another. 2.

Perceptual barriers The problem with communicating with others is that we all see the world differently. If we didn't, we would have no need to

communicate: something like extrasensory perception would take its place. The following anecdote is a reminder of how our thoughts, assumptions and perceptions shape our own realities: A traveller was walking down a road when he met a man from the next town. “ Excuse me,” he said. “ I am hoping to stay in the next town tonight.

Can you tell me what the townspeople are like? ” “ Well,” said the townsman, “ how did you find the people in the last town you visited? ” “ Oh, they were an irascible bunch. Kept to themselves. Took me for a fool. Over-charged me for what I got. Gave me very poor service. ” “ Well, then,” said the townsman, “ you’ll find them pretty much the same here.

” 3. Emotional barriers One of the chief barriers to open and free communications is the emotional barrier. It is comprised mainly of fear, mistrust and suspicion. The roots of our emotional mistrust of others lie in our childhood and infancy when we were taught to be careful what we said to others.

“ Mind your P’s and Q’s”; “ Don’t speak until you’re spoken to”; “ Children should be seen and not heard”. As a result many people hold back from communicating their thoughts and feelings to others. They feel vulnerable. While some caution may be wise in certain relationships, excessive fear of what others might think of us can stunt our development as effective communicators and our ability to form meaningful relationships. 4. Cultural barriers When we join a group and wish to remain in it, sooner or later we need to adopt the behaviour patterns of the group.

These are the behaviours that the group accept as signs of belonging. The group rewards such behaviour through acts of recognition, approval and inclusion. In groups which are happy to accept you, and where you are happy to conform, there is a mutuality of interest and a high level of win-win contact. Where, however, there are barriers to your membership of a group, a high level of game-playing replaces good communication.

5. Language barriers Language that describes what we want to say in our terms may present barriers to others who are not familiar with our expressions, buzz-words and jargon. When we couch our communication in such language, it is a way of excluding others. In a global market place the greatest compliment we can pay another person is to talk in their language.

One of the more chilling memories of the Cold War was the threat by the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev saying to the Americans at the United Nations: “ We will bury you! ” This was taken to mean a threat of nuclear annihilation. However, a more accurate reading of Khrushchev’s words would have been: “ We will overtake you! ” meaning economic superiority. It was not just the language, but the fear and suspicion that the West had of the Soviet Union that led to the more alarmist and sinister interpretation. .

Gender barriers There are distinct differences between the speech patterns in a man and those in a woman. A woman speaks between 22, 000 and 25, 000 words a day whereas a man speaks between 7, 000 and 10, 000.

In childhood, girls speak earlier than boys and at the age of three, have a vocabulary twice that of boys. The reason for this lies in the wiring of a man’s and woman’s brains. When a man talks, his speech is located in the

left side of the brain but in no specific area. When a woman talks, the speech is located in both hemispheres and in two specific locations. This means that a man talks in a linear, logical and compartmentalised way, features of left-brain thinking; whereas a woman talks more freely mixing logic and emotion, features of both sides of the brain.

It also explains why women talk for much longer than men each day. 7

Interpersonal barriers There are six levels at which people can distance themselves from one another: 1. Withdrawal is an absence of interpersonal contact. It is both refusal to be in touch and time alone.

2. Rituals are meaningless, repetitive routines devoid of real contact. 3.

Pastimes fill up time with others in social but superficial activities.

. Working activities are those tasks which follow the rules and procedures of contact but no more. 5. Games are subtle, manipulative interactions which are about winning and losing. They include “ rackets” and “ stamps”.

6. Closeness is the aim of interpersonal contact where there is a high level of honesty and acceptance of yourself and others. Working on improving your communications is a broad-brush activity. You have to change your thoughts, your feelings, and your physical connections.

That way, you can break down the barriers that get in your way and start building relationships that really work. The following questions can used to self-debrief your behavior in settings where personal communications are used to build relationships — at work, at home, in a church, with a spouse and about any place where two or more gather. These are the common

barriers and you may think of others or variations. It is often helpful to do this evaluation in a group and exchange your views to enhance learning about yourself. The value of this is to discover what you may be doing to shut off communications and find ways to improve your behavior. A second way to use these barriers is to just copy the heading and discuss each within a group.

The number one barrier to communications is not listening. Different forms of this are at the end of the list. (jump to listening barriers) **EXPECTATIONS:** Are your expectations of others or organizations a barrier? Do others know your expectations or do you just think they know them? Can you change your expectations or let go of them to be part of a group or a relationship? How would that feel? Did this in any way feel like giving up your “ self” to be what the group wants you to be? This is probably the number one barrier to communications. Expectations are often not expressed to others and it is as if the other is expected to have a crystal ball and know what you expect. **RISKING:** What is a risk for you? How much do you risk in a communications setting? What keeps you from risking? Is it fear? If so, fear of what? Is it control? Control of what? Yourself or others or the group? Do you wish to risk more? What will it take to risk more? This is probably the top barriers in communicating authentically. Risk in communication often has this silent question: “ If I risk myself and this is all I’ve got, what will happen if I am rejected? Building communications with others authentically takes a degree of risk.

**AVOIDANCE:** What did you do to avoid looking at yourself? Think about this. What was behind the avoidance? Fear of rejection? Fear of loss of control?

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Were you part of an avoidance “ project”? What did the group do to avoid doing what it needed to do? Did group norms facilitate avoidance? Avoidance frequently is present when a person feels unsafe or is unsure if its safe. Many business meetings start with considerable avoidance and only in the last minutes does the group get to the real subject, and then often try a quick fix. Avoidance can become a habit. FIXING: Did anyone try to fix you? The group? How did that feel? Did you try to fix, heal or convert anyone or the group? Can you fix anyone other than yourself? How aware are you that this is often done, with good intentions and well-meaning but usually not wanted and unaccepted 90+% of the time? What is your level of acceptance of people just as they are? Fixing is often trying to get the other to believe as you do or to do as you have done in a similar situation or to be more like you so you will feel more comfortable. PROJECTS: Most groups are creative in making projects that have something to do with avoidance.

Can you name a project in your group? What do pseudo-projects represent in a group? Sometimes projects are things, sometimes people and often it’s something completely outside the group and the room. Projects can be a way of fooling ourselves and have many of the characteristics of “ organizing a group” and represent avoidance. They can be barriers to communications. Projects are sometimes necessary to help build safety and trust in groups.

They can take the form of challenging the norms of a group or the written rules. SCAPEGOATING: Did you feel scapegoated? What did it feel like? Were you part of a scapegoating effort on another person? Scapegoating is often another form of avoidance or blaming or excluding. It may be an attempt to keep focus off of the person doing the scapegoating! It is seen in most family

situations and in the workplace and is usually destructive to the personality.

**PROBING:** Did anyone probe you for information? How did that feel? Did it create a barrier for you? If you were probed and did not like it, what kept you from confronting the prober? If you were the prober, why did you probe? Did it have anything to do with keeping the focus off of you? Probing can be avoidance of task or scapegoating if carried too far. **SPEAKING IN CODE:** If you were part of a subgroup of two or more people, did/do you speak with language that only those in the subgroup can understand? Can you understand how this is a form of exclusivity? This is often done without realizing it in all kinds of groups. It is not polite and keeps understanding low.

**CONTROL:** Did anyone try to control you or what you said? How did it feel? Were you aware at any time that you were trying to control an outcome? If you tried to control, what was the reason? Was it to control what might happen to you? Did you notice others trying control? Most of us believe we have far more control than we actually do. Letting go of control and risking more may result in more love coming into your life. **BLAMING:** Did anyone blame you for what was or was not happening? How did that feel? Did you blame anyone? What was your motive for the blaming? Did it have to do with trying to make some other person responsible for your behavior? Did you experience blaming in your family of origin? Blaming can become an almost unconscious habit. **PLACATING:** Did you feel placated by anyone? Did you placate anyone? How does it feel to be placated? **CHAOS AVOIDANCE:** Do you run from conflict or avoid it in some way instead of trying to go through it? Do you leave a conversation when it gets too hot for you? (either actual or emotionally) How do you react to change? Another word for Chaos is change.

People find many ways to avoid talking about change as it usually feels uncomfortable because of the unknown. Chaos can also mean conflict and many will do anything to avoid it. Chaos is one of the most certain things in life and it is well to learn how to embrace it. SILENCE: How comfortable are you with silence? Can you listen to yourself? To your source of spirit? Do you recognize respectful silence? Do you experience a silent time at home? What would it be like if you asked for some silence in your workplace during a meeting? Silence is an unused tool that is very effective in all kinds of ways. Scott Peck says in the Different Drum, “ Silence is the primary key to emptiness. ” Also, “ More than half of Beethoven’s music is silence.

Without the silence there is no music; there is only noise. ” Most people have little true silence in their lives, yet it provides considerable peacefulness.

EXCLUSION: Did you feel excluded at any time? Did you exclude yourself? Did some person say anything that made you feel excluded? Was your feeling of exclusion accurate? Is this something that often happens to you? Did you exclude any person either by avoiding them, or emotionally tuning them out, or by making a judgmental statement? Did you later change the exclusion to inclusion? Think of how people are often excluded and why. It is often done as an unconscious act that may have been learned in the family or work place. BOUNDARY OR BARRIER: A boundary is often created for protection and should only be changed with considerable thought. A boundary “ rule” is one you have originated that defines what is good or bad for you.

A boundry may be a barrier to communication depending on what it is. Are you aware of any boundary you have that is a barrier to meaningful

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communications? Are you aware of any boundary that you want to change?

How will you do that and how will you know if it is safe to change?

Boundaries are accumulated during life for protection and become a learned method of existing. Boundaries need to be changed slowly and may be replaced with another boundary that offers more freedom until it becomes safe to “take the next step”. Some people have few or almost no boundaries and this often gets them into trouble. An example of this is a person that regularly offers far more information than is asked for by people they talk to.

This becomes a turnoff to others and may result in others avoiding you.

**LISTENING:** How well do you listen to what people say? Do you hear what is not said with words, but with emotions or body language? How about listening to what is not said? How can you listen with your whole being, body, mind, spirit and heart? There are many sub-barriers that come under Listening. Below are some. **Automatic Talking:** Listening just long enough to find a word that you know something about. Then shut off the rest of what is being said, particularly the emotional content. Then start talking about the word you know something about.

This blocks real communications by not hearing the total content. This is the most used form of blocking true communication. For more on this, see Automatic Talking Exercise. **SELECTIVE LISTENING:** This is when a person hears another but selects to not hear what is being said by choice or desire to hear some other message.

This can take several forms and result in acting out in destructive ways. An example is to become passive aggressive by pretending to hear and agree to

what was said when actually your intent is to NOT act on the message, but make the other person think you will. Another form is to act on what you wanted to hear instead of what was said. Continued selective listening is one of the best ways to destroy a relationship. BEING A “ FIXER”: A fixer is a person that tries to fix another person’s faults, problems or personality by offering what worked for them or a friend in a similar situatuon.

Fixers often cut off others in the middle of a conversation without hearing the whole story to offer their fix. People overall do not like to be fixed and most suggestions for a fix will be disregarded and may result in anger toward the fixer. Using “ You” or “ We” statements instead of “ I” statements. “ I statements show ownership of what is being said.

“ You” statements are often a form of criticism. “ We” statements often implies everyone within listening distance agrees with the statement which is not true. Its like you speaking for another person without their permission. Absolute Statements. These use such words as Never, always, forever, etc. and are often make a statement untrue. Use a less absolute word.

Daydreaming. Letting your attention drift away. There are many causes of this and you can stop it by getting into the conversation and saying you are having a hard time staying with what is being said, without blaming.

You may find out others are having the same difficulty and will do the same. Being right. This can take several forms. The most common is polite criticism of how a person speak or what they say or to insinuate that the person said it wrong. This can stop communication particularly with sensitive people.

Many people have to learn how to communicate and can only do it by trying the way they know how. Derailing. (a form of avoidance) Changing the subject, or tell a joke, or point a finger at another person or try and turn a question around and back to the speaker. Name calling or belittling.

This is hurtful and may make another feel foolish or stupid and they may exclude themselves from further conversation. Being the Reactor. On occasion, a person will attempt to get you to speak by trying to “hook” you to react. Swearing is a way of hooking some people. A good listener will continue to just listen and not react. This will often cause the person to stop trying to hook you if you keep it up long enough.

How do people end up sending “muddled messages”? Often people tend to focus on problems like lack of listening, or inattention when discussing causes of poor communication, neglecting the fact that if a message is muddled or confused in the first place, no amount of attention or listening is going to unmuddle the initial message. People often send muddled messages – information that is structured in such a way that the other person will have almost no chance of understanding it the way it was intended. For example, throwing too much at the other person so that he or she can’t figure out the point is one way messages are muddled. Being unclear about one wants to say, and not taking the time to clarify to oneself before speaking, is another cause of muddledness.

If you often find that people seem to misunderstand your intent or messages, particularly in face-to-face discussions, often look perplexed and often have to ask questions of you because they don’t understand, start

looking to the quality of the messages you send, and start slowing down and paying attention to what you say. The payoff can be enormous if you can unmuddle yourself. What is assumption of common meaning and why is it a problem? Some people believe that words mean the same thing for different people. After all, don't we have dictionaries so that people can have the same understanding of a word? This is a major problem in communication — not realizing that language, any specific word, can have a different meaning for one person compared to another.

Here's an example. You are talking to someone who is considering buying a pet. For you the word “ dog” has very positive meaning, since you had dogs all through childhood. So, you suggest to the person that he might buy a dog for companionship.

But does the word “ dog” mean the same thing for the other person? That person may have been bitten by a large dog, when he was a child, and has developed a terror reaction to most dogs. For him, the meaning of the word “ dog” (it's connotative meaning) is completely different from yours. If you are oblivious to the idea that words carry different emotional meanings, you and the other person can never learn to understand each other. Even with seemingly straightforward word definitions, things aren't simple and we can't assume that when one person uses the word “ liberal”, for example, that they mean the same things as you might mean. For him, a liberal might mean a cowardly, crime coddling and socialistic thinking person, while for you, it might mean someone who believes that we should help those less fortunate. The more heated and emotionallly loaded the words we are using,

the more important it is to first try to understand what the other person means from the words he or she uses.

Many arguments and conflicts can be prevented by trying to understand first, then “ argue”. What happens if I choose the wrong channel to communicate? If you choose the wrong channels — that is if the channels are not effective for the type of message and meaning you want to create — you are likely to create misunderstanding, and even end up worse off than if you had kept the message to yourself. Not only does using the wrong channels impede communication, but doing so can cause mistrust in others, particularly about your sincerity and commitment to them. Example: Let’s say a departmental manager of 15 employees decides he wants to convey the message that he values their work and well-being. He has a number of ways and channels he can use to do this. He can walk around and talk face to face with his employees on a regular basis, wishing them good morning, and inquiring as to their welfare (that’s one “ channel”).

He could send a memo out each morning wishing them good morning (that’d be another channel). Or he could send an email. The question is “ Which channel would be best for this message? Walking around and talking face to face is the most “ costly” in terms of time and managerial commitment, while the other two are not costly. But consider the reaction of employees. How many employees will get the meaning the manager is trying to send, if the channel is an automated email? Worse, how many employees will question the manager’s commitment if he chooses an email channel to transmit a message that is clearly not suited to the channel? That’s just one example. The more emotionally loaded the message, the more thought has



to The message is good, but the timing is oh so bad — Why is timing so important? Timing is just one aspect of communicating with, influencing and being heard by your boss.

Get heard by your boss by using the techniques outlined in Influencing Your Boss – Getting Heard Helpcard. Free Preview. When you talk to someone, assuming you're like most people, you tend to focus on what you want to say. There's some sense in this since you want to be clear and understandable. It is possible to phrase your message and meaning perfectly, yet have it rejected, ignored or otherwise demeaned.

In many ways, timing IS everything in communication. For example, if you have a great idea you want to pitch to the boss, you may get a terrible reception one day, but if you chose another day, you might get a great reception. Clearly, people are more receptive at some times compared to other times. We tend to forget this.

And then get upset when we don't get the reactions we want. Luckily improving timing in communication isn't difficult. It involves some conscious thought and curbing impulsiveness or even curbing your enthusiasm. Consider the other person — state of mind, emotions, time schedule to assess whether it's a good time to talk about a particular subject. Do this beforehand.

During conversations, if you get unexpected negative reactions, think about whether it's that the other person is simply not ready to hear what you have to say. Maybe it's best to continue at another time. Timing is particularly

important with emotional or tough conversations. It's always good to ask — “ I'd like to talk to you about [topic].

Is it a good time now? ” go into HOW to communicate it, and which channels to use. What is a “ leading question? ” A leading question is a specific kind of question that attempts to “ lead” or manipulate the other person into answering the question “ the way the asker wants”. Its intent is not to understand, but to manipulate. Many of us use leading questions without being conscious of either our intent, or how such use appears to the other person. For example, “ You don't really believe that..

. ” is a leading question that clearly is designed to make a statement of opinion, rather than to engage in true inquiry. Leading questions are probably never advisable, since they are certain to create defensive, anger, and a feeling that you are trying to manipulate the other person. If you want to know, ask. If you want to make a statement, or put forth an opinion, don't use a question to try to disguise what you are doing.

What is the “ I'm Special” Syndrome and How Does It Affect Communication?

You think that's bad? When I was young I had to walk twelve miles uphill to school in the dead of winter, and then twelve miles uphill back home again. No doubt you've had the misfortune to have to talk to someone who's desire to present him or herself as special results in a contest to show who's the most disadvantaged or hard done by. At one end of the spectrum a person who believes and or is trying to portray himself as special tends to exaggerate his situations past and present, to show how difficult his life is or

has been. At the other end of the spectrum the “ I’m special” person goes on and on about who he knows, what he’s accomplished, and how good he his.

Both approaches are driven by the same thing — a sense of wanting to be special in one’s own eyes, or the eyes of others. Ego. It’s very difficult to have real conversations with such a person, because everything gets turned back to their situation, or their accomplishments, or their health maladies. If you have to deal with such a person, there’s really no reasonable way to prevent them from hijacking every conversation for the purpose of appearing special.

However, you can ensure that YOU don’t get caught up in the “ I’m special” syndrome. Life isn’t a competition, and communication isn’t a war to find out who’s best. When you behave this way, you will damage the relationships you are trying to build, and inevitably, when you try to appear special, all you end up doing is to appear to be selfish, self-centered and, in effect a bore. What is placating and how does it create barriers to communication? Placating involves giving in to the other person’s position or demands, even though you still are not comfortable, or happy with them. In essence it involves giving in.

In addition placating language is language of giving in — “ Ok, ok, whatever you’d like”, or “ I didn’t mean it, really”. People behave in placating ways and use placating language for a number of reasons. One is a desire to smooth over conflict with others, and the intent may, in fact be good, but the methods may not be. Often when you try to placate someone, you send a mixed meaning or message. You say “ It really does matter”, and you also

say, “ It doesn’t matter. ” This is an incongruence that confuses the other person.

So placating tends to obscure communication and understanding. If you are truly OK with giving in, then that’s different since you probably won’t create communication confusion, provided you explain why it’s OK. There are of course, other reasons why people go into placating mode, and you should reflect on your own motivations. Are you afraid of conflict? Are you afraid of the other person?