

# Obstacles to organizational communication



Obstacles to Organizational Communication In the process of communication there can be substantial difference between the information that is actually intended to be conveyed by the originator of communication and its recipient. Some part of the information may get not reach the recipient at all, and whatever reaches may be distorted, and may be interpreted by the receiver in a way not intended by the sender of information. This is because of a few poor habits that create obstacles to communication. These obstacles can be avoided with patience and practice, but first they must be identified.

#### Communicator Anxiety Inadequate Preparation Vague Instructions

Communicator Anxiety Anxiety disorders are many and diverse, varying from specific phobias to generalized anxiety symptoms caused by stress. One of the most abundant forms of anxiety is communication anxiety, which involves uneasiness and phobic attitudes towards public speaking. For some people this could be anxiety before speaking in front of crowds of 100 people plus, whereas for others just talking to a group of 5 people can be a problem. Communication anxiety is usually a problem for those whose jobs demand that they give speeches and presentations. Obviously some degree of anxiousness is normal but it can become a hindrance when you are conscious of sweating, not being able to concentrate and having a dry mouth as you speak. There are, however, many ways of overcoming communication anxiety without needing to take tranquilizing medicine to calm you down or avoid the situation completely. Anxiety is composed of two types: situational and trait. Situational Anxiety often referred to as state anxiety. It refers to anxiety caused by factors present in a specific situation, such as speaking for the first time before an audience, speaking in front of the boss, and being critiqued while speaking. Trait Anxiety refers to the internal anxieties an

individual brings to the speaking situation, such as feelings of inadequacy, or fear of looking like a fool in front of others. It is caused by the speaker's personal feelings that exist regardless of the situation. Anytime we become anxious, afraid, or excited, our body's nervous system prepares us for action with a big shot of adrenaline, which accelerates the heart rate, sends extra oxygen to the central nervous system, heart, and muscles, dilates the eyes, raises the blood sugar level, and causes perspiration. The following advice will help you control nervousness created by situational anxiety: Prepare and Practice — Preparation is essential-tackle one small step at a time. Once you have prepared the actual presentation, make easy-to-follow notes and practice your presentation three or more times from beginning to end, speaking aloud. Time yourself to see if you need to shorten or lengthen the presentation. Finally, anticipate possible audience questions and prepare to answer them. Warm Up — Warm up your neck and arm muscles and your voice prior to giving your presentation. Read aloud a memo or page from a book, varying your volume, pitch, emphasis, and rate; do several stretching exercises such as touching your toes and rolling your head from side to side; practice various gestures such as pointing, pounding your fist, or shrugging your shoulders. Use Deep Breathing — Take a deep breath (through your nose), hold it while you count to five, then slowly exhale (through your mouth). As you exhale, feel your stress and tension slowly draining down your arms and out your fingertips, down your body and legs and out your toes. Do the same thing a second or third time if needed. A good time to use deep breathing is right before you go to the front of the audience to begin your presentation. Use an Introduction That Will Relax You As Well As Your Listeners — Most speakers find that once they get a favorable audience

reaction, they relax. This is one reason why so many speakers start with humor; it relaxes them as well as their listeners. Concentrate on Communicating Your Meaning — Instead of worrying about how you look or how you sound, center your energy on getting your meaning across to your listeners. Pay close attention to their nonverbal reactions. Use Visual Aids — Using visual aids, such as transparencies or flip charts, not only adds eye-catching movement to your presentation but also keeps you so busy there is no time to worry about hand gestures. Visuals also make it almost impossible to forget a point or idea — if you forget, simply put up the next visual.

Successful way to manage trait anxiety that you can do by yourself: Positive Imagery (or visualization) — Create a detailed positive and vivid mental image of yourself confidently preparing for and giving a successful presentation. Instead of imagining problems or failure — as most speakers with trait anxiety do — imagine success. Psychologists tell us that we act as the person we “ see” ourselves to be. No amount of lecture, encouragement, or practice will make you into a confident professional speaker as long as deep down you believe yourself to be a nervous or ineffective speaker. To change any negative pictures you have of your speaking ability into positive ones, try this approach: Look two or three months into your future and picture yourself as the speaker you would like to be. Write down the specific characteristics you desire to develop. Now close your eyes and mentally picture this ideal you on the day of your speech, feeling confident and giving a great presentation. Make this mental picture as detailed and vivid as possible. Each time you vividly imagine yourself giving a successful presentation, your confidence will grow just like it would if you had actually given a successful presentation. Inadequate Preparation Inadequate

preparation can make communicator anxiety even worse. Unfortunately, many of us view communication as a simple process requiring almost no special preparation. Good communicators are aware the communication is irreversible (once a particular idea has been expressed, its effect cannot be completely erased). As a result, they know that they must plan their messages carefully. So here is a mini checklist if you ever have to make a business presentation or one minute pitch. What message do you want to convey? If you only have one minute then keep to one message. What does your audience already know? What language do they understand? You can only get away with jargon if you are 100% sure that all your audience will understand it. What action do you want your audience to take at the end of your presentation? Signpost this in your introduction. Give your audience a reason to listen to you. Answer their question, 'What have I got to gain from listening to this?' Opening with a question to qualify your audience can be a good start. If your audience has mixed experience it is a good idea to share information which acknowledges some people may know already but others may not. See the opening paragraph to this article for an example. I haven't insulted people who saw the programme (I hope) but I have told those who didn't what they missed. My readers should therefore all understand my starting point. Check you are using verbal rather than written language. If in doubt read it aloud. Written language is usually more stilted than the spoken word. Try recording what you want to say and then transcribing it. Make sure that your presentation has a structure, usually a beginning, middle and end. If you are using visual aids keep them simple, an image or one word rather than a screen full of text. Speak to the audience not the visual aid. Be very specific about the action you want your audience to take next and make it

easy for them. Finally, STAR. Give them Something They Always Remember. Once you've got your content organized you just have to practice, practice, practice until you can deliver an engaging, memorable presentation with confidence. Vague Instructions Many of us give vague, easily misunderstood instructions due to lack of preparation. But in some cases, we give confusing instructions even when we prepare the instructions ahead of time. Eight rules for giving clear instructions: Begin with an overall picture. Use a minimum number of words. Use simple, easily understood words. Be specific. Use simple comparison. Use repetition. Number or "signpost" objects, steps, or sets of instructions. Use good delivery techniques. Rule 1: Begin with an overall picture The first step in giving instructions of any kind is to give a brief, but vivid, mental picture of the task. In other words, give a frame of reference from which the person can interpret your instructions. An overview could include the following information: a. The importance of the assignment; b. Management's ideas about the task; c. The importance of accomplishing the task by a certain time or date; d. And why past attempts at completing the task failed. Rule 2: Use a Minimum Number of Words The more words you use, the more likely you are to cause confusion. If you are prepared and know what you want to say, you should be able to convey your message in as few words as possible. Rule 3: Use Simple, Easily Understood Words In giving instructions, you should not be trying to impress people with your vocabulary. Do not assume that everyone knows certain words, especially jargon or technical terms. Rule 4: Be Specific In addition to using few words and simple words, you must also be as specific as possible. Rule 5: Use Simple Comparisons People learn more easily when they can compare or contrast a new task with an old one. Mentioning that today's task is

identical to yesterday's except for one additional step makes today's task much easier. To make sure that your comparisons fit into the frames of reference of those who are to follow your instructions, keep all comparisons simple.

**Rule 6: Use Repetition** Most people need information repeated before they completely understand it. When giving instructions, repeat each set of instructions or steps. If the instructions are especially long or complicated, give a brief summary after explaining several steps. And finally, after you've given all instructions, review the entire procedure.

**Rule 7: Number or "Signpost" Objects, Steps, or Sets of Instructions** Instead of saying "And the next step . . .," say "The third step . . ." Instead of saying "When you finish that, I want you to . . .," say "The third thing I want you to do before noon is . . ." This makes it easier for everyone to keep track of the instructions. Also, when possible use mnemonic devices (memory formulas such as acronyms, rhymes, and acrostics) to simplify encoding of your instructions.

**Rule 8: Use Good Delivery Techniques** Glance directly at your listeners while speaking, and watch for nonverbal indicators of confusion (such as a frown or raised eyebrows). Look and sound confident. And of course make sure you speak loudly enough to be heard easily.