

Introduction

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



Introduction Business communication is used to promote a product, service, or organization, relay information within the business or deal with legal and similar issues. It is also a means of relaying between a supply chain, for example the consumer and manufacturer. An organizations profit or loss is decided by the level of expertise shown by the members of the organization towards business communication. Both internal and external communication plays a vital part in the organizations growth. Internal communication is vital because the members of any organization should understand clearly the organizations goals so that they can efficiently work towards achieving the organizational goals. External communication is vital because to sell the products an organization has to make buyers aware of the product and has to influence the buyer's decision using efficient business communication so that their product will reach more customers. To make business communication effective we need to understand the barriers or problems that hinder efficiency in business communication. All of us are involved in business communication in some or other way in our day to day life. Every day transactions that we make for our basic needs like food, clothing etc involves business communication. All of us have experienced business communications and also all of us have experienced problems in business communication. In my experience I have come across various problems in business communication. For example, in my profession of teaching I have experienced problems in business communication when I should communicate with parents of the kids about the kid's progress and the organizations future plans and when I should communicate with my coworkers for managing activities and when I should communicate with the

managers of the organization regarding my work status, my concerns, and ideas to improve performance. I faced problems while communicating with people from different cultural background, and when I am emotionally disturbed or when my perspective is different from the perspective of the other person with whom I am having business communication. There are many barriers like the above mentioned came across in my professional and personal life. This would be the common scenario in many of our life. But we all find different ways to overcome these barriers, for example, I tried to learn the language and culture of the people I am communicating with, but it required lots of time which made us find another way of solving the problem by the use of universal language like English. But still the problem of difference in cultural background was not easy to resolve. Likewise for different kinds of barriers we take different approaches for overcoming the barrier. But what we should be done precisely is what we all should understand. Lot of research has happened in the past and is still happening to find out highly effective ways of overcoming communication barriers, and these researches has paved way for the creation of many tools and techniques to analyze barriers for effective communications and recommendations for overcoming the barriers. Researches show that there are five main obstacles to effective communication namely perceptual barriers, Emotional barriers, Cultural barriers, Language barriers and Interpersonal barriers, which is also my experience. All the barriers affect one or all of the major elements of communication, namely idea, sender, receiver, Message, channel and Feedback. These barriers are found to be prevalent in every organization that where studied and it is found that there

is no scientific approach taken towards overcoming these barriers. Researches also show that successful organizations follow best practices for communication. For example, the well-known search engine Google, attributes its success to simplistic and more understandable presentation of information and in minimizing the distortion caused by message overload. But many organization fail because of not being able to identify the root cause of a problem. Even though business communication alone is not the root cause of many problems, it is found that many problems have inefficient communication as one of the causes of the problem. In this paper we will list and analyze various barriers to efficient business communication. I will explain the different tools that can be used to analyze the barriers for effective communication and also will provide recommendations to overcome the barriers.

Information network The accomplishment of business tasks is related to what is communicated, to whom and how messages are communicated. As information circulates, it can follow a formal chain of command or a more unobstructed pathway based on human relationships. Some messages are work related, others are personal. Let us start with discussing the patterns of communication within an organization.

Formal Communication Network Formal communication is that which is connected with the formal organizational arrangement and the official status or the place of the communicator and the receiver. It moves through the formal channels authoritatively accepted positions in the organization chart. Formal communication is mostly in black and white. Formal communication can be defined as, " A presentation or written piece that strictly adheres to rules, conventions, and ceremony, and is free of colloquial expressions." It

connotes the flow of the data by the lines of authority formally acknowledged in the enterprise and its members are likely to communicate with one another strictly as per channels constituted in the structure. Thus, it is a purposeful effort to influence the flow of communication so as to guarantee that information flows effortlessly, precisely and timely. It emphasizes the essence of formal channel of communication. The different forms of formal communication include; departmental meetings, conferences, telephone calls, company news bulletins, special interviews and special purpose publications. The main advantage of formal communication is that the official channels facilitate the habitual and identical information to communicate without claiming much of managerial attention. Essentially, executives and managers may devote most of their precious time on matters of utmost significance. But at the same time, the weakness of formal communication should not go unaccounted. Communication through channel of command greatly obstructs free and uninterrupted flow of communication. It is, generally, time consuming, cumbersome and leads to a good deal of distortion. [pic] Downward Communication Flow Communication which flows from the superiors to subordinates is known as downward communication. In an organization structure, the superiors utilize their abilities to attain the desired targets which mean that they may be engaged in issuing commands, directions and policy directives to the persons working under them (at lower levels). Under downward communication, the superiors anticipate instant recital of a job that's why it is highly directive. Downward communication can be defined as, " Information flowing from the top of the organizational management hierarchy and telling people in the organization what is

important (mission) and what is valued (policies). " Some examples of downward communication include notice, circulars, instructions, orders, letters, memos, bulletins, handbooks, annual reports, loudspeaker announcements and group meetings. Communication from superior to subordinate can be face to face as well as through written memorandums, orders, job descriptions etc. The authority line flows from the top to the bottom according to the organizational structure (hierarchy). It is needed to get things done, to prepare for changes, to deject lack of understanding and doubt; and to allow the organizational members to develop feeling of pride of being well-informed about all organizational matters. The other elements of downward communication include

1. Directions to carry out a specific task.
2. Job instructions.
3. Information intended to create understanding of the task and its relation to other organizational tasks.
4. Job principle.
5. Information about organizational processes and patterns.
6. Response to the subordinate about his performance.
7. Information of an ideological character to inculcate a sense of mission

Upward Communication Flow Upper communication means the flow of information from the lower levels of the organization to the higher levels of authority. It transfers from subordinate to superior as that from worker to foreman, from foreman to company manager, from company's manager to general manager and from general manager to the chief executive or the board of directors. In this way, the upward communication makes a chain Upper communication includes judgments, estimations, propositions, complaints, grievance, appeals, reports etc. It is very important because it serves as the response on the success of downward communication. Management comes to know how well

its policies, plans, strategies and objectives are adopted by those working at lower levels of the organization. It keeps the management informed about the progress of the work and troubles faced in executions. On the strength of upward communication, the management amends its programs and strategies and makes further plans. It is needed in all type of organizations, whether big or small. It serves the following purposes

1. To create communication receptiveness.
2. To produce a sense of belongingness through active participation.
3. To assess communication efficiency.
4. To boost employee morale.
5. To make improvements in managerial decision making process.
6. To coordinate efforts.
7. To know ideas of each individual in the organization.

Horizontal Communication Flow

Horizontal communication refers to the communication between employees who work at the same level in an organization. It consists of sharing information among peers. This horizontal communication helps employees to share information and coordinate tasks in a casual way fast and reliable. In a business setting, the communication among the marketing department is an example of a horizontal communication. Communication also flows from one department to another, either laterally or diagonally. Communication which flows between department members is called cross-channel. This form of network is shared across functional barriers, work units or people who are neither subordinate nor superior to one another. In any business environment, this form of communication flow occurs for the following reasons:

1. To coordinate work assignments in a particular department or work groups;
2. To develop interpersonal ties, relationship and support among colleagues;
3. To share information and plans for implementation;
4. To secure common

understanding; and 5. To negotiate and arbitrate differences to resolve conflicts and avoid disagreements. The most common form of horizontal communication involves interpersonal contact or in written form such as telephone conversations, e-mails, committee meetings, informal discussion during breaks, notes and memos or social activities among individuals who are at the same level in a particular working environment. Informal communication

Informal communication arises out of all those channels that fall outside the formal channels and it is also known as grapevine. It is established around the societal affiliation of members of the organization. Informal communication does not follow authority lines as in the case of formal communication. [pic] Informal communication takes place due to the individual needs of the members of an organization and subsists in every organization. Normally, such communication is oral and may be expressed even by simple glance, sign or silence. Informal communication, is implicit, spontaneous multidimensional and diverse. It often works in group of people, i. e. when one person has some information of interest; he passes it on to his informal group and so on. An organization can make efficient use of informal channels to fortify the formal channels of communication. It acts as a valuable purpose in expressing certain information that cannot be channeled via the official channels. It satisfies the people desires to identify what is happening in the organization and offers an opportunity to express dreads, worries and complaints. Informal communication also facilitates to ameliorate managerial decisions as more people are involved in the process of decision-making. In spite of many advantages, informal communication has certain disadvantages. Informal communication contains facts,

deceptions, rumors and unclear data. The informal channels of communication may transmit completely imprecise information that may harm rather than help an organization. In addition, it is impossible to fix the responsibility for its origin or flow of information. However, for the efficient working of any organization both formal and informal communications are required.

Business communication process The process by which one person or a group of persons receive an increment of information which has some value for either sender or receiver either by way of knowledge addition or entertainment or acquisition of energy to act or persuasion to buy or act as required by the sender is the process of communication. [pic]

The Process of Communication The critical part of communication is the information, which is being transferred. Information may be in any form- ranging from hand signals to public speech, from email to detailed contract, from one word greeting to a lengthy letter, from a message on a notice board of a school to a full page advertisement on a daily, from a hint with raised eyebrows to five-minute hug, from a memo from a superior or subordinate to a HR manual and so on. For the transfer of the information or the message, certain vehicle or medium is employed, which loads itself with it and passes it on to the intended receivers. Paper, phone, one-to-one meeting, public meeting, conversation, hoarding, newspaper, words written or spoken, body gestures, smile, books etc are the vehicles or media. The way the vehicles take and transport the information in such a way that the receiver understands it as it should be is the communication process. The medium or the sender or the receiver characteristically distorts the information, which in one way or other contributes fully or partly to the failure of the

communication in accomplishing the purpose intended. Two important stages of communication are a) encoding and b) decoding. The process involved in these two stages is a potential source of communication failure. Encoding is translation or conversion of the idea or intention or message into words or signals so that receiver would reconvert the same as intended by the sender. Decoding is what the receiver does to reconvert the received words or signals into the idea or intention or message as originally intended by the sender. The problems associated with encoding or decoding are due to the fact that words or signals have multiple meanings and thus there is a possibility of either use of wrong words or wrong signals or understanding them in a way different from what is originally intended. Understanding of the process of communication would facilitate transactions. Else, there would be no action at all or delayed action if at all there is some action or wrong action or relationships turning bad and so on. For instance, a boss tells his secretary that a meeting with contractors is urgent. But he finds to his surprise that a meeting has been convened quickly the next day morning, but it clashed with another program, which the secretary is not aware. The boss, in this case, while being busy with office routine overlooked the process involved in passing messages and the attendant chances of communication going wrong in many of the stages. He failed to specify the time. But the secretary understood it as next day morning. This illustrates how the process involved in encoding and decoding goes wrong and thus it springs surprises. All the elements involved in communication which constitute the communication process are sender, receiver, message, encoding, decoding, channel, noise and feedback. Sender The point from

where the message originated, here the boss, is the sender. The action intended to happen out of this message is convening of a meeting urgently, but definitely not the next day morning. Message Message is the essential content of communication or information intended to be passed. The request for convening of meeting is the message. Receiver The person who has to take delivery of message is the receiver. Here the secretary is the receiver whose job is to understand exactly and act on it as intended by the sender.

Encoding The idea of convening a meeting, in this instance, has been converted into words, probably with facial expressions signaling the urgency of meeting. Such process of converting an idea is words or expressions is encoding. Channel The encoded message needs a vehicle or a medium to be transported from sender to receiver. The vehicle may be a paper or a telephone or Internet or meeting or conversation. In the present example, oral communication made by the boss to secretary is the channel.

Decoding Decoding is the process of understanding by receiver of the message given by the sender. In this example, the secretary while decoding understood the message given by the sender. Noise Noise is the causative factor for the message being misunderstood due to the problem either in the medium chosen or encoding or decoding or in some stages of the process. In this instance, the message was not properly constructed and hence the secretary did not understand it as intended by the sender. The noise in communication is analogous to the external noise generated by cable or transmission equipment of land line telecommunication while the subscribers talk on land line phones and hence they don't listen or understand the words exchanged.

Feedback The sender would be communicating back to the sender his or her

evaluation or how he or she understood about each part of the message or word before the sender goes further in acting on the message. Here in the present example the secretary did not give her feedback about what she understood and thus the intended message failed. Analysis of the business communication problems [pic] The above figure depicts what happens when communication goes wrong, in a funny manner. But though this is a funny representation of the problem, it's a true scenario, and should be given more importance and should be analyzed to find the barriers that caused communication to go wrong. In my experience I have come across many barriers that hindered efficient communication. Following are some of the barriers or problems that I experienced.

Perceptual Barriers Perceptual differences affect the way we see the world. No two people perceive things exactly the same way. Perception also influences the way we develop language, which depends on shared definitions for meaning and is shaped by our culture. Even when both people speak the same language, a word may have a different meaning and implication in another culture. The word fine for example, means acceptable in the United States. The expression quite good has a different meaning to the English than to Americans. The English interpretation is less than good, whereas the U. S. meaning is very good.

Restrictive Environments Restrictive structures and management block effective communication. Formal channel tends to cause distortion, as each link in the communication channel holds the potential for misinterpretation. Similarly, if managers are not diligent in their efforts to communicate down the formal network, their messages can be fragmented so that employees never get the real "big picture". Managers who use a directive and

authoritarian leadership style create a formidable barrier to effective communication. Some are even too insecure to allow employees to ask questions or offer suggestions (feedback). They lose time and money from errors made due to unclear messages which are not clarified. This also generates negative feelings as employees perceive their opinions to be unwelcome.

Distractions Distractions are the major cause of inefficient communication and distractions are due to various factors, in my experience the following are major distraction elements.

Message overload In today's business organizations, workers may receive more than 200 messages in one day via e-mail, faxes, voice mail, personal digital assistants and other channels of communication. A large percentage of these messages are useless or distracting to the recipients.

Psychological factors 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.

Presentation of information Presentation is another important factor for efficient business communication, which if not done properly can become a barrier. For Example, we all have come across PowerPoint presentations, but many of the PowerPoint presentation is not prepared with the motif of making the information presented remember-able but only with the motif of making it look fancy.

Emotional Barriers Another main barrier is the fear and mistrust that form the roots of our emotional barrier which stop us from communicating effectively with our co-workers.

Feedback Common communication mistakes made by managers include, providing insufficient feedback, providing inaccurate feedback and

neglecting to solicit feedback about their performance and communication style. Making decisions without employee input. In some cases, managers do not ask supervisors and workers for their advice regarding major purchases that will affect them. This oversight may result in receiving equipment or technology that is not properly configured for the group that will be using it, which can be costly for the company.

Physical barriers Physical barriers are often due to the nature of the environment. For example, if employees are located in different geographical locations, poor or outdated equipment, failure of management to introduce new technology, Staff shortages are some of the physical barriers which frequently cause communication difficulties for an organization. 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.

Cultural and Language barriers Different languages and cultures represent a national barrier which is particularly important for organizations involved in overseas business. A cultural barrier arises when two individuals in an organization belong to different religions, states or countries. 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. In today's global scenario, the greatest compliment we can pay to another person is by speaking and effectively communicating to them in their local language. We need to understand that the native language of employees can be different from anyone else's. Recommendation to solve

the problems Communication is the lifeblood of an organization. An organization that is experiencing a breakdown in communication will not live for very long because many problems will crop up and eventually cause the organization to die a natural death. If an organization is experiencing communication problems, it must do what it can to resolve these as soon as possible.

Orientation of employees Management needs to provide the staff with information relating to company objectives, policies and authority relations. By doing so, the staffs are aware of what's happening and many possible conflicts and misunderstanding maybe avoided. An employee who knows about the company's working environment is also able to appreciate problems of other people in the organization.

Developing proper inter-personal relations There is a critical need to develop proper relations between different levels of people working in the organization. Superiors and subordinates should develop a feeling of mutual trusts and confidence. Wherever possible, managers should communicate through personal contacts and emphasize that communication is a two-way process.

Protective listening Full attention should be paid to communication without premature evaluation or judgment. Upward communication is often distorted when managers use his status and starts giving his own suggestions and viewpoints in the course of his face to face discussion with the subordinate. Without emphatic listening, free and frank response cannot be expected. In protective listening, the listener used to understand the viewpoint of the communicator without prejudging approving or disapproving what he says.

Using proper language Semantic distortions can be minimized by communicating the message in direct, simple and meaningful language.

Information should be worded so as to reach the level of the readership.

Communication is not accepted if it is not properly understood.

Communication through actions and deeds When a message is communicated without being acted upon, it tends to distort the current and subsequent communication from the manager. The rationale is that actions matching with deeds speak louder and clearer. Strategic use of the grapevine Grapevine is an essential part of the communication network in every organization. There are occasions when due to personal and other reasons, information should not be transmitted through the official channels of communication. Watch non-verbal cues In the case of oral communication, the sender should observe the actions of the receiver and find whether they go along with the understanding of the sender. Feedback Feedback is a very important tool in improving communication. Meaningful communication occurs when it is received as it was intended. Performance reports, questions clarifications, suggestions and emphatic listening are also very useful in providing the necessary feedback. Design Activities based on following principles Dale Carnegie principle When we are genuinely interested in others, curious about them, they feel respected and valued. Implied in our interest is the suggestion that they have a lot to offer. As we show our interest, they tend to become more interested, more creative, and more capable. Dale Carnegie principle advocates developing courage and self-confidence through preparation. Good preparation keeps audience awake and pay attention to what you say. It also says that the flavor with which you say is more important than what you say. It is mainly the principle of ' Be nice' to others to win friends. Principle of Pygmalion effect When we act

toward people as if we expect outstanding behavior from them, we are applying a principle known as the Pygmalion Effect. Basically, teachers have a huge effect, but it's poorly understood. The implication of the Pygmalion effect for teachers and leaders is massive. It means that the performance of your team depends less on them than it does on you. The performance you get from people is no more or less, than what you expect: which means you must always expect the best. Based on this principle, certain activities were designed expecting high outcomes.

Principle of Bifocal vision Many high achieving people have reported that along the way of their lives, some person has seen potential in them even when it was not obvious to others. That is, a teacher, coach, or mentor had a sense of their potential, even if that potential was not readily apparent. For example, a young student from a poor background and education may be seen by a teacher to have certain giftedness when others have written him/her off. Thus encouraged and supported, the student begins to excel. Bi-focal vision is a term that denotes our ability to see both the actual behavior and a person's potential within. When we act toward persons as if they are more than they appear to be on the surface, the potential within tends to emerge.

Principle of Collaboration Collaborations often cross boundaries of age, class, race, or ethnicity. Social collaboration is unambiguously central to the work. Collaboration between speakers on different linguistic levels is one of the basic conditions for communication. Collaborative productions are a way of using syntax as a linguistic resource for social aims specially for the forming of a social group within a conversational setting.

Conclusion Following are the principles which summarize the perspectives outlined in this paper. All these principles apply

to everyday examples of communication in organizations. We can improve our chances of ‘ successes in communication if we have clear purposes and select appropriate strategies. Without purpose communication goes out of context and rather than being usefull, may create more problems. Thus knowing the proper purpose of communication is vital. There are various strategies for communication and no single strategy is suitable for all purpose, hence its vital to choose the appropriate communication strategy for the purpose in hand Communication always means more than ‘ the message’. Communication is not about merely transferring of message from origin to destination; rather it is more about adding value to peoples concerns, emotions and beliefs. Communication is always based in a specific social and cultural context. Social and cultural context of communication is another vital aspect which has the power to wary the meaning of a message depending on in which social and cultural context the message is conveyed, and hence restructuring and properly delivering the message without its actual meaning being disrupted is important. Communication and action must ‘ match’. If our teacher in our school teaches us stealing is a immoral behavior and if the same teacher practices that particular immoral behavior, the teachings loose there value and impact. Hence the sender of the message should act according to the message he or she is conveying. Communication can always be improved. Like any other skill communication is a skill which can be improved and taken to perfection with practice and will power. Communication is not a born identity and hence anyone can become and be a better communicator. Communication is a fundamental management responsibility. The management of an organization is the place

where all activity starts and it's the same managements responsibility to giving due importance to the communication needs of the organization and take appropriate actions. New media can enhance communication. In today's technology enhanced world media plays a vital part in educating and helping people. And media can enhance communication if the media follows all the above mentioned principles in its communication to the public.