

# Overcoming barriers to communication assignment



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Overcoming Barriers in Communication Communication is a key part in everyone's life. Communicating is a skill that requires constant learning. As easy as communicating may seem to be, communication is a rather complex skill for all people to master. Multiple barriers exist for communication. For the purpose of this paper there will be three specific communication barriers discussed, which consist of: differences in people's cultures, language interpretations, and a person's ability to listen properly. When it comes to the differentiations between cultures, three prominent aspects are present. These are: language, cultural background (i. e. age, gender, level of education), and economic status. People must understand that every language has words that can be taken the wrong way, or that can be misunderstood. People must watch how they say whatever they are trying to say, so as not to be misinterpreted. Then hand in hand with that people must be open-minded and view all the different ways of interpreting what has been said, rather than jumping to conclusions. This flows in with listening properly. A person can not simply hear what is being said, they must listen to what is being said and the way the person says it.

Our team has personally used these skills in the writing of this paper.

Everyone in our team lives in different areas of the United States, and all team members have different backgrounds and lifestyles. As our group came together everyone had to learn about and understand each other. Our team did not have to face the challenge of different languages, because English was spoken, however, because of the online-classroom environment, our communication has been via the internet, which creates an added challenge.

When all communication is done through writing and not face-to-face, it makes for a greater level of difficulty.

This difficulty proved to be a fairly easy task for our group to overcome.

From day one, each team member jumped in, discovered and understood each others thoughts, and developed a plan to create this paper. A team leader, chosen by the team, guided us. Each person chose which section of the paper they preferred to write, and decided on one person to organize what each team member wrote. The finalized product will prove to be an informative resource for our readers. Barrier #1 Cultures have many different barriers that can be encountered. Described elow are three of the most common cultural barriers. First is cultural language barrier. Here in the United States many diverse languages are spoken such as English, Spanish, Arabic, Latin, German, and many other languages. With diverse cultures come diverse languages, which can be difficult to interpret what other people are speaking. Language barriers can be overcome in many ways. Some example are accepting our differences, learning other languages, and asking someone to interpret what is being said. Different cultural backgrounds can also create barriers.

Often assumptions are made with age and gender. Furthermore, believing a senior citizen is too old to make sense or possibly out of touch with today's reality is a form of disrespect. An example of stereotyping in the business world is viewing a woman as a teacher and a male as an entrepreneur instead of either sex capable of either job. The best way to avoid cultural barriers is to avoid prejudice thinking. Classifying people by their age or

gender is a discrimination against their abilities and knowledge. Educational status can create a cultural barrier.

Employers can often assume that a person with a college degree is the best choice for hire, and overlook the person with years of experience. Businesses may show favoritism towards a person with a high school diploma over someone with a GED instead. Avoiding prejudice and favoritism in the workplace is the best way to overcome this barrier. Stop and look at the qualifications for the position. Assess the qualification that the person desiring the position and evaluate whether or not they would be fit for that job. After the evaluation is complete then a fair and just assessment can be made to hire them.

Economic status is a cultural barrier that can cause trouble in the workplace as well as in the community. Poor people are dismissed without regard to the knowledge they have. Wealthy people are regarded as smart and someone to be revered. Classifying or stereotyping people in these categories can be harmful. Many have reasons how they arrived to the economic position they are in today. Some people may have lost their jobs whereas others may have gotten ill or injured and are unable to work anymore. Someone who is wealthy may have gotten an inheritance or won the lottery.

Avoid jumping to conclusions on how much a person knows but his or her economic status. When communication with others that is different, keep in mind that they are people too. Everyone has feelings, thoughts, and ideas that can be used at different times. Practice looking at what is positive about a person and the negative aspects will not be as visible. Barrier #2 In a team

assignment, language can pose as a barrier to effective communication.

Different teams are comprised of individuals from diverse cultures. “

Communication isn't as simple as saying what you mean.

How you say what you mean is crucial, and differs from one person to the next, because using language is learned social behavior: How we talk and listen are deeply influenced by cultural experience” (Tannen, 1995, p. 138).

While communicating through writing, individuals assume that the reader understands the meaning behind the words he or she is using to

communicate. In written communication, words have different meanings within diverse cultures. One example of a word with different meanings is the British English word hire, which means to rent versus the American English word hire, which means to employ.

One word having different meanings within different cultures can create barriers in communication within a team. Additionally, using slang can create challenges in written communication. The reader may not be able to differentiate the meaning of the slang word from the traditional word.

Furthermore, various writing styles between cultures can affect the manner in which the reader interprets the written word. In addition, using idioms or a special vocabulary can pose as a barrier to effective communication. An example developed by the team is the phrase: “ it is raining cats and dogs.

To the members of our team this phrase means that the rain is coming down hard, nevertheless, another group might interpret each word's meaning separately and have the confusion that the sentence means literal falling of cats and dogs from the sky. To overcoming language barriers, an individual or team can use words that the average reader can understand by first

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properly identifying the audience. The author can use more specific and accurate words as much as possible to illustrate the correct meaning while avoiding slang word usage. As a reader, try to deduce what the writer is attempting to achieve in his or her writing.

Furthermore, the reader should try not to over react to something written, because the writer may have been meaning a different interpretation of the word. If a question arises about a phrase, the reader should ask the writer to explain him or her self. If both reader and writer are willing to work on communication, then this barrier can be overcome. Barrier #3 Many cultural barriers must be overcome in order to understand one another better. Communicating clearly is one of them. When it comes to communicating amongst various cultures, one must be a good listener.

Listening is often misinterpreted as hearing. To hear means to acknowledge a sound being made. However, as defined by the International Listening Association, listening is more than acknowledging sound; listening is “ the process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages. ” (International, 1996). Listening is conveyed through interpretation. Poor listening skills can cause friction between two or more people. Interpreting information as negative when the information was not intended to be negative can create a communication barrier.

The way to avoid this cultural barrier is to practice active listening and look at the person speaking. Furthermore, stay focused on what he or she is saying providing feedback if necessary, and paraphrase back to the individual. Active listening is a recommended tool to use in everyday

situations. Learning to choose the right listening style for each situation and person is how to become flexible listeners. To choose the right listening style one might consider his or her reason for his or her listening. When someone is speaking to us no matter the age or topic, what that person is saying to others is important.

The speaker wants to be listened to and heard. Conclusion For some individuals the art of communication comes easy, but for others communication can be a key obstacle in attaining goals. Some times diverse cultural backgrounds can cause communication barriers because diverse cultures usually covers a gamut of different languages. Further, the English language has different dialects that go along with it. For instance, people in Southern parts of the United States pronounce certain words differently from people in the Midwest.

Along with the wide-array of languages and various dialects, people often are guilty of stereotyping. Stereotyping can cloud a persons' judgment leading to wrong decisions based on preconceived notions. Another way language can pose as a barrier is through diverse meanings to certain words. Certain words can have different meanings, which people from different cultures will not understand. When in a team atmosphere, people of diverse cultures will undoubtedly run into words that the meaning to each individual is different.

To overcome this barrier, the team members must get to know their fellow teammates and their culture so they will be able to better communicate in a way so both parties can understand. The final communication barrier is poor listening skills. Individuals must learn how to and practice active listening to

overcome the barrier. Individuals should learn to look at the person speaking to them and, if possible, reply by paraphrasing a part of what they said; this skill could improve communication between two or more individuals exponentially.

Diverse language dialects, stereotyping, writing and listening skills are all potential barriers to communication that with proper training each individual can overcome and just might have to if a team is to prosper. References International Listening Association (1996). Retrieved 14 October 2008, from [http://www.listen.org/Templates/try\\_new.htm](http://www.listen.org/Templates/try_new.htm) Tannen, D. (1995, September). The Power of Talk: Who Gets Heard and Why. *Harvard Business Review*, 73(5), 138-148. Retrieved October 10, 2008, from Business Source Complete database.