

COMMUNICATION

*Sister M. Tanisha A.C., Department of Home Science, Patna Women's College, P.U.
e-mail Id: maria_tanisha@yahoo.com

Barriers in communication

Communication is a process. Though communication is essential, perfect communication is rarely achieved in practice. There are obstacles which continuously block and distort the flow of ideas and information. Some of the main problems in communication are given below.

1. **Badly expressed messages:** Very often the message is expressed in poorly chosen words or empty phrases, poor organization of ideas and awkward sentence structure. The use of inappropriate language, poor vocabulary, ambiguous words, lack of clarity and precision lead to misunderstanding. Different people derive different meanings from the same words or symbols due to difference in their education, experience and orientation.
2. **Status and Position:** Vertical communication is hampered by difference in the status and position of the superior and subordinate. Status refers to the regard and attitude of members of the organization towards a position and its occupant. Status arises on account of formal position in the hierarchy, job title, salary and other privileges. Effective communication becomes difficult when people become conscious of status and position.
3. **Inattention:** Many people simply do not pay adequate attention to the message. They do not listen to spoken words attentively or they fail to read the message carefully. Generally, people pay attention to the information which confirms their beliefs and ignore those that conflict with what they believe. Such selective listening hampers effective communication. Communication overload also hampers effectiveness communication. It happens when people possess more information than they can assimilate or cannot adequately respond to the messages directed to them. Poor attention also arises due to lack of interest, over stimulation, tendency to criticize the mode of delivery. The source of communication and the way in which it is presented also determine the degree of attention paid to it. Listening is the most neglected skill of communication.
4. **Perception:** When people with different perceptions communicate, they have trouble in getting the meaning across. Every one perceives the message from one's own angle or viewpoint. Perception of people differs due to differences in their needs, education social background, interest etc. Differences in value judgements and reference frames also inhibit communication.
5. **Resistance to change:** Human beings by nature prefer to maintain status and generally resist new ideas. When the communication contains a new idea, the receiver may not take it seriously or may receive it according to his own convenience.

Everyone likes to receive the information which confirms his present belief and tends to ignore anything that is contrary to such belief.

These problems of communication process/ barriers of communication can be classified by various methods as given below.

I. **According to phases of communication**

Every communication process has at least three phases.

(A) Barrier relating to the Communicator

- (1) **Ineffective environment:** The environment created by the communicator influences his effectiveness. They physical facilities, air of friendliness, respect for others' point of view, recognition of accomplishments of others, permissiveness and rapport in general, are all important to have a climate which is conducive to effective communication.
- (2) **Disorganised efforts to communicate:** To make sense, the communication effort must be organized according to some specific form or pattern.
- (3) **Standard of correctness:** This involves the use of correct words or other symbols correct logic and correct content or facts.
- (4) **Standard of social responsibilities:** This infers that when one communicates, one assumes responsibility for the effect of one's communication on the respondents and the society.
- (5) **Cultural values and social organisation:** Cultural values and social organization are determinants of communication. For effective communication, the communicator must possess knowledge of the cultural values of his listeners.
- (6) **Inaccurate symbols:** The system of symbols used to represent ideas, objects or concepts must be accurate and used skilfully. Select the symbols that accurately represent the idea to be conveyed and are understood by the audience. Symbols are meaningful to a person only when he understands what they stand for.
- (7) **Wrong concept of the communication process:** A common mistake the communicator makes is the identification of the part with the whole or the parts fallacy. The way one thinks about communication will influence its quality.

(B) Barriers relating to transmission of message

Many obstructions can enter at the interpretation level. These are often referred to as 'noise', that is, some obstruction that prevents the message from being heard by or carried over clearly to, the audience. 'Noise' emerges from a wide range of sources and causes which effect the interpretation of the message.

- (1) **Wrong handling of the channel:** If correct procedure and techniques are not used channel cannot leave desirable impact on receiver and message may be distorted.

- (2) **Wrong selection of channels:** Correct relation of channel is essential to achieve attainable communication objectives otherwise wrong interpretation of message results.
- (3) **Physical distraction:** Failure to avoid physical distraction often obstructs successful message sending.
- (4) **Use of inadequate channels in parallel:** The more channels a communicator uses in parallel, or at about the same time, the more chances he has of the message getting through and being properly received.

(C) Barriers relating to the receiver

- (1) **Attention of the listeners:** There is an unfortunate tendency not to give undivided attention to the communicator. This is a powerful obstruction that prevents the message from reaching its desired destination.
- (2) **Problem of cooperation, participation and involvement:** Both the communicator and the receiver must be brought into the act. Learning is an active process on the part of the listener and unless the respondent is the same wave length, the character of what is sent out hardly governs the communication process. Thus it takes two to make communication.
- (3) **Problem of heterogeneity:** The more homogenous an audience, the greater the chances of successful communication. The more a communicator knows about his audience and can pin-point its characteristics the more likely he is to make an impact.
- (4) **Attitude of the audience towards the communicator:** An important factor in the effectiveness of communication is the attitude of the audience towards the communicator. It is a function of the communicator to make their attitude favourable.
- (5) **Resistance to change:** Lack of change proneness and hesitation in adopting new technology, skill and knowledge on the part of the receiver also hampers proper communication. In this case, the receiver does not listen to the message whole heartedly.

II. According to various types of problems

These are – technical problems, semantic problems and influential problems.

- (1) **Technical Problems:** These are problems concerned with the accuracy of the transference of information from sender to receiver. Certain things that are not intended by the information source are added to the signal. These unwanted additions may be distortions in the shaper or shading of a picture or errors in transmission. All these changes in the signal are called 'noise.'
- (2) **Semantic problems:** Problems regarding the interpretation of meaning by the receiver as compared to the intended meaning of the sender. This is a very deep and involved situation even if one is dealing only with the relatively simple problems of communication through speech.

- (3) **Influential problems:** The problems of influence or effectiveness are concerned with the success with which the meaning conveyed to the receiver leads to the desired conduct on his part.

III. According to nature of problems

- (1) **Physical problems:** The possible disorders affecting communication fall generally into the following categories. Speech and voice defects; anxiety-tension such as those involved in the stage fright, or feeling of inferiority, which noticeably affect speech, paralysis, disease or characteristics of physical appearance which interfere with expressive bodily action or which tend to call forth unfavourable reactions on the part of the listeners; lack of skill in the use of background or staging techniques, together with defects, such as radio station in the means and conditions of transmission.
- (2) **Psychological:** These psychological difficulties are, in part, a function of the very nature of language; in part, they are due to the emotional characteristics, and mental limitations of human beings. These general considerations concerning the psychological nature of language are the background against which more specific difficulties in communication can be understood. These specific obstacles merit special attention: (i) the failure to refer language to experience and reality, (ii) the inability to transcend personal experience in inter-group communication, (iii) stereotypes, the assimilation of material to familiar frames of reference, (iv) the confusion of precept and concept, ramification and personification.
- (3) **Cultural:** Cultural differences pose serious barriers in the communication process. Within this expanding field of activity, we may distinguish three small questions: (i) the way in which communication systems are related in given cultural values, (ii) the particular ethical problems of responsibility raised by our current use of communications systems and (iii) problems of communication when cultural boundaries have to be transcended.

Methods to overcome the barriers of communication

Effective communication is essential for successful interpersonal relationship. It is necessary to take steps to ensure effective communication. The following measures can be adopted to eliminate the barriers.

1. **Clarify the idea:** the communicator must be clear about what he wants to communicate. He should know the objective of his communication. The message should be clearly formulated and should be expressed in as simple and precise language as possible so that the receiver can understand it easily and quickly. The message should be concise, concrete and correct.
2. **Completeness of the message:** if the information is not completely supplied, people make assumptions about the message. It must be complete, timely and adequate in all respects; otherwise it is likely to be misunderstood. No important details should

be omitted. Incomplete communication delays action spoils relations and increases costs. The message should be relevant to the nature and purpose of the communication.

3. **Understand the receiver:** the communicator must become aware of the total physical and human setting in which the message will be received. Before conveying the message he must find out the needs, feelings, receptivity, perceptions and understanding levels of communicate. The message should be designed from the viewpoint of the receiver. The sender of the message must work at the problems from the receiver's point of view. This is called empathy in communications.
4. **Use appropriate channels:** the media and channels used in communication must be appropriate to the message, the receiver and the purpose of communication. A judicious combination of formal and informal channels and written and oral media will help to improve the effectiveness of communication. Use of multiple channels, certain amount of repetition and participation of subordinates is essential for an orderly flow of information.
5. **Consistency in communication:** the message should be consistent with objectives, policies and programmes of the organization. This will avoid chaos and confusion in the organization. Different messages should not mutually conflict. Whatever it is necessary to amend the old message; this fact should be started in the new message to avoid confusion and chaos. Communication should be supported by actions and behaviour to ensure credibility in communications. Actions speak louder than words. If actions are contrary to communications, people do not take them seriously.
6. **Feed back:** communication should be a two-way process. The communicator should try to know the reactions of the receiver. The use of feedback mechanism invokes effective participation of subordinates and it help to make future communications more effective. There should be continuous evaluation of the flow of communication in different directions. A feedback system helps to build up mutual understanding and distortions of message can be avoided. Feedback indicates the return flow of communication.
7. **Simplified structure:** the communication system can be strengthened by simplifying the procedure, reducing the layer, making constructive use of grapevine and regulating information flow. Lines of communication should be as short and direct as possible and the number of levels should be minimized. Regulating the flow of information eliminates communication overload and ensures an optimum flow of information to members of organization. Filtering of information should be discouraged.
8. **Improve listening:** the sender of the message as well as receiver must listen with attention, patience and empathy. The communicator can gather useful information for future messages by good listening. Generally, managers suffer from bad listening and they need to avoid valve judgements. They must develop awareness of actions

and their impact on others. They must develop the habit of empathic listening to secure free and frank responses.

9. **Mutual trust and confidence:** communication is an inter-personal process. Therefore, it can be made effective by developing mutual trust, respect and confidence among the members of the organizations.

Effectiveness of communication depends on the smooth transmission of the message from the source to the destination for which care must be taken to remove any kind of barriers that can interrupt the process.