

Typical Business Communication and Barriers to Effective Communication

Module Learning Outcomes

Describe typical business communication, and explain barriers to effective communication

1.1: Recognize the role of communication in the management function

1.2: Differentiate between typical communication flows within an organization

1.3: Explain barriers to effective communication

1.4: Differentiate between typical channels of business communication

Learning Outcomes: Communication and Management

1.1: Recognize the role of communication in the management function

1.1.1: Describe the components of the communication-process model

1.1.2: Recognize common missteps in communication

1.1.3: Differentiate between formal and informal communication networks

The Role of Communication in Management

- Role is to accomplish the goals of an organization- managers create plan that defines what needs to be done, when, and how
- Benefits:
 - Provides clarity- confusion makes people uncooperative
 - Builds relationships- reduces tension between hierarchical levels
 - Creates commitment- everyone feels like they are valued
 - Defines expectations- people who are uncertain don't perform jobs well

Practice Question 1

The five defined roles of management in business are: planning, organizing, staffing, leading, and controlling. What important role is left off of this list?

1. Communicating.
2. Hiring/firing.
3. Authorizing checks.
4. Selecting vendors.

The Communication Process Model and Missteps

- Alt text: graphic that lists process of Sender to Encoding to Channel to Decoding to Receiver with Feedback running between Sender and Receiver
- Caption: communication-process model shows how information is received and sent
- Easiest to understand when one person is communicating with another
- Receiver receives encoded message and decodes it-converts
- When information to be communicated isn't encoded correctly
- When the receiver interprets message differently than sender intended
- All problems can occur during feedback- often not needed or wanted

Formal and Informal Communication Systems

Formal

- Methods used to convey information necessary for conducting business of organization
- Conform to rules and regulations given by profession or law

Informal

- Connect almost anyone in organization to anyone else
- Skip over hierarchical levels and between departments
- Not necessarily disruptive
- Social Network- system of personal relationships
- Grapevine- how gossip is spread through organization

Learning Outcomes: Typical Communication Flows

1.2: Differentiate between typical communication flows within an organization

1.2.1: Differentiate between downward, upward, horizontal, diagonal, and external communication flows

Organizational Communication Flows

- Four directions:
 - Downward
 - Upward
 - Horizontally
 - Diagonally
- In established and traditional organizations, communication flows in vertical direction
- In informal firms such as tech start-ups information flows horizontally and diagonally

Upward vs Downward Communication

Upward Communication

- Information from lower-level to high-level employees
 - when workers report to supervisor or team leaders
 - Examples: progress reports, proposals for projects, budget estimates, etc.
- Important goal of many managers is to encourage spontaneous or voluntary upward communication
- Must trust that management will recognize their contributions

Downward Communication

- Company leaders and managers share information with lower-level employees
- Senders don't usually expect to get a response
- Forms include speeches, blogs, podcasts, and videos
- Most common types are everyday directives of department managers
- Delivers information that helps to understand workforce about key changes, new goals, or strategies, etc.

Horizontal and Diagonal Communication

Horizontal Communication

- Exchange of information across departments at same level
 - Purpose is to request support and coordinate activities
 - Can work together to solve problems or issues
 - Problems can arise if one manager is unwilling to share information

Diagonal Communication

- Cross-functional communication between employees at different levels of the organization
- Advantages:
 - Building relationships between senior-level and lower-level employees
 - Encouraging informal flow of information in organization
 - Reducing chance of a message being distorted by going through additional filters
 - Reducing workloads of senior-level managers

External Communication Flows

- Focuses on audiences outside organization
- Senior management almost always controls communications that relate to public image
- First-level and middle-level management generally handle operational business communications such as purchasing, hiring, and marketing
- Important for employees to behave professionally



Practice Question 2

What communication flow do you think is most effective in developing meaningful feedback?

1. Downward.
2. Upward.
3. Sideways.
4. Diagonal.

Learning Outcomes: Barriers to Effective Communication

1.3: Explain barriers to effective communication

1.3.1: Differentiate between filtering, selective perception, and information overload

1.3.2: Differentiate between emotional disconnects, lack of source credibility, and semantics

1.3.3: Explain active listening

Understanding Barriers to Effective Communication

1. Physical Conditions
2. Filtering
3. Selective Perception
4. Information Overload
5. Semantics
6. Denotation and Connotation
7. Emotional Disconnects
8. Credibility

Practice Question 3

This excerpt from an internal memo confused several employees:

“The salary we are offering is commensurate with remuneration for other managers.”

Which barrier to communication would account for the confusion?

1. Physical conditions.
2. Credibility.
3. Semantics.
4. Information overload.

Active Listening

- Communication technique that has been around for many years
- Important in parenting classes, marital relationships, public schools, counseling, and tutoring
- Focus on listening rather than talking
- Takes practice—look at speaker in the eye, note body language, don't interrupt, ask questions
- Able to convey that you care about speaker and their opinions



Learning Outcomes: Channels of Business Communication

1.4: Differentiate between typical channels of business communication

1.4.1: Differentiate between face-to-face, written oral, web-based, and other typical channels of business communication

1.4.2: Explain the importance of tailoring the message to the audience

Oral Communications

- Depend on spoken word - richest mediums and are face-to-face, in-person, phone conferences, lectures etc.
- Deliver low-distortion messages because body language and voice provides meaning
- Most labor intensive channels
- Used when high likelihood of creating confusion or anxiety
- Useful when organization wants to introduce key official followed by detailed explanation



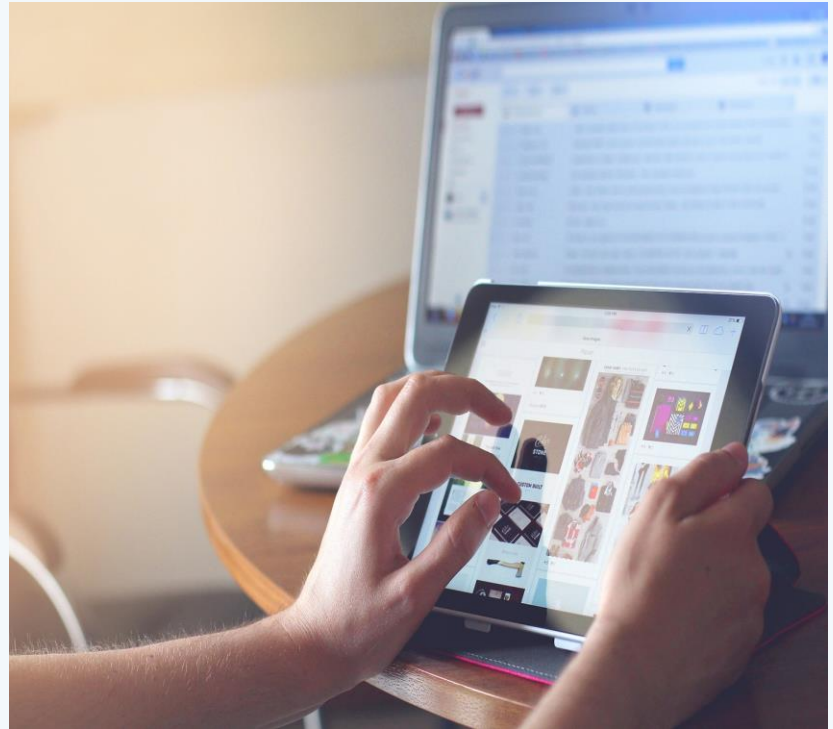
Written Communications

- E-mails, texts, memos, letters, reports, spreadsheets, etc.
- Leaner business communications- writer must provide enough context for message to make sense
- Receiver should be alert of confusion and ask for clarification if needed
- Effective in transmitting large messages and can be studied overtime



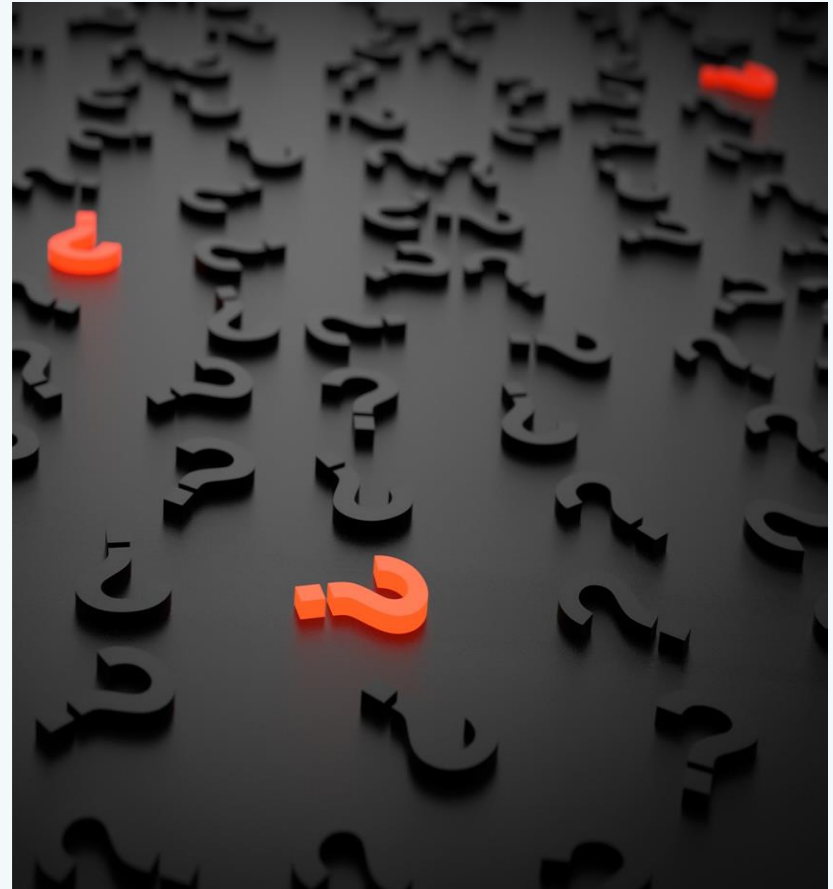
Electronic (Multimedia) Communications

- TV broadcasts, social media, interactive blogs, public internet company pages, Facebook, Twitter, etc.
- Allow messages to be sent immediately and globally
- Can also be risky- private communications of large corporations have been hacked and their data stolen



Which Channel is Best?

- Best channel is one that most effectively delivers the message so that it is understood as sender wanted
- Nuanced or emotional messages require rich medium while simple messages don't
- The more emotional the context, the richer the medium should be



Tailoring a Message to an Audience

- Which channel suits the content best?
- What do you want to achieve by sending the message?
- Does the message require interaction from the audience or is it more of throwing out information?
- Will visual aids help the message or distract from it?
- Do you have to establish your credibility?
- Ask yourself why the audience should care about topic

Know the Audience

- Can't tailor information to sender if you don't know the audience
- Must know:
 - How big is audience?
 - What is the status of the audience?
 - Can you establish empathy with the audience?



Class Discussion: The Right Channel

A good rule of thumb regarding communication channel is to select the richest channel available for the job. Which channel would you choose to send the following communication?

1. You are an event planner and need to let management know the site of the celebrity tennis tournament you have selected.
2. You are a sales manager and need to know if your field reps are available for a quick conference call.
3. You need to convince your manager to give you a raise.
4. You need to know if Jolene in the mail room can add additional copies for the end-of-week stand up.
5. You are the CEO who needs to respond to the IRS for an underpayment penalty.

Practice Question 4

What is the most important factor leading to effective communication?

1. Selecting the right channel.
2. Crafting the message.
3. Listening for feedback.
4. Tailoring to the audience.

Quick Review

- Can you describe the components of the communication-process model?
- Can you recognize common missteps in communication?
- Are you able to differentiate between formal and informal communication networks?
- Are you able to differentiate between downward, upward, horizontal, diagonal, and external communication flows?
- Can you differentiate between face-to-face, written, oral, web-based, and other typical channels of business communication
- Please explain the importance of tailoring the message to the audience