

Verbal and Non-verbal Communication

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Verbal Communication

When messages or information is exchanged or communicated through words is called verbal communication. Verbal communication may be two types: **WRITTEN** and **ORAL** communication. Verbal communication takes place through face-to-face conversations, group discussions, counseling, interview, radio, television, calls, memos, letters, reports, notes, email etc.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION :- 'Written Communication' means the sending of messages, orders or instructions in writing through letters, circulars, manuals, reports, telegrams, office memos, bulletins, etc. It is a formal method of communication and is less flexible. A written document preserved properly becomes a permanent record for future reference. It can also be used as legal evidence. It is time consuming, costly and unsuitable for confidential and emergent communication. Written communication, to be effective, should be clear, complete, concise, correct, and courteous.

ADVANTAGES OF WRITTEN COMMUNICATION:

- **Easy to preserve:** The documents of written communication are easy to preserve. Oral and non-verbal communication cannot be preserved. If it is needed, important information can be collected from the preserved documents.
- **Easy presentation of complex matter:** Written communication is the best way to represent any complex matter easily and attractively.
- **Permanent record:** The documents of written communication act as a permanent record. When it is needed, important information can be easily collected from the preserved documents.

- **Prevention of wastage of time and money:** Written communication prevents the waste of money and time. Without meeting with each other the communicator and communicant can exchange their views.
- **Accurate presentation:** Through the documents of the written communication top executive can present the information more accurately and clearly. As it is a legal document everybody takes much care to draft it.
- **Use as a reference:** If it is needed, written communication can be used as future reference.
- **Delegation of authority:** Written communication can help the authority to delegate the power and authority to the subordinate. It is quite impossible to delegate power without a written document.
- **Longevity:** Written documents can be preserved for a long time easily. That is why; all the important issues of an organization should be black and white.
- **Effective communication:** Written communication helps to make communication effective. It is more dependable and effective than those of other forms of communication.
- **Maintaining image:** Written communication helps to maintain the images of both the person and the organization. It also protects the images of the company or organization.
- **Proper information:** It is a proper and complete communication system. There is no opportunity to include any unnecessary information in a written document.
- **Less distortion possibility:** In this communication system information is recorded permanently. So, there is less possibility of distortion and alteration of the information.
- **No opportunity to misinterpret:** there is any opportunity to misinterpret the information or messages of written communication.
- **Controlling tool:** Written communication can help to control the organizational activity. The written document may be used as a tool for controlling.
- **Easy to verify:** The information and messages that are preserved can be verified easily. If there arises any misunderstanding any party can easily verify the information.
- **Others:** Clear understanding, Legal document, Acceptability, Reduction of risk, Creating confidence, Easy circulation, Wide access or coverage etc.

DISADVANTAGES OF WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

- **Expensive:** Written communication is comparatively expensive. For this communication paper, pen, ink, typewriter, computer and a large number of employees are needed.
- **Time consuming:** Written communication takes time to communicate with others. It is a time consuming media. It costs the valuable time of both the writer and the reader.
- **Red-Taoism:** Red-Taoism is one of the most disadvantages of written communication. It means to take time for approval of a project.
- **Useless for an illiterate person:** The message receiver is illiterate, written communication is quite impossible. This is a major disadvantage of written communication.
- **Difficult to maintain secrecy:** It is an unexpected medium to keep business secrecy. Secrecy is not always possible to maintain through written communication. Because here we need to discuss everything in black and white.
- **Lack of flexibility:** Since writing documents cannot be changed easily at any time. Lack of flexibility is one of the most important limitations of written communication.
- **Delay in response:** It takes much time to get a response from the message receiver; prompt response is not possible in case of written communication that is possible in oral communication.
- **Delay in decision making:** Written communication takes much time to communicate with all the parties concerned. So the decision maker cannot take decisions quickly.
- **Cost in record keeping:** It is very difficult and expensive to keep all the records in written communication.
- **Complex words:** Sometimes the writer uses complex words in writing a message. It becomes difficult to meaning out to the reader. So the objectives of the communication may be lost.
- **Lack of direct relation:** If there is no direct relation between the writer and the reader, writer communication cannot help to establish a direct relation between them.
- **Other:** Prompt feedback is impossible, Slowness, Bureaucratic attitude, Understanding problem between boss and subordinates, lack in quick clarification and correction, formality problem, lack of personal intimacy, etc.

ORAL COMMUNICATION :- Oral communication implies communication through mouth. It includes individuals conversing with each other, be it direct conversation or telephonic conversation. Speeches, presentations, and discussions are all forms of oral communication. Oral communication is generally recommended when the communication matter is of temporary kind or where a direct interaction is required. Face to face communication (meetings, lectures, conferences, interviews, etc.) is significant so as to build a rapport and trust.

Advantages of Oral Communication

- There is a high level of understanding and transparency in oral communication as it is interpersonal.
- There is no element of rigidity in oral communication. There is flexibility for allowing changes in the decisions previously taken.
- The feedback is spontaneous in case of oral communication. Thus, decisions can be made quickly without any delay.
- Oral communication is not only time saving, but it also saves money and effort.
- Oral communication is best in case of problem resolution. The conflicts, disputes and many issues/differences can be put to an end by talking them over.
- Oral communication is an essential for teamwork and group energy.
- Oral communication promotes a receptive and encouraging morale among organizational employees.
- Oral communication can be best used to transfer private and confidential information/matter.

Disadvantages/Limitations of Oral Communication

- Relying only on oral communication may not be sufficient as business communication is formal and very organized.
- Oral communication is less authentic than written communication as they are informal and not as organized as written communication.
- Oral communication is time-saving as far as daily interactions are concerned, but in case of meetings, long speeches consume a lot of time and are unproductive at times.
- Oral communications are not easy to maintain and thus they are unsteady.

- There may be misunderstandings as the information is not complete and may lack essentials.
- It requires attentiveness and great receptivity on part of the receivers/audience.
- Oral communication (such as speeches) is not frequently used as legal records except in investigation work.

NON – VERBAL COMMUNICATION:

Behavior and elements of speech aside from the words themselves that transmit meaning. Nonverbal communication includes pitch, speed, tone and volume of voice, gestures and facial expressions, body posture, stance, and proximity to the listener, eye movements and contact, and dress and appearance. Research suggests that only 5 percent effect is produced by the spoken word, 45 percent by the tone, inflection, and other elements of voice, and 50 percent by body language, movements, eye contact, etc.,.

BODY LANGUAGE : Some parts of our body can express many indications without any sound. Messages can be transmitted with the help of our body movements which is called body language. Body language is a form of non-verbal communication, which consists of posture, gestures, facial expressions, eye movements etc.

- **Facial expression:** A facial expression is one or more motions or positions of the muscles in the skin of the face. These movements convey the emotional state of the individual to observers. Facial expressions for happiness, sadness, anger and fear are similar throughout the world. A proverb says, —”Face is the index of mind”. Example: By waving our hands we express ‘good-bye’; by shaking our head from side to side we express —”we do not know”.
- **Gestures:** Gestures refers to visible bodily actions that communicate particular messages which include movement of the hands, face, eyes, head or other parts of the body. Common gestures include waving, pointing, and using fingers to indicate numeric amounts. Culture-specific gestures that can be used as replacement for words, such as the hand wave used in western cultures for —”hello”and —”goodbye”.
- **Posture:** Posture indicates the position in which we hold the body when standing or sitting. It can help to communicate non-verbally. Consider the following actions and note cultural differences: Bowing not criticized or affected in the US; shows rank in Japan.

Slouching is rude in most Northern European areas. Hands in pocket-disrespectful in Turkey. Sitting with legs crossed-offensive in Ghana, Turkey. Showing soles of feet-offensive in Thailand, Saudi Arabia.

- **Eye Gaze or Eye contact:** Eye contact indicates looking, staring and blinking etc. which is important in nonverbal behaviors. Looking at another person can indicate a range of emotions, including hostility, attention, interest, and attraction, defines power and status and has a central role in managing impressions of others.
- **Appearance and dress:** External appearances also play a vital role to communicate with others. Our clothes provide a good visual signal to our interest, age, personality, taste, and sex. Our choice of color, clothing, hairstyles and other factors affecting appearance are also considered a means of nonverbal can evoke different moods. Consider differing cultural standards on what is attractive in dress and on what constitutes modesty. For example, seeing the dress of army officers, we can easily determine the job status.
- **Touch:** Touch is culturally determined. But each culture has a clear concept of what parts of the body one may not touch. Basic message of touch is to affect or control-protect, support and disapprove (i.e. hug, kiss, hit, kick) USA-Handshake is common (even for strangers), hugs and kisses for those of opposite gender or of family (usually) on an increasingly more intimate basis. Islamic and Hindu- Typically don't touch with the left hand. Left hand is for toilet functions. Islamic cultures generally don't approve of any touching to opposite genders (even handshakes). But consider such touching (including hand holding, hugs) between same sexes to be appropriate.
- **Silence:** Silence is another form of non-verbal communication which expresses the positive or negative meanings of particular messages. In a classroom, silence indicates that students are listening carefully and attentively.

SPACE OR PROXIMITY: People often refer to their need for —personal space, which are also important types of nonverbal communication. The physical distance between you and others signals your level of intimacy and comfort. If someone you don't know stands too close or touches you too often, you will probably begin to feel uncomfortable.

TIME: Another type of non-verbal communication involves time. That is how we give meaning to time and communicate with others. For example, when a worker begins late in work everybody a worker can be considered as a man of carelessness but if a manager does it; we say it is a symbol of power. We know time can play a vital role in reducing tension, conflict among groups. It is said that- —Kill the time to delay the justicell.

PARALINGUISTIC (TONE AND VOLUME OF VOICE): Paralinguistic refers to vocal communication that is separate from actual language. Paralanguage also includes such vocal characteristics as rate (speed of speaking), pitch (highness or lowness of tone), inflection, volume (loudness) and quality (pleasing or unpleasant sound).

Vocal characterizers (laugh, cry, yell, moan, whine, belch and yawn). These send different messages in different cultures (Japan- giggling indicates embarrassment; India- belch indicates satisfaction) **Vocal qualifiers** (volume, pitch, rhythm, tempo, and tone). Loudness indicates strength in Arabic cultures and softness indicates weakness; indicates confidence and authority to the Germans; indicates impoliteness to the Thai; indicates loss of control to the Japanese. (Generally, one learns not to —shout in Asia for nearly any reason). Gender-based as well women tend to speak higher and more softly than men. **Vocal segregates** (UN-huh, shh, uh, ooh, mmmh, hummm, eh mah, lah). Segregates indicate formality, acceptance, assent, uncertainty.

VISUAL COMMUNICATION When communication takes place by means of any visual aid, it is known as visual communication. Such as facial expression, gesture, eye contact, signals, map, chart, poster, slide, sign etc. for example, to indicate ‘danger’, we use red sign, to indicate ‘no smoking’, we use an image showing a lighted cigarette with cross mark on it etc.

Verbal and non-verbal: Though words are active carriers of information, gestures can sometimes be more powerful than words. Facial expressions, sounds, signs and symbols are the non-verbal communication.

Principles of Communication:

Principle of Clarity: The idea or message to be communicated should be clearly spelt out. It should be worded in such a way that the receiver understands the same thing which the sender wants to convey. There should be no ambiguity in the message. It should be kept in mind that the words do not speak themselves, but the speaker gives them the meaning. A clear message will

evoke the same response from the other party. It is also essential that the receiver is conversant with the language, inherent assumptions, and the mechanics of communication.

Principle of Attention: In order to make communication effective, the receiver's attention should be drawn towards the message. People are different in behavior, attention, emotions etc. so they may respond differently to the message. Subordinates should act similarly as per the contents of the message. The acts of a superior also draw the attention of subordinates and they may follow what they observe. For example, if a superior is very punctual in coming to the office then subordinates will also develop such habits. It is said that 'actions speak louder than words'.

Principle of Feedback: The principle of feedback is very important to make communication effective. There should be feedback information from the recipient to know whether he has understood the message in the same sense in which the sender has meant it.

Principle of Informality: Formal communication is generally used for transmitting messages and other information. Sometimes formal communication may not achieve the desired results, informal communication may prove effective in such situations. Management should use informal communication for assessing the reaction of employees towards various policies. Senior management may informally convey certain decisions to the employees for getting their feedback. So this principle states that informal communication is as important as formal communication.

Principle of Consistency: This principle states that communication should always be consistent with the policies, plans, programmes and objectives of the organization and not in conflict with them. If the messages and communications are in conflict with the policies and programmes, then there will be confusion in the minds of subordinates and they may not implement them properly. Such a situation will be detrimental to the interests of the organization.

Principle of Timeliness: This principle states that communication should be done at proper time so that it helps in implementing plans. Any delay in communication may not serve any purpose rather decisions become of historical importance only.

Principle of Adequacy: The information communicated should be adequate and complete in all respects. Inadequate information may delay action and create confusion. Inadequate information also affects efficiency of the receiver. So adequate information is essential for taking proper decisions and making action plans.

Mutual understanding: Communication is effective when sender and receiver develop mutual understanding of the subject. Messages conveyed should be understood by the receiver in the desired sense.

Goal-oriented: Communication is goal-oriented. Unless the receiver and sender know the purpose they intend to achieve through communication, it has little practical utility.

Foundation of management: Though communication is a directing function, it is important for other managerial functions also. Designing plans and organization structures, motivating people to accomplish goals and controlling organizational activities; all require communication amongst managers at various levels.

A means, not an end: communication is not an end. Effective communication is a means towards achieving the end, that is, goal accomplishment. It smoothens managerial operations by facilitating planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling functions.

Human activity: Since communication makes accomplishment of organizational goals possible, it is essential that people understand and like each other. If people do not understand each others' viewpoint, there cannot be effective communication.

Interdisciplinary: Communication is the art of how communicators use knowledge of different fields of study like anthropology, psychology and sociology. Making best use of these disciplines makes communication effective. It is, thus, an interdisciplinary area of management.