

Module IX : Organizational Communication & Information Technology

Chapter I : Organizational Communication & Information Technology

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Chapter I

Organizational Communication and Information Technology

A. Defining Communication

Communication has been defined differently by different individuals. One researcher listed as many as 95 definitions, none of which is widely accepted. We may take the following as a working definition.

“Communication is the process by which people attempt to share meaning via transmission of symbolic messages”.

This definition of communication emphasizes three essential points indicated below:

- (i) Communication involves people – therefore to understand communication, it is necessary to understand how people relate to each other.
- (ii) Communication involves shared meaning – it suggests that in order to communicate with each other, people must agree on the definition of terms they use.
- (iii) Communication is symbolic gesture, sounds, letters, numbers and words can only represent or approximate the ideas they are meant to communicate.

B. Importance of Communication

Effective communication is important for managers and administrators for several reasons:

- (a) Through the communication process, management functions of planning, organizing, leading and controlling are accomplished. Information has to be communicated to the senior managers to

provide a basis for planning. Organizing requires communicating with people about their jobs and assignments and of course, the leadership function involves primarily communicating with the group to achieve organizational goals. A lot of two-way communication is required in the job of controlling instructions have to be communicated to the subordinates and feedback received from them to apply necessary correctives. Communication is thus required for almost every aspect of managerial and administrative function.

- (b) Managers and administrators have to spend a large part of their time in the activity of communication. They have to undertake a lot of face-to-face, electronic or written communication with their subordinates as well as their clients. They hardly sit alone. Even if they do, they are either disturbed by some phone-calls (communication) or are dictating letters, conference minutes, office memos – all activities connected with communication.

C. Organizational Communication

Communication is the sharing or exchange of thought by oral, written, or nonverbal means. Communication establishes relationships and makes organizing possible. Every message has a purpose or objective. The sender intends - whether consciously or unconsciously - to accomplish something by communicating. In organizational contexts, messages typically have a definite objective: to motivate, to inform, to teach, to persuade, to entertain, or to inspire. This definite purpose is, in fact, one of the principal differences between casual conversation and managerial communication. Everything that a manager does involves communicating. Ineffective communication is the basis for many managerial problems.

Effective communication in the organization centers on well-defined objectives that support the organization's goals and mission and it does not equal agreement. Supervisors strive to achieve understanding among parties to their communications.

Communication can be:

One way and two-way communication

Communication is one-way when the senders send the message without expecting a feedback. For example, policy directives to subordinates do not require immediate feedback. On the other hand two-way communication takes place where the receiver sends a feedback to the original communication. Seeking a progress report or inviting a suggestion are examples of two-way communication.

Harold Levit and Renold Mueller conducted experiments on the effects of one-way and two-way communications. We will state below their results without giving details of their experiments:

- (i) One-way communication is faster than the two-way communication as obviously the time of feedback is saved.
- (ii) Two-way communication is more accurate. The feedback allows the sender enough opportunity to clarify the doubts of the receiver.
- (iii) Receivers are sure of the contents of the communication when two-way communication is used. They can clarify their doubts.
- (iv) Senders can feel attached by the questions of the receivers in a two-way communication.
- (v) Although less accurate, one –way communication is more orderly than two way communication which appears to carry a lot of noise.

These results can provide practical guidelines for communication in organization:

- (i) One-way communication can be use when:
 - (a) the speed of communication is important;
 - (b) the accuracy is either easy to achiever or not so important;
 - (c) orderliness is required - like in a public meeting.

An incidental advantage of one-way communication is that the sender's mistakes are saved from the embarrassment of a public discussion.

- (ii) The two-way communication should be used when:
 - (a) the accuracy is the more important factor;
 - (b) speed is either easily achieved or is not so important.

In most cases, managers use a good mix of one-way and two-way communications.

- **Verbal** - formal, such as speeches and presentations, or informal, such as conversations, meeting discussions, etc.
- **Non-Verbal** - human elements such as facial expressions and body language or environmental such as cultural, colors, office design, etc.
- **Written** - letters, memos, reports, manuals, forms, etc.

Organizational communication can be:

- Formal Communication
- Informal Communication

Formal Communication and Informal Communication

Formal Communication

It is the communication that follows the official chain of command or is communication required to do one's job. It takes place within prescribed organizational work arrangements. Organizational communication establishes a pattern of formal communication channels to carry information vertically and horizontally.

Informal Communication

Informal messages are exchanges outside of official channels, in hallways, in coffee rooms, at parties, at lunches, in parking lots, or in

bars after work. Informal networks are often used intentionally to bypass formal channels to insure that information gets to the place where it is most needed. Informal networks are developed and sustained by special relationships that are formed by its members.

Informal networks:

- Are generally face-to-face
- less constrained by organizational and political restraints
- Move messages rapidly
- tend to be more the result of the situation than the people or their roles
- Tend to develop more often within organizational workgroups, departments , or divisions than between them and
- Generally transmit information that is accurate, though often somewhat incomplete, **leading to misinterpretation.**

It is not defined by the organization's structural hierarchy. It fulfills two purposes:

- permits employees to satisfy their needs for social interaction
- creates alternative, and frequently faster and more efficient, channels of communication

Grapevine

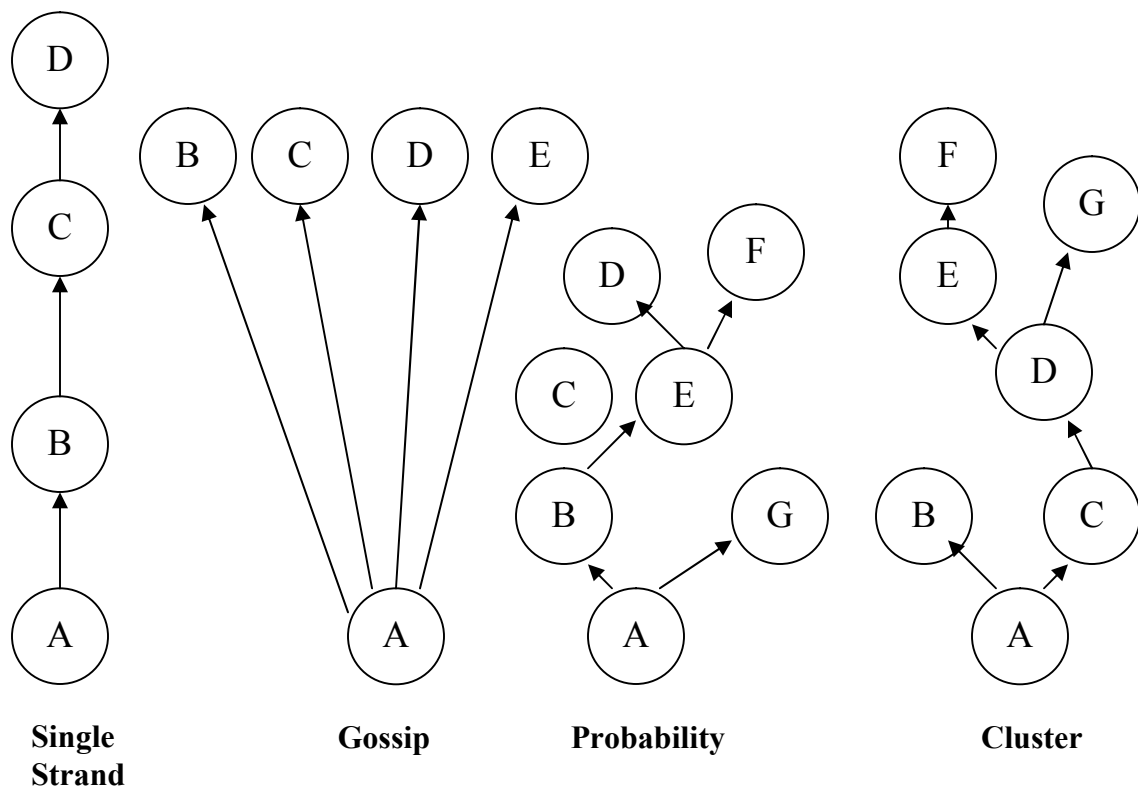
The grapevine refers to a regular system of communication among employees that occurs outside the normal channels of communication. As an informal system of communication, the grapevine often carries the first word of personnel (and personal) issues as well as leaked sensitive information. Grapevines exist in almost all organizations and serve a very important carrying function. Grapevines should be monitored to find out what kind of messages are being conveyed.

Grapevine is a type of information communication which is not officially sanctioned. It is made of several informal communication networks that overlap and interact at a number of points. It cuts across rank or authority lines and follows any path-horizontal, vertical, diagonal and zig-zag. it is different from the legitimate information that the management wishes to communicate by word of mouth.

In addition to the social and informal communicational functions the grapevine has work related functions also. It is much faster than the formal communication channel. Managers sometimes use it to spread information through “Planned leaks”.

Kelth Davis has studied the phenomenon of grapevines in the organizations and has identified four types of grapevine chains.

Grapevines Cluster



- (i) In a single strand grapevine one person –
- (a) passes on information to another person
 - (b) who in turn passes on to another person
 - (c) and so on. It is quite inaccurate in passing information.

- (ii) In a gossip grapevine – One person gets some information and tells it to everyone he meets or talks to. This chain comes into play when some interesting but non-job related information is being circulated.
- (iii) In the probability chain an individual passes information to some others a random who in turn pass it on to some others. This is used when information is widely interesting but insignificant.
- (iv) In cluster chain – A person gives information to a select few who convey it to some other selected few.

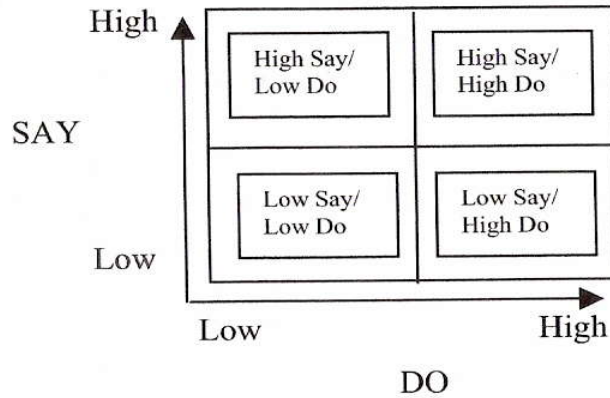
Davis has said that cluster chain is the most important variety of grapevines prevalent in the organizations. Only a few individuals, known as liaison individuals, pass on information to few other individuals whom they trust. This information is often interesting, job related and timely.

Formal versus Informal Communication

In the past, the concern of managers of large bureaucratic organizations and, consequently the major focus of the organizational communication literature, was *formal, top-down communication*. *Informal communication*, generally associated with interpersonal, horizontal communication, was primarily seen as a potential hindrance to effective organizational performance. This is no longer the case. On-going, dynamic, and non-formal, if not informal, communication has become more important to ensuring the effective conduct of work in modern organizations.

Most discussions of informal communication emphasize how to manage organizational culture and climate (the context of informal communications) to prevent informal and formal communications from being in opposition.

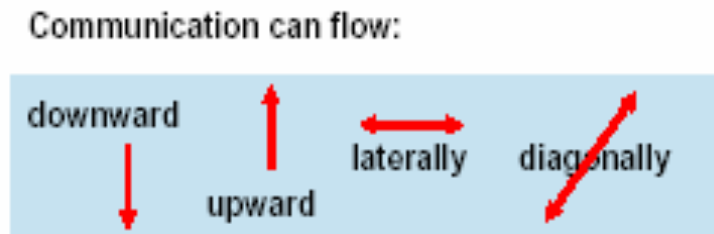
Manager's SAY/DO Correlation Associated with Formal and Informal Communication Conflict



D'Aprix (1996:39-40) developed a SAY/DO matrix— managers say one thing but do another – as a key explanation of how informal/formal communication issues can arise. He locates ideal organizational communication in the High Say/High Do quadrant – indicating that there is sufficient communication and that management actions match their communications. An organization in the High Say/Low Do quadrant is most likely to have a culture in which informal and formal communications conflict.

D. Direction of Communication Flow

An organization's hierarchical structure, its management style, and its organizational culture influence the direction in which messages flow. Formally, messages can flow in three directions: vertically (downward and upward), horizontally (or laterally) and diagonally.



Vertical communication

Vertical Communication consists of communication up and down the organization. Upward communication is meant to supply information to higher levels about what is happening at lower level. This includes progress reports, suggestions, explanations and requests for help. Such communication helps the higher management in controlling the lower formations and correcting deviations from original instructions. It also supplies data for planning for planning future course of action. Downward communication flows from top towards lower levels. its major purpose is to inform, instruct and direct the subordinate formations. It also provides information to the workers about organizational goals and policies.

Downward - flows from a manager to subordinates

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)."

Downward communication involves messages that travel from superiors to subordinates. Superiors can send job instructions, information on procedures and practices, requests for tasks, feedback on job already in progress, or information on organizational goals and objectives. Several problems occur with downward communication. Distortion or filtering of messages may occur as they travel down the hierarchy to employees. Downward communication is often unclear and vague because hurriedly prepared. Superiors make decisions then remember to send information about those decisions to the employees concerned. The quantity of information sent downward is often an issue. Too much information can overload employees can cause information processing problems, stress, anxiety, and poor productivity. Too little information can make employees feel nervous, threatened, or resentful. The critical element in downward communication becomes the ability to send the right messages to the right people, with the appropriate content, at the right time.

Downward Message Flows correspond closely with the lines of authority. The most familiar pattern of formalized information flow is

from management to employees. Messages flow downward from persons in positions of relatively greater authority to others in the organization who report to them directly or through others.

Messages transmitted downward generally serve one or more of the following functions:

- Specifying a task to be performed
- Providing instructions about how to perform a task
- Providing information about the reason for a particular task that needs to be performed
- Providing information about organizational policies or practices
- Providing information about an employee's performance and /or
- Providing information about the organization and its mission.

Upward - flows from subordinates to managers

Upward communication can be defined as "The communication flowing from subordinates to superiors, usually concerning employees' comments about themselves, their reactions about others, their reactions to practices and policies, and their thoughts about their work."

Upward communication involves messages that are sent from subordinates to superiors. Subordinates send messages providing answers to inquiries, reporting on activities, tasks, and projects, communicating understanding about practices and policies, or revealing job related problems.

- Upward communication has several functions, including:
- Providing input for decision making
- Advising about subordinates' information needs
- Providing information regarding subordinates
- Providing a potentially constructive outlet
- Allowing superiors to assess the effects of previous downward communication and,
- Helping subordinates cope with problems and facilitating their involvement

Problems of vertical communication

Downward communication is likely to be filtered, modified or halted at each level from which it passes. The middle level may like to expand and clarify the policy directives given by the top managers. For example, working instructions are added while forwarding the Acts and Rules framed by the legislature. Upward communication is also filtered condensed or altered by various levels. Officers at every level think that it is their job to safeguard the time of their superiors by preventing superfluous or irrelevant information from reaching them. For this purpose they condense the reports, returns etc. going above. There may be one more reasons for doing so. The information and reports being setup may contain some material which reflects poorly on the working of the middle level managers. In that case they may either cut out the report altogether, or, if it is not possible to do so, they may substantially modify it to remove or mitigate the effect of unfavorable parts. Thus vertical communication is almost always atleast partially inaccurate or incomplete or exaggerated etc.

Importance of Vertical Communication

The importance of Vertical Communication is, however, obvious. Some researchers have found that more than two thirds of communication of a manager takes place with his superiors and subordinates. The accuracy of vertical communication is aided by:

- (i) Similarity of thinking between superiors and subordinates; and
- (ii) Trust and confidence between them. Inaccuracy in the vertical communications result from:
 - (a) The desire of subordinates for upward mobility. Such an upward mobile subordinate is highly self-opinionated. He defends his self-image rather than find a consensus. He is likely to highlight information which presents him favorably and is likely to suppress information which presents him in poor light.

- (b) Lack of trust between superior and subordinates. The subordinate will not come out with information when they feel that the information is likely to be used against them or likely to be used unfairly.
- (c) There are problems in downward communication also. The senior managers often do not provide their subordinates enough information to enable him to perform their jobs properly. Sometimes this lack of communication is due to carelessness or complacency. The senior managers take for granted that accurate information has reached their subordinates. Sometimes this is done deliberately to keep the subordinate dependent on the superior. Whatever the reason, the net affect of this lack of communication is that the subordinates feel confused, uninformed or powerless to carry out their duties.

Horizontal or lateral Communications

Communication at same organizational level or communication of information to managers on the same level in an organization. These are communications between managers of equal hierarchical ranks.

Horizontal or lateral communication involves the exchange of information among workers at the same hierarchical level. As Katz and Kahn (1978) note, horizontal communication eases some of the burdens of management because peers can indoctrinate and train one another, and can coordinate activities of groups of workers.

Moreover, horizontal communication provides important and necessary socio-emotional rewards. However, peer indoctrination and training can be faulty or even at cross-purposes to management goals. Some organizations adopt heavy-handed managerial techniques in order to discourage horizontal communication flow. However, this form of cure may be worse than the ailment, particularly under conditions of isolation and confinement. In space as elsewhere, the problem is not one of preventing horizontal communication, but of preventing such communication from assuming destructive forms.

Lateral communication usually follows the pattern of workflow in the organization. It occurs between the members of a group; between two or more groups, between different departments; and between line and staff. Sometimes it occurs outside the chain of command. This occurs with the knowledge and approval of the higher management. The advantages of lateral communication are:

- (a) It provides a direct channel of organizational co-ordination and problem-solving. It avoids the slower procedures of directing communication through a common superior.
- (b) It enables the members of organization to form relationships with their peer groups. These relationships are important part of employee satisfaction.
- (c) It reduces inaccuracy by putting relevant people in direct contact with each other.
- (d) It reduces the communication burden i.e. the communication in this way is much faster.

Diagonal Communication

Diagonal - cuts across both work areas and organizational levels

Horizontal communication involves messages that are exchanged among individuals at the same hierarchical level in an organization. Also called lateral communication, they serve a number of functions including problem solving, information sharing, task coordination, and conflict resolution.

Functions of horizontal information include:

- Coordinating planning and execution of tasks
- Providing for collective problem solving
- Facilitating common understanding
- Resolving differences and
- Developing supportive and productive work relationships

E. The Communication Process

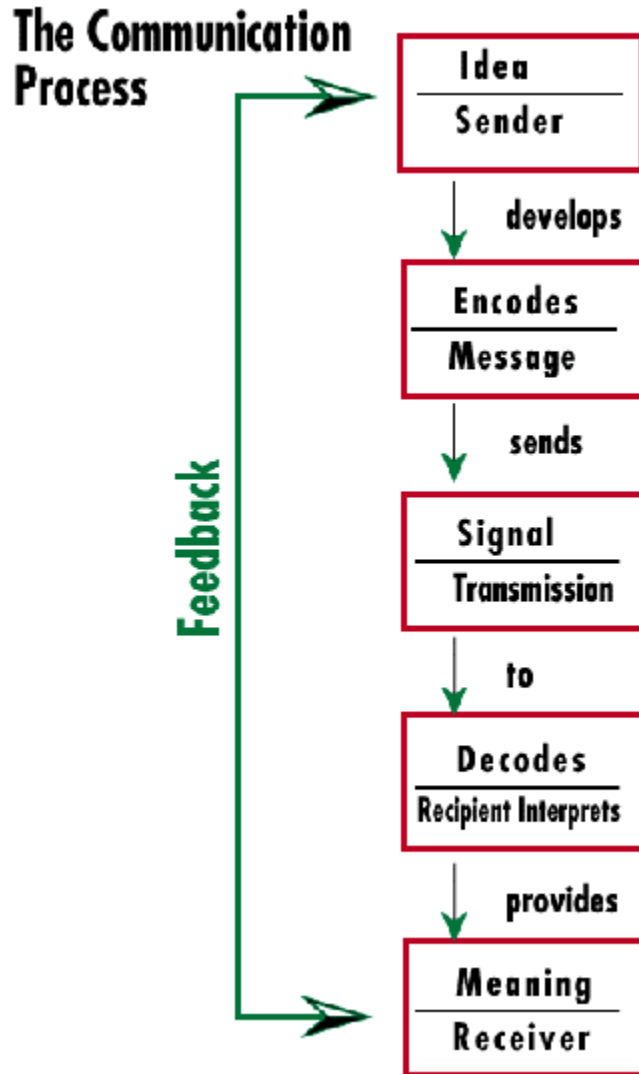
Communication is the process of passing information and understanding from one person to another. The communication process involves six basic elements: sender (encoder), message, channel, receiver (decoder), noise, and feedback. Supervisors can improve communication skills by becoming aware of these elements and how they contribute to successful communication. Communication can break down at any one of these elements.

Sender Encodes

The **sender** initiates the communication process. When the sender has decided on a meaning, he or she **encodes** a message, and selects a channel for transmitting the message to a receiver. To encode is to put a message into words or images. The **message** is the information that the sender wants to transmit. The medium is the means of communication, such as print, mass, electrical, and digital. As a sender, the supervisor should define the purpose of the message, construct each message with the receiver in mind, select the best medium, time each transmission thoughtfully, and seek feedback. Words can be verbal - written and spoken. Words are used to create pictures and stories (scenarios) are used to create involvement.

Written communication should be used when the situation is formal, official, or long term; or when the situation affects several people in related ways. Communication and the need to exchange information are no longer constrained by place and time. Email, voice mail, and facsimile have facilitated communications and the sharing of knowledge. **Email** is the computer transmission and storage of written messages. Voice mail is the transmission and storage of digitized spoken messages. **Facsimile** (fax) is the transmission of documents.

Verbal or spoken communication includes informal staff meetings, planned conferences, and mass meetings. Telephone calls are used for quick checkups and for imparting or receiving information.



Teams using information technology have access to information, share knowledge, and construct documents. Meetings take place electronically from multiple locations, saving the organization's resources in both the expenses of physically bringing people from different locations together, and the time lost by employees traveling. **Teleconferencing** is simultaneous group verbal exchanges. Videoconferencing is group verbal and visual exchanges.

Nonverbal messages include images, actions and behaviors used to communicate. Images include photographs, film, charts, tables, graphs, and video. Nonverbal behaviors include actions, body language, and active listening. Actions and body language include eye contact, gestures, facial expressions, posture, and appearance. The effective communicator maintains eye contact for four to five seconds

before looking away. Gestures should be natural and well timed. Grooming and dress should be appropriate for the situation. Listening requires good eye contact, alert body posture, and the frequent use of verbal encouragement.

The **channel** is the path a message follows from the sender to the receiver. Supervisors use *downward* channels to send messages to employees. Employees use *upward* channels to send messages to supervisors. *Horizontal* channels are used when communicating across departmental lines, with suppliers, or with customers. An informal channel is the grapevine. It exists outside the formal channels and is used by people to transmit casual, personal, and social interchanges at work. The **grapevine** consists of rumors, gossip, and truthful information. The supervisor should pay attention to the grapevine, but should not depend on it for accurate information.

Receiver Decodes

Information technology is revolutionizing the way organizational members communicate. Network systems, electronic links among an organization's computer hardware and software, enable members to communicate instantaneously, to retrieve and share information from anyplace, at anytime. The **receiver** is the person or group for whom the communication effort is intended. **Noise** is anything that interferes with the communication. Feedback ensures that mutual understanding has taken place in a communication. It is the transfer of information from the receiver back to the sender. The receiver **decodes** or makes out the meaning of the message. Thus, in the feedback loop, the receiver becomes the sender and the sender becomes the receiver.

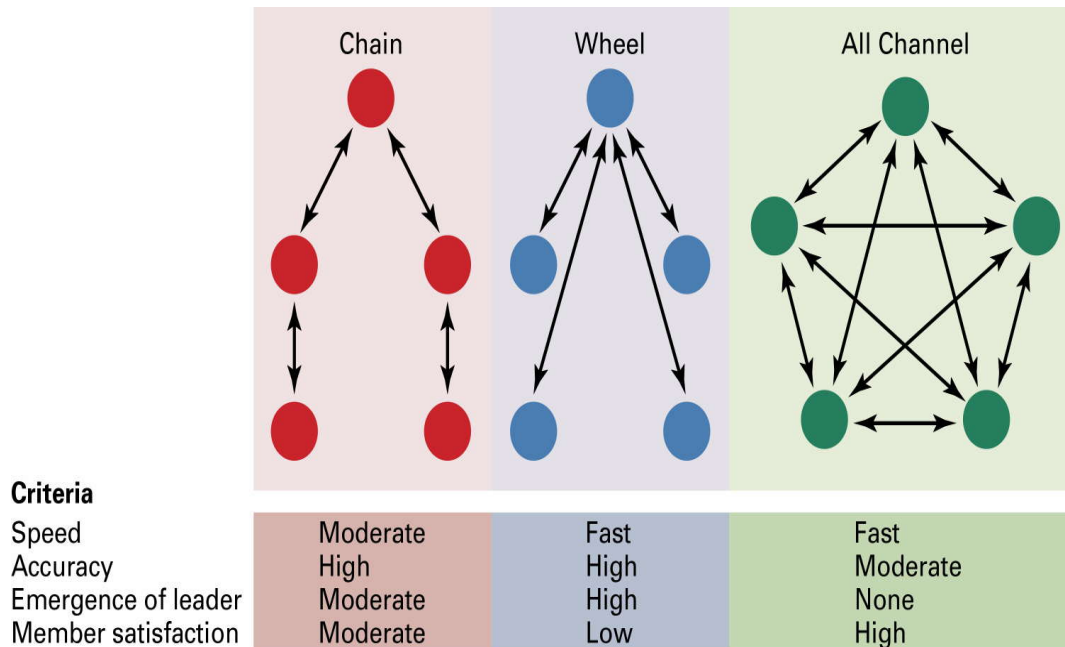
F. Communication Networks

By a network, we mean the channels through which messages pass from one person to another. These networks may be viewed from two perspectives: First, small groups left to their own resources will develop communication patterns resembling these several network structures. Second, these networks may also be viewed as formalized structures established by an organization for communication within the company.

Organization can design their communicating networks or structures in several ways. Some communication networks are very rigid. Employees are discouraged from talking to any one except their immediate superiors. This helps maintain the status and position of senior levels and helps prevent unnecessary information from reaching them. On the other hand some networks are loosely designed. Individuals are encouraged to communicate with anyone they like. This may be useful where free flow of information is essential for achieving the goals of the organization. For example, research organization needs such a free flow.

The Network Structures

- ***The Chain:*** The chain is similar to the circle except that the end members may communicate with only one person each.
- ***The wheel:*** The wheel is characterized by the centralized position of a clear leader, who is the only one who can send messages to all members and the only one who can receive messages from all members.
- ***The All-Channel:*** The all-channel or star pattern is like the circle in that all members are equal and all have exactly the same amount of power to influence others, except that each member in this pattern may communicate with any other member. This pattern allows for the greatest member participation. Communication through these networks occurs often but not always face-to-face. Messages may be written in informal memos or in formal letters and reports.



- **The Y:** The y pattern is somewhat less centralized than the wheel, but more centralized than some of the other patterns.
- **The Circle:** The circle has no leader; here there is total equality. Each member of the circle has exactly the same authority or power to influence the group.

G. Barriers to Effective Communication

Any factor that impedes the exchange of information between the sender and the receiver is a barrier to communication. These barriers may be overt and physical or covert and psychological or personal. The occurrence of noise in a machine-room is a physical barrier at that place and may be easily overcome by closing the machine or by moving it to another place. On the other hand, poor language or understanding on the part of the receiver is personal barrier and fear complex in him is a psychological barrier, The former can be got over by improving the language skills and comprehension of the subordinate (by training), the latter is much more difficult to understand and overcome. Since a manager is all the time communicating with his subordinates, colleagues, peers, clients – it is absolutely essential for him to understand what are the barriers to effective communication and what methods to overcome them are or at least how to mitigate their severity.

We will first discuss barriers to inter-personal communication and their remedies:

- (i) **Differing Perceptions.** The most common barrier to effective communication is the individual variations in the perception of the same event. Let us take the example of a superior who wants to increase efficiency of his workers by praising the genuine good work of one of them. The workers, on their part take it to mean that the particular worker may be buttering the boss and they may eventually start harassing him. Sometimes the communication has a different meaning in different environments. For example, a perfectly healthy difference of opinion expressed in a meeting of Board of Director will be regarded as down right foolish if aired in a meeting of the shareholders.
- (ii) **Noise** is any factor that disturbs, confuses or otherwise interferes with communication. However, totally noise-free communication does not appear to be possible. It may be noted that sometimes even relevant information is dismissed as noise along with other irrelevant information.
- (iii) **Inconsistent verbal and non-verbal communication** may create a lot of confusion in the mind of receiver. Even praising the subordinate with a poker face will not convince him that superior means well. If at all, the gesture will confuse him.
- (iv) **Distrust.** The credibility of message depends to a large extent on the credibility of the sender in the mind of the receiver. This credibility of the sender in turn depends on many factors such as:
 - (a) Rapport between the sender and the receiver;
 - (b) Perceived qualities of the sender – Credibility is high if the send is perceived by the receiver as a sincere, knowledgeable and honest person;

- (c) Past experience of the receiver with regard to similar communications from the sender;
- (d) Peculiarities of the situation – For example in labour management negotiations, the labour tends to view the claims of the management with distrust.

H. Factors affecting effectiveness of communication in Organization

All the factors that have been discussed above regarding inter personal communication also apply to the organizational communication. However, there are several factors, unique to organizational situation, that effect the communication effectiveness in the organizations. Some of these are discussed below:

- (i) **Formal channel of communication** influence communication effectiveness in two ways:
 - a) Formal channels of communication go on lengthening as the organization grows. For example in a country-wide organization with a zonal, divisional and district set up there are many chains in the command structure making the formal channel of communication very long.
 - b) Such a long channel results in inhibiting the information flow between different levels. Since the lowest level workers communicate their problems only to the next level, the senior management may not get all the information. While it has the advantage of keeping the flow of information to the higher levels within manageable limits, sometime even necessary information is obstructed.
- (ii) **Organizations Authority Structure** has a similar influence on communication effectiveness. This authority structure decides who will communicate freely with whom. There is hardly any worthwhile communication between two individuals who have a great authority difference.

- (iii) **Job Specialization** also affects communication in its own way. Person in the same specialty are familiar with the jargon and can communicate effectively. However, communication between highly differentiated groups is inhibited.
- (iv) **Information Ownership** means that some individuals pose valuable information and knowledge about their jobs. This may be about a better method of doing a thing learnt by experience or knowing something special about the organization or its clients. This enables them to perform a job better than their peers. For that reason it gives them a sense of power. They are, therefore, not willing to share this information with others. Hence an open communication within the organization does not take place. Some of this aspect have been studied widely and shall be discussed in some detail.

I. **Overcoming Barriers to Effective Communication**

This will involve two steps:

- (a) To recognize the various types of barriers existing in any given situation;
- (b) To take action to overcome these barriers specific remedies may have to be thought of to overcome these barriers in different specific situations.

Overcoming general barriers

However, some general solutions to the general problems will be discussed here.

- (i) **Overcoming differing perceptions** will require that the message should be properly explained so that it can be understood by those with different view and experiences. It may be of help to visualize the background of those to whom the communication is addressed and to couch it in a language they can understand.

- (ii) **Overcoming language differences** will require that the meaning of technical terms and jargon should be fully explained. Simple language should be used as far as possible. If necessary the subordinates may be asked to state the meaning of important communication to make sure they have understood it.
- (iii) **Overcoming noise** will require removing its cause or increasing the strength of the communication.
- (iv) **Overcoming emotionality.** First step is to become aware of the emotional problem and to know what is the likely emotional reaction of an employee so that the others may be prepared to deal with the emotional encounter. The second aspect is to study ones own behaviour and its impact on the emotional state of others. This may help in modifying one's own behaviour. The general solution is to create a supportive atmosphere in the organization and to prevent the development of negative and hostile emotions.
- (v) **Overcoming inconsistent verbal and non-verbal communication.** This will require that the sender sho0d be aware of them and should attempt to avoid sending false massages. Gesture, postures, facial expressions, nod or wave of hand all must agree with the message. One may learn this by observing this kind of behaviour in others.
- (vi) **Redundancy** means repeating the message or restating it in a different form. It reduces uncertainty in the message. Optimum amount of redundancy depends on the circumstances. For a simple message communicated in a permanent form (writing, printed material dis. etc) much redundancy is not required. However, for communication send orally or in other perishable form or for complex communication (even in writings) more redundancy may be desirable. However, redundancy should not be overdone, otherwise it becomes a noise. Moreover, there are other limitations like money, space, time etc.
- (vii) **Feedback.** A culture of feed back should be created in the organization. This helps the sender in making corrections in the

earlier communication and helps the received in getting any clarifications he might be needing.

Overcoming Organizational Barriers

Since much of what applies to interpersonal communication also applies to the organizational communication, many methods of overcoming barriers to effective communication also common. Differing perceptions and language difficulties have to be tackled by and using simple language, by explaining technical terms and the jargon and by taking into account the background of those to whom the communication is addressed. However, some more steps may be necessary to overcome special organizational barriers to communication. Some of the remedies are discussed here:

- (i) **Management by Objective (MBO)** – can be used to improve communications in the organization. MBO involves joint goal setting, joint problem solving, performance feedback etc. MBO programmes may, therefore, be very useful in improving downward communication and creating an atmosphere of trust and confidence between superiors and subordinates.
- (ii) **Organizational Development** aims at changing the entire organizational culture. This includes establishment of open objective and authentic communication between superiors and subordinates at all levels of organization.
- (iii) **Physical Layout of Work Place** can also influence the communication pattern in an organization. In turn affecting its culture and policies.

An open space lay out may result in one type of inter-personal interaction while linear corridors of rooms may create a different type of interaction. A lot of emphasis is being given, these days on the design of work places to improve the communication processes in addition to other things.

J. Understanding Information Technology

The computers are changing the communication scene very fast. They not only store and process data but also distribute numerical data and information throughout the organization. In advanced countries corporate electronic mail and tele-conferencing are also becoming popular. Many companies are using computers to improve inventory keeping and consumer ordering. Tele-commuting is also being used to send and receive work people do at home. What is the effect on organizations? An important result is that the content, size, form and frequency of messages have changed. This has influenced the interacting between the individuals and departments. Most of the employees now work on the computers and are able to get most of the information without the help of others. This has reduced the interpersonal communication between them. This is affecting the lower level workers more, but even the managers are affected. When they get information in seconds, their dependence of their subordinates is reduced. If due to computers, workers get too isolated, the organization may lose valuable training and knowledge sharing advantages that come from informal social contact at work.

The various applications of IT facilitating organizational communication are listed on the next page:

Use of IT in organizations

<i>Networked Computer Systems</i>	- linking computers through compatible hardware and software
<i>e-mail</i>	- instantaneous transmission of written messages
<i>instant messaging (IM)</i>	- interactive real-time communication requires groups to be logged on the computer network at the same time leaves network open to security breaches IM software is currently incompatible with important business applications software
<i>voice-mail</i>	- digitizes a spoken message transmits message over the network stores the message for later retrieval
<i>Fax</i>	-allows transmission of documents containing both text and graphics over ordinary telephone lines
<i>Electronic data interchange (EDI)</i>	- permits the exchange of standard business transaction documents
<i>Teleconferencing</i>	- permits simultaneous conferral using telephone or e-mail group communications software
<i>videoconferencing</i>	-participants can see each other
<i>Intranet</i>	Internet technology that links organizational employees
<i>Extranet</i>	-Internet technology that links an organization with customers and suppliers
<i>Internet-based voice communication</i>	- allows users to talk with each other
<i>Wireless Capabilities</i>	-depends on signals sent through space without any physical connection -based on microwave signals, satellites, radio waves, or infrared light rays