



SIAYA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

P.O. BOX 1087 - 40600 SIAYA. TEL: 0703564522

Email: info@siayainstitute.ac.ke

Department of Liberal Studies

COMMUNICATION SKILLS NOTES

Henry Ligawa

SUBJECT COORDINATOR

2022

TOPIC 1: INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNICATION

MEANING AND ROLE OF COMMUNICATION

The word communication is used to mean speaking or writing or sending a message to another person. Communication is really much more than that. It involves ensuring that your message reaches the target audience and that the receiver understands and responds to the message appropriately. Communication is an important aspect of behaviour; human communication is affected by all factors that influence human behaviour.

GENERAL DEFINITION OF COMMUNICATION

Communication comes from the Latin word *communicare*, which means “to make common” or “to share.” **Communication** is defined as the process of using messages to generate meaning (Judy Pearson, 2008). Communication is considered a **process** because it is an activity, an exchange, or a set of behaviours—not an unchanging product. It is an activity in which you participate. David Berlo (1960), a pioneer in the field of communication, probably provided the clearest statement about communication as a process: “If we accept the concept of process, we view events and relationships as dynamic, on-going, ever changing, continuous. When we label something as a process, we also mean that it does not have a beginning, an end, a fixed sequence of events. It is not static, at rest. It is moving. The ingredients within a process interact; each affects all the others.

Working definition

Communication is the process of transmitting information and meaning from one individual or organisation to another by means of mutually understandable symbols. The crucial element is **meaning**. Communication has as its central objective the transmission of meaning. The process of communication is successful only when the receiver understands an idea as the sender intended it. Both parties must agree not only on the information transmitted but also on the meaning of that information.

In order to transfer an idea, we must use symbols (words, signs, pictures, sounds) which stand for the idea. The symbols must be understood by the person or persons with whom we intend to communicate. Both must assign the same meaning to the symbols used; otherwise, there is miscommunication.

ROLE/ PURPOSE OF COMMUNICATION IN AN ORGANISATION

1. Managing the human resource. Communication is the tool with which we exercise influence on others, bring about changes in the attitudes and views of our associates, motivate them and establish and maintain relations with them. The primary element in the skills of management is competence in communication.
2. Communication is central to the success of everything that we do in an organisations (objectives); our family, school/college, office, hobby group, community group, our city/town are the organisations in which we live and act. Our activities succeed or fail, and our goals are achieved or not achieved, according to our ability to communicate effectively with other members.
3. Building positive interpersonal relation. Communication plays a foundational role in the development of any healthy interpersonal relationship. It can strengthen a mutual sense of commitment; it also helps to bridge the gap between people who have misunderstandings. Indeed, communication plays a critical role in all phases of interpersonal relations, from creating a relationship to maintenance of relationships.

4. Communication is the glue that holds an organisation together, whatever its business or its size (creates unity and harmony). Without communication an organisation cannot function at all. Without effective communication, information cannot be collected, processed, or exchanged; words and data would remain isolated facts. With effective communication, multinational organisations which are spread all over the world can function like a single unit.
5. Communication enables an individual to express ideas thoughts and feelings effectively in writing and in speech. The most important foundation skill for anyone in the new world of work is the ability to communicate; being able to express your ideas effectively.
6. Communication helps in team building and team-work. Owing to advances in information technology, companies downsize and decentralize, and work is increasingly carried out by teams. Team members must be able to work together to identify problems, analyse alternatives, and recommend solutions. They must be able to communicate their ideas persuasively to others. Ability to work well in teams, to manage your subordinates and your relationships with seniors, customers and colleagues, depends on your communication skill.
7. Marketing the products and services. Communication in the form of advertisement and public relations is needed in order to inform the public and to persuade potential customers to buy the products. Production of goods is of no use if potential buyers have no information about the product. Communicating to the public about the product is the essence of business.
8. Delegation of work horizontally and vertically.
9. Transacting business: through internal and external communication.
10. Building positive public relations

ESSENTIALS/PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Communication is effective only when both the sender and the receiver are focussed on the act of communication. While the sender must sharpen and improve skills of speaking and writing, the receiver must improve skills of listening and reading. The qualities of communication which the sender must achieve are called the C's of Communication because most of them begin with the letter C.

Cs of Good Communication

1. Correctness

A letter must be correct in every respect:

(i) In spelling, grammar, pronunciation, and use of language. Incorrect language spoils the message, distracts the receiver's attention, and creates a poor impression of the sender; it may also convey a wrong meaning. All spellings must be checked; spelling of names must be checked with extra care. Most people are offended if their name is wrongly spelt or pronounced. There must be consistency in the use of numbers, units of measure, technical terms, abbreviations, hyphens, grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalisation. American and English spelling vary. Hyphenation and punctuation and capitalisation do not have absolutely fixed rules. Whatever you decide on, be consistent throughout the document.

(ii) In appearance and form of layout. Poor and untidy appearance, with typing mistakes corrected in ink, uneven spacing or carelessness in the layout, creates a poor impression of the company's efficiency in handling its work. Appearance depends on placing the parts of layout correctly on the letterhead, even spacing between letters, words, lines and parts of layout, and having proper margins on all sides. Similarly, shabby appearance of the speaker and lack of attention to body language creates a bad impression.

(iii) In the information conveyed correct and accurate. Communicating wrong or incomplete information is the most harmful thing; it leads to waste of time in making corrections and will lead to loss of goodwill and loss of business. All dates and days, time, numbers and facts must be in agreement. Nothing is more confusing than mismatched information.

(iv) In tone, formality and style must be appropriate to the occasion, the content and the relationship between the sender and the receiver. An overdone apology sounds childish or undignified; a grudging or patronising agreement to grant a request sounds unpleasant.

2. Clarity

The message must be clear at the first reading so it that takes very little time to follow and understand. Clearly written or spoken messages avoid misunderstanding and save time. Write and speak to express, not to impress. Clarity depends upon five factors:

(i) Simple, common everyday words which everyone can understand. Never send the reader to the dictionary. Technical terms should be avoided unless absolutely needed and if you are communicating within the profession.

(ii) Short and simple sentences. Long sentences confuse the reader, and often confuse the writer also. Phrases and clauses should not be added on to a sentence. Each bit of important information should be given in a separate sentence.

(iii) Proper punctuation and pauses. It helps to provide pauses and stops and to break up groups of words into sensible units. Besides the full stop, there are other, shorter pauses like the semi-colon and the comma which help to break up a sentence into readable units.

3. Consistency

Consistency should be in the use of numbers, units of measure, technical terms, abbreviations, grammar, spelling, punctuation and capitalization and dates. British or American spellings vary. Hyphenation, punctuation and capitalization do not have absolutely fixed rules. Whatever you decide on, be consistent throughout the document.

4. Coherence

Coherence is logical sequence of ideas. Making a clear plan for a presentation or a letter ensures that the ideas are in logical order; coherence, that is, logical connection of ideas makes any composition easy to understand. Consistency in numbering also helps in achieving coherence

5. Concreteness

Giving definite and concrete details with figures and names. Vague phrases like "in due course" or "at your earliest convenience" are not so useful as definite time phrases like *in two weeks* or *within three weeks, soon, good, any time*. Use words and expressions which communicate exact and definite information. It is better to use concrete words with a definite meaning, or to give concrete examples and description. Words like *good, bad, far, near*, make sense only when you indicate the level of efficiency or quality and say at what speed.

6. Conciseness

Conciseness means expressing much in a few words; in business communication it means keeping to the point, using as few words as possible without sacrificing clarity or courtesy. It does not necessarily mean being brief; it means making every word count. Conciseness can be achieved by:

(i) Leaving out unnecessary modifiers; for example, "new innovation;" (can there be an old innovation?) or "very unique" (unique means only "one of its kind"). Other examples are: "advance plans", "actual experience", "cylindrical in shape", "three cubic meters in volume."

(ii) Reducing unimportant ideas to phrases or single words like,
in the form of - as
in many cases - often
exhibits the ability to - can
in the event of - if

(iii) Making sure that only the necessary and relevant details are included. Using more words than necessary confuses the idea.

Conciseness and clarity are closely related; giving clear and definite details often reduces the length of a sentence. Readers are thankful for precise and clear messages. Irrelevant ideas and going out of point confuses the listener.

7. Courtesy

Courtesy is consideration for other people's feelings. It is seen in an individual's behaviour with others. A well-mannered and courteous person shows consideration and thought for others. In a letter, the style, the manner and the choice of words reflect the courtesy of the writer. Some simple rules for courtesy are:

- (i) Use the courtesy words *please, thank you, excuse me* and *sorry* as the situation requires.
- (ii) Express appropriate feeling according to the situation. For example, sympathy when someone suffers, good wishes when someone begins something new, and congratulation when someone achieves something.
- (iii) Make the other person feel comfortable. This is an important factor of courtesy. Care and consideration for the reader is reflected in the letter. The opening sentence itself shows the courtesy of the writer:

- *We appreciate your promptness in sending the goods.*
- *Thank you for sending your quotation so promptly.*
- *We are sorry to learn that you were inconvenienced.*

Requests must also be made courteously:

- *We would appreciate it very much if you could send your cheque within three days of receiving our bill.*
- *Will you please look into the matter at once?*

(iv) Be attentive and prompt in responding. Every message, written or oral should be answered within twenty-four hours. If it is a letter of complaint, the response should be immediate; a courteous company makes a phone call or sends a fax message immediately on receiving a complaint or hearing about a problem. Everyone appreciates prompt attention.

(v) Let the tone, the choice of words and the style of the message reflect your consideration for the feelings and needs of the receiver. This is particularly important if the message to be 'conveyed is likely to be unpleasant for the reader. A courteous letter has the best chance of getting a favourable response. Seeing the situation as the reader sees it, and taking care of his/ her needs, is courtesy. You must have an awareness of how the words sound to the receiver.

8. Completeness

The message communicated should be complete with all necessary details and information given to enable proper understanding and response by the receiver.

ROLE OF ICT IN COMMUNICATION

As depicted here, ICT involves the use of computer and internet in communication, including the internet enabled mobile phone.

Effects of Communication Technology on Business Productivity

- 1) Business productivity has increased dramatically with mobile communication tools. The mobile telephone and the mobile PC have freed the business person from the desk and made it possible to work from anywhere, anytime. With instant messaging, the capabilities of communication have become even more powerful. Regular Instant Messaging users have increased the number of people they contact and the frequency of such contacts, while decreasing the number of e-mail and phone calls they initiated.
- 2) It builds customer and partner relationships. Clients and business partners get instant access to the company contacts they need, right when they need them. They do not have to waste time waiting for the operator or the EPBX system to put them through to the person they need to talk to.
- 3) It increases employee productivity since on-the-spot responses means that work gets done faster and more efficiently, right from your desktop.
- 4) It increases flexibility and decreases downtime. There is no need to spend time just waiting for information to be located and transmitted by some other person. Direct access to the needed information means ability to take decisions on the spot. Within the organisation, rigid and time

consuming procedures of getting information through the organisational channels can be avoided. Using wireless connectivity gives users more flexibility to work from a variety of locations, resulting in productivity gains and efficiency savings. With instant messaging it is possible to reply to urgent queries, eliminate the need to make copies, eliminate travel in many cases. Productivity gains are measured by the *amount of additional time available that is used to perform business tasks*.

- 5) An important development is the portability of the cellular telephone and of the laptop computer, so that an individual has the power to contact anyone at any location from any location. The instrument is no longer tied to the transmitting equipment because of developments in wireless technology combined with telephone for the cellular (mobile) telephone.
- 6) The laptop and other portable computers and the mobile telephone have freed the person from the office and the desk.
- 7) The mobile telephone has acquired a large number of capabilities besides transmission of voice; it has become capable of storage.
- 8) Data which might be needed at important meetings at a faraway location can be carried in compressed form in a mobile telephone, a laptop computer, palmtop computer or pocket computer. This data can be in the form of text, graphics or voice and sounds.
- 9) The instrument is also capable of taking instant pictures and storing or transmitting them; these can then be transferred to other instruments like the desktop computer.
- 10) It allows access to the internet, thus making information search possible from any location. The instrument allows the user to carry out some editing of the stored data.
- 11) Ability to hold one-on-one conferences online and hold "virtual meetings" where others can join in.
- 12) Offers opportunity for online marketing and online business transactions. Employees and customers can discuss sales deals on-the-spot.
- 13) Information communication is fast, enabling immediate answers to urgent questions and staying in close touch with employees who are on the road. The management can also send personal, timely congratulatory notes to boost staff morale.
- 14) It has capacity for mass storage of information. All data about the organisation can be located in one place.
- 15) It enables quick and ready access to information from many sources at any time.
- 16) Provides reprographic services in communication.
- 17) Enables social networking through the social media.

Challenges posed by the use of ICT in communication

1. Increase in cyber-crime.
2. Internet fluctuations.
3. High cost of purchasing and installing communication gadgets.
4. Proper usage of ICT needs technical knowledge and skills.
5. Mobile phone and social media have led to spread of fake news, hatred and defation.

TOPIC 2. COMMUNICATION PROCESS

Communication as a **process** is moving, continually changing, with no beginning or end. In our definition, communication is a process—something that is continually changing. Individual words, sentences, and gestures have no meaning in isolation. They make sense only when viewed as parts of an on-going, dynamic process. To fully understand the process of communication, we must notice how what we say and do influences and affects what the other person says and does. We must pay attention to the changes we experience and how these changes influence and affect our perception, interpretation, and interactions with others, from moment to moment, year to year, and decade to decade. Similarly, we also need to be sensitive to the on-going changes in those we communicate with because they are changing too. Communication is alive, and to fully appreciate it requires that we view it as a dynamic, fluid, and continually changing process.

COMPONENTS OF THE PROCESS OF COMMUNICATION

There are seven elements or factors which make up the process of communication:

1. Source /Sender, is the one who initiates the action of communicating
2. Audience /Receiver is the person(s) for whom the communication is intended
3. Goal/Purpose is the sender's reason for communicating, the desired result of the communication
4. Message/ Content is the information conveyed
5. Medium /Channel is the means or method used for conveying the message
6. Feedback is the receiver's response to the communication as observed by the sender
7. Environment /Context is the background in which the communication takes place.

1. Source

The **source** is the originator of the message. It is the person or persons who want to communicate a message to another person or a group of people. The source of a message can be an individual speaker addressing a group, a child asking for candy, a couple sending out invitations to a family reunion, or a person writing a letter.

Encoding

Once the source has decided on a message to communicate, he must **encode** or convert that idea, thought, or feeling into verbal and nonverbal symbols that will be most effectively understood by the receiver. This encoding process can be extremely creative because there are unlimited ways for the source to convert the idea or feeling into words and behaviours.

2. Message

The **message** is the idea, thought, or feeling that the source wants to communicate. This message is encoded or converted into verbal and nonverbal symbols that will most likely be understood by the receiver.

3. Receiver

The **receiver** is the recipient of the message. The receiver can be an individual or a group of people. Once the receiver hears the words and receives the nonverbal cues from the sender, she must interpret or decode them if communication is to occur.

Decoding

Decoding is the process of making sense out of the message received. The receiver must decipher the language and behaviours sent by the source so they will have meaning. After the receiver decodes the message, the receiver (now the source) can encode a return message and send it back to the other person.

4. Channel

A **channel** is the medium by which the message is communicated. The source can utilize the channels of sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste. For instance, if you want to communicate affection for another person, you can utilize a variety of channels or combination of channels. You can say, "I like you"

(sound). You can give a hug (touch). You can wink an eye (sight). You can send cookies that you baked (taste). Or you can deliver a dozen roses (smell). You can creatively select the channels of communication to productively communicate your message.

5. Context/Environment

All communication occurs within a certain context. The context is made up of the physical surroundings, the occasion in which the communication occurs, the time, the number of people present, noise level, and many other variables that can influence and affect the encoding and decoding of messages. The context plays an important role in the communication process.

6. Feedback

The receiver also feels a reaction to the message; this reaction may be conscious or unconscious; it may cause some change in the receiver's facial expression. It definitely leads the receiver to think. The receiver may take some action, if required. He may also reply to the message. The response and/or reply is **feedback**. Receiver's functions complete one cycle of the process of communication.

7. **Goal/Purpose** is the sender's reason for communicating, the desired result of the communication

STAGES OF COMMUNICATION

1. The sender conceptualises and encodes the message.
2. The sender chooses the channel and sends the message to the receiver
3. The receiver receives and decodes the message.
4. The receiver chooses the channel and sends the feedback.

BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Communication is not always successful. Several things can prevent the message from reaching ' the intended recipient or from "having the desired effect on the recipient.

1. Physical Barriers

Obstacles that prevent a message from reaching the intended recipient may be outside and beyond the control of the persons concerned. Some can be controlled by the management; some cannot be controlled because they are in the environment.

(a) Defects in the Medium

Defects in the devices used for transmitting messages are external, and usually not within the control of the parties engaged in communication. The telephone, the postal system, the courier service, or electronic media may fail. Messages can get delayed, distorted and even lost while being transmitted. A partial failure of the mechanical equipment is more harmful than a total failure because a partial failure may carry an incomplete or distorted message. A fax message can be wrongly delivered as a wrong number can get dialled on the telephone. The printout may not be clear at all. It is advisable to call up and check that the fax has been received.

(b) Noise

Noise is any disturbance which occurs in the transmission process. In face-to face communication which is carried by air vibration, the air may be disturbed by noise such as traffic, factory work, or people talking. In a factory, oral communication is very difficult because of the noise of the machines. Organisations that can afford sound-proof rooms can overcome this barrier to some extent.

(c) Information Overload

When there is too much information, some of it is blocked in transit and may not reach the intended audience. Advertising and sales information is an example of overload; so much communication about products floats through so many media that a good deal of it does not reach the potential buyer.

2. Semantic and Language Barriers

Semantic means pertaining to or arising from the different meanings of words or other symbols. First of all, many words have multiple meanings. Just look into a good dictionary and see how many meanings you can find for some commonly used words like "charge", "spring", "check", "suit", "ring".

The meaning that comes to your mind first depends on your occupation ("charge" may mean electrical charge to an engineering student, but fee/rent to a commerce student).

Words like "minute" and "wind" are pronounced in two different ways to mean two entirely different things. Some words like "present", "transfer", "record" are used as verb and as noun with a difference in stress in speaking, but no difference in spelling. A person may be present at a function and receive a present (stress on pre-), and present (stress on -sent) some thoughts on the budget. Similar sounding words like "access" and "excess", "flour" and "flower", "cite", "site" and "sight" can cause misunderstanding in speech. Many people confuse "week" and "weak," "steal" and "steel" in writing.

Emotional and cultural attitudes towards something can evoke different responses in people; for example, "dog" will evoke responses according to a person's past experience with the animal as well as cultural attitudes towards the animal.

Phrases can be tricky; 'a red and a blue carpet' signifies two carpets: one red and one blue. 'A red and blue carpet' is one carpet in two colours. Sentences can convey entirely different meanings depending on how they are spoken. Consider the sentence, "*What can I do for you?*" It means something different with every shift of emphasis from one word to another in oral communication.

Technical terms can also be a barrier to communication when used with an audience who are not members of that profession. Often, these words have other meanings in ordinary language, and are differently understood by people who do not belong to that occupational group. Consider the new meanings given to ordinary words by computer technology such as "mouse".

More importantly, semantic barriers arise because words mean different things to different persons. It is said, "meaning is in people, not in words." Age, profession, education, cultural background and many other factors influence the meaning we give to words.

A dialect for example would identify a person geographically and identically certain slang would reveal the cultural or group orientation of the persons speaking it. The same are then barriers, if spoken in situations and with people, who may not be able to relate to them.

3. Organisational Barriers

Editing and filtering: A great deal of loss of information occurs as a message moves from senior management to lower levels. Each person through whom it passes edits it, filters it, and simplifies it for the understanding and needs of the next person who is to receive it. Loss or distortion of information as it moves downward may be caused by misinterpretation, lack of understanding, and neglect of messages by some of the members of the organisation.

Loss of information also occurs as messages move from subordinates to higher levels of authority. Messages are filtered at every level. There may be deliberate suppression of information out of self-interest and jealousy; a supervisor may suppress or change a good suggestion from a subordinate so as to take the credit personally; a senior officer may prevent information about discontent in the department from reaching the manager because it reflects on his/her human relations skills.

Deliberate withholding of information from peers who are perceived as rivals becomes a barrier in horizontal communication. A common barrier to horizontal communication is organisational politics; one manager may withhold information from another since possession of information usually has benefits and advantages.

Over-dependence on written communication: Too much dependence on written communication is one of the reasons for communication gaps. Circulars, bulletins, notices and even letters are not always read carefully. Many employees are unable to read and understand long messages. Even better

educated persons at higher levels do not always give proper attention to all written communication. Oral communication has to be used to supplement written communication when the message is important.

4. Cultural Barriers

When we join a group and wish to remain in it, sooner or later we need to adopt the behaviour patterns of the group. These are the behaviours that the group accepts as signs of belonging. The group rewards such behaviour through acts of recognition, approval, and inclusion. In groups which are happy to accept you and where you are happy to conform, there is a mutuality of interests and a high level of win-win contact.

Where, however, there are barriers to your membership of a group, a high level of game-playing replaces good communication.

5. Gender Barriers

There are distinct differences between the speech patterns in a man and those in a woman which may create misunderstanding between genders. Global studies suggest that a woman speaks between 22,000 and 25,000 words a day whereas a man speaks between 7,000 and 10,000. In childhood, girls speak earlier than boys and at the age of three, have a vocabulary twice that of boys. The reason for this lies in the wiring of a man's and woman's brains. When a man talks, his speech is located in the left side of the brain but in no specific area. When a woman talks, the speech is located in both hemispheres and in two specific locations. Scientifically speaking, a man talks in a linear, logical and compartmentalized way, which are the features of left-brain thinking; whereas a woman talks more freely, mixing logic and emotion, features of both sides of the brain. It also explains why women talk for much longer than men each day.

6. Socio-Psychological Barriers

People have personal feelings, desires, fears and hopes, likes and dislikes, attitudes, views and opinions. They form a sort of emotional filter around the mind, and influence the way we respond to messages that we receive and to new experiences. Factors like the time, the place and the circumstances of a particular communication also influence our understanding and response. Problems of understanding, interpretation and response to communication arise partly from our socially-learned attributes and partly from our personal attributes. These are called socio-psychological barriers.

- (a) **Self-centred Attitudes:** We tend to see and hear everything in the light of our own interests and needs and desires. We pay attention to messages which are useful to us, and often do not pay enough attention to those messages which do not interest us.
- (b) **Group Identification:** Our values and opinions are influenced, in some matters, by the group to which we belong, like family, the larger family of relatives, people of our locality or city, our religion or language group, gender, age group, nationality, economic group and so on. We tend to reject an idea which goes against the interests of the group.
- (c) **Self-Image:** our idea about what we are, what we look like and what impression we make. It is quite difficult to accept any idea which goes against it.
- (d) **Selective Perception:** we see, read or hear selectively according to our own needs, interests and experience may not perceive some of the aspects and information content of the message.
- (e) **Filtering:** Filtering is the process of reducing the details or aspects of a message. Each person who passes on a message reduces or colours a message according to his/her understanding of the situation.
- (f) **Status Block:** A "boss" who is conscious of status finds it difficult to receive any suggestions from subordinates as they feel that they know everything about how to run the business. They do not agree that a junior may have some good ideas and many good ideas are wasted only because they come from junior employees who are considered to be too young and inexperienced. Social distance sometimes makes workers too shy or frightened to speak to their senior bosses.

- (g) **Resistance to Change:** Some people strongly resist new ideas which are against their established opinions or traditions or social customs. They may avoid new ideas because they feel insecure or afraid of changes in methods or situations.
- (h) **Closed Mind:** Limited intellectual background, limited reading and narrow interests can cause a person's mind to be narrow and limits the ability to take in new ideas. Young employees with bright ideas and fresh approach feel frustrated by the closed mind of the senior people in an organisation.
- (i) **Poor Communication Skills:** Lack of skill in writing and in speaking prevents a person from framing the message properly. Oral communication can be handicapped by a number of problems; nervousness in facing an audience may affect a person's clarity in speaking. Even excitement about an achievement or a new idea may make a person's speech incoherent. Lack of skill in reading and in listening is also common.
- (j) **State of Health:** Pain or fever certainly makes a person disinclined to engage in communication; but even if the general state of health is poor, communicating ability is reduced. The mind is not sufficiently alert; there will be gaps in attention while reading or listening; there is lack of energy to think clearly and to find the right words. Perception is low when the state of health is poor. Emotions, which play an important part in successful communication, are easily disturbed.
- (k) **Experiential barriers**
The difficulty in understanding matters not personally experienced. Our past experience may also negatively influence our perception and understanding related to those experiences.
- (l) **Perceptual barriers**
The problem with communicating with others is that we all see the world differently. The selectivity/exposure filters that are developed on the basis of experience or lack of it play their part. A bad experience would perceptually block out unpleasant things. This could be in the shape of avoiding it and if that is not possible by altering the behaviours i.e., response types in different ways. Similarly, retention filters out things that feel good, and gives the tendency to forget those things that are painful.
- (m) **Emotional barriers**
It is comprised mainly of fear, mistrust, and suspicion. The roots of our emotional mistrust of others lie in our childhood and infancy when we were taught to be careful what we said to others. "Don't speak until you're spoken to"; "Children should be seen and not heard". As a result, many people hold back from communicating their thoughts and feelings to others because they feel vulnerable. While some caution may be wise in certain relationships, excessive fear of what others might think of us can stunt our development into effective communicators and our ability to form meaningful relationships. Emotions influence both our speech and our listening. In many cases emotions may stop us from saying many things and in other instance may make us say things that we never wanted to say.
- (n) **Hidden agendas**
Hidden Agendas serve two functions: (i) Individual's strategy for poor self-esteem. This is mostly in cases where the personality is a submissive one. In such cases the communication can turn sly and manipulative as one does not have the courage to communicate openly. This is particularly the case as one is always apprehensive of others differing point of view and is fearful of annoying the other person, not being confident of handling a communication situation if there was one requiring assertive handling. (ii) Promote ulterior motives and needs. If a person is known to promote one's ulterior motives and needs either by being aggressive or by being covertly submissive; sooner or later it would become a major communication barrier. It generally creates a win-lose situation and does not work in establishing trust, which is a basic premise for effective and purposeful communication.
- (o) **Stereotypes**
Stereotypes are mental images and expectations. Stereotypes provide a shortcut to form an opinion of someone. We tend to get opinionated sooner or later and it becomes difficult to

change opinions. Opinions give us a base to relate to others. Humans are very diverse by nature whereas stereotyping them in categories with specific characteristics is very common and therefore it also becomes one of the most common barriers to communication.

(p) Defensiveness:

If we feel threatened by a message, we become defensive and respond in such ways that reduce understanding. This is a particularly harmful barrier in handling complaints and grievances and in resolving conflicts.

OVERCOMING BARRIERS

- (i) Persons in positions of authority, as well as subordinates, can be helped to overcome these barriers by training in effective communication. Periodical review and reorganisation of communication networks is also needed to ensure that information reaches people in time.
- (ii) Health centres: Many organisations provide medical aid, gymnasiums and recreation for the staff in an effort to keep down stress levels. Regulations like compulsory vacation after a certain number of months/years are also meant to ensure that employees avoid stress and fatigue.
- (iii) You have to cultivate all the communication skills including getting feedback and non-verbal communication.
- (iv) The Management should ensure the channels must be kept in good working condition; the intercoms, notice-boards, information on meetings must be kept up-to-date. Many companies which can afford it, maintain soundproof rooms for meetings and take steps to reduce the noise level in the office.
- (v) Semantic and language barriers can be overcome only by being careful with the use of language, and by using words which have clear meaning, by using short and simple sentences, and also by using visual aid whenever possible. Whenever possible, feedback must be got and given to ensure that there is common understanding of a message.
- (vi) Personal barriers can be overcome only "by making a conscious effort, and by training for better communication.
- (vii) To reduce cultural barriers, it is better not to assume similarity with those from other cultures until you are sure. It is safer to assume difference till you are sure of similarity. Depend on description rather than evaluation or interpretation; persons from different cultures evaluate and interpret differently.

TOPIC 3: CLASSIFICATION OF COMMUNICATION

ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION

We define organizational communication as the ways in which groups of people both maintain structure and order through their symbolic interactions and allow individual actors the freedom to accomplish their goals. This definition recognizes that communication is the primary tool to influence organizations and gain access to organizational resources.

(a) Internal vs external communication

Internal communication occurs within the organisation while external communication is between an organisation and other organisations, customers or individuals who are external to the particular organisation. Internal communication networks are patterns of relationships through which information flows in an organization. Stohl (1995) describes communication networks as capturing “the tapestry of *relationships*—the complex web of *affiliations* among individuals and organizations as they are woven through the collaborative threads of communication” (p. 18). Communication networks emerge in organizations based on formal and informal communication (Stohl & Stohl, 2005).

External communication must pass through the registry section which keeps record of such communication. It involves communication with individuals and organisations outside our organisation.

(b) Formal vs informal communication

Formal communication consists of messages that follow prescribed channels of communication throughout the organization. The most common way of depicting formal communication networks is with organizational charts. Organizational charts provide clear guidelines as to who is responsible for a given task and which employees are responsible for others’ performance. Organizational charts demonstrate that communication can flow in several directions: downward, upward, and horizontally.

1. **Downward communication** occurs whenever superiors initiate messages to subordinates. Ideally, downward communication should include such things as job instructions, job rationale, policy and procedures, performance feedback, and motivational appeals. When abused, it can lead to dictatorship.
2. Messages flowing from subordinates to superiors are labelled **upward communication**. Obviously, effective decision making depends on timely, accurate, and complete information traveling upward from subordinates.
3. Messages between members of an organization with equal power are labelled **horizontal communication**. Horizontal communication is important to organizational success when used to coordinate tasks, solve problems, share information, and resolve conflict. Horizontal communication receives much more attention in participatory organizational structures in which employees have more opportunity to formally participate in decision making (such as quality circles or autonomous work teams).

Informal/grapevine communication has no definite route of communication for sharing information. Information converges a long way by passing from one person to another leaving no indication from which point it started. This is similar to the vines of grapes. This kind of communication is in the form of (a) office **gossip** involving telling a number of persons in one’s group, (b) **single standard** office stories to a trusted colleague who in turn tells another trusted colleague, and so on. (c) **Probability**; an employee may also become indifferent about whom he should pass the information to. He/she

may pass the information to anybody around him who may be interested to listen. (d) **Cluster:** in this case the person who has the information passes it to selected individuals who also pass it on to selected individuals. In every organisation, some people have good liaison with other persons.

Informal communication is generally considered to be any interaction that does not generally follow the formal structure of the organization but emerges out of natural social interaction among organization members. Whereas formal communication consists of messages the organization recognizes as official, informal messages do not follow official lines. The concept of emergent organizational networks represents the informal, naturally occurring patterns of communication relationships in organizations (Susskind, Schwartz, Richards, & Johnson, 2005).

Moreover, effective workplace communicators understand the nature of both formal and informal communication.

Managers who take time to develop and listen to sources of informal information are better equipped to understand employees' attitudes and concerns. When entering an organization, such as when you start your first job, asking other employees about communication practices is smart because you not only discover formal procedures but also make contact for informal sources of information.

(c) Intrapersonal vs interpersonal communication

Intrapersonal Communication

Intrapersonal communication is the communication that occurs within your own mind. Intrapersonal communication occurs, when you evaluate or examine the interaction that occurs between yourself and others, but it is not limited to such situations. This form of communication occurs before and during other forms of communication as well. For instance, you might argue with yourself during a conversation in which someone asks you to do something you don't really want to do: Before you accept or decline, you mull over the alternatives in your mind. Intrapersonal communication also includes such activities as solving problems internally, resolving internal conflict, planning for the future, and evaluating yourself and your relationships with others.

Interpersonal Communications

Interpersonal communication is the process of using messages to generate meaning between at least two people in a situation that allows mutual opportunities for both speaking and listening. Like intrapersonal communication, interpersonal communication occurs for a variety of reasons: to solve problems, to resolve conflicts, to share information, to improve perceptions of oneself, or to fulfil social needs, such as the need to belong or to be loved. Through our interpersonal communication, we are able to establish relationships with others that include friendships and romantic relationships. Dyadic and small-group communications are two subsets of interpersonal communication. **Dyadic communication** is simply two-person communication, such as interviews with an employer or a teacher; talks with a parent, spouse, or child; and interactions among strangers, acquaintances, and friends. **Small-group communication** is the process of using messages to generate meaning in a small group of people (Brilhart & Galanes, 1998). Small-group communication occurs in families, work groups, support groups, religious groups, and study groups.

TOPIC 4: FORMS OF COMMUNICATION: VERBAL AND NONVERBAL

The communication process can take any of the four forms—verbal and nonverbal. Both forms usually operate together in the majority of messages you send and receive. Spoken or oral and written are both forms of verbal communication while nonverbal consists of visual and audio-visual.

VERBAL COMMUNICATION

1. Oral
2. Written
3. Visual
4. Audio visual

Types of verbal communication

1. Face to face communication: involves the speaker and the listener interacting face to face such as in dyadic, small group or public speaking.
2. Telephone conversation: involve two people interacting by use of telephone though it is possible for a small group by means of teleconferencing.
3. The radio: makes it possible to speak to a large number of people at the same time.
4. Written communication: involves use of written forms of communication such as letters, memos, reports, circulars, etc.

Spoken and Written Communication

Oral communication is more natural and immediate; we speak to communicate in natural and informal situations. We also speak in formal and official situations such as making a presentation or taking an interview when the target audience is present. Written communication has to be used when the other person is not present and is not available on the telephone. Long and complex messages are best conveyed in writing.

Attributes/Features of Spoken and Written Communication

Oral and written communications have different attributes which have to be taken into account in choosing which one to use in a particular situation.

(i) **Speed:** Written communication is slower in preparation, in conveyance and in reception; it takes more time to draft, type, dispatch, and to receive and read a letter than it takes to speak, and to hear, listen to, and understand an oral message. Feedback is also slower in written communication.

(ii) **Record:** Written communication serves as a record and can be used for future reference. It is a documentary proof, and can be used as legal evidence. Oral communication may be taped for later ' reference, but the

Authenticity of the voice can be questioned; moreover, tapes can be edited and the message distorted. Written records and documents are more reliable and acceptable.

(iii) **Precision and accuracy:** Written communication is more precise and accurate than oral. Choice of precise words is possible in written communication because the writer has the time to look for suitable words and phrases, and to revise the draft, if necessary. Accuracy is necessary in written communication because the receiver is not present to ask for clarification. In oral communication, it is not always possible to be so precise in the choice of words. There is also no time to seek and consider words while speaking; however, the receiver can seek clarification on the spot. Besides, oral communication has the support of vocal ' tone and gestures and expressions which enrich the meaning of the words.

(iv) **Length:** A written message is usually shorter than an oral communication. The situation of oral communication requires some preliminary and closing remarks, while for written messages there are standard formats for opening and closing which can keep the message short.

(v) **Expense:** Written communication requires stationery, preparation, and transmission, all of which cost money. Oral communication can also cost a great deal since it requires simultaneous presence and attention of the two parties, and getting together costs money. Costs will depend on the availability of the required person(s) at the particular place.

(vi) **Body Language:** Oral communication is supported by the speaker's body language and paralanguage. The speaker can control the style of delivery, giving meaning to words and sentences by voice inflexion and facial expressions and gestures. Written communication is separated from the writer's bodily presence and is more in the control of the reader. The reader can give to the words the sound, inflexion and stress as he chooses; and this may be affected by the reader's mood and state of mind at the time of reading.

(vii) **Feedback:** Oral communication allows immediate feedback; the listener's face gives some feedback and the speaker can modify the message on the spot. Clarifications can be sought and given at once. A conversation can be brought to a satisfactory conclusion by continuous exchange of ideas and views. In written communication the feedback is delayed; the reader's facial expressions cannot be seen by the writer; the reader's response is known to the writer only when the reader replies. The reader may give a cautious and guarded reply without letting the other see the really felt reaction.

(viii) **Formality:** Spoken language tends to be less formal than written language. When a language is spoken, there are abbreviations and dropping of some sounds, as in *can't, won't, don't, I'll, we'll*. The vocabulary used in written English is also more formal than in spoken English. Spoken English requires learning correct pronunciation English spelling does not always indicate how the word is pronounced. We have to learn correct pronunciation so that we can communicate with people in other parts of the world.

Importance of verbal communication

- (i) **Speed:** Oral communication is fast with immediate feedback.
- (ii) **Record:** Written communication serves as a record and can be used for future reference. It is a documentary proof, and can be used as legal evidence. Written records and documents are more reliable and acceptable.
- (iii) **Precision and accuracy:** Written communication is precise and accurate. Choice of precise words is possible in written communication because the writer has the time to look for suitable words and phrases, and to revise the draft, if necessary. Accuracy is necessary in written communication because the receiver is not present to ask for clarification.
- (iv) **Length:** A written message is usually shorter than an oral communication. There are standard formats for opening and closing which can keep the message short
- (v) **Body Language:** Oral communication is supported by the speaker's body language and paralanguage which enrich meaning.
- (vi) **Feedback:** Oral communication allows immediate feedback; the listener's face gives some feedback and the speaker can modify the message on the spot. Clarifications can be sought and given at once. A conversation can be brought to a satisfactory conclusion by continuous exchange of ideas and views.
- (vii) **Formality:** verbal communication allow for choice between being formal or informal. Spoken language tends to be less formal than written language. The vocabulary used in written English is also more formal than in spoken English.

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

Nonverbal communication is all communication that is not spoken or written. Nonverbal communication has a great impact and influence on the receiver's decoding or interpretation of any message.

Types of nonverbal communication

1. Body Movement (body language)

The study of body movement is known as **kinesics** and it deals with all the ways people use their bodies to communicate or enhance their verbal communication. Body movement includes posture, gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact.

Posture—the way you position and move your body—can communicate a great deal about you. For example, leaning toward or leaning away from someone in conversation can convey your degree of interest, attentiveness, or involvement. Turning your back or standing to leave can convey a lack of interest or signal the end to the conversation.

Gestures are any movement of the hands, fingers, or arms. Open arms can signify honesty and openness.

Facial expressions are the arrangement of facial muscles to communicate messages. They include the mouth, cheeks, eyes, eyelids, eyebrows, forehead, nose, and chin. The face is probably the most observed part of the body when we communicate with others, and this is not without reason. Our face usually communicates our internal, emotional experience.

Eye contact can also communicate several different types of messages. Direct eye contact in our culture can communicate involvement, intimidation, and intimacy. A diverted or downcast gaze communicates a different message. Our eyes can also communicate dominance and submission. We can “stare someone down” with a prolonged gaze that is not returned by the other person, or we can avoid or break eye contact when talking with a superior, such as a boss or supervisor.

2. Paralanguage

Paralanguage is how we speak. Paralanguage includes pitch, volume, rate, and quality. **Pitch** refers to the highness or lowness of our voice. The pitch of our voice is primarily determined by the physical length and thickness of our vocal chords, but it can rise if we are frightened, anxious, or excited, and it can lower if we are attempting to sound more powerful or authoritative.

Volume refers to the relative softness or loudness of our voice. We often speak in a characteristic volume; some individuals talk loudly, whereas others talk in almost a whisper. We can also adjust our volume to meet the requirements of the communication setting we are in. In a noisy, crowded room we raise our volume and speak above the other voices, whereas during a movie or quiet dinner we lower our voice.

Rate is how fast or slow we speak. People tend to have their own personal rate of speech. Some speak fast, others slow. We tend to increase our rate of speech when we’re excited, frightened, or nervous, and we tend to decrease our rate of speech when we’re uncertain, thoughtful, and sad.

Quality refers to the overall sound of our voice. Each human voice has a distinctive tone. The quality of one’s voice may be characterized as soothing, harsh, strident, or calm. We each have a distinctive quality to the way we sound. Can you recall your mother’s voice? Your father’s voice? Your best friend’s voice? Often, when answering the telephone, we immediately recognize the caller by his or her voice quality.

3. Personal Presentation

Our **clothing** is one of the most obvious and public displays of who we are and what we want to communicate to others. The primary consideration is popularity, attractiveness, and status. We can create a variety of public images simply by the clothing we wear.

Our **grooming** can also reflect and communicate messages to the world. The length and style of our hair, bathing routines, makeup, cologne and perfume, finger and toenail painting (even for men these days), and many other grooming habits communicate a great deal about who we are and how we want to be perceived.

Touching is the most intimate form of nonverbal communication behaviour. Touching behaviour, or **haptics**, as it is called by social scientists, includes all behaviour that involves the skin. Primarily, touching behaviour deals with our hands and how we use them to communicate.

4. Proxemics

Proxemics, the study of our use of space, and was first introduced by anthropologist Edward Hall in his book *The Hidden Dimension*. By observing conversations between people, Hall discovered that our personal space could be broken down into four zones or distances:

◆ **Intimate distance** (0 to 18 inches) is reserved for intimate activities include making love, holding intimate or confidential conversations, hugging, kissing, and snuggling. This is often referred to as our “personal bubble.” Only our most intimate relationships are permitted into this area. If an uninvited person invades our personal bubble, whether it’s a stranger sitting next to us on an empty bench or

a person getting too close for comfort during a conversation, we usually move away slightly to maintain our intimate distance.

◆ **Personal distance** (18 inches to 4 feet) is used for most conversations with family, friends, and most acquaintances.

◆ **Social distance** (4 to 12 feet) is the distance we feel most comfortable with transacting business, sitting during committee meetings, and interacting with the hotel clerk, the supermarket cashier, or the police officer giving us a ticket.

◆ **Public distance** (12 to 25 feet) is used for public ceremonies, speeches, large group meetings, and class lectures. If the distance between people is greater than 25 feet, communication is often limited to shouting and exaggerated nonverbal gestures.

The distance of your personal space changes depending on the setting, the people involved, and how you are feeling at the moment. Cultural factors also play an important role in determining proxemic distancing and personal comfort.

5. Sign language

Sign language is a form of non-verbal communication commonly used for the hearing impaired. It involves the use of hands to make symbolic gestures which have specific meanings. Sign language is taught in formal learning institutions for communication with the hearing impaired such as the use of braille. Communicating using sign language for the visually impaired may take the form of:

- Finger spelling
- Signing Exact English (SEE)
- Kenya Sign Language (KSL)

NB: find out what the three concepts entail.

Importance of nonverbal communication

(a) Non-verbal methods have almost instant effect because of quicker grasp by the receiver. Speed in conveyance and response makes non-verbal methods extremely useful in critical situations like traffic signs and signals.

(b) Visual non-verbal methods aid verbal communication; maps, charts and graphs are necessary for conveying information or plans related to geography, locations, data, and most of the sciences. A large amount of complex data can be presented in a compact form; one page can convey information that would need several pages of words. It makes information available conveniently, at a glance for comparisons.

(c) Response to visuals and plain sounds is more powerful than to language. A cry of agony arouses stronger response than a sad story; a film is more effective than a written story. TV news is more interesting than on radio.

(d) It is the best method to convey information to illiterate people. Containers of poisons are marked with a skull and cross-bones as a warning; illiterate drivers manage with the non-verbal traffic signals. Films are used to explain processes to people who may not follow oral explanations easily. Non-verbal communication can overcome the barrier of language.

(e) Sign language helps the hearing impaired to communicate, learn and be able to work like any other physically normal persons.

Functions of non-verbal communication

- a) Message reinforcement or complementation of verbal messages, for example, a warm welcome and a firm handshake.
- b) Negation of the verbal message.
- c) Message substitution, i.e. using nonverbal without verbal communication such as pointing.
- d) Message accentuation/intensification i.e. smiling as you say, "It is nice to meet you."
- e) Message regulation, i.e. lowering the voice to mark the end of a turn or eye contact to nominate the next speaker.

VISUAL, AND AUDIO-VISUAL COMMUNICATION COMMUNICATION

Visual communication aids

It includes pictures, posters, graphs, diagrams, charts and billboards etc. Organizations make extensive use of pictures such as blue prints, progress charts, maps, visual aids in training programmes, scale models of products and similar devices. The use of such means of communication is increasing in training and education as well as in organisational communication. Pictures can provide powerful visual images as suggested by the proverb "A picture is worth a thousand words". In fact, many companies have designed their advertisement copies in which only pictures are used; however pictures should be combined with well-chosen words and action to tell the complete message.

Audio-visual communication aids

Audio-visual communication involves use of telecast films on the cinema, slides on a projector screen, computer, television and video. It is the latest medium of communication. It is a combination of sight and sound. Audio-visual communication is suitable for publicity, mass propaganda and mass education. Large business firms frequently make use of this technique to educate their workers and to popularise their products. The working of a new product can be effectively demonstrated through audio visuals. Audio communication is suitable mostly for mass publicity and mass education.

Importance of audio, visual and audio visual communication aids

- (i) Ability to record information for future reference
- (ii) The computer and internet has enhanced search, processing and storage of information and generally enhanced speed and efficiency in communication.
- (iii) Audio visual communication tends to have longer memorability due to use of multiple channels which makes it suitable for teaching, learning and advertisement.
- (iv) The internet services through mobile phone and computer has improved social networking through Facebook, What's up, and Twitter.
- (v) Faster feedback due to speed in communication such as mobile phone.
- (vi) Audio, visual and audio visual communication is a source of entertainment, through music, video pictures, and social chat with friends on Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp.

Weaknesses of visual and audio visual

- (i) The mobile phone has enhanced coordination of crime while IT has enhanced cyber-crime such as money laundering.
- (ii) The initial cost of buying and installing such communication devices and the operating cost is generally high for most people.
- (iii) Communication process may be hindered due to failure in network reception such as in internet, radio and television.
- (iv) Illiteracy may hinder the use of communication gadgets since it needs a good operating knowledge such as the use of computer.
- (v) The use of audio visual communication has reduced the need for face to face interaction. People now prefer to use the social media and calling which hinders close social interaction.
- (vi) There is a possibility of information leak when someone taps your communication. This is common in mobile telephony. Young people may also get content meant for adults.
- (vii) Graphs, charts and posters take time to construct.
- (viii) Lack of feedback in the use of mass media such as radio and television.

Barriers to audio, visual, and audio visual communication

- (i) The recipient must have communication gadget with compatible features as the sender to be able to receive the message.
- (ii) The initial cost of buying and installing such communication devices and the operating cost is generally high for most people.

- (iii) Network and airwave failure may hinder communication process over telephone, internet, radio and television.
- (iv) Illiteracy may hinder the use of communication gadgets since it need a good operating knowledge such the use of computer.
- (v) Breakdown of communication gadgets; computers, cameras, slide projectors, video and radio gadget may break down when they are needed for use.
- (vi) Lack of electric power may hinder use of electronic communication gadgets such as computers, projectors, slide projectors and television.
- (vii) Language barrier: most mass media broadcast in official languages which many people may not understand.

Ways of overcoming the barriers to visual and audio visual communication

- (i) In a business organisation, the management should always ensure the audio, visual and audio visual channels are always working properly.
- (ii) The management should always ensure that networks and airwave receptions are adequate for proper communication.
- (iii) Always ensure that there is electricity or battery power and a proper back-up before beginning to use audio, visual and audio visual communication gadgets.
- (iv) Your choice of medium should be dictated by the literacy level, physical location and technological capacity of the receiver.
- (v) The choice of language should always depend on the linguistic knowledge and competence of your receiver.
- (vi) Mass media should broadcast in a variety of languages; the availability of channels broadcasting in local languages ensures this.

TOPIC 5: CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION

Channel is the medium that carries the message from the source to the target audience. All channels can be classified as written, face to face to face, electronic and non-verbal.

Choice of Communication Medium

You need to consider several aspects in choosing a medium for a particular message. The main aspects are:

- a) The type of audience you want to reach.
- b) The speed with which the message should be conveyed: The pressure of time and the distance between the sender and the receiver influence the choice of the medium. Some media are faster and can travel distances rapidly, like the telephone, the fax and the e-mail; these media also have the advantage of being person to person.
- c) Need for confidentiality of the message is an important consideration. The choice will certainly be influenced by requirement of secrecy; all media do not ensure the same secrecy of the message. Messages like warning memo, report on a customer's credit standing, demand for overdue payment, and so on, are confidential. They cannot be sent by media like telegram or telex or fax even if they are urgent.
- d) Need for accuracy in transmission is not the same for all messages. If the content to be transmitted is mainly data, you make the choice for accuracy and speed in transmitting.
- e) Need for reliability of the medium is an important factor. Sending a message by hand delivery is more reliable than ordinary mail; registered post is more reliable than ordinary mail.
- f) Cost of the medium and its relative importance and urgency.
- g) Availability of a particular medium to the sender and to the receiver is obviously an affecting factor. You can use only those media which both you and the intended receiver can access. You may have a fax machine but if the receiver does not have one and has no arrangements for receiving a fax message, you cannot use that medium.
- h) Feedback capacity of the medium: For some messages, you need immediate feedback; you have to use a medium which will enable you to get it at once, like the telephone.
- i) Availability of hard copy for record.
- j) Formality of the medium must be suitable to content of the message. A letter of congratulation is more formal and has a different effect from conveying the same message orally.
- k) Intensity and complexity of the message is a major factor. Many messages in an organisation have an emotional content, which influences the choice considerably; the emotional content is not carried equally by all media.

TOPIC 6: OFFICIAL ETIQUETTE, PROTOCOL AND DIPLOMACY

Etiquette means conventionally accepted rules for formal relations and personal behaviour in a polite society. It includes the code of ethical behaviour in relation to professional practice or action among members of a profession in dealing with each other.) Other words associated with etiquette are **decorum**, which suggests dignity and a sense of what is appropriate for a person of good breeding, and **propriety**, which implies established conventions of morals and good taste. Since communication is, essentially, relationship, and includes the activity of establishing and maintaining contact with others, knowledge and practice of rules of etiquette add to a person's effectiveness. Basic etiquette is an important part of presenting a positive image to one's boss, colleagues, clients, customers and acquaintances. A cultivated person is marked by behaviour that shows respect and courtesy to everyone, regardless of position.

Importance of office etiquette

1. Good interpersonal relations with fellow staff
2. Good image of the company
3. Good image of individual employee
4. Customer satisfaction

Areas of official etiquette

1. Personal Behaviour

It is generally felt that if you cannot be trusted not to embarrass yourself in business and social situations, you may lack the self-control that is necessary to be good at what you do.

Greeting: It is customary to greet others on entering, and acknowledge others' greetings either with a smile and a nod or with formal greeting like "good morning" according to the occasion.

Good posture is pleasant, and can be developed by keeping both feet firmly on the floor, holding the back straight without slouching, and not crossing the arms either while standing or sitting. Self-composure and a dignified posture make a good impression and project an image of competence. Not being overweight or being in good shape contributes to a presentable appearance.

Sneezing or coughing: may be unavoidable, but can be dealt with discreetly. If you sense a sneeze or cough or yawn coming on, cover your nose and mouth with a handkerchief in your left hand, so as to leave your right hand clean for shaking hands, opening doors, etc. Burping must be firmly controlled; hiccups can be avoided by being in good health and taking care of what one eats.

Grooming such as combing the hair or applying lipstick, should always be done in the privacy of rest-rooms.

Fragrances or perfumes of any kind should be applied sparingly, evoking a subtle scent. Strong and/or cheap fragrance is often offensive and not appropriate in a professional setting.

2. Greetings

The style of greeting varies from country to country. If in mixed religious company, it may be useful to keep to Western style greetings. When receiving visitors from another country or visiting another country, it is better to find out their style of greeting, both the verbal and the non-verbal gesture that accompanies it.

Between persons who know each other very well, it is customary to greet with "Hello! How are you?" The response is "Hello! Quite well, thanks. And you?"

3. Making an Apology

A simple apology is to say, "Sorry" or "I'm sorry." A somewhat more formal style is to say, "Pardon me" or "I beg your pardon." This formal apology is also used if you do not catch or understand what someone says to you, and you wish them to repeat what they said. A formal written apology uses the words "I/We regret ... " Requirements and styles of apology vary

between cultures. In India, a gestural apology is required if your foot accidentally touches another person. In most Western cultures, an apology is definitely required if you are late and keep someone waiting. Tone of voice and facial expression are important while expressing an apology.

4. Expressing Thanks and Appreciation

A simple "Thanks" is quite informal; "thank you" is slightly more formal. "Thank you, James" sounds very sincere; "thank you, Mr. Murthy" or "thank you, sir" is formal. In the USA many people say, "Thanks. I appreciate your help," Or "Thank you. I appreciate it." The tone of voice and facial expression should be appropriate. A written expression is formal; for example, "I/We appreciate your cooperation in ..." Or, "I/We thank you for your interest in our project." It is important not to sound patronising while expressing appreciation.

5. Conversation

In conversation, speak in a low voice, with controlled gestures. Make eye contact with the speaker. Show him you understand his talk by nodding your head, maintaining an upright posture, and, if appropriate, putting in an occasional comment such as "I see" or "that's interesting" or "really?" The speaker will appreciate your interest and feel that you are really listening. It is not polite to interrupt others; wait and listen politely till they complete what they are saying and speak only when they stop; if by mistake you interrupt, stop at once and apologise.

Remember that you represent the company and not just yourself. Divulging company secrets or speaking off the record is not acceptable.

The purpose of small talk is to find something in common and create a bond. A good way to do this is to ask people about their interests.

Politics is a delicate topic but is of common interest to most people; it need not be avoided so long as no arguments are raised. Business environment, cultural events, sports, are good conversation topics on which one should be well-informed.

Using slang terms or swearing is not polite even in an informal social situation. People who have to swear to make a point are often perceived as less intelligent.

6. Introducing

Introductions may appear simple but these are the few moments in which critical first impressions are made on all sides. And you never get a second chance to make a first impression. Generally, personal impressions are made within 20 - 30 seconds upon meeting someone.

The person making the introduction, and the two persons being introduced must all be able to do their parts well. Create a warm, happy and cordial atmosphere while introducing.

Business introductions: Business introductions are based on hierarchy; a person of lesser authority is introduced to a person of greater authority. When introducing people, help the newly acquainted persons to start and carry on a smooth, friendly flow of conversation. Comment briefly on the background of each. A remark on a hobby or interest common to both helps to get a conversation started.

Introducing yourself: If no one introduces you, or if the host or hostess of the function is too busy, just introduce yourself to the other guests. Extend your hand, smile and say, "I'm Hilla Vakil, David's partner." Avoid saying things like "Mr. Mehta works for me;" it sounds arrogant. Instead, say, "Mr Mehta and I work in the same office."

Always use both, your name and surname when introducing yourself. Be clear and concise in your introduction; it is poor manners to narrate your life history (or, worse, your problems or illnesses).

At a business function, it is appropriate to say where you work. Take care not to focus too much attention on yourself with grand sounding statements. At functions that are not strictly business, it is not necessary to give much job information, since many people feel that they are not defined by employment.

At a special interest event like environmental protection work, you can mention your connection to the organisation that has organised the event. At any business meal, always introduce yourself to the people sitting next to you to open the way for conversation. Not introducing yourself can cost you a valuable business lead because few people want to deal with someone who appears to be aloof or not able to follow the etiquette.

7. Shaking Hands

Shaking hands is a formal greeting gesture. Shake hands only when introduced to someone, or on meeting an acquaintance. Hands are not shaken at parting; you do not shake hands with someone you know very well.

The physical connection you make when shaking hands with someone can leave a powerful impression. When someone's handshake is unpleasant in any way, we often associate negative character traits with that person. A firm handshake made with direct eye contact sets the stage for a positive encounter.

Offer your hand turned (at a 90 degree angle) towards the floor; don't hold just the fingers or try to crush the other person's hand with an iron grip. To shake hands properly, keep your thumb up and touch webs (the space between your thumb and first finger) before wrapping the fingers around the other person's hand. Ensure your grip is medium to firm, neither limp and weak nor bone-crushing.

Men and women are equals in the workplace. Do not wait for a woman to offer her hand to be shaken, rather than automatically extending their hand to her.

During cocktails, hold your drink in the left hand so that your right hand is free, and it is not wet and cold from holding a glass.

At a conference or other function where participants use name-tags, wear the name-tag high on the right shoulder so that it is easy to read when shaking hands.

8. Paying Compliments

A compliment is an expression of appreciation. If you can, make a complimentary remark on an attractive neck-tie/ scarf, or brief-casel handbag, a well-argued case, competent collection of data, a well-planned meal, a well conducted meeting, a neatly turned out phrase. It goes a long way in creating goodwill. A compliment should be given at the right time and place, for example, soon after meeting, or before the business begins. It should be given immediately on noticing something or immediately after a praiseworthy accomplishment. Compliments may also be paid during a meeting or after it if someone made a very good point or spoke very well or performed anything very well. NB:

- A compliment should be moderate, not exaggerated as that is flattery which is in-genuine.
- Compliments should have no other motive than to recognise someone for something special. If compliments are given in order to get a compliment or a favour in return, people soon find out the ulterior motive.
- A compliment should never be sarcastic. Tone of voice and body language must express the appreciation as much as the words. Sarcasm hurts the receiver, and it is not polite.
- Remarks that could be construed as sexually provocative, racist or sexist should not be made even if the atmosphere is relaxed.
- It is not polite to ask where they bought it (whatever you appreciate) or how much they paid for it.

9. Responding to Compliments

When someone pays you a compliment, acknowledge it and thank the person graciously. A simple 'thank you' with an expression reflecting pleasure on the face is sufficient. Don't feel embarrassed or rebuff the compliment saying "Oh! It's nothing" or "Sorry, I could not do much."

10. Agreeing and Disagreeing

Agreeing with someone is easier to express than disagreement. But overdoing it to win goodwill is not sincere. It is sufficient to say cheerfully, "I agree" or "Yes, that seems OK to me," or "Yes, OK" when it is informal. In a formal situation or when speaking to seniors, formal style is better; a remark such as, "Yes, I accept that," or

"Yes, I think that is all right," would be sufficient. Agreement must be graceful and cheerful, even if the agreement is conditional. State the condition clearly and say, "I'll agree to that on one condition ... ," or "I'll accept that on the condition that "

If you disagree with someone's statement, in a discussion, you may feel tempted to express yourself aggressively. An aggressive response such as, "I don't agree with you," can hurt or irritate those who hear it. Also, an artificially polite statement like, "I beg to differ," is not friendly (it is a put-down). If you are assertive, you can express disagreement without being offensive. When you disagree, instead of not keeping silent or responding aggressively, try positive assertiveness. Listen carefully and summarise what the other person has said then state your own position, and do it without attacking. It is useful to say something like, "*I would like to state another point of view.*"

11. Telephone Etiquette

Your voice is all you have got to make the telephone conversation lively and effective. Clear articulation and correct pronunciation are necessary. But it is not advisable to try to put on an artificial or borrowed accent.

Speed of speaking can affect clarity to some extent. Average speaking speed is about 150 words a minute; talking very fast not only affects clarity, but may also give the impression of being in a hurry; very slow talkers give the impression of being dull. A high-pitched voice is unpleasant and may appear uncultured; an extremely low pitch can sound mechanical. People who have a loud voice appear to be brash and overbearing; very soft speakers cannot be heard clearly, and may seem shy. You need to find the right speed, pitch and volume that makes you sound clear and easy to follow. Tone is the expressiveness of the voice. It carries 38% of the load of communication; you have to make it count. A great deal of tone depends on the speaker's attitude and state of mind.

Making a call: Prepare in advance before making a call, and plan all questions and comments. Collect all required information, files, papers that may be needed. Have paper and pen at hand. Greet; as soon as the call is answered, return the greeting and identify yourself, and ask for the person to whom you want to speak.

Concentrate; eliminate all distractions and pay attention only to the person you have called. Use simple language. Never use slang. Say "yes" not "yah". Take notes; jot down names, addresses, telephone numbers and other important points which need to be remembered and/or passed on to others and may be needed later.

Ask questions; if something is not clear, ask for clarification or explanation and listen carefully. Use conversation cues; saying "I see" or "Yes" at the proper time shows the speaker that you are listening, and encourages him/her to continue speaking. Listen between the lines; tone of voice conveys a good deal. Summarise; the main points should be repeated at the end to check the understanding of both parties. End the call politely; say "thank you" for giving you time (or information or help), indicate the next step, if required. Wish the time of the day pleasantly and replace the receiver gently. The person who made the call should put down the receiver first; within the organisation, the senior should end the call; in case of a call to or from a customer, the customer should end the call.

Taking a call

Answer the call promptly, on the first or second ring; not more than three in any case.

Identify yourself by a phrase like, "Suresh Nair here" or "Suresh speaking" or "National Bank, Kisumu branch, Suresh Nair speaking" or "Mrs Philo-rose, Training Officer" and greet good morning or good evening as suitable. This usually prompts the speaker to identify him-self/herself; if it does not, ask, "May I know who's calling?" (not "who is this?" or "who is speaking?") Smile when you speak, it helps to make a positive welcoming impression with the tone of the voice. Listen carefully; it is bad manners to interrupt. Get any clarifications after the person has paused for a response. Take responsibility to help; connect to the right person (after saying so) or offer to get the required information. Take down a message if necessary; get all points correct (and check by reading out if it is long or complicated). Check all dates,

addresses, figures and spellings of names. (Writing down the phonetic spelling for correct pronunciation saves much embarrassment later). Use the caller's name (correctly); it shows you are tuned in and attentive. If you have to leave the telephone to get some information ask if the caller would like to hold on or would like you to call back. And be sure to call back with the information. Keep your cool and be patient with a difficult caller.

Cellular Phone Etiquette

Cell phone should be used only in an emergency. If it is necessary to make or take a call, keep it short and discreet.

If other people are present, excuse yourself. Attention to present company is always important; never give the impression that speaking to someone else is more important than those present. Move to a quiet corner so as not to bother others.

Switch off the cell phone when entering a meeting or a lecture hall; also in a theatre, or any other public performance. Use a quiet method of call notification like vibrator or flashing light in a hospital or in any place where the ring is likely to cause severe discomfort.

Placing Someone on Hold

There should be a very good reason for placing someone on hold; like pulling out the person's file or answering another line. Ask permission before placing the person on hold and do so only after getting the response; taking permission for granted is very impolite. Never keep a person on hold for more than 60 seconds. If you find it will take longer, return and explain, and ask "May I call you back?" And, of course, call back as soon as the other work is done. When you return, thank the person for holding.

Leaving a Voice Mail

While leaving a voice mail (message on the answering machine) it is important to include your name, telephone number, and company's name if you are calling on your company's behalf. Spell any unusual name. Repeat your name and telephone number at the end of the message. Specify the purpose of the call instead of just saying "please give me a call."

Indicate what would be the best time to return your call. If you are likely to be away, say when you will be back or whom to contact in your absence.

Anticipate that you may have to leave a message, and prepare what you have to say. This will prevent rambling.

NB: the four pillars of politeness in conversation are: Thank you, excuse me, sorry and please.

TOPIC 7: WRITING SKILLS

COURTESY IN WRITING

Courtesy in writing is achieved by the following.

- (a) Appropriateness of format for that kind of writing.
- (b) Appropriateness of content information
- (c) Appropriateness of tone: This is created by the word choice and choice of content information, i.e. what information is communicated versus what is left out. It also involves use the courtesy words *please*, *thank you*, *excuse me* and *sorry* as the situation requires.
- (d) Appropriateness of language use, ie. Word choice and expression that show respect and recognition of the audience. It also involves formality or informality of language used.
- (e) Expression of appropriate feeling according to the situation. For example, sympathy when someone suffers, good wishes when someone begins something new, and congratulation when someone achieves something.

PUNCTUATION MARKS

- (a) Comma
- (b) Colon and semicolon
- (c) Exclamation mark
- (d) Full stop
- (e) Hyphen
- (f) Question mark
- (g) Ellipsis
- (h) Brackets
- (i) Quotation

PARAGRAPHING

A paragraph is a set of related sentences dealing with a single topic. There is no rule about the length of a paragraph. It varies according to the need. In a story or a novel, there are some long paragraphs and some short ones. In a book that discussed concepts such as Economics, there may be long paragraphs. In business letters, the paragraphs are short; in a report the paragraphs may be long.

A good paragraph has the following characteristics:

1. Topic sentence:

A topic sentence is a sentence that indicates in a general way what idea the paragraph is going to deal with. It includes the topic and a controlling idea. It may be in the form of a question. Look at these sentences:

- Personal relationships such as parent-child, husband-wife, brothers and sisters suffer because most people in cities have busy schedules.
- Talking to a sympathetic listener can have a great therapeutic effect.
- Skill in Public Speaking is not necessary for everyone.
- Shouldn't smoking in public places be made illegal?

2. Adequate development

Add supporting ideas to the topic sentence, to develop it fully and adequately. There should be 3 to 6 ideas to support the topic sentence. Of course, this varies from paragraph to paragraph, depending on your purpose. Add RENNS (reasons, examples, names, numbers, senses), which give details and further explain the supporting ideas. Some methods to add supporting details are:

- Use examples and illustrations
- Cite data (facts, statistics, evidence, details)

- Examine testimony (what other people say, such as quotes and paraphrases)
- Define terms in the paragraph
- Compare and contrast
- Evaluate causes and reasons
- Examine effects and consequences
- Analyse the topic
- Describe the topic
- Offer a chronology of an event (time segments)

3. Concluding/ clincher sentence.

The concluding sentence is the last sentence of the paragraph. It should leave the reader with something to think about. It can be written by restating the topic sentence in different words. Look at these sentences:

- Being a sympathetic listener is therefore a satisfying experience.
- I think it is in the interest of public health to make it illegal to smoke in public places.
- Since there are many occupations that do not have any occasion for speaking in public, everyone need not acquire public speaking skills.

Write a concluding sentence for each of the topic sentences given earlier.

Example:

For our government to be stable and effective, we must fight corruption. We should ensure that leaders and government agents become answerable to the tax payer. In addition, the public should be educated on the ills of corruption while those who have stolen public funds are made to return it and face the full force of the law. Again, people known to have stashed money in foreign banks should be forced to repatriate that money so as to improve cash flow in our economies. This is will put our countries on the road to prosperity.

ESSAY WRITING

Like a paragraph, an essay also has introduction in which the essay topic is first introduce, the body in which issues concerning the topic are discussed, and a conclusion which ties up your arguments about the topic.

The following are types of essays.

- (a) Descriptive
- (b) Explanatory
- (c) Narrative
- (d) Argumentative

FUNCTIONAL WRITING

Business correspondences are forms of communication that are used within organisation or from one organisation to another.

a) Business letters

- Letter of inquiry
 1. Points included in the letters are:
 2. Courteous request for information, giving its purpose
 3. Statement of what is wanted (or a list of questions)
 4. Request that the information may be given by a certain date
- Letter of complaint

The letter should include the following points:

1. Reference to the order, its date and number
2. Clear description of the mistake or deficiency
3. Clear statement of the inconvenience or loss caused, and the action the supplier should take to lessen the inconvenience

4. Request for adjustment and/or investigation

- Letter of appreciation

The letter of appreciation should contain the following points:

1. Appreciation for the good done.
2. The benefits derived from that.
3. Urge to continue in that spirit.
4. Concluding remark

- Letter of recommendation

The letter of recommendation should contain the following points:

1. Statement of recommendation
2. Position you are recommending the person for
3. Positive attributes of the person such as personality and qualification
4. Assurance that the person will serve well if given chance
5. Concluding remark

- Letter of apology

The letter of apology should contain the following points:

1. Regret for the wrong done (saying 'sorry')
2. Acceptance of the wrong done
3. Commitment not to repeat or allow a repeat
4. Action you are taking to remedy the situation or to avoid there a repeat

General Structure of a Business Letter

Almost all business messages can be written as a framework of four points.

- Opening/Introduction, Giving the required information, Action/Response from the writer or the recipient, Closing remark.

Format of a business letter

- Block format, Semi-block format and Indented format

Opening Sentence

The opening sentence has the important function of establishing good feeling and rapport, and drawing a favourable response from the reader.

- *We are glad to say that we can deliver your shelves a week earlier as you requested in your letter of the 12th.*
- *We are extremely sorry to learn from your letter dated 23 September that you were not able to get good photographs.*

Showing interest in the reader's needs and paying attention to his/her feelings and desires creates goodwill at the beginning of the letter. Avoid beginning with "Referring to your letter..." or "With reference to your letter." These openings lead to a grammar mistake or an incomplete sentence unless you have full command of these troublesome constructions.

b) Memos*

A memo (short for memorandum) is used only for communication within the organisation. It may be from one person to another or to several persons. The purpose of a memo may be:

- To ask for information
- To request decision or action
- To convey information about action or decision

Memos have the name of the organisation, the title 'Internal Memo, Ref. No., To., From., Date, Subject, Body, Name of Sender, Designation., CC

c) Circulars

With electronic communication within organisations, the difference between memoranda and circulars is already blurred and may soon disappear. Circulars are used for sending instructions and information about new procedures or policies to all branches of the organisation. They are addressed impersonally like a memorandum "To all Branch Managers", or "To all Accounts Section staff for information and immediate action" Circulars used for internal communication

follow the same style of layout as those sent out of the organisation. However, they are not personalised and are written in the same precise, informative style as memoranda and office orders.

Contents: Name and Logo of organisation, Ref. No., Date., Circular No., To., Regards., Body., Signature., Name., Designation., CC., Appendices (if any)

d) Public Notices

A notice is used when many people in the organisation have to be given the same information. It is the most common method of mass communication within an organisation. A notice is short; the language is simple, and the type is large and well-spaced for easy reading. A notice is put up on the notice board. A copy may also be circulated among staff for signature. A notice is often called an office circular. A notice must be drafted in clear language. It must also be short so as to fit on a single sheet. A notice is an announcement and does not have to give details of the topic. If it is about a complex topic, it may refer to detailed information available in the office for reference.

Contents: Name and logo of the organisation., The title 'Notice'. , Content., Designation

e) Electronic mail

Content: To., Cc., Bcc., Attachment., Subject, salutation, body, complementary close, name (and designation)

f) Letter of application*

Content: In the cover letter, you should include how you found out about the position, your primary reasons for being interested in the position, and how your specific qualifications (education, training, work-related experiences, and skills) meet the needs of the organization.

g) Curriculum Vitae*/ résumé.

A **résumé** is a one-page or two-page summary of your training, skills, and accomplishments. The eight most common components are.

1. **Personal details.** Provide your name, address, and telephone number(s), email, gender, age, and optionally marital status, religion, nationality.
2. **Job/career objective.** Describe your goals in employment you are seeking.
3. **Education.** Begin with your highest degree and continue in reverse order.
4. **Professional training.** List any specialized training, courses, and so on.
5. **Employment history.** List both paid and unpaid work experience, beginning with the most recent. Include employment dates, primary job responsibilities, and accomplishments and awards.
6. **Professional affiliations.** List professional groups to which you belong and any offices you have held.
7. **Special interests and skills.** List interests and skills that are related to the job for which you are applying.
8. **Referees.** These are individuals who know your work, your abilities, and your character.

NB: As you construct your résumé, think in terms of how your education, training, skills, and work experience can fit the requirements of the advertised job. Present only those skills and accomplishments that show you can do the job. Emphasize your strengths throughout the résumé, but always be truthful. Above all, your résumé should be written with the company in mind—how can you satisfy the company's employment needs?

h) Press release

i) Advertisement

j) Minutes

TOPIC 8: SUMMARY WRITING

NOTE MAKING & SUMMARY WRITING

Summary means making a shorter version of a text which highlights the main contents of that text and which is in prose form.

Importance

The study skill enables you to capture the key information in a spoken or written text for future reference.

Steps in summarisation

- (i) Extract the main points onto a working space; you will then use these points to write your first draft.
- (ii) If the draft is longer than intended, identify the unnecessary words and expressions and reframe your sentences. There could also be unnecessary points which you need to eliminate.
- (iii) If the draft is too short, you are likely to have left out some important material which you need to include.
- (iv) Write the final copy making sure it is of the intended length.

TOPIC 9: REPORT WRITING SKILLS

A report is a logical presentation of facts and information. It provides feedback to the managers on various aspects of the organisation. A report presents information needed for reviewing and evaluating progress, for planning future course of action and for taking decisions. Every organisation has a system of routine periodical reporting on the progress and the status of different activities. Besides, management assigns some special studies for the purpose of taking decisions. Special Reports may be written by an individual or by a group of persons to whom the task has been assigned. The report is submitted to the authority that assigned it.

Role of Reports

- a) to review performance of a unit in an organisation
- b) to keep a check on a continuing activity in an organisation
- c) to plan for the future needs of the organisation
- d) to survey the market needs for products or services of an organisation
- e) to submit standardised information to the management of an organisation etc.

Types of Reports

Oral report

Written report

Management reports

Operation procedures

Production schedules

Maintenance, breakdown and accident reports

Entrepreneurship and trade reports

Internal memos

Format/Structure of a Report (Parts of a Report)

A report has several sections which enable the writer(s) to lay out all the complex information in an easy-to-read form. All reports do not require all the sections but long reports need to include all the parts.

A report generally includes the following sections. The essential sections marked with an asterisk (*); the other sections may be included depending on the type, length and purpose of the report.

- Letter of transmittal
- Title page*
- Table of contents
- List of abbreviations and/or glossary
- Executive summary/abstract
- Introduction *
- Body*
- Conclusion*
- Recommendations
- References
- Appendices

1. Letter of Transmittal

This is typed on the organisation's letterhead. This is a letter addressed to the person who commissioned the report; in this letter, you effectively hand over your report to that person. The letter includes:

- a salutation (e.g., Dear Ms Bhatia)
- the purpose of the letter (e.g., *"Here is the final version of the report on 'Underwater Welding' which was commissioned by your company."*)
- the main findings of the report
- any important considerations
- an acknowledgement of any significant help
- an expression of pleasure or thanks (e.g., *"Thank you for giving us the opportunity to work on this report."*)

Example:

Dear Mr. Pitt,

Please accept the accompanying Work Term Report entitled "Colour Sonar Imaging Tool for Fish Stock Assessment."

This report is the result of work completed at the Institute of Marine Biology,' Department of Fisheries, Government of Karnataka. During my second work term as a University of Osmania student, I was engaged to assist in field sonar data collection, and the subsequent computer processing of this data, for the purpose of herring stock assessment. In the course of this work I developed innovative colour sonar imaging software in an effort to process the data more efficiently and accurately. This new method of processing sonar data is the subject of this report.

During the course of the term, I had the opportunity to learn much about electronics repair, digital signal processing, computerized data acquisition, and sonar. I feel that this knowledge will be helpful in future work terms, and in my career.

I would like to thank my manager, Sup Ervisor, for his patience and good judgement, as well as the technologists who were always willing to help.

Yours sincerely,

signature

Student

2. Title page

This must include:

- report title which clearly states the purpose of the report
- full details of the person(s) for whom the report was prepared
- full details of the person(s) who prepared the report
- the date of the presentation of the report

A short report of two to three pages does not need a title page, but it must have a title. It must indicate the subject of the study and the purpose of the study. The title appears at the top of the first page, before the text of the report, as follows: ***Report of Committee appointed to investigate the Decline in Sale of Cycles in Tamil Nadu between January and June, 2007.*** In an individual letter form report, the title is in the form of subject line, indicating the topic, for example: ***Subject: Decline in Sale of Cycles in Tamil Nadu between January and June, 2004***

3. Table of Contents

This is given after the title page. It is used only if the report is long, say ten pages. It is a list of the headings and appendices of the report with the page number on which each begins. If the report is long and complex, you can give a list of the tables, and a list of illustrations (or figures), separately. The correct page numbers must be shown opposite the contents. Word processing packages can generate a table of contents.

4. Abbreviations and Glossary

If the report includes abbreviations which may not be known to all readers of the report, an alphabetical list of them is provided. If there are many technical terms, a glossary is also provided. A glossary is an alphabetical list of the terms, with brief explanations of their meanings.

5. Acknowledgements

This is a list of names of persons who helped the writer of the report with information, collection of -data, references, discussion, and so on. It can be written in one paragraph or a few short paragraphs.

6. Abstract or Summary or Executive Summary

An abstract is a summary used for a scholarly, academic work and an executive summary is used for a business report. An Executive summary is written for an executive who most likely does not have the time to read the original. It is not longer than 10% of the full report (usually one paragraph, and not longer than a page).

An executive summary:

- Gives readers the essential contents of the report document in **1-10** pages depending on the length of the report.

- Previews the main points of the report enabling readers to build a mental framework for organizing and understanding the detailed information in the report.

- Helps readers determine the key results and recommendations reported in your document. The summary includes one or two sentences for every main section of the report. For example, it may include:

- the context of the research

- the purpose of the report

- the major findings (you may need several sentences for this)

- the conclusions

- the main recommendations

The summary is written after the report is completed. It should be the last thing you write even though it is usually the first thing read by others. Its concise length and summary format enable the reader to quickly understand the main points of the issue.

7. Terms of Reference or Introduction

This is the first section of the report. It gives (a) details of the assignment and, (b) the purpose and scope of the study. In some reports this section is given the roman number (I).

(a) Details of assignment

Include: who assigned the report and/or appointed the committee, on what date and how the appointment was made (that is, by a resolution at a meeting, or by letter or office order). In the case of a committee, the names of the members of the committee are included. It also states what the assignment is, what the date for submitting the report is, and whether the report is expected to make recommendations.

Example: *The committee was appointed by the following resolution adopted at the meeting of the Board of*

Directors, held on 8 July, 2003: Resolved that a committee consisting of Mr. A.(Convener), Mr. B. and Mr. C, be, and is hereby, appointed to investigate the decline in the sale of cycles

in Tamil Nadu between January and June, 2003, and to report with recommendations in one month's time.

If the assignment is made by letter by the CEO or any other authority, the terms of reference must give the number and date of the letter, the name and title of the appointing authority, the purpose of the report, and the time allowed.

According to the DIO letter no. xxx, dated xxx from Ms Zarine Chowna, M.D., a committee consisting of Ms ABC, Mr DEF and Ms PQR was formed to examine the complaints of customers in xxx region. The committee was asked to report with recommendations in three weeks.

An individual writing a letter form report includes the authorization in the first paragraph of the letter.

- In accordance with your letter no xxx dated xxx, I have examined xxxx and am presenting the report below.

- As you requested, I have investigated xxx and am happy to present my findings as follows.

(b) Purpose and Scope

This includes information about the area surveyed or the problem examined, and the limitations imposed on the study by constraints like time, finance, or non-availability of data.

- Owing to constraints of time, the committee limited its study to five most populous cities in Tamil Nadu.

- As data related to xxx was not available, this study is limited to yyy only.

8. Procedure

This is the second section of the body of the report and may be numbered II. Methods used for collecting information are stated in this section. It begins with the meetings held by the committee, for example: *The committee met three times, on 26 July, and 12 and 20 August, 2007.*

Other methods of collecting information depend on the nature of the study. There are several methods.

(i) Records of the organisation can provide data on production, sales, recruitment, marketing, expenditure, etc. A comparison of figures for different periods may suggest useful conclusions.

(ii) Observation consists of watching certain phenomena involved in a problem, and recording what is systematically observed. This method is useful for problems like wastage of time in movement of material in a factory, or the circulation of traffic during certain hours or buyers' behaviour at the point of purchase.

(iii) Interrogation is the method of asking questions. It may be done by (a) interviewing, if the number of persons to be questioned is small, (b) getting questionnaires filled in, if the number is large, (c) meeting experts and asking for their opinion, (d) informal talks with randomly selected concerned persons can be used for collecting information, provided that questions are asked skilfully.

(iv) Reference to books, directories, standard publications.

(v) Visits and personal inspection are necessary when suitable sites are being surveyed or when there is need to observe the procedures or working.

(vi) Experimentation is done by various kinds of tests for different kinds of inquiries.

The committee's work of investigation is recorded in passive voice, for example,

- meetings were held with the members of the sales department.
- All the three sites were visited by the committee.
- Buyers' choice decisions were observed for three days.

The value of the findings, conclusions and recommendations depends on the thoroughness of the investigation, and the methods used. Therefore, a report must indicate the methods used for collecting information.

9. Findings

This is the most important section. It may be numbered III in a report that numbers the sections. Presentation of findings is the main part of the report. The collected facts and information have to be organized into a presentable form, with headings and sub-headings. The mass of collected information is analysed and divided for easy and readable presentation. The units are joined by a numbering system.

The basis for division into units may be time periods, or geographical location, or cause-and-effect, objectives or any factors which enable classification of the data. Details may be in the form of numbered statements. This section may end with a brief summary of the most important findings or some conclusions which emerge from the findings. If the conclusions are very important and significant, there may be a separate section.

Use of illustrations in giving the findings makes a report much more readable, clear and effective

Such as use diagrams, graphs, charts, plans or maps. There are several advantages in using illustrations.

- They clarify and support the verbal analysis.
- They can present a large amount of complex data in a compact form and with precision.
- Comparisons of data can be seen at a glance in a graph or chart.
- Pictorial representation is more attractive and interesting to most people.

Every illustration should have a number and a title and should be mentioned in the text of the report. A table has a number and title placed above it i.e. *Table 3.5: Sales volumes*, means table number 5 in chapter 3 illustrating volume of sales of different products. Illustration should be placed as near as possible to the point where it is mentioned for the first time in the text. Complicated illustrations are given as Appendices. All diagrams, graphs, charts, maps etc. used as illustrations must have:

- proper labels to show what information is being represented
- the scale used
- the key to colour/shading/symbols used
- the date of the information it contains

10. Conclusions.

The conclusions are drawn from the major findings.

Example: The study concludes that the reducing sales figures are as a result of:

- (a) Poor marketing strategies
- (b) Competition from similar products

11. Recommendations

This is the last section of the body of the report. Recommendations are proposals for action suggested by the report writer(s) to the appointing authority. This section is included only if the assignment has asked for it. Recommendations should be written in the same order as the problems are stated in the findings, as far as possible. They may be numbered, and must be in the same grammatical form. Recommendations may be introduced with a sentence like,

- The committee makes the following recommendations.
- The sub-committee recommends the following steps:
- The following steps are recommended:

12. Signature, Place, Date

A committee report must be signed by all members of the committee. The signing involves Name, Responsibility, Signature and Date.

13. References

References mean the list of books and articles used by the report writer. It is arranged in alphabetical order of the surnames of the authors. Publication details are usually included. APA 6th edition is the most common referencing style.

14. Appendix (plural: appendices or appendixes)

This is supplementary material given at the end of the report. This may be a copy of a questionnaire used, or plans of buildings, maps or other material which is referred to in the body of the report, but need not appear in the body. Any interested reader can refer to it since it is mentioned in the report. If there is more than one appendix, they are numbered, i.e. APPENDIX IV: MAP OF KIBERA

Preparation for report writing

- a) audience analysis
- b) reading skills
- c) data collection
- d) data analysis

Referencing styles

- (a) American Psychological Association
- (b) Chicago

Preparation of PowerPoint slides

CHAPTER 10: CONDUCTING MEETINGS AND MINUTE WRITING

Definition

Meetings are formal or informal gathering of members of an organisation or office with a purpose of discussing specific issues in an organisation.

Terminologies used in meetings

- (i) Agenda: a summary of business to be transacted at the meeting and are usually sent to members in a notification of meeting.
- (ii) Quorum: the minimum number of members stipulated in the constitution or rules of an organisation to be enough to transact business of committee or group on behalf of others.
- (iii) Quorum hitch: A situation where there aren't enough members to transact business as required by the group standing order.
- (iv) Standing orders: rules or constitution guiding meeting and conduct of business in an organisation.
- (v) In-attendance: Non-members of the organisation or committee who are attending a particular meeting.
- (vi) Resolution: a decision made by the group meeting after discussing an agenda.
- (vii) Adjournment: official ending of the meeting.
- (viii) Amendment: any changes made to the minutes of the previous meeting especially at the stage of matters arising from the previous minutes.
- (ix) Preliminaries: Activities preceding discussion of the day's agenda, such as the chairperson opening the meeting and communication from the chair.
- (x) Communication from the chair: the chairperson's opening remarks such as welcoming members, introducing the in-attendance if any, giving any reports that there may be and setting the tone of the meeting for discussion of the day's agenda.

Role/Purpose of meetings

- (i) To arrive at a consensus: deliberate and brainstorm on issues affecting an organisation.
- (ii) To collect ideas: involve all members or concerned members in management, decision making and policy formulation in an organisation.
- (iii) To solve a problem: pass decisions and policies on issues affecting an organisation
- (iv) To inform and explain: for the management to communicate decisions and policies to members of an organisation such as in briefs.
- (v) For team building and consultations towards achieving objectives of an organisation.
- (vi) To elect executive office holders in case AGM or select committees for special assignments.
- (vii) To get feedback: receive reports from department and committees on special assignments.
- (viii) To understand the situation and suggest solutions such as in conferences.
- (ix) To learn and train such as in workshops and seminars.
- (x) The alert participant finds that a meeting is an opportunity for continuing education in business management; by gather much knowledge in your own field from the other participants, who present different points of view.
- (xi) The meeting also enables participants to learn about the total function of the department or the organisation, and get an over-all company view.
- (xii) The meeting forces the active participant to think carefully.
- (xiii) Besides, it offers you the opportunity to develop your own skills of presenting your point of view before a roomful of critics who will review your thinking.

- (xiv) Active participation serves to demonstrate your talents to superiors. The ability to think clearly, to discuss rationally, to make positive contribution and to maintain courteous conduct is sure to be noticed in a meeting.
- (xv) A person who has learnt to be a good participant generally becomes a good leader of a meeting.

Types of meeting

Meetings can be classified on the basis of the purpose for which they are held.

- a) **Decision-making Meeting:** Committees, boards of directors, and such specially appointed bodies with powers to take decisions on behalf of the parent body or appointing authority, hold decision-making meetings.
- b) **Executive Committee Meeting:** Some committees like the board of directors or the executive council have powers to implement decisions; they may review recommendations of other bodies, or take decisions on their own. They hold meetings at which they pass policies and give instructions for carrying out certain work.
Committee meeting: is a meeting attended by the committee members. Most committees consist of:
 - (i) **The chairperson** who conducts the meeting according to the agreed set of rules called *standing orders*; makes initial communication; selects speakers; wraps up each agenda with the decision evident from members contribution; makes a ruling when there are divergent opinions; maintains order in the meeting.
 - (ii) **The secretary** who drafts the agenda for the meeting and issues this to the members, takes notes of the deliberations and prepares minutes of meeting for record (filing), reading the minutes for approval and adoption at the next committee meeting;
 - (iii) **The treasurer** who is responsible for the financial affairs of the organisation;
 - (iv) **Members:** One or several other members duly appointed.
- c) **Consultation Meeting:** An advisory body, which may consist of experts, holds meetings to discuss and advise other bodies. They do not have powers to take any decisions or action. Joint consultations between different departments, sections, or other related bodies/groups are an example of consultation meetings.
- d) **General meeting:** General meetings may be attended by all members of an organisation such as monthly meetings, quarterly meetings and Annual General Meeting (AGM). AGM are called to elect new officials and committee members, and to receive reports and present financial accounts and estimates.
- e) **Extra-ordinary general meeting:** is an additional meeting which is called to address a particular purpose at times other than when it is stipulated in the constitution or rules of that organisation. It addresses issues which cannot wait until the specified date of the next general meeting.
- f) **Problem-solving Meeting:** A meeting of all those concerned with a particular activity where the problem is found may be called for the specific purpose of solving the particular problem. Everyone contributes by looking at the problem from his/her point of view and task. Any snags and blocks can be dealt with in co-ordination.
- g) **Briefing Meeting:** Giving information is the main function of a briefing session. A prepared note of briefing may be read out, and questions or requests for clarification are answered; but there is no discussion at briefing meetings. Companies may hold a briefing meeting to inform the press/media. Within a company, seniors at every level hold briefing meetings for their subordinates. These briefing sessions are an addition to the formal information system of the company.

- h) **Negotiation Meeting:** This is characterized by the presence of two clearly competing sides. When parties with competing interests like buyer-and-seller, or two separate organisations which want to collaborate, or employer-and-employee, need to settle their differences, they meet to discuss and arrive at an agreement. Various other meetings of management with the staff, like interviews for selection, reprimand, appraisal and exit interviews and meetings for discussion of grievances also have an element of negotiation.
- i) **Group Discussion:** This type of meeting is usually informal. It can be a very stimulating and useful activity in organisations. It helps in understanding a situation, in exploring possibilities and in solving problems as it generates a multiple point of view. It gives a sense of participation to all those who participate in it. It is used as a tool for selecting candidates by observing the behaviour and abilities of the individuals taking part in it.
- j) **Conference:** A conference is a meeting of a large group of persons assembled for the purpose of discussing common problems or activities. The number of participants may be anything from 10 to 500 or more; a large conference is divided into small groups for the purpose of discussions. The participants may not be from the same organisation. The conference is a tool of learning and training and development; members pool together and share their knowledge and experience, and discuss their problems. It is an enriching activity. It does not have a task to complete; any conclusions that are arrived at during the discussions are included in a report of the conference. Copies of the report are given to the participants and their organisations. A conference does not have any authority but it may make recommendations since the participants are persons who have experience and are engaged in the activity and are directly affected by the state of affairs in the field.

Meetings can also be classified on the basis of whether they are convened formally or informally.

- (a) **Informal meetings:** meetings called at short notice either by means of telephone, by memorandum or by word of mouth to discuss matters which arise suddenly. They normally don't have an agenda communicated prior to the meeting.
- (b) **Formal meetings:** meetings held after the people concerned have been notified in writing earlier. Notification of meeting is normally contains agenda for the meeting.

Responsibilities of Participants (members)

- a) Contributing to the discussion of the agenda,
- b) Putting the executive to task to explain issues pertaining to the agenda,
- c) Passing resolutions on policies and decisions,
- d) Implementing decision of meetings as are assigned or required.

Preparation for a meeting

- (i) The secretary in consultation with the chairperson prepares a notice and gives to all members entitled to attend. The notification states the date, venue and time and a list of the agenda.
- (ii) The secretary ensures the venue is prepared for the meeting such as providing enough seats and organising the sitting arrangement.
- (iii) The secretary ensures availability of enough writing material for all members.
- (iv) The secretary ensures availability of refreshments such as water, juice or soda.
- (v) The secretary ensures the following have been brought to the meeting: minutes of previous meeting, relevant files and papers, a short-hand notebook for taking notes, attendance record and standing orders.
- (vi) Sound equipment to be tested, projection equipment plugged in, tested, and focussed and properly levelled

- (vii) Facilities for display availed and checked.
- (viii) Extension cords placed properly so that no one will trip over them
- (ix) Provision for darkening the room if necessary
- (x) Exhibits, projection material, arranged in required sequence

Challenges in conduct of meetings and minute writing

- 1) Showing up late
- 2) Lack of written agenda
- 3) Failing to come up with concrete action points
- 4) Lack of attention when members use laptops and phones.
- 5) Finishing on Time: Meetings can run overtime and consequently many agenda items can get left behind or they don't get adequate attention. There are various reasons why meetings run overtime, some of which include:
 - The meeting did not start on time
 - Agenda was not based on importance thus devoting too much time on items of lesser importance
 - The meeting flow was not managed well
 - Agenda had too much on it to cover in one meeting

How to finish on time

- Start your meeting On Time
 - Designate a timekeeper to monitor time of each item to be discussed and communicate times with participants
 - Place topics of importance or more discussion at the top of agenda
- 6) Inability to Make Decisions: Sometimes meetings drag on as participants struggle to make decisions or reach a consensus. The responsibility for making sure consensus is reached lies squarely on the leader. Some reasons why groups seem unable to consensus include:
 - Goals and outcomes are not made clear
 - Certain participants get side tracked on peripheral issues
 - Philosophical issues divide people

How to facilitate groups to make a decision

- Create and convey goals and outcomes for agenda topic that require decisions.
 - Seek out or present alternatives supported by the data
 - Assist participants getting through a block or impasse by restating the initial questions and regaining focus
- 7) Attendance: When key stakeholders or influential participants do not attend, decisions that are made may be questioned later. Idea and collaboration are limited and other participants may become frustrated. Some strategies to ensure attendance at meetings include:

- Diagnose the problem for the absence and have discussion with those members accordingly
 - Ensure that your meetings are worthy of peoples time by utilizing the practices mentioned earlier
- 8) **Dominant Participants:** Dominant participants can stifle creativity, collaboration, and problem solving but they often have good ideas. Utilize their ideas by guiding their energies and allow others to contribute. Some types of Dominant Participants include:

- 1) **The Windbag:** comments too frequently, dominate discussions and is often the first person to speak on issues

How to Handle:

- Limit remark time at the onset of the meeting
- Target questions or comments to other members by using their name
- Limit leadership responsibility to this member

- 2) **The Rambler:** speaks a great deal, often gets off track in remarks

How to Handle:

- Limit remark time at the onset of the meeting
- When participant pauses, redirect and get back on track
- Consider making this person a recorder thus neutralizing their time for remarks
- Limit leadership responsibility to this member

- 3) **The Homesteader:** takes on a point of view or makes a decision and is then reluctant, unable or unwilling to budge or consider alternatives

How to Handle:

- Utilize hints for collaboration and consensus building
- Use data and facts to reassure the point and redirect

- 9) **Silent Participants:** Silent participants have different reasons for being that way. Some people are reticent by nature, others are afraid of ridicule or dismissal. It is you goal as the leader to engage everyone. Some Silent Participants include:

- **The Mummy:** reluctant or unwilling to participate. Reasons may include; confusion of the issues, feeling of inferiority or superiority, indifference.

How to Handle:

- Give the participant a role or duty
- Ask direct questions using their name

- 10) **Lack of Follow-Through on Tasks**

The effectiveness of a meeting can be assessed in the outcomes. If leaders do not follow-through on decisions, action plans, or issues after the meeting, then there will be questions as

to the value of the meetings and your integrity. Tools and techniques to ensure follow-through include:

- Be clear at the end of the meeting in regards to who is responsible to each task
- Develop written action plans
- Designate Point Persons for tasks and delegate appropriately
- Set deadlines and check in with point persons and participants to ensure tasks are being accomplished

Advantages of meetings

- (i) Help to involve all members or concerned members in management, decision making and policy formulation in an organisation. Being involved in group activity and discussion provides social and emotional support to the participants. Employees who have a chance to contribute and take part in decisions are known to be more loyal.
- (ii) Help to formulate and pass decisions and policies on issues affecting an organisation
- (iii) Provide opportunity for the management to communicate decisions and policies to members of an organisation.
- (iv) Help in team building and consultations towards achieving objectives of an organisation by addressing grievances.
- (v) Provide opportunity for members to elect executive office holders in case AGM or select committees for special assignments.
- (vi) Provide opportunity for members to receive reports from department and committees on special assignments and corroborate/verify the same.
- (vii) Meetings permit a multiple point of view; it enables an organisation to benefit from the expertise of specialists in technology, law, taxation, personnel and so on.
- (viii) Discussing ideas and problems in a meeting is a democratic way of functioning. It shows respect for individuals and their opinions and views.

Disadvantages of meetings

- (i) Meetings are unpopular because they take up time, usually that of many people (time-consuming). This is usually brought about by digression from the main focus.
- (ii) The decisions made are binding even if you did not agree to them, so long as they were passed by the majority.
- (iii) Meetings may be used by the management to rubberstamp unpopular decisions or policies.
- (iv) Meetings are expensive. A great deal of money and time has to be spent on making preparations and on the actual conduct of a meeting.
- (v) A meeting may end without any useful conclusion if there is much disagreement among the participants.
- (vi) There may not be any useful outcome. Several persons take meetings lightly and attend without preparation, just for the sake of spending some time away from their work place or because they are required to.
- (vii) If the chairperson is not skilled in conducting a meeting, there may be a great deal of useless talk from the Chair, causing others to feel frustrated if they do not get an opportunity to respond or to express their views.

Recent research in group activity has shown that leaders and participants can be trained in group activity and discussion. The disadvantages can be overcome with training of organisation members.

Golden rules of meeting management

1. Select participants with care to ensure that all who need to be involved are, but that people who are not required can be spared the time.
2. Be prepared and ensure participants can be prepared by providing relevant documents in advance.
3. Stick to a schedule.
4. Stay on topic.
5. Don't hold unnecessary meetings.
6. Wrap-up meetings with a clear statement of the next steps and who is to take them.

Suggestions for effective participation in meetings

(i) Never fail to do homework. Study every item on the agenda, collect information and gather points of view for each item. Any papers distributed with the agenda must be read thoroughly.

(ii) Keep an open mind. However well-prepared you may be, there is a possibility that you may be wrong. Be prepared to learn and correct any mistake in thinking or information.

(iii) Do not disturb other participants or yourself by talking on the side or shuffling papers.

(iv) Have a sporting spirit. If your idea/suggestion is defeated in the discussion, be graceful and thank others for helping you to clarify your ideas.

(v) Show interest in what others say. When someone makes a good point, show appreciation even if it demolishes your point.

(vi) Never personalize a difference of opinion. If it is necessary to disagree with something that is said, first re-state or summarize it and then explain why you disagree.

(vii) Speak up if you have something to say, especially on a topic on which you have knowledge. Willingness to contribute and share is necessary. But keep your comments short and precise. There is no need to make a lengthy speech to make an impression.

(viii) Do not be carried away or swayed by emotions. Problems cannot be solved by anger, jealousy, revengefulness or spite. Willingness to examine the ideas presented will be more useful.

(ix) Be a good listener. You will learn a great deal about matters and about human behaviour if you listen carefully and intelligently.

(x) Be courteous at all times. Your meeting manners must be at least as good as your social manners when you are the host, or a guest in someone's house.

Types of minute

- **Action minutes** record the decisions reached and the actions to be taken, though not recording the discussion that went into making the decisions. This is the most common form of minutes used. They include a report of actions taken since the last meeting as well as planned actions. It is important to note who is responsible for upcoming actions. The secretary should save any handouts included with a presentation.
- **Discussion minutes** are lengthy and may include information which is not essential to the focus of the meeting. It may be necessary to keep discussion minutes in a situation where the process behind the decisions may be in question later. Discussion minutes contain everything action minutes do as well as the discussion which lead to the actions decided upon. Do not include discussion which does not pertain to the topic

at hand. Be sure to record the speaker and the focus of the presentation as it concerns the topic.

- **Verbatim minutes**, like transcripts, are a record of every single word said at a meeting. They are often long and can be difficult to skim for a particular piece of information. With the exception of courtroom proceedings and Congress, a verbatim record of a meeting is rarely necessary. Verbatim minutes will not always follow the agenda.

Minute writing

Structure of minutes

- Title
- Attendance (present, absent, apologies)
- In-attendance
- List of agenda
- Preliminaries
- Confirmation
- Business of the day
- A.O.B
- Adjournment
- Provision for signing

Language and tone

- Past tense, reported speech, objective tone

TOPIC 11: INTERVIEWS

One of the most important communication skills you can learn is your interviewing skills—both as the interviewer and the interviewee. An **interview** is a communication transaction in which an interviewer engages in questioning and discussion with an interviewee to gather information.

Types of interview

- a) Information gathering interview (academic research interview, journalistic interview, product survey)

The most common type of interview is the information-gathering interview, such as an **interview with an expert** for a report, term paper, or speech. Other types of information-gathering interviews include those conducted **by journalists for publication**, **product survey** researchers who interview shoppers in your local mall, and organizational researchers who interview employees to collect data on management effectiveness and production methods.

- b) Employment interview.

THE EMPLOYMENT INTERVIEW

Your primary goal in an employment interview is to sell yourself, your accomplishments, and your skills. You will also be seeing if the organization will meet your goals and needs. During an employment interview, you have only one chance to make a good impression, so the preparation and skill you bring to the interview will determine your overall success.

Preparing for the Interview

Once you have been asked for an interview, you can begin the third step in the interviewing process—preparing for the interview.

1. Researching the company.

Very few applicants ever research a company before an interview. You will make a strong impression if you show familiarity with the organization you are attempting to join. Researching the company will also help you anticipate questions the interviewer might ask and enhance your responses. Try to learn as much as possible about its history, its products and services, its corporate culture, its major competition, and the department you are hoping to join. Review its annual report, corporate pamphlets, relevant journal articles, or related local newspaper articles. If you know any employees of the company, interview them for important information or search their website.

2. Reviewing possible interview questions.

Although you can never be totally certain about the exact questions you will be asked, there are some fairly common topics that are addressed in almost every interview. Here is a list of commonly asked questions during an interview:

- 1) Explain how you schedule your time during an average day.
- 2) How do you prioritize tasks when you have a great deal to do?
- 3) Why did you select our company for employment?
- 4) What training, skills, abilities, and experiences can you contribute to our company?
- 5) As a worker, what are your strengths?
- 6) As a worker, what are your weaknesses? (Remember to present them as challenges for your growth or lessons you have learned.)

- 7) Tell me about a time when you had to demonstrate leadership. How did others respond to you? How did the situation turn out?
- 8) If you knew that this job would require you to work fifty hours a week for the next two months, would you still be interested in it? Why or why not?
- 9) Tell me about a time when you had to stand up for a decision you made, even if it made you unpopular. How did you react? How did you feel?
- 10) Tell me about a time when you experienced interpersonal conflict with a co-worker or colleague. What did you do? How did it turn out? How did you feel?
- 11) Where do you see yourself ten years from now? What are some things you would like to accomplish in your lifetime?

3. Conduct interview role-play.

Writer Leo Tolstoy once observed that “Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks about changing themselves.” One of the most beneficial activities you can do as you prepare for your interview is to change yourself—to improve your communication skills by videotaping an interview role-playing situation.

4. Bring interview materials.

It’s a good idea to bring a copy of your résumé to the interview, even though the interviewer supposedly has one. Also bring any additional materials you feel could be of interest to the interviewer—a pamphlet you designed, an article you authored, and so on. Carry whatever can fit easily into your briefcase. Remember to bring the address, phone number, and name of the interviewer. Carry originals and photocopies of your academic and other certificates.

5. Dress professionally.

This is the occasion to wear your best clothes. Men should dress in a suit or sports coat, dress shirt, and tie; women in a tailored dress or skirted suit. Make sure your clothes are clean and well pressed. Wear dress shoes and shine them before leaving the house. Don’t wear excessive jewellery and keep your perfume or aftershave to a minimum. Dress professionally for the occasion. It not only shows respect for the interviewer and the company, it also communicates respect for yourself.

6. Arrive fifteen minutes early.

This is not the time to be late. Don’t make a poor impression as by showing up ten minutes late. Leave earlier than necessary. Take those extra minutes to sit in your car and collect yourself before walking into the building. Those few minutes of silence will help to focus and calm you. Notify the receptionist five to ten minutes before your appointment that you have arrived and whom you are scheduled to see. Make sure you smile and sound friendly, because the interview is beginning now with the receptionist. He may be asked for his impressions of you after the interview.

Conducting the interview

1. Greet the interviewer.

Greet your interviewer with a firm handshake, direct eye contact, a smile, and a friendly hello. Don’t offer your hand first; let the interviewer(s) do it. Confirm the pronunciation of the interviewer’s last name if you’re uncertain. Address the interviewer as Mr., Ms., Mrs., or Dr. during the interview. Don’t use the interviewer’s first name.

2. Speak and act in a pleasant manner.

Much of the interviewer’s impressions of you will be based on your voice and how you come across nonverbally. Is your voice pleasant to listen to? Is your voice warm and conversational in tone? Are you speaking at a comfortable rate? Don’t rush your words. Don’t force your sentences. Avoid slang and expressions that are not familiar to the interviewer or appropriate for the occasion. Sit in a relaxed, comfortable manner, without appearing sloppy or lazy. Use direct eye contact when responding to questions, but don’t stare at the interviewer for the entire time. Be direct, yet natural. Remember to smile. Your smile will communicate

friendliness and a positive attitude. Overall, speak and act like the kind of individual you would want to hire if the roles were reversed.

3. Thoughtfully consider each question.

There's often a tendency to respond to each question immediately, without really considering the response. Give yourself permission to pause a moment or two before beginning your answer. If you don't understand a question, paraphrase what you thought you were asked to check its accuracy. If you still don't understand, ask the interviewer to repeat the question.

4. Answer each question exhaustively.

Avoid brief answers of a word or two. Develop your responses as best you can, citing examples to support your points. Don't ramble on and on, however. Look for feedback from the interviewer's face. Often, nonverbal behaviour can signal when you have adequately answered the question. If you are uncertain, ask the interviewer if she would like you to provide another example to develop your point. If you don't know the answer to a question, admit it. Don't pretend you know the answer or exaggerate a response. Your honesty will be appreciated.

5. Listen effectively.

Don't interrupt the interviewer. Listen to the questions or comments until you hear that pause that signals that it is your turn to speak. Nod your head occasionally as a sign that you understand the question. Smile as you listen. As mentioned earlier, if you don't understand a question, paraphrase it before you attempt to answer.

6. Be positive.

Emphasize the positive in all your responses. Even if the interviewer asks a question about a weakness, frame your response in a positive fashion—as an area of growth or a learning experience. Never say anything bad or negative about anyone, especially former co-workers or bosses or organisation. Communicate the positive in every word that comes from your mouth.

7. Demonstrate an enthusiastic attitude.

Create a positive impression by demonstrating enthusiasm during the interview. Be enthusiastic in the way you speak, move, and interact. This doesn't mean that you have to shout and do cartwheels. But it does mean that you communicate that you are happy to be there and will work hard if hired. The interviewer will reason that if you aren't enthusiastic in the interview, you'll never be energetic on the job. Communicate your interest, commitment, and enthusiasm.

8. Limit your discussion of salary and benefits.

At the conclusion of most employment interviews, you will be asked if you have any questions. This is not the time to ask about salary, getting a spacious office with a view, or the company's benefits package. Those discussions will come *if* you are offered the job. It would be more advantageous to ask a question or two about the position you are applying for or the company in general. Also ask when you will receive a decision on the position. Remember, you are still being evaluated by the interviewer. Avoid sounding self-centred or greedy. Make a positive, enthusiastic impression all the way to the end of the interview.

9. Thank the interviewer.

Thank the interviewer for the opportunity to interview. Smile and shake the interviewer's hand firmly.

10. Write a thank-you letter.

Write a thank-you letter to the interviewer. Thank the interviewer for the opportunity to interview and briefly allude to a few of the important points raised during the session. Keep the letter brief, appreciative, and positive. End by saying that you are looking forward to hearing from him or her.

11. Follow up.

If you needed to send additional information or materials to the interviewer, make certain that you do it as soon as possible. It is most effective if you include any follow-up material with your thank-you letter.

If you haven't received any communication from the interviewer or the company for two weeks or in the timeframe specified by the interviewer, call the company's personnel department (not your interviewer) and ask for the status of the hiring process. Don't make a nuisance of yourself. You just don't want to be forgotten.

NB: Either way it's good. It was an honour to be selected for an interview in the first place. Everyone who applies is not asked for an interview. And everyone who is interviewed is not offered a job. Be gentle on yourself. You are much more experienced and skilled in the interviewing process and this will pay off during your next interview. And there will be a next time.

Roles of interviewer and interviewee

- (i) The interviewer engages in questioning and discussion with an interviewee to gather information.
- (ii) The interviewer assesses the interviewees to judge their suitability for the job at hand in the organisation.
- (iii) The interviewees sell or market themselves to the organisation, by proving their accomplishments, knowledge and skills.
- (iv) The interviewees assess if the organization meets their goals and needs.

Challenges of interview

- (i) Anxiety to perform your best at the interview
- (ii) Intensive preparation
- (iii) Positively answering questions about your weaknesses or on personal issues
- (iv) Quoting expected salary if asked to do so without sounding greedy for money
- (v) Handling challenging questions which you may not have ready answers for.

TOPIC 12: PUBLIC RELATIONS AND CUSTOMER CARE

Meaning of public relations and customer care

Public Relations is about reputation - the result of what you do, what you say and what others say about you. Public Relations is the discipline which looks after reputation, with the aim of earning understanding and support and influencing opinion and behavior. It is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics. Customer care is the work of looking after customers and ensuring their satisfaction with one's business and its goods or services.

Types of customers

Customers can be of following types:

- 1) **Loyal Customers-** These types of customers are less in numbers but promote more sales and profit as compared to other customers as these are the ones which are completely satisfied. These customers revisit the organization over times hence it is crucial to interact and keep in touch with them on a regular basis and invest much time and effort with them. Loyal customers want individual attention and that demands polite and respectful responses from supplier.
- 2) **Discount Customers-** Discount customers are also frequent visitors but they are only a part of business when offered with discounts on regular products and brands or they buy only low cost products. More is the discount the more they tend towards buying. These customers are mostly related to small industries or the industries that focus on low or marginal investments on products. Focus on these types of customers is also important as they also promote distinguished part of profit into business.
- 3) **Impulsive Customers-** These customers are difficult to convince as they want to do the business in urge or caprice. They don't have any specific item into their product list but urge to buy what they find good and productive at that point of time. Handling these customers is a challenge as they are not particularly looking for a product and want the supplier to display all the useful products they have in their tally in front of them so that they can buy what they like from that display. If impulsive customers are treated accordingly then there is high probability that these customers could be a responsible for high percentage of selling.
- 4) **Need Based Customers-** These customers are product specific and only tend to buy items only to which they are habitual or have a specific need for them. These are frequent customers but do not become a part of buying most of the times so it is difficult to satisfy them. These customers should be handled positively by showing them ways and reasons to switch to other similar products and brands and initiating them to buy these. These customers could possibly be lost if not tackled efficiently with positive interaction.
- 5) **Wandering Customers-** These are the least profitable customers as sometimes they themselves are not sure what to buy. These customers are normally new in industry and most of the times visit suppliers only for confirming their needs on products. They investigate features of most prominent products in the market but do not buy any of those or show least interest in buying. To grab such customers they should be properly informed about the various positive features of the products so that they develop a sense of interest.

An organization should always focus on loyal customers and should expand or multiply the product range to leverage impulsive customers. For other types of customers strategies should be renovated and enhanced for turning out these customers to satisfy their needs and modify these types of customers to let them fall under loyal and impulsive category.

Role of public relations and customer care

Almost all large organizations either have a public relations department or outsource their public relations needs to a company. Public relations is seen as a vital part of maintaining the organization's image and of communicating its message to its customers, investors and the general public. A positive perception of a company or non-profit can increase its sales and improve its bottom line. The functions and key tasks of a public relations specialist can be varied.

1. Public Image Strategy

Public relations strategists will work with top executives in the organization to craft an overview of how the company wants to be perceived, and how it is going to project a positive image. This can involve focusing in on exactly the right message, and then deciding on the broad outlines of a campaign to disseminate that message.

2. Outreach Events

Public relations professionals often arrange events to raise the profile of the organization or lend its brand and name to a charitable event that represents the philosophy of the company. Think of a corporation sponsoring a Special Olympics event, or a hospital organizing a health outreach day in its town.

3. Media Relations

Talking with the media is a core function of public relations departments. Public relations professionals field questions from reporters, arrange for interviews with key individuals in the organization and write press releases to make the media aware of company events or achievements.

4. Social Media

One emerging function of public relations is to maximize an organization's positive use of social media to build its image. Managing a Twitter feed, a Facebook page and a YouTube channel are all vital ways to connect with possible new customers or stakeholders. Monitoring public comment about the organization on the Internet can also give PR professionals early warning of any emerging trends or problems.

5. Handling Emergencies

Sometimes a company or organization is struck by a disastrous event that ruins its public image. This might be an oil company that has to deal with a high profile spill, or a food company that has a contamination event. Public relations professionals decide how the organization will repair the damage to its image, communicate how it is dealing with the problem and regain control of its message.

Interpersonal and PR skills

There are certain customer service skills that every employee *must* master if they are forward-facing with customers.

Without them, you run the risk of finding your business in an embarrassing customer service train-wreck, or you'll simply lose customers as your service continues to let people down. Luckily, there are a few universal skills that every support member can master that will **drastically** improve their interactions with customers.

1. Patience

If you don't see this near the top of a customer service skills list, you should just stop reading. Not only is patience important to customers, who often reach out to support when they are confused and frustrated, but it's also important to the business at large: we've shown you before that great service beats fast service every single time. If you deal with customers on a daily basis, be sure to stay patient when they come to you stumped and frustrated, but also be sure to take the time to truly figure out what they want — they'd rather get competent service than be rushed out the door!

2. Attentiveness

The ability to *really* listen to customers is so crucial for providing great service for a number of reasons. Not only is it important to pay attention to individual customer interactions (watching the language/terms that they use to describe their problems), but it's also important to be mindful and attentive to the feedback that you receive *at large*. For instance, customers may not be saying it outright, but perhaps there is a pervasive feeling that your software's dashboard isn't laid out correctly.

3. Clear Communication Skills

Make sure you're getting to the problem at hand quickly; customers don't need your life story or to hear about how your day is going. More importantly, you need to be cautious about how some of your communication habits translate to customers, and it's best to err on the side of caution whenever you find yourself questioning a situation. When it comes to important points that you need to relay clearly to customers, keep it simple and leave nothing to doubt.

4. Knowledge of the Product

The best forward-facing employees in your company will work on having a **deep** knowledge of how your product works.

It's not that every single team member should be able to build your product from scratch, but rather they should know the ins and outs of how your product works, just like a customer who uses it everyday would. Without knowing your product from front-to-back, you won't know how to help customers when they run into problems.

5. Ability to Use "Positive Language"

Sounds like fluffy nonsense, but your ability to make minor changes in your conversational patterns can truly go a long way in creating happy customers. Language is a very important part of persuasion, and people (especially customers) create perceptions about you and your company based off of the language that you use.

6. Acting Skills

Sometimes you're going to come across people that you'll **never** be able to make happy. Situations outside of your control (they had a terrible day, or they are just a natural-born complainer) will sometimes creep into your usual support routine, and you'll be greeted with those "barnacle" customers that seem to want nothing else but to pull you down. Every great customer service rep will have those *basic acting skills* necessary to maintain their usual cheery persona in spite of dealing with people who may be just plain grumpy.

7. Time Management Skills

Hey, despite my many research-backed rants on why you should spend more time with customers, the bottom line is that there *is* a limit, and you need to be concerned with getting customers what they want in an efficient manner.

The trick here is that this should also be applied when realizing when you simply **cannot** help a customer. If you don't know the solution to a problem, the best kind of support member will get a customer over to someone who does.

Don't waste time trying to go above and beyond for a customer in an area where you will just end up wasting both of your time!

8. Ability to "Read" Customers

You won't always be able to see customers face-to-face, and in many instances (nowadays) you won't even hear a customer's voice! That doesn't exempt you from understanding some basic principles of behavioral psychology_and being able to "read" the customer's current emotional state. This is an important part of the personalization process as well, because it takes knowing your customers to create a personal experience for them. More importantly though, this skill is *essential* because you don't want to mis-read a customer and end up losing them due to confusion and miscommunication. Look and listen for subtle clues about their current mood, patience level, personality, etc., and you'll go far in keeping your customer interactions positive.

9. A Calming Presence

There are a lot of metaphors for this type of personality: "keeps their cool," "staying cool under pressure," etc., but it all represents the same thing: the ability that some people have to stay calm and even influence others when things get a little hectic. The best customer service reps know that they **cannot** let a heated customer force them to lose their cool; in fact it is their *job* to try to be the "rock" for a customer who thinks the world is falling down due to their current problem.

10. Goal Oriented Focus

This may seem like a strange thing to list as a customer service skill, but I assure you that it is vitally important.

Employees should handle customers on a case-to-case basis, though there should be guidelines for handling common problems.

11. Ability to Handle Surprises

Sometimes the customer support world is going to throw you a curveball. Maybe the problem you encounter isn't specifically covered in the company's guidelines, or maybe the customer isn't reacting how you thought they would.

Whatever the case, it's best to be able to think on your feet... but it's even *better* to create guidelines for **yourself** in these sorts of situations.

12. Persuasion Skills

To truly take your customer service skills to the next level, you need to have some mastery of **persuasion** so that you can convince interested customers that your product is right for them (if it truly is). It's not about making a sales pitch in each email, but it is about not letting potential customers *slip away* because you couldn't create a compelling message that your company's product is worth purchasing!

13. Tenacity

Willingness to do what needs to be done (and not take shortcuts) is a key skill when providing the kind of service that people talk about. Remembering that your customers are people too, and knowing that putting in the extra effort will come back to you ten-fold should be your driving motivation to never "cheat" your customers with lazy service.

14. Closing Ability

Being able to *close* with a customer means being able to end the conversation with confirmed satisfaction (or as close to it as you can achieve) and with the customer feeling that everything has been taken care of (or will be). Getting booted after a customer service call or before all of their problems have been addressed is the *last* thing that customers want, so be sure to take the time to confirm with customers that each and every issue they had on deck has been entirely resolved.

15. Willingness to Learn

Those who don't seek to improve what they do, whether it's building products, marketing businesses, or helping customers, will get left behind by the people willing to invest in their skills.

