



Effective Business Communication: The world of Business is a World of Action

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Abstract

Professor Brahmhatt has discussed 7 sections in this paper of 'Effective Business Communication: The world of Business is a World of Action' with his note in brief after each section. In the introductory section, he has discussed derivation of the word 'Communication' and its meaning. In the next section, he has discussed the role of communication in business. He states that **communication is the life blood of any organization and its main purpose is to effect change to influence action**. In the third section, the definition of the term is given. In the fourth section, different purposes of communication are discussed. The subsequent section discusses the process/cycle of communication and the next section of the paper discusses basic elements of communication cycle. In the sixth section of the paper, Prof. Brahmhatt has discussed some major differences in oral as well as written communication. Finally, The paper discusses barriers of effective communication in business.

Key terms: Business Communication, Decoding, Encoding, Oral Communication, Written Communication.

1.0 Introduction

The word "communication" derived from the Latin word 'communicare' that means to impart, to participate, to share or to make common. It is a process of exchange of facts, ideas, opinions and as a means that individual or organization share meaning and understanding with one another. In other words, it is a transmission and interacting the facts, ideas, opinion, feeling and attitudes. It is the ability of mankind to communicate across barriers and beyond boundaries that has ushered the progress of mankind. It is the ability of fostering speedy and effective communication around

the world that has shrunk the world and made 'globalization' a reality. Communication had a vital role to play in ensuring that people belonging to a particular country or a culture or linguistic group interact with and relate to people belonging to other countries or culture or linguistic group. Communication adds meaning to human life. It helps to build relationship and fosters love and understanding. It enriches our knowledge of the universe and makes living worthwhile.

Tushar's Notes: Communication is all about sending and receiving information. Good communication is vital for running of each and every business. You cannot have human relations without communication. However, good and effective communication is required not only for good human relations but also for good and successful business. ("Importance of business communication," 2007) It helps the organization to motivate and guide its employees and to achieve better relations with customers. Effective communication can only take place when the data sent and received are understood. Good communication is

1.1 Role of Communication in Business:

The term business communication is used for all messages that we send and receive for official purpose like running a business, managing an organization, conducting the formal affairs of a voluntary organization and so on. Business communication is marked by formality as against personal and social communication.

The success of any business to a large extent depends on efficient and effective communication. It takes place among business entities, in market and market places, within organizations and between various group of employees, owners and employees, buyers and sellers, service providers and customers, sales persons and prospects and also between people within the organization and the press persons. All such communication impacts business. Done with care, such communication can promote business interests. Otherwise, it will portray the organization in poor light and may adversely affect the business interest.

Communication is the life blood of any organization and its main purpose is to effect change to influence action. In any organization the main problem is of maintaining effective communication process. The management problem generally results in poor communication. Serious mistakes are made because orders are misunderstood. The basic problem in communication is that the meaning which is actually understood may not be what the other intended to send. It must be realised that the speaker and the listener are two separate individuals having their own limitations and number of things may happen to distort the message that pass between them.

When people within the organization communicate with each other, it is internal communication. They do so to work as a team and realise the common goals. It could be official or unofficial. Modes of internal communication include face-to-face and

written communication. Memos, reports, office order, circular, fax, video conferencing, meeting etc. are the examples of internal communication. When people in the organization communicate with anyone outside the organization it is called external communication. These people may be clients or customers, dealers or distributors, media, government, general public etc. are the examples of external communication.

1.2 Defining the term ‘Communication’

Communication may be defined as interchange of thought or information between two or more persons to bring about mutual understanding and desired action. It is the information exchange by words or symbols. It is the exchange of facts, ideas and viewpoints which bring about commonness of interest, purpose and efforts.

American Management Association defines, ‘Communication is any behaviour that results in an exchange of meaning’.

Newman and Sumner Jr. state that, ‘Communication is an exchange of facts, ideas, opinions or emotions by two or more persons’.

Peter Little defines communication as, ‘Communication is the process by which information is transmitted between individuals and/or organizations so that an understanding response result’.

According to *Keith Davis*, ‘The process of passing the information and understanding from one person to another.’ It is essentially a bridge of meaning between the people. By using the bridge a person can safely across the river of misunderstanding’.

Louis A. Allen defines, ‘Communication is the sum total of all the things that a person does, when he wants to create an understanding in the mind of another. It involves a systematic and continuous process of telling, listening and understanding’.

A wider and more comprehensive definition is given by National Joint Committee for the communicative needs of persons with severe Disabilities:

‘Any act by which one person gives to or receives from another person information about that person’s needs, desires, perceptions, knowledge, or affective states. Communication may be intentional or unintentional, may involve conventional or unconventional signals, may take linguistic or non-linguistic forms, and may occur through spoken or other modes’ -*Julia Scherba de Valenzuela, Ph.D.*

These definitions show that communication involves exchange of thoughts between two parties. Communication is the transmission of information and meaning from one individual or group to another. The crucial element is meaning.

Communication is successful only when the receiver understands an ideas 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 to persons with whom we intend to communicate. Both must assign the same meaning to the symbols used; otherwise, there is miscommunication. Until and unless there is a common understanding of the symbols, it is not possible to communicate.

Tushar' Note: Therefore, the main purpose of communication is to inform, or to bring around to a certain point of view or to elicit action.

1.3 Purpose of Communication

The following are different purposes of communication;

1.3.1 For the instructive function: The instructive function unvarying and importantly deals with the commanding nature. It is more or less of directive nature. Under this, the communicator transmits with necessary directives and guidance to the next level, so as to enable them to accomplish his particular tasks. In this, instructions basically flow from top to the lower level.

1.3.2 For integration of activities: It is consolidated function under which integration of activities is endeavored. The integration function of communication mainly involves to bring about inter-relationship among the various functions of the business organization. It helps in the unification of different management functions.

1.3.3 For information: The purposes or function of communication in an organization is to inform the individual or group about the particular task or company policies and procedures etc. Top management informs policies to the lower level through the middle level. In turn, the lower level informs the top level the reaction through the middle level. Information can flow vertically, horizontally and diagonally across the organization. Becoming informed or inform others is the main purpose of communication.

1.3.4 For evaluation: Examination of activities to form an idea or judgement of the worth of task is achieved through communication. Communication is a tool to appraise the individual or team, their contribution to the organization. Evaluating one's own inputs or other's outputs or some ideological scheme demands an adequate and effective communication process.

1.3.5 For necessary direction: Communication is necessary to issue directions by the top management or manager to the lower level. Employee can perform better when he

is directed by his senior. Directing others may be communicated either orally or in writing. An order may be common order, request order or implied order.

1.3.6 For teaching: The importance of personal safety on the job has been greatly recognized. A complete communication process is required to teach and educate workers about personal safety on the jobs. This communication helps the workers to avert accidents, risk etc. and avoid cost, procedures etc.

1.3.7 For influencing others: A complete communication process is necessary in influencing others or being influenced. The individual having potential to influence others can easily persuade others. It implies the provision of feedback which tells the effect of communication.

1.3.8 For interrelationship and interdependence: A business enterprise cannot isolate from the rest of the society. There is interrelationship and interdependence between the society and an enterprise operating in the society. Goodwill and confidence are necessarily created among the public. It can be done by the communication with the different media, which has to project the image of the firm in the society. Through an effective external communication system, an enterprise has to inform the society about its goals, activities, progress and social responsibility.

1.3.9 For employees orientation: When a new employee enter into the organization at that time he or she will be unknown to the organization programs, policies, culture etc. Communication helps to make people acquainted with the co-employees, superior and with the policies, objectives, rules and regulations of the organization.

1.3.10 Other [Decision Making]: Effective decision-making is possible when required and adequate information is supplied to the decision-maker. Effective communication helps the process of decision making. In general, everyone in the organization has to provide with necessary information so as to enable to discharge tasks effectively and efficiently.

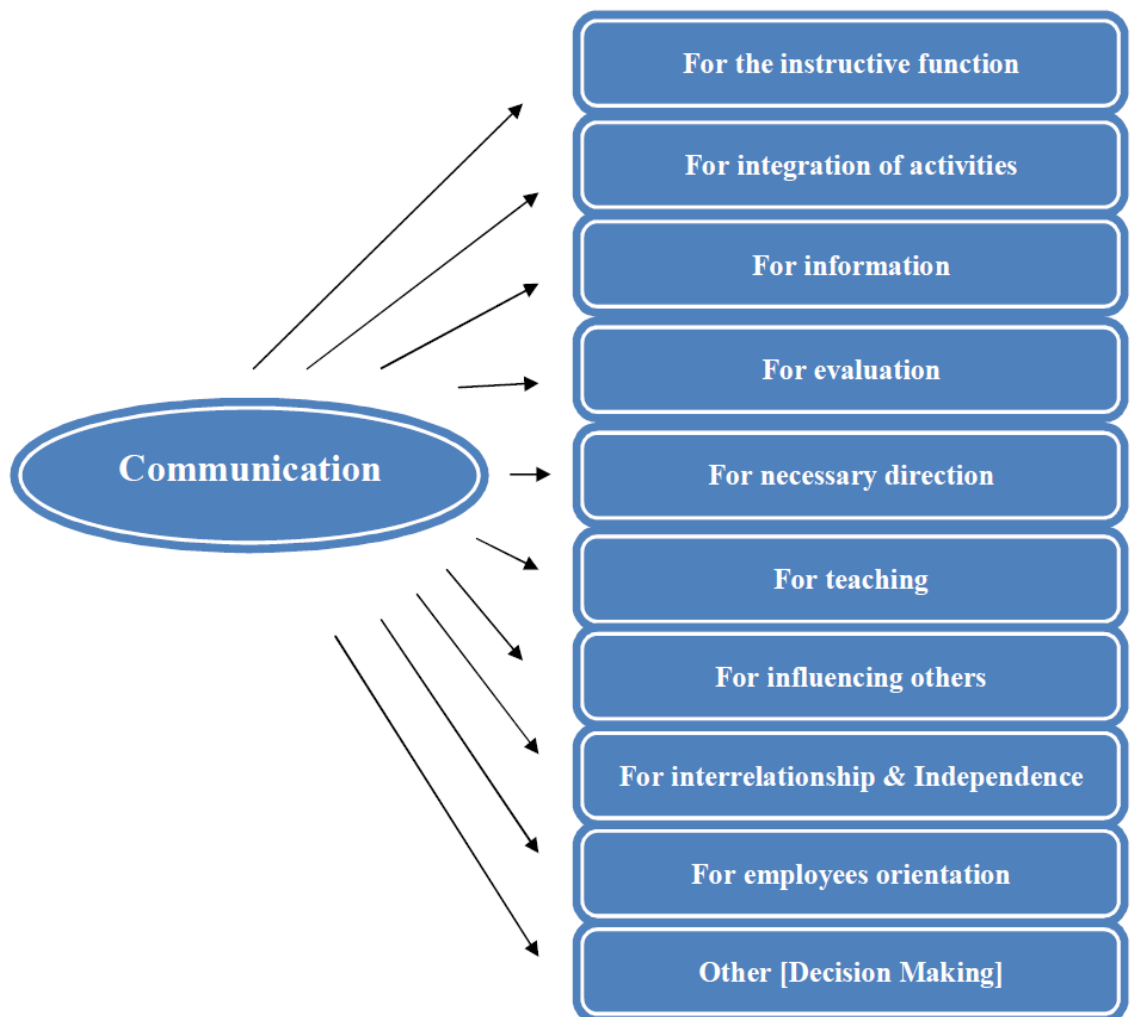
Tushar's Note: Prior to entry in any organization, certain communicative abilities are also looked for in candidates. Ability to speak, conduct oneself properly in an interview, get along with others, listen carefully and accurately, make effective presentations, prepare good yet brief report, make proposals, sell ideas, convince and persuade others are some of the attributes looked for in a candidate. If an individual possesses these attributes looked for in a candidate. If an individual possesses these attributes or can train himself to excel in them, he himself would realize how much easier it is for him only to secure a comfortable position in an organization but also to achieve success.

1.4 The Communication Process/ Cycle

The Communication Process Communication is a process that serves to connect senders and receivers of messages in space and time. Although human beings tend to be interested primarily in the study of human communication, the process is present in all living things and, it can be argued, in all things. From this we may conclude that communication is a fundamental, universal process.

Although all of us have been communicating with others since our infancy, the process of transmitting information from an individual (or group) to another is a very complex process with many sources of potential error.

Communications is so difficult because at each step in the process there major potential for error. By the time a message gets from a sender to a receiver there are four basic places where transmission errors can take place and at each place, there are a multitude of potential sources of error. Thus it is no surprise that social psychologists estimate that there is usually a 40-60% loss of meaning in the transmission of messages from sender to receiver.



It is critical to understand this process, understand and be aware of the potential sources of errors and constantly counteract these tendencies by making a conscientious effort to make sure there is a minimal loss of meaning in your conversation.

Tushar's Note: No matter what the setting or the number of people involved, all communication consists of a few elements. Although the process of communication is more than the total of these elements, understanding them can help explain what happens when one person tries to express an idea to others.

1.5 Basic Elements of Communication Cycle

Communication is a two-way process in which there is an exchange and progression of ideas towards a mutually accepted direction or goal. For this process to materialize, it is essential that the basic elements of communication be identified. These elements are as under:

1.5.1 Sender The communication process begins with a **sender**, the person who transmits a message—a sales manager making a presentation to a client, a computer programmer explaining a new program to a co-worker, or an after-dinner speaker introducing a guest.

Tushar's Note: The source of the message is the sender. The sender must know why the communication is necessary and what result is needed.

1.5.2 Message A **message** is any signal that triggers the response of a receiver. Some messages are deliberate, while others (such as sighs and yawns) are unintentional. Messages are not synonymous with meanings. For example, you might remind a co-worker about a deadline with the intention of being helpful, but your colleague could interpret the message as an indication that you were annoyed or mistrustful.

Tushar's Note: The message is simply the information that you want to communicate. Without a message, there is no cause of communicating. If you cannot summarize the information that you need to share, you aren't ready to begin the process of communication.

1.5.3 Encoding The sender must choose certain words or nonverbal methods to send an intentional message. This activity is called **encoding**. The words and channels that a communicator chooses to deliver a message can make a tremendous difference in how that message is received. Consider the simple act of a manager's offering feedback to an employee: Whether the words are respectful or abrupt and whether the message is delivered in person or in a memo can make a big difference in how the feedback is received.

Tushar's Note: Encoding is the process of taking your message and transferring it into the proper format for sharing it with your audience. It requires knowing your audience and ensuring that your message provides all of the information that they need.

1.5.4 Channel The **channel** (sometimes called the **medium**) is the method used to deliver a message. As a business communicator, you can often choose whether to put your message in writing as a letter or memo. You can deliver it by hand or send it via regular mail or use an overnight delivery service. You can send a fax or electronic mail. Or you can communicate it orally, either over the phone or in person.

Tushar's Note: The medium or channel is the method of communication that you choose such as face-to-face conversations, telephone calls or videoconferencing, and written communication like emails and memos.

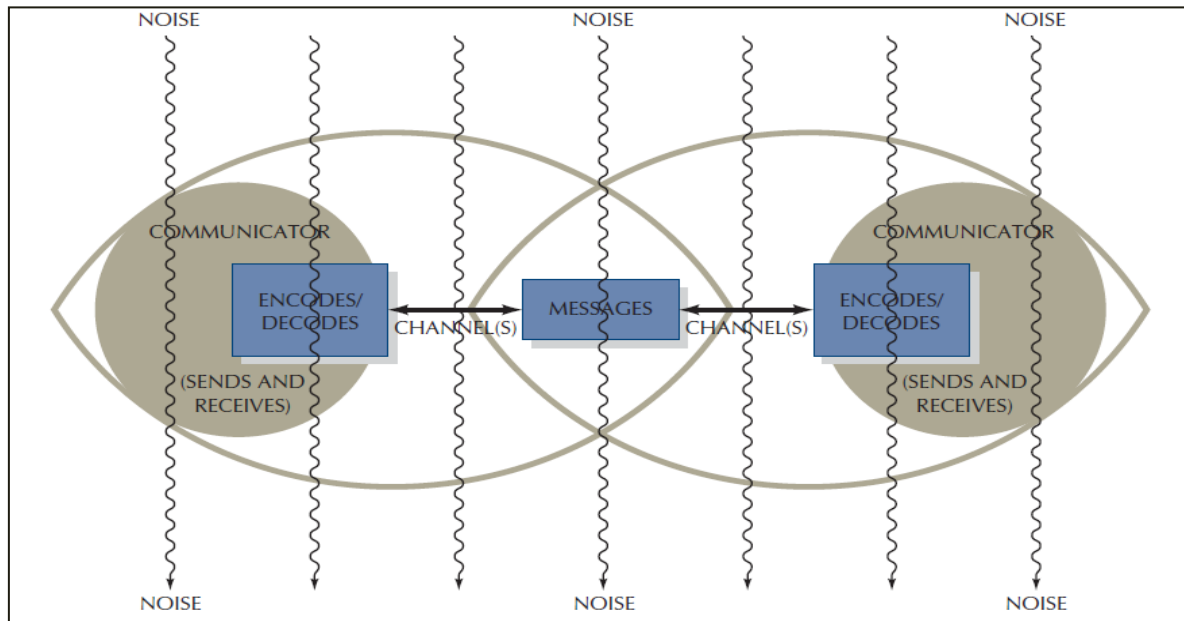
1.5.5 Receiver A **receiver** is any person who notices and attaches some meaning to a message. In the best of circumstances, a message reaches its intended receiver with no problems. In the confusing and imperfect world of business, however, several problems can occur. The message may never get to the receiver. It might be delivered but lie buried under a mountain of papers on the recipient's desk. If the message is oral, the listener might forget it. Even worse, a message intended for one receiver might be intercepted by another one. A bystander might overhear your critical remarks about a co-worker, or a competitor might see a copy of your correspondence to a customer.

Tushar's Note: You have expectations for a response from the receiver when you send a message. You can increase the chances of getting this result by addressing your audience's concerns or addressing specific benefits as part of your communication.

1.5.6 Decoding Even if a message does get to its intended receiver intact, there is no guarantee that it will be understood as the sender intended it to be. The receiver must still **decode** it, attaching meaning to the words or symbols. As we have already seen, decoding is not always accurate. Your friendly joke might be taken as a deliberate offense, or a suggestion might be misinterpreted as an order. The request for "next year's figures" might mean the next fiscal year, not calendar year. It is a mistake to assume that your messages will always be decoded accurately.

Tushar's Note: Decoding is the process of receiving the message accurately and requires that your audience has the means to understand the information you are sharing.

FIGURE 1
Communication Model



1.5.7 Feedback Receivers don't just absorb messages like sponges; they respond to them. Consider audience questions during a talk or the way a customer glances at the clock during a sales presentation. Imagine the tone of voice an employer might use while saying, "I'll have to think about your proposal." Behaviors like these show that most communication is a two-way affair. The discernible response of a receiver to a sender's message is called **feedback**. Some feedback is nonverbal—smiles, sighs, and so on. Sometimes it is oral, as when you react to a colleague's ideas with questions or comments. Feedback can also be written, as when you respond to a co-worker's memo. In many cases, *no* message can be a kind of feedback. Failure to answer a letter or to return a phone call can suggest how the noncommunicative person feels about the sender. When we add the element of feedback to our communication model, we begin to recognize that in face-to-face settings people are simultaneously senders and receivers of information. This explains why these two roles are superimposed in the communication model pictured in Figure 1–1.

1.5.8 Noise It might seem that, with enough feedback, the mental images of sender and receiver will match: the message received will be identical to the message sent. Your own experience probably shows that this doesn't always happen. The most obvious type of noise is **external noise** (also called **physical noise**). This includes sounds that distract communicators, such as the babble of voices in the next room or the annoying ring of someone's cell phone in a meeting; but there are other types of external noise that don't involve sound. For example, an overcrowded room or a

Tushar's Note: Feedback lets you gauge how successful you were at communicating. It also offers a chance to adjust your communication process for the future.

smelly cigar can disrupt concentration. A second kind of interference is **physiological noise**. Hearing disorders fall into this category, as do illnesses and disabilities that make it difficult to send or receive messages. Recall how hard it is to pay attention when you are recovering from a late-night study session or have the flu. The third type of interference is **psychological noise**, that is, forces within the sender or receiver that interfere with understanding. Egotism, defensiveness, hostility, preoccupation, fears—all these and more constitutes psychological noise.

Tushar's Note: One of the greatest sources of communication failure is **noise**—the term communication scholars use for factors that interfere with the exchange of messages.

1.5.9 Context Communication is influenced by the **context** in which it occurs. There are several dimensions of context, including physical, social, chronological, and cultural. We will now take a brief look at each of them.

Communication always takes place in some setting. This **physical context** can influence the content and quality of interaction. For example, imagine how discussing a problem with your boss or asking for a raise might be received differently in each of the following settings:

In your boss's office.

In your work area, with others observing the conversation.

Over lunch at a local restaurant.

At a company picnic or party.

The **social context** refers to the nature of the relationship between the communicators, as well as who is present. Imagine, for instance, the difference in asking a manager for the raise under a variety of different social contexts:

You and the manager have been friends for several years, *or* you and the manager have no personal relationship.

You are the same age as your manager, *or* she or he is 15 years older (or younger) than you.

You and the manager have gotten along well in the past, *or* you have had an ongoing personality conflict with the manager.

You and the manager are alone, *or* your only chance to ask for the raise comes with other employees around.

The **chronological context** refers to the ways in which time influences interaction. A sample of time-related considerations shows the importance of adapting to the chronological context:

What time of day is it (first appointment in the morning or last in the afternoon)?

What are the communicator's personal preferences for time (a morning person or a late starter)?

Is it before, during, or after work hours?

Is this a busy time of year (holiday season, tax time)?

Has there just been a major layoff, downsizing, or profit loss?

You can boost your chances for success by paying attention to chronological factors. When calling someone or requesting a person's help, consider asking, "Is this a good time?" or "Do you have time now, or would another time be more convenient?"

The **cultural context** of communication includes both the organizational and the ethnic and/or national backgrounds of the persons communicating. Chapter 2 discusses the role of culture in detail. For now, you can get a sense of the importance of culture by imagining how just a few differences in backgrounds might influence communication between the following people:

Baby boomers and generation X-ers.

Euro-Americans and Hispanics.

New Yorkers and Californians.

Men and women.

Americans and Japanese.

Tushar's Note: Context involves things such as your relationship with your audience, the culture of your organization and your general environment.

1.6 Difference between Oral and Written Communication

Though both oral and written communication is part of one discipline, there are major differences between them. It is this characteristic that makes a communicator adopt them separately on different occasions. Following are some major differences in oral and written communication.

1.6.1 Interactive and Non-interactive: Oral communication is interactive, while written communication is non-interactive. In the former interaction between the sender and the receiver through words is what characterizes and differentiates it from written communication. It is extremely fluid and knows no limits. If the sender feels that his goal is not being met, he can change resort to a change in strategies. However, the same is not true for written communication. The medium is frozen. Whatever has been written finally gets transmitted as a complete picture in itself. If it is incomplete, it is reworked.

1.6.2 Complex issues: Complex issues are best sorted out through written communication. On the contrary, oral communication looks only at basic issues. The minute they start getting convoluted, the normal reaction is to request the recipient to pen down the ideas for greater clarity.

1.6.3 Comparatively Long Time: As it takes a comparatively long time to formulate ideas and put them down, written communication normally enjoys a longer time frame than oral communication which is aimed at being brief and succinct.

1.6.4 Distinct Advantage: Oral communication has the distinct advantage of being conducted almost any place where the two participants meet. The same does not hold true for written communication. The places where they are received are highly restrictive. Despite this disadvantages coupled with the cost factor that is rather high when compared to oral communication, written communication is still preferred to in many situations. Probably one of the reasons for this is that written messages have a greater impact. The same things when stated orally may not create the same impression.

1.6.5 Feedback: Finally, there is the difference in terms of feedback. In the case of oral communication, feedback almost always is immediate. On the other hand, for written communication it is not immediate. If the time span in providing feedback exceeds the normal timeframe, conclusions are almost always arrived at company is not interested, references are being worked at, people are influencing and swerving the direction of the feedback.

Tushar's Note: I would say that it is because of these differences that oral and written communications are used on different occasions and situations. Both have their advantages and disadvantages. However, none can take the position of the other. Both are essential and needed. What can, nevertheless be done, is for one to be aware of the disadvantages and make attempts to improve upon the situation.

1.7 Barriers to Effective Communication

So far as the barriers of communication are concerned, there are a wide number of sources of noise or interference that can enter into the communication process. This

can occur when people know each other very well and should understand the sources of error. In a work setting, it is even more common since interactions involve people who not only don't have years of experience with each other, but communication is complicated by the complex and often conflictual relationships that exist at work. In a work setting, the following suggests a number of sources of noise:

1.7.1 Language: The choice of words or language in which a sender encodes a message will influence the quality of communication. Because language is a symbolic representation of a phenomenon, room for interpretation and distortion of the meaning exists. In the above example, the Boss uses language (this is the third day you've missed) that is likely to convey far more than objective information. To Terry it conveys indifference to her medical problems. Note that the same words will be interpreted differently by each different person. Meaning has to be given to words and many factors affect how an individual will attribute meaning to particular words. It is important to note that no two people will attribute the exact same meaning to the same words.

- Defensiveness, distorted perceptions, guilt, project, transference, distortions from the past
- Misreading of body language, tone and other non-verbal forms of communication (see section below)
- Noisy transmission (unreliable messages, inconsistency)
- Receiver distortion: selective hearing, ignoring non-verbal cues
- Power struggles
- Self-fulfilling assumptions
- Language-different levels of meaning
- Managers hesitation to be candid
- Assumptions-eg. assuming others see situation same as you, has same feelings as you
- Distrusted source, erroneous translation, value judgment, state of mind of two people

1.7.2 Perceptual Biases: People attend to stimuli in the environment in very different ways. We each have shortcuts that we use to organize data. Invariably, these shortcuts introduce some biases into communication. Some of these shortcuts include stereotyping, projection, and self-fulfilling prophecies. Stereotyping is one of the most common. This is when we assume that the other person has certain characteristics based on the group to which they belong without validating that they in fact have these characteristics.

1.7.3 Interpersonal Relationships: How we perceive communication is affected by the past experience with the individual. Perception is also affected by the

organizational relationship two people have. For example, communication from a superior may be perceived differently than that from a subordinate or peer

1.7.4 Cultural Differences: Effective communication requires deciphering the basic values, motives, aspirations, and assumptions that operate across geographical lines. Given some dramatic differences across cultures in approaches to such areas as time, space, and privacy, the opportunities for mis-communication while we are in cross-cultural situations are plentiful.

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