

COMMUNICATION TRAINING MODULE

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INTROUDUCTION

Importance of communication has always been realized in all times because it is the most vital means by which people are connected together in society. However, today communication plays a crucial role in almost all aspects of life. Work in business, government or organizations are impossible without communication. People have to communicate with each other, exchange information, make decisions and talk about innovations. Management is a complex practice of communicating with other people. In an age when the business environment is turbulent in terms of competition, new technologies political instability, workforce diversity, the need for good communication skills is being increasingly felt by managers at all levels.

The ability to communicate effectively in various business situations has to be developed. For organization to perform and to have a competitive advantage managers and workers have to be well equipped with communication skills. Many of the problems that occur in an organization are the direct result of people failing to communicate effectively and efficiently. Big corporations e.g. textile sector and multinational organizations need better communication skills in their employees so that they are able to work in teams and with people from diverse background. Good communication skills in today's business world, has been found to directly impact productivity. Therefore, this communication skills training module will help to improve communication among the managers and workers for enhanced, competitive and successful performance of the organization.

Aims and objectives of the module

Aim

The aim of this module is to assist in the development of communication competence by providing information regarding different forms of communication and their appropriate use.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this program, participants will be able, to communicate more effectively and efficiently by:

- i. Listening, and responding with an open mind in a more effective way.
- ii. Using appropriate communication methods.
- iii. Minimizing communication barriers.
- iv. Using verbal and non-verbal messages appropriately.
- v. Relating and networking with others at work.
- vi. Giving and receiving instruction correctly
- vii. Maintaining a working relationship with clients.
- viii. Use of two-way communication feedback.
- ix. Recognize and appreciate cultural and gender difference in communication.

TRAINING TOPICS

A. Understanding communication

- What is communication
- The communication process
- Principles of communication

B. Barriers to communication

- Over communication
- Long, differences
- Conflicting information
- Interests and attitudes
- Differing status, position and self-expression
- Exercise/activity

C. Listening skills

- Difference between listening and leaving.
- Types of listening
- Why you need good listening skills
- Good listening practices.

D. Providing feedback

- Giving feedback
- Characteristics of good feedback
- Activity

E. Non-verbal communication

- Types
- Functions
- Characteristics
- Activity

F. Giving and receiving instructions

- Give clear instructions \
- Use a structured approach
- Receive and follow instructions
- Activity

G. Oral Communication

- Face to face
- Conducting meetings

H. Adapting to differences: Personality, Culture, and Gender

TEACHING METHODOLOGIES

- Lectures
- Group discussions and reporting
- Group activities (These activities can be done before , during or after the presentation of the topic)

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL

LCD

- Laptops
- Note books, etc

Understanding Communication at workplace

Learning outcomes

- To understand the process necessary for effective communication.
- To identify barriers and situations that can inhibit effective communication
- To identify and use techniques of active listening.

Definition

Communication is the act of being understood.

Communication is a process, which involves sharing of information between people through a continuous activity of speaking listening, and understanding.

Or

It is the giving receiving, or exchange of information opinions or ideas by writings, verbally, non-verbally visual means, or any combination of the three, so that the material communicated is completely understood by everyone concerned.

Importance of communication

Many writers have identified the advantages of good communication:

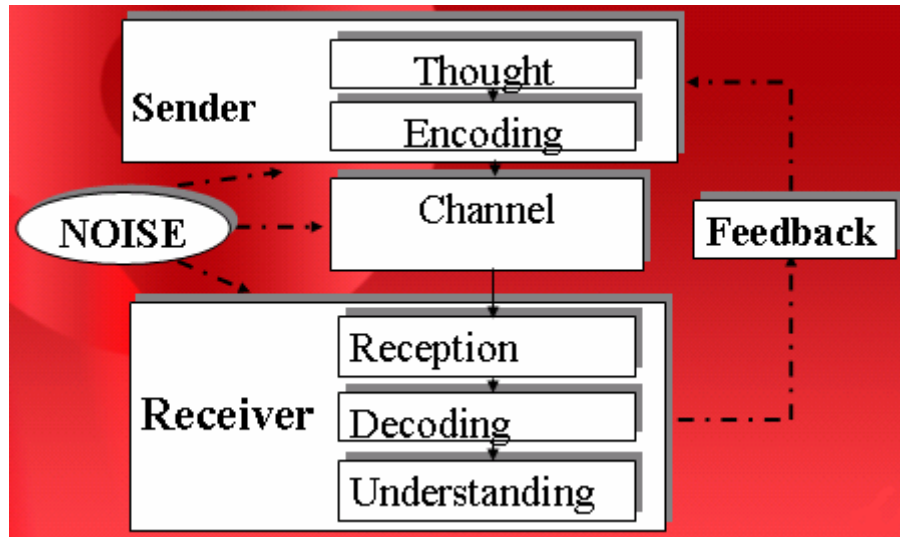
1. Leads to personal effectiveness.
2. Helps to network with people.
3. Influences motivation for enhanced performance.

4. Builds better understanding between boss and subordinates.
5. Creates better interpersonal relations.
6. Increases listening ability.

All these benefits cannot be automatically achieved. One can understand the complex nature of communication by examining the factors that make communication a dynamic process.

The communication process

The word process indicates that it is an activity that is connected with a series of steps that are deliberately undertaken to reach a goal. A communication process comprises the following elements:



What is involved in the communication process?

The steps involved in this process are:

1. Idea: Information exists in the mind of the sender (who is the source). This can be a concept, idea, information, or feelings.

2. Encoding: The source initiates a message by encoding the idea (or a thought) in words or symbols and sends it to a receiver. The message is the actual physical product from the source encoding. When we speak, the speech is the message. When we write, the writing is the message. When we gesture, the movements of our arms and the expressions of our faces are the message.

3. The Channel: The channel in the communication process is the medium that the sender uses to transmit the message to the receiver. Care needs to be exercised in selecting the most effective channel for each message. Even though both an oral and a written medium may be appropriate to transmit a particular message, one medium may be more effective than the other. To illustrate, let's assume that an individual desires an immediate reply to a question. Although the message could be in either an oral or a written form, the oral medium most likely will be more effective because of the immediacy, if required. In selecting an appropriate channel, the sender must assess the following factors, as the situation demands:

- need for immediate transmission of message, (Fax instead of letter)
- need for immediate feedback, (Phone instead of fax)
- need for permanent record of the message, (Written rather than oral)
- degree of negotiation and persuasion required, (Personal meeting – face-to face)
- the destination of the message, and (Far flung area – letter only)
- the nature of the content of the message. (Has to be a contract –written)

In addition, the sender should take into consideration his/her skill in using each of the alternative channels, as well as the receiver's skill in using each of the channels.

Communication rarely takes place over only one channel; two or three even four channels are normally used simultaneously.

Example: in face-to-face interactions, we speak and listen but we also gesture and receive these signals visually.

4. Decoding: It is the act of understanding messages (words or symbols). This is known as Decoding. When the sound waves are translated into ideas, we are taking them out of the code they are in, hence decoding. Thus, listeners and readers are often regarded as Decoders.

During the transmitting of the message, two processes will be received by the receiver. Content and Context.

Content is the actual words or symbols of the message which is known as *language* – i.e. spoken and written words combined into phrases that make grammatical and semantic (meaning) sense. We all use and interpret the meanings of words differently, so even simple messages can be misunderstood (Are you going to give me or not?). And many words have different meanings to confuse the issue even more (You are smart.).

Context is the environment in which communication takes place. It can be formal or informal. The circumstances surrounding the communication also make up the context.

Remember: A message is never communicated unless it is understood by the receiver.

Question arises then, how do you know a message has been properly received?

5. Feedback: By two-way communication or feedback. This feedback will tell the sender that the receiver understood the message, its level of importance, and what must be done with it.

So the feedback loop is the final link in the communication process. Feedback is the check on how successful we have been, in transferring our messages as originally intended. It determines whether understanding has been achieved or not. The purpose of feedback is to change and alter messages so the intention of the original communicator is understood by the second communicator. It includes verbal and nonverbal responses to another person's message.

There are five main categories of feedback. They are listed in the order in which they occur most frequently in daily conversations.

1. Evaluation: Making a judgment about the worth, goodness, or appropriateness of the sender's statement.

2. Interpretation: Paraphrasing - attempting to explain what the sender's statement means.

3. Support: Attempting to assist or support the sender.

4. Probing: Attempting to gain additional information, continue the discussion, or clarify a point.

5. Understanding: Attempting to discover completely what the sender means by his/her statement.

Noise: The presence of noise can result in fairly significant problems in the communication process. Unfortunately, communication is effected by noise, which is anything – whether in the sender, the transmission, on the receiver – that hinders communication.

For example:

- o A noisy environment may hinder the development of a clear thought.
- o Encoding may be faulty because of the use of ambiguous symbols.
- o Transmission may be interrupted by noise in the channel, such as a poor telephone connection, misprinted text, or maybe a typographical mistake.
- o Inaccurate reception may be caused by inattention.

ACTIVITY

Blind Square

Assemble the group in a circle with each participant at an arm's distance from the next.

- Seat participants and instruct them to put on blind folds. Place a rope in the center of the circle, and instruct all participants to hold onto the rope while forming a square. Member of the task must communicate with each other to move into the proper position.

Debrief

Discuss the importance of communication.

Barriers to Communication

In the process of communication, caution needs to be exercised as barriers to communication are either consciously or unconsciously erected by the sender or the receiver. These barriers hamper the growth of communication and relegate it to the status of a conversation where feedback is not expected. If either the speaker or the listener has problems in adjusting his frequency with the co-interacting, barriers would automatically be erected.

Some of the barriers to communication are:

- Over-communication:
- Conflicting Information:
- Language Differences:
- Prejudice
- Differing status
- Interest and attitude
- Prejudgment

ACTIVITY 1

Work in groups of 3-5 members.

1. Think of a situation when you tried to communicate with another person. Or when somebody tried to communicate with you, and it failed. Think about the problems or barriers that interfered with the communication.
 - a) Outline the situation to the members of your group and tell why you think it failed.
 - b) List the reasons for failure identified by your group.
 - c) Come together as a large group to share the barriers identified by each group.

ACTIVITY 2

Write a statement on a piece of paper. But do not let the participants see it

Statement:.....

Choose one participant to go with you outside the room and tell him/her the above statement. Then tell him/her to convey the message to another persona once they re-enter the room. The first one goes back to the room, to convey the message to the second, the second to the third person and the process is repeated up to the fifth person.

Then ask the fifth person to write the statement on the flipchart or chalkboard. Then compare the initial written statement and the last.

Ask the participants the following questions:

1. What is the main problem?
2. What did they hear?
3. What can be done?

GIVING AND RECEIVING INSTRUCTIONS AT WORKPLACE

Learning objectives
After completing this topic, participants will be able to:
1. Give clear, timely and correct instruction to enable accomplish workplace activities.
2. Receive and follow instructions to complete workplace tasks.

When instructions are unclear, people are unable to accomplish and their workplace activities to the standard required. In order to do the job well, people need to understand how to do the job to achieve the intended outcome.

Guidelines of giving instructions at work

- Determine what needs to be accomplished the intended outcome.
- Give the reasons for doing the job.
- Use concrete action words rather than abstract words.
- Have the other person paraphrase the instructions back to you.
- Demonstrate the skills in the task if your instructions involve machinery or equipment
- Encourage questions
- Ensure your timing is appropriate.
- Follow up as the person does the task on the job.
- Offer timely and specific feedback.

Sequence the content

As you prepare the instructions, sequence the material in one of the three ways:

1. Move from the simple to the complex.
2. Move from the familiar to the unfamiliar
3. Follow the order performed on the job.

Choose an appropriate time

When you give instructions, ensure the timing is right and the communication climate is positive. You not only want to give the instructions. You also want to ensure that the people receiving the instructions are able to:

- a) Listen and understand
- b) Say what they think and feel
- c) Show that they are willing and able to follow the instructions.

Instructions given in a thoughtful, appropriate and controlled manner are more easily understood.

Questioning skills to use as you give instructions.

As you give instructions, you need to know how much of the information is being understood and the level of understanding. Different types of questions let you know if the other person can:

- a) Remember the facts.
- b) Restate the information in their own words.
- c) Apply the information to a new situation

Simple and routine instructions usually only require questions that check if the person can remember, restate and apply the information to the new situation. There are times when you can simply give verbal instructions and demonstrate how to do the task. On the other occasions, you should support the spoken directions with a written set of instructions and graphics. Once people understand the instructions, you want them to be able to take the actions to complete the task. Written instructions and graphics are a handy reference.

Receive and follow instructions

- Listen carefully
- Focus on the person giving the instructions
- Avoid jumping to conclusions
- Ask questions about the standards to be reached.
- Paraphrase to check on your understand.
- Double-check any safety issues.
- Ask for help if you feel you do not understand or are unable to follow the instructions.

Questioning skills to use as you receive instructions

Be willing to ask questions and to share ideas and information. You need to follow instructions for successful accomplishment of the tasks given.

Questioning skills

When receiving instructions, your questions should be;

- Brief and clear
- Focused on the work task
- General when you want an overview.
- Specific, when you are trying to understand particular facts or ideas.
- Rephrased, when the instructor does not understand your question.

As instructions are given and received issues should be dealt with assertively and cooperatively. People who take time to listen to the instructions and ask questions are able to respond in order to achieve the intended outcome.

ACTIVITY

Shoe tie

Split the group into pairs and assign one person in each pair to give instructions on tying a shoe to his partner. The individual receiving directions must follow instructions as stated, while tying a shoe is an everyday skill this activity reminds participants that specific directions and guidelines in even the most mundane tasks are required to be successful.

PROVIDING FEEDBACK AT WORKPLACE**Learning objectives**

After completing this topic, participants will be able to:
1. Provide appropriate feedback to enhance the development of effective working relationships and the productivity of the business.
2. Encourage both positive and negative feedback from the workers.

Feedback is an essential part of successful interpersonal communication. It indicates how well the sender's message is being understood or has been understood by the recipient.

The importance of feedback cannot be overemphasized. Feedback makes communication a two-way process, it indicates effective understanding or misunderstanding of the message, it stimulates further communication and discussion.

Feedback can help or hinder your communication and the climate you create. In the workplace most people communicate face-to-face with their lecturer, supervisors, and colleagues so the ability to provide appropriate feedback can assist the development of effective working relationships and the productivity of the business.

There is continuing research evidence that feedback not only improves communication but also, in turn, leads to more effective manager and organizational performance.

Types of feedback

Feedback can be classified in different ways. It can be:

- Verbal
- Positive
- Non-verbal
- Action
- Negative
- A combination of any of these

Encouraging feedback (the receiver's part).

Do not wait to be asked for feedback volunteer it.

Tell the sender what you think

You do understand as well as what you do not

Negative feedback

You can encourage negative feedback by making it clear that:

- You recognize it as vital if you are to know what is working properly and what is not.
- You do not become upset or angry towards those who are prepared to share negative messages with you.
- You believe in fixing problems rather than blaming or punishing those who report them.
- Even when you are at fault, you value this kind of message more than cover-ups or false praise.
- You encourage and support others who accept negative/error feedback.

Naturally, a climate in which there is open discussion of errors mistakes and problems takes a little getting used to, but workers soon become comfortable with it. It is an ideal foundation for positive problem solving because:

- It promotes active thinking by looking more closely at problems rather than avoiding them.
- It makes it harder to hide' problems.
- Error feedback is more likely to be true and is probably more accurate than overly positive feedback.

N.B

Do not make the common mistake of assuming "everything is all right" when there are no visible signs of trouble. It is wise to be a bit skeptical if you receive only positive feedback. Tune in to the bad news along with the good.

Encouraging feedback as sender of message

- If you are talking, ask questions to see how much your listeners really understand.
- Give contacts.
- Encourage people to ask questions about your decisions
- Do not assume agreement or understanding

- Do not use expressions as “you cannot miss it,” they discourage feedback.
- Show that you welcome feedback of any kind, whether good news, bad news, action or process.
- Visit every section, unit branch, or department under your responsibility regularly. Seek feedback from as many people as possible and from all levels.

False feedback

Not all feedback is an accurate representation of events or feelings. Some people will try to use it to distort your vision of what is really going on. One obvious reason for doing this is to get the sender out of trouble.

Reasons for giving false feedback

- To avoid blame-a team member might mislead management about his or her part in a problem.
- To keep people at a distance- a supervisor might give cold negative feedback to avoid being caught up in a situation at work in which feelings are involved.
- To avoid unpleasant reality.
- To play down a problem so as to lessen other’s concern health officials might tell media representatives that there is absolutely no danger’ of an epidemic occurring, when they are not really sure.

N.B

Be wary of exaggerated feedback.

Tools for getting feedback in the workplace.

- a) Follow-up feedback. Keeping in touch keep with all those who do business with you. Follow-up feedback may involve an occasional phone-call or a half-yearly visit.
- b) Make use of multiple channels: making use of mix of different channels will result in:
 - Better understanding
 - A strong influence on the receiver
 - A better chance of gaining agreement.
 - Easier recall
- c) Encourage open door policy
- d) Suggestion box
- e) Organize occasional get together
- f) Management by walking around

Characteristics of effective and ineffective feedback

- Intention: Effective feedback is directed toward improving job performance and making the employee a more valuable asset it is not a personal attack and should not compromise the individual’s feeling of self-worth or image. Rather effective feedback is directed towards aspects of the job.
- Specificity: Effective feedback is designed to provide recipients with specific information so that they know what must be done to correct the situation. Ineffective feedback is general and leaves questions in the recipients minds. For example, telling an employee that he or she is a poor worker.
- Description: Effective feedback is descriptive rather than evaluative. It tells the employee what he or she has done in objective terms, rather than presenting value judgement.
- Usefulness: Effective feedback is information that an employee can use to improve performance. If it is something that an employee cannot correct, it is not worth mentioning.
- Timeliness: Time feedback properly. The more immediate the feedback the better.
- Readiness: in order for feedback to be effective, employee must be ready to receive it. When feedback is imposed or forced on employees it is much less effective.
- Clarity: Effective feedback must be clearly understood by the recipient.
- Validity: Effective feedback must be reliable and valid. When the information employee will feel that the supervisor is unnecessarily biased or the employee may take corrective action that is inappropriate and only compounds the problem.

ACTIVITY**Giving and receiving feedback game**

This training game illustrates that feedback is an important part of the communication cycle. It is used to demonstrate the value of checking whether you heard correctly.

This training game is played in pairs. It is played in two rounds. The seating for this training game are pairs of chairs are placed around the room giving the participants the room to spread out. The chairs have their back to each other. So when participants are seated they will have their backs to each other. In the pairs one of the participants is assigned the letter A and the other is assigned the letter name B.

All the As in this training game are given a drawn figure on a paper.

(Any depending on the trainer). The Bs in this training game is given an empty sheet of paper and a pen and pencil. The As are expected to communicate to 'B' the figure in their hands so that they are able to draw an exact replica on the sheet given to them.

In this round of the feedback game a constraint is introduced. The Bs are told not to speak while playing this round of the training game. They have to listen and draw according to the instruction by 'A'. After everyone has finished playing the round the Bs shares their version of the figure with the As. very rarely does anybody get the figure right. There's quite a bit of laughter at the copies of the figure that the 'B's have made.

In the next round of the feedback game the As are given a second figure.

This time the B's are given the opportunity to speak and check with the A's about any instructions that they did not understand. After, they have finished the 'B' show their figures. In this round they discover that except for a couple of mistakes all the drawing are similar to the figure given.

Debrief of the training game

How do you feel?

What are you learning?

Drive home the fact that to work effectively in groups' feedback is essential.

IMPROVING LISTENING SKILLS AT WORKPLACE**Learning objectives**

After completing this topic, participants will be able to:

1. Listen actively for the purposes of understanding instructions, procedures and making informed decisions.
2. Apply the listening process to all the communication at the work place for successful interactions.
3. Identify and overcome barriers to effective listening or compensate for the noise they create.

One of the most powerful tools for effective, two-way communication is active listening. We spend more time listening than we spend at any other method of communicating.

Time spent listeningType of communication

1. Speaking
2. Reading
3. Writing
4. Listening

What is listening?

Active listening is a skill you learn by practice. It takes more effort than plain 'hearing' but the benefits make it well worthwhile. Listening goes beyond hearing. Hearing is a physiological activity that occurs when sound waves hit our eardrums. Listening is far more complex than hearing or otherwise,

Physically receiving messages. Listening refers to the interpretative process that takes place with what we hear. Through listening, we store, classify and label information, listening therefore, involves attention, interpretation and understanding.

Applying listening to business is the conscious, active process of eliciting information, ideas, attitudes and emotions in interpersonal, oral exchange for the purpose of increasing the listener's capacity of planning and decision-making. At work people listen in order to understand instructions receive new information, understand changes in procedure and interact with other people.

Whatever the purpose, concentration and a deliberate effort to be interested in the speaker's message will increase listening effectiveness.

Benefits of listening

1. You enjoy two-way benefits. When people notice how well you listen to them, they usually reciprocate and try to understand you better.
2. Relationship within a group improves. Members develop a more positive attitude towards each other, so personal support and teamwork is strengthened. Friendships develop and deepen.
3. You receive more accurate information. The more confident people are that you are listening to them, the happier they will be to share facts they would not reveal to a poor listener.
4. Influence: have an effect on the attitude and behaviours of others, because people are more likely to respect and follow those whom they feel have listened to and understand them.
5. Help: be able to assist people because you hear more, empathize more and come to understand others more deeply.
6. Learn: You acquire knowledge of others the world and yourself and profit from the insights of others who have learned or seen what you have not.

Listening process

Listening is an active process, which means we must exert effort to listen well. We must be involved with our ears and minds, if we want to listen effectively.

1. Mindfulness

The first step in listening is to make a decision to be mindful. Mindfulness is being fully present in the moment. When we listen mindfully, we tune in fully to another person and try to understand what that person is communicating, without imposing our own ideas judgments or feelings.

Mindfulness starts with the decision to attend fully to another. Physically, this is signified by paying attention, adopting an involved posture, keeping eye contact, and indicating interest in what other person says.

Because mindful listening involves taking the perspective of another, it fosters dual perspective a cornerstone of effective communication. In addition, mindfulness enhances the effectiveness of the other person's communication mindfulness is a choice. It is not a talent that some people have and others do not.

2. Physically receiving/hearing messages

The second process involved in listening is hearing, or physically receiving messages. Listening begins with receiving the messages the speaker sends. The messages are both verbal and non-verbal.

In receiving try to:

1. Focus your attention on the speaker's verbal and non-verbal messages, on what is said and on what is not said.
2. Avoid distractions in the environment.
3. Focus your attention on the speaker rather than on what you will say next.
4. Maintain your role as listener and avoid interrupting.

Women and men seem to differ somewhat in their listening. As a rule, women are more attentive than men to the whole of communication. Thus, many men tend to focus their hearing on specific content aspects of communication whereas women generally are more likely to attend to the whole of communication, noticing details, tangents, and relationship level meanings.

3. Selecting and organizing material

We do not perceive everything around us. We selectively attend to only some messages and elements of our environments. What we attend to depends on many factors including our interests, cognitive structures and expectations. Selective listening is also influenced by culture. We attend selectively by remembering that we are more likely to notice stimuli that are intense loud, unusual, or that otherwise stand out from the flow of communication. This implies that we may overlook communicators who speak quietly and do not call attention to themselves.

Once we have selected what to notice, we then organize the stimuli to which we have attended.

Understanding and interpreting

Understanding, the stage at which you learn what the speaker means includes the thoughts that are expressed and the emotional tone that accompanies these thoughts.

In understanding, try to:

1. Relate the new information the speaker is giving to what you already know.
2. See the speaker's message from the speaker's point of view, avoid judging the message until you fully understand it as the speaker intended it.
3. Ask questions for clarifications if necessary, ask for additional details or examples if they are needed.
4. Rephrase (paraphrase) the speaker's ideas in your own words.

To interpret someone on her or his own terms is one of the greatest gifts we can give another. Too, often we impose our meanings on others, try to correct or argue with them about what they feel or crowd out their words with our own. Good listeners stay out of others way so they can learn what others think and feel.

Evaluating

Evaluating consists of judging the messages in some way. Evaluate the speaker's underlying intentions or motives. Often this evaluation process goes on without much conscious awareness.

In evaluating try to:

- Resist evaluation until you fully understand the speakers point of view.
- Assume that the speaker is a person of goodwill, and give the speaker the benefit of any doubt by asking for clarification on position to which you feel you might object.
- Distinguish facts from inferences, opinions and personal interpretations by the speaker.
- Identify any biases, self-interests, or prejudices that may lead the speaker to slant unfairly what is presented.

Responding

Responding occurs in two phrases:

- Responses you make while the speaker is talking.
- Responses you make after the speaker has stopped talking.

These responses are feedback. This information tells the speaker how you feel and what you think about his or her messages.

In responding try to:

- Be supportive of the speaker throughout the speaker's talk by using and varying your back-channeling cues. Using only one back-changeling the for example saying "uh-huh" throughout –will make it appear that you are not listening but are merely on automatic pilot.
- Express support for the speaker in your final response.
- Be honest.
- Own your responses, state your thought and feelings as your own, and use I-messages.

Remembering

The final aspect of listening is remembering, which is the process of retaining what you have heard. Messages that you receive understand and evaluate need to be retained for atleast some period of time. We remember less than half of a message immediately after we hear it. A time goes by retention decreases. What you remember is actually not what was said but what you think (or remember was said.) memory for speech is not reproductive. Rather memory is reconstructive; you actually reconstruct the messages you hear into a system that makes sense to you. Effective listeners let go of a lot of details to retain more important content.

By being selective about what to remember we enhance out listening competence.

In remembering, try to:

- a) Identify the central idea and major support advanced.
- b) Repeat names and key concepts to yourself or, if appropriate aloud.
- c) Summarize the message in a more easily retained form.
- d) Listen with your 'eyes'.
- e) Take notes

Levels of listening

Active level

It is a process of sending back to the speaker what you as a listener think the speaker meant-both in content and feeling.

Characteristics of active Listeners

- Active listeners are willing to give the speaker a chance to develop his or her ideas.
- Active listeners are open-minded about people who look or sound different from themselves.
- Active listeners can follow several methods of organization- even poorly organized material will be listened to with some degree of tolerance.
- Active listeners are likely to listen even more attentively when the material becomes difficult. It becomes a challenge to the.

Protective listening level

Listeners may not listen to a speaker because they have learnt to tune out certain kinds of stimuli. As a listener, you will sometimes hear negative and even hostile expressions aimed directly at you. While no one really likes to be subjected to hostile remarks. You have to control protective listening so verbal attacks are perceived without you having to defend or retaliate.

Partial listening

Responding to some stimuli while ignoring others. This makes a listener miss important facts and points that are needed for clarity and understanding.

Preferential listening level

Listening that is directly affected by a person's beliefs, interests or emotions. Listening for what you want to hear. Personal background experiences habits and family tradition will many times change or distort the speaker's intended meaning into what the listener really wants to hear.

Types of listening

Critical listening

- Its applied when we suspect that we may be listening to a biased source of information. It is also associated with being able to detect propaganda devices employed by a communicator.
- This type of listening is engaged during advertising, political rallies and debates.

Passive listening

Listening without talking or directing the speaker in any obvious way- is a powerful means of communicating acceptance. Passive listening allows the speaker to develop his or her thoughts and ideas in the presence of another person who accepts but does not evaluate who supports but does not intrude. By listening passively, you provide a supportive and receptive environment.

Empathic listening

If you want to understand what a person means and what a person is feeling, you need to listen empathically. To empathize with others is to feel with them to see the world as they see it, feel what they feel. It can also be described as listening "between the lines". When we listen between the lines we heighten our awareness and interpersonal sensitivity to the entire message a person may be trying to communicate.

Empathic listening serves as a reward or encouragement to the speaker. It communicates your caring and acceptance and reaffirms the person's sense of worth. This style of listening seems to be most important in terms of strengthening or improving a positive interpersonal relationship between the parties involved.

Empathetic listening often requires the opposite frame of mind from that required for critical listening. Empathic listening implies a willingness not to judge, evaluate or criticize but rather to be an adapting, permissive and understanding listener.

Although empathic listening is the preferred response in most communication situations there are times when you need to go beyond empathy and measure the meanings and feelings against some objective reality. Sometimes you have to put your empathic responses aside and listen with objectivity and detachment.

Becoming an empathic listener requires focusing on the following guidelines.

- a. A greater emphasis on listening than on talking.
- b. Follow the other in his exploration rather than leading him into areas we think he should be exploring.
- c. Clarify what the other person has said about his own thoughts and feelings rather than asking questions or telling him what we believe he should be thinking, seeing or feeling.
- d. View the speaker as an equal. To encourage openness and empathy try to eliminate any physical or psychological barriers to equality: avoid interrupting a sign that you feel what you have to say is more important.
- e. Avoid “offensive listening” the tendency to listen to bits and pieces of information that will help you attack the speaker or find faults with something the speaker has said.
- f. Avoid sharpening. The situation in which you highlight or emphasize one or two aspects of the message and ignore other aspects.
- g. Beware of the “friend or foe” factor that may lead you to distort messages because of your attitude toward another person.

Barriers of effective listening

Barriers may come from the listeners themselves when a part of their own background interferes with their perception of the speaker or of the spoken message. Barriers may also come from any of the elements in the communication process.

External obstacles

Being aware of these barriers can help us guard against them or compensate for the noise they create.

1. Message overload

Naturally, we feel overwhelmed by the amount of information we are supposed to understand and retain. These messages saturate our brains and we are unable to listen.

2. Message complexity

The more detailed and complicated the message, the more difficult it is to follow and retain.

3. Noise

Try minimizing physical noise, semantic and psychological noise.

4. Pre-occupation

When we are absorbed in our own thoughts and concerns, we cannot focus on what someone else is saying. When we are preoccupied with our own thoughts, we are not fully present for others. We are not being mindful. When our thoughts wander occasionally, we should note that our focus has wandered and actively call our minds back to the person who is speaking and the meaning of his or her message.

5. Prejudgment

Sometimes we think we already know what is going to be said, so we do not listen carefully. At other times, we decide in advance that others have nothing to offer to us, so we tune them out. When we prejudge others communication, we sacrifice learning new perspectives that might enlarge our thinking.

When we prejudge, we disconfirm others because we deny them their own voices. Instead of listening openly to others we force their words into our own preconceived mind-set. This devalues them. Prejudgment also reduces what we learn in communication with others.

6. Reacting to emotionally loaded language

These are words that evoke responses, positive or negative. Certain words may summon up negative feeling and images to you. Words like woman, house-wives etc, resonate so negatively with economically empowered women.

Others include:

Boredom or lack of interest.

The listener's dislike of the personality or physical appearance of the speaker.

A desire to change rather than accept the speaker.

A perception by the listener that the speaker lacks credibility.

Forms of unlistening

1. Pseudo listening

Is pretending to listen. When we pseudo-listen, we appear to be attentive, but really our minds are elsewhere. We engage in pseudo listening when we want to appear polite to avoid hurting the speaker when we are bored but we have to appear engaged, fear of the speaker.

Common indicators of pseudo-listening are

- a) Responses that are irrelevant to the message being communicated.

2. Monopolizing

Is continuously focusing communication on ourselves instead of listening to the person who is talking. Two tactics are typical of monopolizing.

- i) Conversational rerouting, in which a person shifts the topic back to himself or herself. Rerouting takes the conversation away from the person who is talking and focuses it on the self.
- ii) Interrupting to divert attention from the speaker to ourselves or to topics that interest us.

3. Selective listening

Focusing only on particular parts of communication. We screen out parts of a message that do not interest us and revert our attention to topics that do interest us. Selective listening also occurs when we reject communication that makes us uneasy.

4. Defensive listening

Is perceiving personal attacks, criticism or hostility in communication that is not critical or mean-spirited. When we listen defensively, we assume others do not like, trust or respect us, and we read these motives into whatever they say, no matter how innocent their communication may be. Some people are generally defensive expecting criticism from all quarters. They perceive negative judgement in almost anything said to them. Defensive listening is confined to specific topics or vulnerable times when we judge ourselves to be inadequate. Defensive listening can deprive us of information and insights that might be valuable even if not pleasant. In addition, responding defensively to honest feedback may discourage others from being honest with us.

5. Ambushing

It is listening carefully for the purpose of attacking a speaker. Ambushing involves very careful listening but is not motivated by a genuine desire to understand another. Instead ambushers listen to gather ammunition they can use to attack a speaker.

Not surprisingly, people who engage in ambushing tend to arouse defensiveness in others.

ACTIVITY

Listening game: the most influential experience

Do not provide any explanation on listening before playing the game.

1. Dividing the group into twos. Take all the 'ones' outside the room. (This listening game will work well when you have a co-facilitator).
2. The co-facilitator steps out of the room with the 'ones', while you stay in the room with the 'twos'.
3. Instructions to the 'ones'. Take a few moments and reflect on an incident which had a dramatic influence in your life. After a while you will go back to the room. Then you will find you colleagues sitting in different parts of the room with an empty chair in front of them. You can take the empty chair before anybody you choose. Once you are seated begin to tell that person the 'one most influential event in you life'. After you have finished, your partner will summarize what you told her".
4. Room arrangement with the 'twos' during this listening game. Get the two to spread out in the room (not huddle around one area of the room) and sit on a chair. Other than their own chair they should have an empty chair facing them

Instructions for the twos

After a while the 'ones' will come into the room and each one will occupy one of the empty chairs.

- They will begin to tell you about an experience that they have had in their lives. Your task is to ignore them as unobtrusively as possible.
- You will continue this non-listening behavior until the trainer gives you a signal.
- As soon as you hear the signal transform you body language to one of listening.

Debrief of listening game

- a) Describe the behaviours that you will notice in this game.

NONVERBAL SKILLS AT WORKPLACE**Learning outcomes.**

After completing this topic, the participants will be able to:

1. Define non-verbal communication and its importance at workplace.
2. Describe functions of non-verbal communication at workplace using examples from everyday experience of communication.
3. Explain factors that influence understanding of non-verbal communication in organizations.
4. Analyze the relationship between verbal and non-verbal communication
5. Identify the categories of non-verbal communication and apply them appropriately in their workplace communication

ACTIVITY**Non-verbal communication**

Have activity cards:

Worried

Happy

Disappointed

Hysterical

Intimidated

Participants to draw one of the activity cards. Without speaking, communicate the feeling or emotion on the card to the rest of the group. Have one participant at time get up in front of the group.

Definition of non-verbal communication

- It is the process of communication through sending and receiving wordless messages.
- Non-verbal communication describes all intentional and unintentional messages that are not written or spoken.
- Such messages can be communicated through gestures object communications speech and written texts such as handwriting style spatial arrangement of words, or the use of emotions

NB

The most important thing in communication is to hear what is not being said (Peter Drucker ,2009)

The popular aphorism “Actions speak louder than words” holds a great deal of meaning when it comes to understanding the essence of non-verbal communication.

Characteristics of non-verbal communication

Nonverbal messages:

1. Convey feeling: up to 93% of emotional meaning is communicated non-verbally
2. Form relationships: Establish the nature of relationship
3. Express truth: nonverbal cues may leak feelings.
4. Contextual: Conveys relational information (emotions and feelings), depending on the circumstances or context in which it occurs.
5. Culture Bound: Non-verbal cues and messages that work in one culture may not work in another. Each culture provides it is members with a code of behaviour that is acceptable in different situations.
6. Gender bound.

Functions of non-verbal communication**Interaction of verbal and non-verbal communication**

The total message contains the spoken words and the non-verbal communication. Non-verbal communication adds meaning, modifies or changes the spoken words in six ways.

- Repeating: Using non-verbal messages to follow up and reiterate verbal messages.
- Substituting: Using non-verbal messages to replace verbal messages.
- Complementing: Non-verbal messages that enrich the meaning of verbal messages.
- Regulating: Using non-verbal messages to control the interaction patterns of a conversation.

- Accenting: Emphasizing parts of verbal messages.
- Contradicting: When non-verbal messages are incongruent with verbal messages.

Categories of non-verbal communication

1. Kinesics

Body movement, gestures, posture facial expressions and eye contact fall within the broad field of non-verbal study called Kinesics.

Body movements.

They are classified into five:

1. Emblems: They substitute for words. Emblems are body movements that have specific verbal translations.
2. Illustrators: They accompany and literally illustrate verbal messages. They are aptly non-verbal sketches or pictures that accent emphasize or reinforce words. They are usually intentional and are often used in situations where the verbal code alone is unable to convey meaning accurately. Illustrators make communication more vivid and help maintain your listeners attention.
3. Affect displays: They are facial expressions of emotion. Facial expressions communicate emotional reactions to a message and generally mirror the intensity of people's thoughts and feelings. These can be more accurate cue to interpreting people's emotions than the words they use.
4. Regulators: They control interaction, Regulators monitor maintain, or control the speaking of another individual. Regulators are culture-bound: each culture develops its own rules for the regulation of conversation.
5. Adaptors: They are unconscious movement of the body that originate from the nervous state of our mind. They are non-verbal ways of adjusting to a communication situation.

Posture

Posture can be used to determine a participants degree of attention or involvement the difference in status between communicators, and the level of fondness a person has for the other communicators. Posture is understood through such indicators as direction of lean body orientation, arm position, and body openness.

Gesture

A gesture is a non-vocal bodily movement intended to express meaning. They may be articulated with the hands, arms or body.

Eye communication/oculesics

This is the science of the movement grammar of our eyes and of facial expressions.

Eye contact function

Eye contact serves several important functions:

- To monitor feedback.
- To maintain interest and attention visual dominance behaviour, increase of eye contact with the hope that the person will increase attention.
- To signal a conversational turn. Eye communication can also serve to inform the other person that the channel of communication is open and that she or he should now speak.
- To signal the nature of the relationship: Relationship can either be positive or negative, amorous, hostile or indifferent.
- To compensate for physical distance.

Eye avoidance

- When you avoid eye contact or avert your glance, you allow others to maintain their privacy.
- It can also signal lack of interest in a person, a conversation, or some visual stimulus.

Eye grammar

- Staring eyes: Too much eye contact that either shows superiority or lack of interest a threatening attitude or a wish to insult.
- Too little eye contact: it has multiple interpretations. The gesture indicates dishonesty, impoliteness insincerity, and also shyness.
- Withdrawal of eye contact: This is considered as a sign of submission.
- Frequently looking away at people from a distance. This an extrovert's behavior, interested in knowing reactions, or to influence or scrutinize

- Scarcely looking at a person when in close proximity. An introvert shows this kind of behaviour when discussing intimate or difficult topics, or dislike for the other person.

Facial communication

“You can read his face like an open book” is a common remark made about people whose facial expressions show a lot of transparency of expressions.

- Facial movements may communicate at least the following eight emotions.
- Happiness, surprise, fear, anger, sadness, disgust, contempt, and interest.

Touch/Haptics communication

Physical contact with others is the most basic form of communication and a lack of touch in certain situations often communicates that there is a problem.

Touch may communicate five major meanings:

- Positive emotions e.g. among people who have relatively close relationship (support, appreciation, inclusion, sexual interest).
- Playfulness. Playful touch lightens an interaction.
- Touch controls the behaviors, attitudes or feelings of the other person.
- Touch demonstrates the male power and dominance over women.
- Ritualistic e.g. greetings and departures.
- Task related touch –This related with the performance of some function.

Whether or not you reach out to touch other people is often determined by:

Gender differences, cultural differences and type of relationship.) We need to be especially careful about how we use haptics in an organizational environment. Touch sometimes may be misinterpreted as sexual harassment.

Paralanguage

It is the study of non-verbal cues of the voice. Paralanguage may change the meaning of words.

Categories of paralinguistic include:

- a) The voice set is the situation in which the speaker is speaking: This can include the situation, gender, mood, age and a person's culture.
 - b) The voice qualities are volume pitch, tempo rhythm articulation, resonance nasality, and accent. They give each individual a unique “voice print”.
 - c) Vocalization consists of 3 subsections.
- Characterizers: they are emotions expressed while speaking, such as laughing, crying and yawning.
 - Qualifier: is the style of delivering a message eg yelling as opposed to whispering.
 - Voice interferences: are the sounds and words we use when we hesitate or not sure of the right word. Use of the occupational u'h', e'r', well, and 'you know' to indicate that we are searching for the right word. But such interferences become a problem when they are excessive and interrupt your listener's concentration and comprehension.

The non-verbal importance of paralinguistic skills hence can be seen as extremely influencing skill when we communicate with people. An awareness of the subtle nuances of vocal qualities will help you to understand working relationships. Speaking to co-workers, employees, higher management, clients and customers needs different uses of vocal behavior. The sooner we understand the power of our vocal intonations the better we will be at our interpersonal relationships at workplace and in life.

Silence

Silence just communicates as intensely as anything you verbalize. Silence allows the speaker time to think, time to formulate and organize his or her verbal communications. Some people use silence as a weapon to hurt others (silent treatment)

- As a response to personal anxiety, shyness or threats.
- Used to prevent communication of certain messages. Silence often allows us to cool off before expressing hatred, severe criticism, or personal attacks, which we know are irreversible.
- Can be used to communicate emotional response. Sometimes silence communicates a determination to be unco-operative or defiant; by refusing to engage in verbal communication, you defy the authority or the legitimacy of the other person's position.

- Silence can be used when one has nothing to say. James Rusell Lowell expressed this well. “Blessed are they who have nothing to say, and who cannot be persuaded to say it”.

Proxemics/spatial messages

This is the study of how people’s perception of space communicates information.

The four space zones identified by researchers are:

- The intimate zone
- The personal zone
- The social Zone
- The public zone

The language of space is important in the context of business as we are always involved with human interactions. Except for the public zone, very often the mix up of the other 3 zones can create problems at work.

Territoriality

The possessive reaction to an area or to particular objects. Through territorial/behavior you signal ownership and status. Primary territories are your and yours alone. Secondary territories are associated with you but are not owned by you. Public territories belong to or are used by all the people.

Signaling status

The size and location of the territory indicates something about status. Status is also signaled by the unwritten law granting the right of invasion. Higher status individuals have a ‘right’ to invade the territory of lower-status persons, but the reverse is not true e.g the boss of a large company, can barge into the office of a junior executive but the reverse would be unthinkable.

Territorial encroachment

When your ‘ownership’ of a certain territory is challenged, this action constitutes territorial encroachment. Types of encroachment include: violation-unwarranted use of another’s territory, invasion-entering the territory of another and thereby changing the meaning of that territory. Contamination-occurs when a territory is rendered impure e.g. smoking, or obscenity.

Reactions to encroachment

- Turf defenses: defending your territory against the intruders and expelling them.
- Insulation: erecting some sort of barrier between yourself and the invaders.
- Linguistic collusion: you would speak a language unknown to the outsiders or use professional jargon to which they are not privy.
- Withdrawal: you can leave the territory. Violation of space whether personal social or public, can create a wrong impression and lost business opportunities Culture differences affect the distance of zones. In multi-cultural groups, one needs to quietly observe the accepted proxemics of different groups and interact accordingly.

Different perceptions of personal space can be a problem in organizations, particularly with different cultural groups. Space influences what we talk about with others. For example the way meetings are arranged. A round table formation encourages participation among members. Another important aspect of space is the architectural design of buildings. The trend today is to have open office spaces and not closed layouts. The explanation given is that open offices induce increased communication that results into instant feedback and better interpersonal relationship.

Art factual communication

Artifacts are the personal items we wear or keep close to us. The non-verbal message signals that an individual sends across through appearance, clothing, style, perfume, etc.

The way your private spaces are decorated communicates something about who you are.

Chronemics/time/temporal communication

Time can be viewed from two major perspectives: cultural and psychological.

Cultural time

Three types of cultural time are identified

1. Technical time: is precise, scientific time.
2. Formal time: refers to the manner in which a culture defines time.
3. Displaced and diffused time orientation. In displaced time orientation, time is viewed exactly.

Diffused time orientation: time is seen as approximate rather than exact.

Psychological time

It refers to the importance placed on the past, present, or future. Past orientation: you give particular reverence to the past.

Present orientation

Future orientation

The time orientation that people develop depends a great deal on their socio-economic class and personal experiences.

Time and status

Time is especially linked to status consideration. The way we use our time tells others about our sincerity of purpose, our dedication to our work, and how serious we are at work. Unscheduled visits, long telephone chats, absence of time log books, long memos, and mixing up personal work with office work are major time robbers. Time robbers reduce our efficiency at work and results into poor time management. The more we get competitive and professional, more pressure we will have on ourselves to respect time. Today’s fast paced business world is a slave of time. Time management has emerged as a vital factor in organization today.

Conclusion

We need to develop proficiency in understanding our non-verbal and those of others so that our interpersonal relationships and communication do not suffer. Good verbal and non-verbal communication skills are the real assets and we must capitalize on them.

ACTIVITY

Catching the chicken

1. Ask for a volunteers from the group
2. While three of the volunteers step out of the room, ask the rest of the group to sit in a circle.
3. Ask the remaining volunteer to step into the circle and ask her to imitate the action of catching a chicken in a barn.
4. The volunteer has to use only actions to do this and neither she nor the rest of the participants can speak through the training game. They are not to reveal the training game that is going in any way to the volunteers coming into the room.
5. You will also tell them that the volunteers will come into the room and help her in her task of “catching the chicken”.
6. Now step out of the room and send the other volunteers into the room at intervals of around one minute. When you send them **in** ask each of them to join their colleague in whatever they find he doing and help her out.
7. After all 3 volunteers have come into the room and the training game has continued for another minute, have the participants stop the game.
8. Begin with the last volunteer ask her what she thought she was doing, 3rd, 2nd.

Debriefing of the game

In the debrief draw their attention to how it is normal for people to interpret the behavior (non-verbal communication) of a person and respond to it rather than clarifying the communication. Remind them that while the people inside were told not to speak or reveal in any way the training game that was going on, the volunteers outside were not restricted in anyway, yet they chose not to ask anybody about what was going on, rather they jumped in right away and started imitating the leader.

This behavior is true especially when the person who is communicating is a leader.

MEETINGS AT WORKPLACE

Learning objectives
After completing this topic, participants will be able to:
1. Conduct meetings with a clear purpose and full involvement of members to help make sound decisions.
2. Write minutes and make correct use of documents in a meeting.
3. Avoid bad habits in meetings, so as to take part in meetings effectively.

Any organization which has a number of members needs to hold regular meetings of various kinds. It will need to bring its members together to exchange information to solve problems, to take decisions and to make sure that each section or department knows what is going on in other areas of the organization. Poorly run meetings can be lengthy, dull affairs, which seem to be controlled by people who like the sound of their voice and which rarely make any impression on the day-to-day running of the organizations. To safeguard against this, it is essential that everyone who is involved in a meeting has a clear idea of its purpose and contributes fully and effectively to the discussion.

Why meetings are poorly run?

Purpose

Meetings that do not have a clear goal or purpose are meetings called for the sake of having a meeting. These seldom achieve much and are often a substitute for real action.

Planning

Poor planning can mean that people do not get the information they need to help them make a sound decision. The most obvious symptom of poor planning is when the convener/chairperson has not prepared an agenda or organized the venue.

Participants

Participants can undermine a meeting by not having the skills to communicate effectively, or by being allowed to get away with disruptive behavior and hidden agendas. The chairperson may have ineffective facilitation skills or be working on an agenda that is at odds with the purpose of the meeting.

Why have a meeting?

- Helps coordinate activities involving a number of people or work groups.
- Meetings are used to negotiate sales, investigate problems, plan events, and develop new procedures and so on.
- Through meetings people can keep up-to date with developments and changes, which means better planning and co-operation between sections.
- Meetings give people an opportunity to share ideas and help develop team spirit.
- More effective problem solving.

Common factors of meeting

Goals

Goals and aims have been identified which the meeting elects to achieve

Outcome

The members of the meeting have an interest in the outcome of its business.

Interests

Participants represent sectional or official points of view.

Action or information

A problem situation, plans or attitudes need to be resolved or crystallized,

Deadlines

The business of the meeting takes place within a limited time scale which affects the potential effectiveness of decisions or the relevance of information.

Leadership

Someone has assumed or been assigned the leadership of the meeting.

Key steps to organizing a meeting

There are four key steps that must be managed in order to get the most from meetings:

- Plan the meeting
- Conduct the meeting
- Record meeting outcomes
- Follow up meeting outcomes

Planning the meeting

Good planning pays off through increased satisfaction with the process and outcomes. The four steps for planning an effective meeting are usually the responsibility of the chairperson.

1. Determine the purpose of the meeting

- You should be able to tell people what will be achieved by having the meeting.
- Let the outcome be something tangible.

2. Organize the venue

The room chosen should be quiet, and big enough for you to use charts and audiovisual equipment without anyone having to move in order to see them.

Test-run all equipment it must work effectively.

3. Room layout

Preliminary notification of date, time, place and purpose. Set the meeting time well in advance and check that the key stakeholders are available at that time.

- Follow telephone communication with a notice of meeting and a draft agenda.
- Invite participants to submit items for an agenda, which will be set out closer to the meeting time. Make sure each person knows why they are being invited. This allows them to prepare their thoughts in advance.

The agenda

An agenda helps the chairperson to structure the meeting and the secretary or minute-taker to keep track of what is being discussed. It needs to include the most important items and be sent out in advance.

- An agenda can be considerably enhanced by providing an explanatory note.
- An agenda acts both as a running order, schedule and time-table during a meeting. The adroit chairman will ensure that agendas are not allowed to become too long or ponderous.
- Careful thought may also be given to the position of an item of business on an agenda.

Pro forma for an agenda

The agenda usually follows a structure and lists standard items:

- Welcome
- Apologies for absence
- Special event
- Confirmation of minutes of the previous meeting
- Business/matters arising out of minutes
- Correspondence sent and received
- Reports
- Adjourned business (any business carried over from a previous meeting to be dealt with before new business)
- General business
- Any other business
- Close of meeting (details of the next meeting)

NB

The agenda must list a realistic number of items for discussion and give an appropriate time for each one. These items should be prioritized and ordered according to their urgency and importance.

It is useless to overload an agenda if there is not enough time for discussion

Indicate a realistic time frame for discussion next to each item.

Hidden agenda

Apart from the written or open agenda, which outlines the topics to be discussed, some people bring with them issues that make up their 'Hidden Agenda'

These refers to issues raised in discussion which relate to private or individual goals. In such cases individuals try to push through decisions that will benefit some people but not the whole group.

Identifying hidden agenda

A number of verbal and non-verbal background signals can be useful indications.

- One person regularly interrupting others while they are speaking or disrupting logical discussion in other ways.
- Two people supporting each other on every issue, especially if the support is personal rather than related to the topic under discussion.

- Attempts to debate people's characters rather than the ideas they put forward.
- The amount of airtime commanded by one speaker-individuals who talk far more than they listen, either see themselves as more important than others or may be trying to stop others having their say.

Conducting the meeting

Most people simply turn up to a meeting and let it 'happen' which is why many meetings seem to miss the mark.

Planning the seating arrangement

- Seating arrangements influences the kind of interaction that takes place.
- The ideal seating arrangement the circular or oval shape allows everyone to see everyone else. This results in better communication between members and effective control and participation by the chairperson.
- This type of seating arrangement lessens the possibility of some members of the meeting becoming dominant.

Rectangular shape

It can lead to problems such as meetings within meetings.

The chairperson may find it difficult to maintain control.

How to take part in meetings effectively

- Listen first- Each meeting develops its own climate. By listening and waiting, you will be able to assess not only the general climate, but also the moods and attitudes of individuals. Test the temperature first before diving in.
- See where the land lies most meetings tend to comprise sub-groups or causes allied to achieve common objective.
- Timing: time when to speak, if you contribution is to be effective.
- Succinctness: keep your points short and simple use any previous arguments to support you opening statement. Justify your points with generally appreciated examples and stress your main contention when closing.
- Involving others: make reference to contributions of others if they are relevant to your point of view.
- Loss of face: one of the hurts which goes deepest and which people least forgive is when someone makes them to 'lose face' in the company of colleagues. Consideration for others and the ability to construct "face-saving" formulate approaches and remarks is one of the most important skills which those who take part in meetings need to acquire.

Integrity not obduracy

The mark of the mature person is that he or she has the strength of personality to defer to a superior argument – graciously.

Courtesy

Bad habits in meetings are such as:

- Interrupting someone by 'talking over them'
- Exchanging winks or grins with a neighbor as a means of criticizing what is being said.
- Showing annoyance by switching off or sulking silently.
- Showing boredom by longing or doodling
- Loosing temper
- Belittling others when speaking
- monopolizing the proceedings by being long-winded
- Failing to show attention and then showing it.

Being ready for opposition views and standpoints and positions must therefore be critically examined and the ground set for answering criticism.

Being informed: appearing misinformed or "behind" the times invalidates the force of any contribution.

Activity

The participants to debate on the following assertions.

1. Contributing effectively at meetings has more to do with listening than speaking.
2. Meetings are for bureaucrats. The doers are usually out of the office, busily doing!

ORAL COMMUNICATION AT WORKPLACE

Learning Objectives
After completing this topic the participants will be able to:
1. Use face to face communication effectively for successful interactions and work performance.
2. Describe the factors that affect face to face communication at the workplace

It is the exchange of ideas or information by spoken word. In a business setting it can take place between two people or within groups of any size, at every level of every kind of organization face-to-face communication is the oxygen in the life-blood of business and public service organizations. Despite the efficiency and speed of modern telecommunications-essential in their way- there is no totally acceptable substitute for people talking and reacting in close, direct contact.

Why many people prefer face-to- face communication

1. This medium provides people with ‘a total impression’ in a way that written communication or telephone calls do not.
2. The medium permits instant feedback.
3. Allows non-verbal usage.

Factors affecting face-to-face communication

- Plan beforehand- have supporting notes and documents to hand.
- Explore opposing points of view look at the situation from the other point of view and have counter-arguments ready if needed.
- Check out the location of the contact-
- It helps to be familiar with surroundings whether for a meeting or interview.
- Exclude interruptions and distractions- these prevent concentration.
- Consider the person or people you will be seeing – it pays to be well informed. Know what makes people tick.
- Select a mode of speaking appropriate to the situation- being over-familiar and ‘chatty’ or reserved and formal may prove blocks to effective communication depending upon the context of the dialogue.
- Check your appearance-dress signals what we represent, or how we wish to be accepted.

Tips on face-to-face communication**1. Mannerism**

Avoid irritating unpleasant or discourteous mannerisms of speech, gesture or posture.

2. Thinking

Think before you speak – once a statement is uttered it may be difficult to retract.

3. Courtesy

The effective communicator is always courteous. Avoid: interrupting, contradicting, showing off, losing your temper, being condescending or showing boredom or impatience.

4. Timing

Choose the right moment to speak.

5. Listening

Failing to listen to someone is not only a grave discourtesy but also may result in your looking silly or making a faux-pas.

6. Structuring

Structures points logically and express them in connected phrases and sentences.

7. Styling

Strive to ensure that the manner in which you speak is appropriate to the circumstances. Choose your words and expressions carefully, mindful of the personalities and backgrounds of others present. It is easy to give offence but difficult to overcome its effect.

Reacting and contributing

Ensure you make some positive contribution to a dialogue.

Talking point
 Effective oral communication techniques tend to be overlooked because people are loath to admit-even to themselves – that they are less than expert in any aspect.

ADAPTING TO DIFFERENCES : CULTURE AND GENDER

Learning objectives
After completing this topic, participants will be able to:
1. Appreciate workforce diversity, and use it for the benefit of the organization.
2. Analyze factors that cause cross cultural and intercultural communication problems and try to overcome them.
3. Communicate deeply, sensitively and strategically in a multi-cultural environment

Intercultural communication

Is communication between people living in the same country but from different cultural backgrounds. Over time a culture develops distinctive national patterns of communication and social behavior. These patterns affect the way people communicate and act as individuals or in groups. People working in a multicultural environment must acquire new skills and knowledge about other cultures. The more sensitive a person becomes to the diverse cultural factors the more successful will the person be in getting into the right frame of reference for communicating ideas with people from other cultures.

The factors that cause cross cultural and intercultural communication problems, owing to lack of knowledge about the other culture are:

- Social customs
- Values and beliefs
- Names and titles
- Sense of time
- Social conduct
- Language/speech for communication
- Non-verbal communication
- Exchanging business cards
- Being ethnocentric
- Believing in the stereotypes.
- Life concerns
- Dress
- Rules of politeness. Who can speak to whom and who can begin a conversation
- Courtesies in speech such as when to say ‘please’, ‘thank you’ or ‘excuse me’.
- Use of humor and irony.

Overcoming cultural barriers

Cultural sensitivity leads to better communication. Therefore, a global manager can overcome cultural barriers and be an empathetic communicator by.

1. Knowing your own culture first-foreigners may ask you curious questions about social and cultural norms as followed in your culture.
2. Take interest in other cultures e.g. pay attention to the non-verbal cues of other culture.
3. Avoid being ethnocentric and judgmental. At no cost must you make your business client feel that your country’s culture is the best. Every culture is as good as the other.
4. Be a good observer and listener backed by right cognitive skills of other cultures, and keep unbiased mind.
5. Practice flexibility in accepting a new way of looking at individuals –by doing this you will help yourself in not stereotyping individuals.
6. Avoid derogatory labeling
7. Provide training

Therefore in order to succeed as a global manager in any kind of challenging business role and situation it is absolutely essential to pay attention to your communication skills for successful multicultural business dealings by adapting yourself to the situation at hand without being ethnocentric.

In the words of Robert Rosen “Beware, and be ready for a borderless economy in a multicultural world. You will have to communicate deeply, sensitively and strategically.

Adapting to gender differences

Gendered styles of verbal communication.

Feminine speech

- Regard communication as a primary way to establish and maintain relationship with others. They engage in conversation to share among themselves and to learn about others.
- Use communication to establish egalitarian relations with others. Do not out do, criticize, or put others down. If you have to criticize be gentle.
- Responsiveness: Learned tendencies to care about others and to make them feel valued and included. It affirms the other person and encourages elaboration by showing interest in what was said.
- Feminine talk is personal
- Speech tentativeness. This may be expressed in a number of forms.

Masculine speech

- It establishes status and control
- Men disclose less than women.
- It is instrumental men use speech to accomplish instrumental objectives. Particularly when men think they are knowledgeable about a topic.
- Conversational command. Research indicates men are more likely to interrupt to control conversation by challenging other speakers, or wresting the talk stage from them.
- It tends to be direct and assertive
- Its abstract men speak in general or conceptual terms that are removed from concrete experiences and personal feelings.
- Less emotional.
- Public speaking.

Group work

Discuss the following topics.

One of a manager’s most difficult tasks is to ensure that his staff works amicably together. If personality, cultures and gender clashes are inevitable in organizations it is his or her job to see that they are kept under control and not allowed to interfere with the organizations objective. Are these clashes inevitable in organizations?

What can managers do to prevent them from arising? Faced with one, what communication principles should a manager adopt in seeking to resolve it?