Business Communication

▪ Anjanee Sethi ▪ Bhavana Adhikari

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BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

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Dr. Sethi, apart from being an academician is a prolific trainer and has been successfully consulting and training middle as well as senior level executives of major public and private sector undertakings in India. She is a certified management trainer and is well versed in the principles of adult learning.

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Dedicated to our students whose never ending enthusiasm to learn inspired us to write this book

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PREFACE

Globalisation and the emergence of new technologies has caused an increase in the importance of communication.

What encompasses 'Business Communication' today has undergone a sea change due to the emergence of a highly competitive business environment and very different working conditions. The challenges that face business communication today are multifarious and strikingly different than what they were a couple of years ago. But if that has made us better communicators is a question that needs to be answered. Business Communication continues to be important, as businesses today, more than ever demand that managers be effective communicators. With a dazzling array of communication modes and channels available, the manager still lands up being a 'confused communicator'.

There are more than 1200 B-schools in India imparting management education to students. Approximately 0.1 million students graduate out of these institutions and a majority of them are recruited by various organisations. Apart from imparting technical and managerial skills, B-schools are also responsible for honing their communication skills. A study was carried out to assess the training imparted to MBA students in soft skills in light of the requirement of the industry. Study sample comprised students with a MBA degree who were freshly recruited in various organisations. 185 MBA/PGDBM graduates from 10 B-schools participated in the study by responding to a questionnaire. Brainstorming sessions with industry professionals, academia and students were also conducted. This study threw light on the requirements of current and future managers and identified the key skill requirements. It has formed the basis of selecting the topics for this book. Also, the syllabi of Business Communication of approximately 30 B-schools offering the MBA/PGBDM programme was analysed in detail to aid in the selection of topics for this book, making it relevant to cater to the needs of the current business environment. The traditional topics that have been at the core of the Business Communication curriculum still continue to be important in the current work environment. These prominently include presentation skills, negotiation skills, listening, interviews, group discussions, meetings, business letters and report writing. These traditional areas need to be supplemented with more relevant topics such as a cross cultural approach to communication, business etiquette keeping in view global communication, communication with the media, organising events, seminars, press conferences etc. and, importantly, all this needs to be a part of core Business Communication syllabus.

Classrooms need to provide a 'next generation' learning environment with focus on computer mediated communication. This will enable the students to familiarise themselves with technology and computing resources which are increasingly becoming a part of the work environment.

The detailed need analysis that has gone into the selection of topics for this book provides it a competitive edge. It is expected that this book will be useful to students of business management and will serve as a text book of business communication for most B-schools and universities.

Writing a book is a daunting proposition. The most difficult part of writing a book, though, is writing the acknowledgements. It symbolises the culmination of a project that has consumed every waking minute for months. It is at this point that we are reminded of how many people contributed to the book. We take this opportunity to thank our families for putting up with our obsession of completing this project on time. Their patience and support has gone a long way in helping us.

We thank our friend Shirley Thomas for contributing some of the caselets in this book. We also thank the editorial team at Tata McGraw Hill who worked with us tirelessly to prepare this book for publication in record time.

ANJANEE SETHI
BHAVANA ADHIKARI

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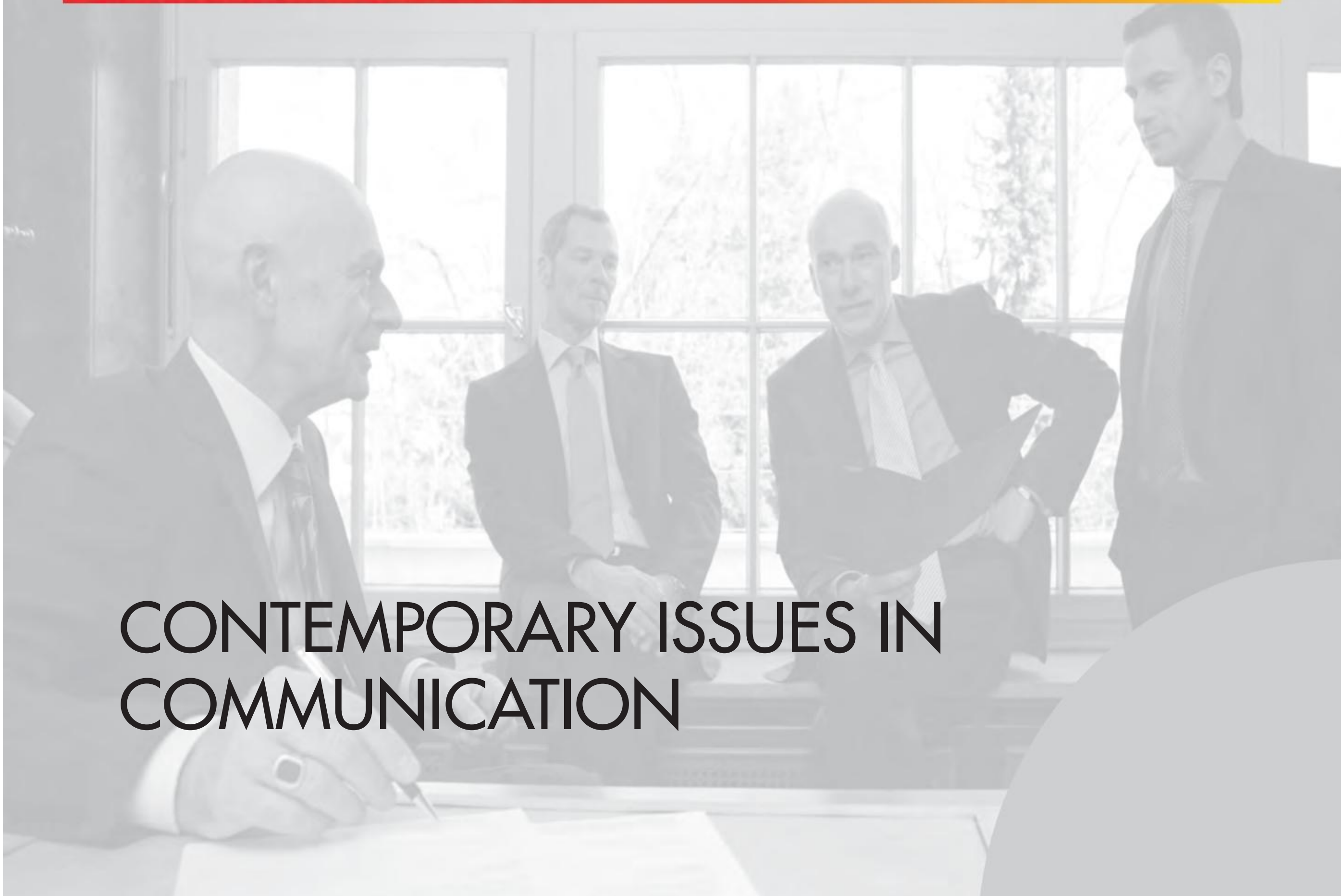


CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN COMMUNICATION

Prologue

Effective communication is essentially the key to the success of any business. To survive in the highly competitive business environment, managers need to keep themselves abreast with the latest developments in communication. This prologue covers some contemporary communication related issues that budding managers need to be familiar with. These include computer mediated communication, social networking, cross cultural communication, crisis communication and impression management.

With businesses going global, there is shift towards computer mediated communication and for this organisations need to not only possess the latest technologically advanced communication equipment but also be familiar with their use. Here we introduce the concept of computer mediated communication and the use of technology for effective communication. Synchronous techniques such as video-conferencing which overcome the constraints of distance have also been covered.

Computer mediated communication does not come without its challenges, prime among them being the absence or near lack of non-verbal cues. These have also been discussed here.

Social networking has gained immense popularity, especially with the advent of online networking. The importance of networking, both online and face to face has been covered in this portion. Increasingly social sites on the internet like Orkut, Linkedin, Facebook, etc. are fulfilling the need for both social and professional interaction.

Further, this part talks about cross cultural communication and the issues to be borne in mind while communicating in cross cultural environment. In today's globalised economy understanding and appreciating cross cultural differences and developing sensitivity towards culture gains tremendous significance. It is becoming increasingly important to develop cultural sensitivity so as to minimise misunderstanding and overcome barriers for communicating in cross-cultural situations.

Crisis is an inevitable reality which most organisations have to face at some point of time. It is up to the organisations to handle the crisis effectively so as to protect their image and reputation. Effective handling of crisis to minimise damage is largely dependent on the communication before, during and after the crisis. In this regard, crisis communication is a much talked about issue which organisations need to focus upon. Here we describe the essentials of crisis communication.

> *"Your ability to communicate is the most important skill you can develop to get on to the fast track in your career."*
>
> BRIAN TRACY

The advancement of information technology has dramatically changed the way that businesses communicate today. For example, fax was a popular form of communication for businesses in the 80's. Though it still has its uses, people now largely use e-mail instead. With the advent of the use of internet, most companies today use intranets to communicate with employees and internet to connect with other stakeholders. It is imperative today for businesses to have in place appropriate and state of the art technology in order to facilitate communication within and across organisations as workplaces become global. In today's networked global organisations, most communication takes place through mediated technology. This is especially noticed in the IT organisations where teams are more often than not distributed not only geographically, but also culturally thereby necessitating caution while communicating through mediated technology. Further, it means that communication takes place with the reduction of non-verbal and social clues available in face-to-face communication situations leading to its own set of communication challenges.

COMPUTER MEDIATED COMMUNICATION

Computer mediated communication (CMC) can be defined as any communication that is enabled through the use of computers. It can be broadly seen in terms of transmission and reception of messages using computers as input, output, storage and routing devices. It includes electronic mail, bulletin boards and computer conferencing among other things. It is also defined as human to human communication interfaced with computer technologies. It is very often seen in contrast to what is called face-to-face communication. It is also often confused with human computer interaction (HCI) which in fact, is quite similar to CMC. Essentially, they tend to focus on different characteristics. HCI focuses more on the interface of the user's psychological processes and technology, and deals with issues of interactivity, presence and cognition. On the other hand, CMC deals mainly with the user interactions and characteristics of the environment in which communication takes place.

Some of the other features of CMC include anonymity, synchronicity, relationship development and impression formation. Since CMC does not involve face to face interaction, anonymity which is the ability to engage in anonymous communication is an important feature of CMC. The identity of the users may remain hidden from each other in such cases. There may be three levels of anonymity depending to the extent to which the identity of the users is revealed to each other. These are true anonymity, visual anonymity and perceived anonymity. Another feature of CMC is synchronicity which refers to communication occurring at the same time i.e., without any delay. Relationships, developed during CMC may range from impersonal communication to hyperpersonal communication. In CMC people tend to form impressions about each other based on video, audio, profile, textual inputs and imagination.

An often-expressed concern which is now being increasingly questioned is the media richness and social presence for virtual work environments and the feeling that the reduction in cues might inhibit the ability of employees to engage in effective collaborative work. There has also been a concern regarding their reduced ability to form and sustain relationships, thus hampering their ability to trust the person on the other end of the channel. These assumptions, of course, are now being critically examined in view of the changing social fabric. With youth today, increasingly laying less emphasis on "trust" in their personal relationships, is it right to expect them to emphasise on "trust" at the workplace? The importance given to trust traditionally as a critical element in team and leadership roles perhaps needs to be re-examined. Further, as we now have a whole generation being brought up with an exposure to internet and social networking sites, adapting to virtual communication/CMC at the workplace is really not a big deal. In fact, the current generation might just be more comfortable using CMC than face to face communication.

What, therefore, needs to be taught and learnt is how to increase clarity of communication through the mediated form and establish common ground early on during CMC interactions. Virtual communication also has the advantage of reducing the levels of control, achieved through monitoring, that may actually result in greater accountability of employees. It may also result in greater collaboration and sharing of information and increases accessibility to co-workers (though it might be problematic). Increased accessibility to employees often blurs the demarcation between their work and personal life leading to several life-style related health problems. Within organisations, employees are often unclear about laws and company policies governing electronic communication. Privacy issues often arise as official mails are not necessarily private and employers have access to them. Moreover, information overload is a major challenge that employees and organisations face today. CMC also helps organisations build online information database that employees can access and create communities in which people share their expertise and knowledge, an area commonly known as 'knowledge management'.

Video-conferencing

An increasingly used CMC technique is video-conferencing. It is the live exchange of information among people, through machines distanced from each other but linked by a telecommunication system. The technique was very expensive earlier and could not be used for routine applications such as telemedicine, distance education or business meetings. Video teleconference systems rapidly evolved in the 90's. During this period IP (internet protocol) based video-conferencing became possible, and more efficient technologies were developed permitting desktop or PC based video-conferencing. Today we have modern plasma video-conferencing systems available with multiple user interface.

Exhibit P.1

The popularity of video-conferencing has grown tremendously in recent times due to the increased cost of travel, and more affordable transmission rates.

There are two major issues that prevent video-conferencing from becoming a standard form of communication. The first is eye contact that plays a major part in conversational turn-taking and other aspects of communication. While traditional telephones do not provide for eye contact, video-conferencing systems are worse as they provide an incorrect impression that participants are avoiding eye contact. The second problem lies in appearance consciousness i.e., the burden of presenting an acceptable on-screen appearance which is not there in audio-only communication. Research has found that the addition of video actually impaired communication, possibly because of the consciousness of being on camera.

Guidelines for conducting successful video-conferences

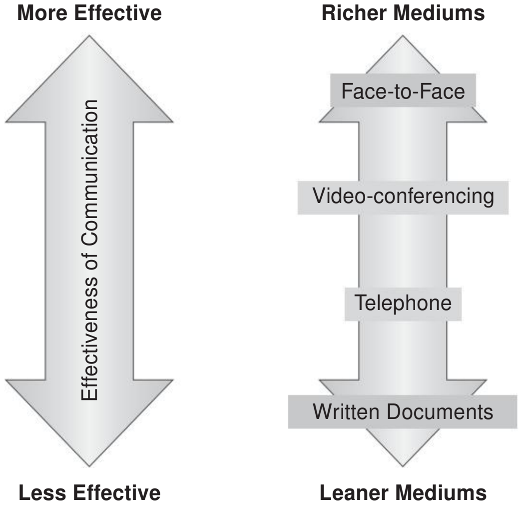
- Plan well in advance for the conference
- Prepare a detailed agenda like you would do for a meeting and follow it
- Involve all participants equally during the meeting
- Speak normally and clearly. Don't shout
- Remember the reduced non-verbal communication in video-conferences has to be made up for, by clarity in speech
- Paraphrase often to clarify important points
- Address individuals by their names to assure their attention when speaking
- During the video-conference introduce yourself and wait for the camera to focus on you before you start speaking
- Limit the use of gestures and restrict movement
- Prepare all graphics keeping video in mind
- Use/provide appropriate handouts
- Minute the meeting as you would normally do

Two theories which form the essence of CMC are

- **Social Presence Theory**- These theories are closely related to each other. Social presence theory states that a sense of 'intimacy' or 'we are together feeling' leads to increased enjoyment, involvement, and task performance, persuasion and socio emotional interaction. It predicts that CMC is capable of creating in users a sense of intimacy and immediacy. While people participate in virtual communication they also assess how much they feel that they are present in a real setting. As is well known, face to face communication yields the highest level of social presence while certain forms of asynchronous communication result in the lowest level of social presence.

- **Information Richness Theory** or media richness theory states that uncertainty and ambiguity of information communicated will vary with the richness of the media. Face to face communication is considered a rich media and is predicted as the best choice to resolve ambiguity. Less rich media such as asynchronous CMC is the best choice to resolve uncertainty (Daft and Lengel 1986).

Exhibit P.2



CMC Language

There is a general misconception that CMC as a method of communication lacks the ability to convey emotions, feelings and expressions in the way face to face communication can. During face to face communication, one heavily relies on non-verbal signals to complement and add meaning to the verbal message. To add this dimension to computer mediated communication, typography cues using the keyboard are used to convey a variety of expressions and emotions. Emoticons are popularly used in many virtual communities. These are typographical symbols conveying emotions.

For example :-) denotes standard smiley indicating I'm happy
:- (denotes a frown
;-) denotes a wink
:-/denotes dismay
:- > denotes an expression of sarcasm
:- O denotes surprise

Typography cues such as bold and italics also can be used to create emphasis. For example, capitals can be used to denote stress on a particular word. Consider the following sentence written in different ways. Without changing the words or their sequence each sentence conveys a different meaning.

You have to come on Monday

You have to come on MONDAY

YOU have to come on Monday

You have to COME on Monday

YOU HAVE TO COME ON MONDAY

You have to come on Monday :-)

Further, challenges in computer mediated communication range from differences in language proficiency, to managing communication across time zones. The failure to establish a rapport and common ground early on during the communication interaction, challenges with respect to cultural sensitivities arising due to stereotyping and lack of cultural tolerance are rampant.

Case: Global Performer*

Read the following case on virtual communication and answer the questions that follow.

Scene A

Anita Thomas was an MBA student in a leading business school in India. Most of her life had been spent in the major cities in India where her father's work would take her. As part of her course requirements in Management, she was instructed to virtually interact with an undergraduate student from a top business school in the United States on certain discussion issues pertaining to effects of global recession on academics. At the end of three days allotted for this interaction, sufficient discussion had been generated. This was however, at the cost of Anita being admitted to a hospital for severe exhaustion from lack of sleep. She however, regained her health and subsequently this experience came in handy in her future interactions with Americans on her first job.

Scene B

Rahul Tiwari was an MBA student in a leading business school in India having spent most of his schooling and early college days at metropolitan cities in India. As part of his course requirements in Management, he was instructed to virtually interact with an undergraduate student from a business college in a national university in the Middle East on certain discussion issues pertaining to effects of global recession on academics. They had not got around to discussing the issues until the beginning of third day. By the end of the third day,

*Contributed by Shirley Thomas, Lecturer, CCE, Sultan Qaboos University, Muscat.

though the material generated on the issues was negligible, Rahul got a new perspective on life and viewpoints of that region. In his third job as CEO of a leading food processing company in Qatar, his interpersonal relations held him in good stead while interacting with top government officials.

Discussion Questions

1. What kind of differences do you see in both scenarios?
2. What contributed to the success of the first case? Give your suggestions on how the health debacle could have been averted?
3. Give your suggestions on how the discussions on the issues in the second case could have been expedited?
4. How do you think Rahul managed to break the ice and get around to developing a fresh perspective?

SOCIAL NETWORKING

Social networking has gained immense popularity. With employees today spending significant time at the work place rather than outside, it is perhaps natural that they are fulfilling their need for social interaction through mediated communication. Participating actors in social networking are called nodes and the relationship of these key actors are called ties. So a social network comprises of nodes which are tied by specific types of interdependencies like values, ideas, financial exchange, friendship, kinship, conflict or trade. The ties can be of any order i.e. it can vary from the ties a family holds among its family members or the trade ties between two organisations or perhaps even nations. Accordingly there are three types of social networks:

(1) Primary – comprises close friends, family and relatives
(2) Secondary – has a broader base and includes classmates, schoolmates, colleagues
(3) Tertiary – has the widest range and includes loads of strangers too in web networking (Orkut, Facebook, Myspace, etc.)

Further, there are two types of social networks according to degree of freedom for entry: open networks and gated communities. While social networks are open in nature and primarily used by youngsters who look for new friends, relationships tend to be informal in nature. Gated communities on the other hand are restrictive as compared to the open networks. Trust is critical in the case of gated communities as it is used with a more serious objective like trade.

Advantages of Social Networking

(1) Basic Human Need (To Connect): To connect is a basic human need. According to Maslow's need hierarchy, social needs play a vital part. Man is a social creature and social networking helps people to socialise both in their interest groups and with diverse people. This is why social networking sites like Orkut, Facebook are so successful as they are a platform for the people with similar interest to interact without the restriction of boundaries.

(2) Basic Human Need (To Share): It is a basic need of human beings to share either their opinion or expertise. Social networking helps these people share their knowledge and expertise and is also very helpful for people who need that knowledge for various purposes.

(3) Identity: Social network redefines identity of a person in a social context. A person who belongs to a particular interest group which is a part of a social network represents a character of the person's personality and becomes an integral part of his identity.

(4) Viral Nature: Social networks are viral in nature as much effort is not required to build it.

Disadvantages of Social Networking

(1) Time consuming: At times social networking turns out to be very time consuming while not giving much in return. Because of this, social networks do not come out as efficient systems.

(2) Not always productive: Social networking is used to gain knowledge and expertise but many-a-time it becomes a platform for fun and loses its productivity.

(3) Easy target for marketers: As the people who belong to a social network make their social groups with similar kind of needs and interests, it becomes marketer's easy choice.

(4) Undesirable social interactions: In social networking there are at times undesirable social interactions which makes it boring and creates fatigue. If one is interested in business networking then different levels of social interaction might help.

Online social networking involves connecting and sharing information with other like-minded people or communities via the web. It ranges from general category social networking like internet message boards and yahoo groups to social book marking tools like *del.icio.us* and Technorati. Together with them come the friend-of-a-friend (FOAF) social networking sites such as Orkut and MySpace which are specifically designed to connect people and form communities with common interests and goals. A typical FOAF network will display a directory of people or themes. When one finds someone with similar interests, he can send him/her a message asking to be added to his/her contact lists. This in turn allows him to meet other like-minded folks in that person's network. It supposedly helps to expand an individual's contact more efficiently and quickly than one could in the real world. The network grows exponentially with each person he adds. One example of social networking being used for business purposes is LinkedIn.com, which aims to interconnect professionals. It claims to have more than 20 million registered users from 150 different industries. Professional networking sites function as online meeting places for business and industry professionals

Social networking is a handy tool for both business and friendly interactions. Business decision makers often prefer two way communication channels. Social networking applications provide an appropriate medium for businesses to interact with their past, current and prospective employees and with customers to advertise their product. This advertising medium has, in fact, proved to be more effective than the "word of mouth" influence. Together with this, social networking sites also allow us to identify and connect with our present and past friends whom we may have lost contact with. Networking sites have often been used to promote blogs, or to post bulletins and updates. It is because of its capacity to make life more exciting that it has caught the attention of a lot of people.

Opportunities in Social Networking

While not for everyone, social networking can provide interesting opportunities. Some of the ways that social networking sites might help are:

1. Establishing a simple web presence

MySpace and Facebook offer easy-to-use tools that help set up a Web presence. One just needs to put up some simple material. Creating an initial Web presence using different tools could be an interesting option.

2. Promoting specific actions or petitions

People check their email when they want to read and write. They log-in to Facebook or MySpace when they want to take action. For many youngsters, an email petition is an annoyance to be deleted, while Facebook applications are fun, social, and available when one is ready to click a button, add name to a petition, volunteer a little something about oneself, and compare his responses with friends. If one knows and respects his culture, social networking sites can be an effective way to encourage people to take action or spread the word about one's cause.

3. Consolidating existing unofficial social networks related to organisation

Sometimes it's not about what one has created, but what already exists. Some of the supporters may already be using social networking tools to informally find and keep tab on one another. In this case, forming an official group and profile can help all the supporters' network in one place.

4. Informal outreach that blends the personal and professional

One director reported posting a message to one of her social networks one morning about the sandwich she was eating for breakfast, soon followed by another message to report on survey responses that had just come in. Social networks can be a useful, and an immediate way to stay in touch with a group of people, and let them know what's going on with you, your organisation.

5. Researching potential employees, and others

One can find tons of information about people and a lot of possible contacts within social networking sites. For instance, it can be a useful place to research the background and affiliations of potential employees.

6. Strengthening relationships between people who already know each other

When one has a group of people who have participated in a volunteer day, workshop, or other meet up, he/she can foster the relationships through online social networking. By allowing group members to post messages and resources, one encourages them to stay in touch and continue their involvement with one another and with the organisation.

7. Encourage and respond to feedback quickly

To get quick and honest feedback, social networks are also a great way to test one's commitment to open communication.

Advantages

Low Costs

Definitely, it's cheaper to use online social networking for both personal and business use because most of it is usually free. While personal use is rather simple and for anyone, its business functions are underestimated by many. On a social networking site, one can scout out potential customers and target markets with just a few clicks and keystrokes.

Builds Credibility

One can definitely gain the customers' confidence if you can connect to them on both a personal and professional level. Despite having to do a bit of work, it definitely pays off as one can be tapped for an offer if someone catches wind of one's products or services.

Connections

One is friends with people who have other friends, and so on. There is potential in such a situation. By using a social networking site, one can get connected with these people to form a web of connections. As long as one gives as well as receives, these connections work and become valuable in the long run.

Disadvantages

Lack of Anonymity

Sharing your name, location, age, gender, and any other type of information may be a problem.

Scams and Harassment

There is a potential for failure of security in both personal and business context. While many sites apply certain measures to keep off cases of harassment, cyber-stalking, online scams, and identity theft to an absolute minimum, you can still never be sure.

Time Consuming

If this is not your kind of thing then it would just be a waste of time for you. The key to social networking is that it is supposed to be fun, whether you are just doing it for fun or for business purposes.

By being aware of your surroundings and who you are talking to, you should be able to safely enjoy social networking online. Just use common sense and listen to your inner voice; it will tell you when something doesn't feel right. Once you've convinced yourself that you are sufficiently informed, you can begin to search for networking communities to join. This can easily be done by performing a standard internet search. Your search will likely return a number of results, including MySpace, FriendWise, FriendFinder, Yahoo! 360, Facebook, Orkut, and Classmates or you can create your own social networking site.

Making Contacts

In business parlance, making contacts is referred to as networking. In simple words networking is developing contacts that may be put to future use both for receiving and giving help in organisational and personal context. The objective of networking is to make contacts with people we know who can further connect us with people they know and so on thus increasing the network. Networking is a vital skill contributing towards career and business building.

There is no specific time and place for networking. The key to networking is to:

- Look for opportunities
- Be alert
- Pay attention

One can make contacts anytime anyplace. However events involving a gathering of a large number of people are suitable places to develop new contacts. Given below are some events in which one can make new contacts.

Workshops, seminars and conferences
Charity shows
Trade shows
Professional meetings
Clubs
Community service clubs
Conventions
Political events
Religious gatherings

Types of contacts

Though there is no rigid compartmentalisation of the types of contacts we can cultivate, but broadly speaking we can categorise them into the following types

I. Personal contacts—These contacts are related to our personal rather than work/ professional life. These include:
   - Friends

- Neighbours
- Acquaintances
- Relatives
- Members of religious bodies of which we are a part
- Classmates, schoolmates, college friends
- Teachers
- Club members, etc.

II. Professional contacts—These are people you come across in your professional life-at your workplace, in conferences, meetings, seminars etc. These include:
- Employers
- Supervisors
- Colleagues
- Subordinates
- Customers, clients
- Fellow members of professional associations/bodies
- Professionals from other organisations working in the same or related area as you.

III. Contacts of contacts—The main advantage of networking is that not only the person you directly know (or contact) becomes a part of your network but contacts of contacts also indirectly become a part of your network. After being initially referred to or introduced to a contact of someone you know it is important that you cultivate and maintain that contact. Contacts of contacts can be either of professional or personal nature.

IV. Internet contacts—These are contacts you make and sustain on the Internet. There are innumerable internet sites which link people across the world bringing them on to the same platform to share their views. These contacts include your e-mailing list or members of e-mail discussion groups of which you are a part.

Introducing yourself

On meeting a new person it is important to be able to introduce oneself quickly and with clarity and ease. Larry James in his book Ten Commitments of Networking calls this very important self introduction a "30 second connection". After being introduced, others should know precisely who you are and what you do. There are four important elements to an effective "30 second connection":

1. Your name
2. The name of your business
3. Specifically what you do
4. What kind of business leads you are looking for (only if appropriate in the situation).

Business cards

Meeting a new person is essentially followed by exchange of business cards. Business cards are an effective means of providing personal contact details. It is essential to ensure a sufficient supply of business cards at all times. Business cards help people remember who you are and what you do. They create a first impression so it is important to design them with attention. Only exchanging and collecting business cards is not sufficient. It is important that you organise your collection of business cards and keep-in-touch with the contact by occasionally calling up or sending an e-mail. Following are some of the points related to business cards which need to be kept in mind

(I) Necessary information for your business card includes your name, company name, title, phone, fax numbers, email and your website address. Many people call the first phone number listed so prioritise the phone numbers.

(II) Stick to standard sizes usually 2″ × 3 ½″. Avoid fancy cut-outs or odd sizes.

(III) Carry extra business cards in your briefcase and car.

(IV) Business cards are usually exchanged at the beginning or end of a meeting.

(V) On accepting business cards make a point of studying them and show interest before putting them away.

(VI) Business cards should be kept in a card case to ensure they are spotless and unwrinkled.

(VII) On exchanging business cards, if you tell someone you will call to follow-up, keep your word.

Though face to face contact will always be important, new technologies augment traditional networking.

CROSS CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Culture is a fascinating topic. Though if of you are ever caught up in a cross cultural situation fascinating might not exactly be the descriptive word you would choose. We experience the influence of culture all the time. In fact, culture is deeply embedded in communication and thus needs to be taken into consideration while communicating.

In today's globalised economy understanding and appreciating cross cultural differences and developing sensitivity towards culture, gains significance. With the world growing smaller and more accessible, organisations have a diversified workforce with a variety of ethnicities and backgrounds coming under the same roof. This results in an increased contact with other cultures and interaction with people who have different frames of reference than yours. Mc Luhan media expert and visionary in fact, coined the term 'Global Village' in the sixties. The global village is much more than a superficial interaction of population vacationing in different parts of the world. It is a complete confluence of people coming together and celebrating their similarities and differences. The important aspect which managers need to keep in mind is that idiosyncratic behaviour of individuals will override any attempts at grouping people blindly into categories.

Culture

There are hundreds of definitions of culture. Broadly speaking culture can be thought of as a way of life of a group of people, a shared pattern of behaviour which is passed down from one generation to the next. It is a way of viewing human relationship. Culture is something we acquire as a part of the socialisation process from birth through all our life. It is something we don't always see. It is also something we won't always 'learn'. Therefore it is apt to describe culture as being 'acquired' rather than 'learned'. The abstract, complex and illusive nature of culture is what makes it more fascinating. At a more mundane level culture dictates norms and rules of accepted and expected behaviour and includes perception of self, others and environment.

Each of us is culturally unique though at the same time being a part of a larger whole. Culture deals with attitudes, values and behaviours or the schemata that we use all the time to make sense out of the unfamiliar. An interesting analogy of culture can be seen when it is compared to an iceberg. Overtly identifiable associations which are visible at the surface level are language, different traditions, our customs, the food we eat, the way we dress etc. What lie beneath the surface are the attitudes, values and belief that shape our world view.

Overt
- Language
- Tradition
- Custom
- Food
- Dress

Covert
- Values
- Attitudes
- Beliefs
- Perception

Importance of Understanding Culture

With businesses becoming global, cultural differences should be understood. Lack of understanding may lead to miscommunication which can be a serious matter. Culture has a serious influence on international business. With increasing mobility managers need to be aware of the business practices in the host and other countries.

It makes sense to understand the concepts of business negotiations, bribery and ethics while conducting international business. Recognizing business culture, management values and behaviour is important for success in the international market as knowledge of foreign business practices helps to forge and sustain successful business relations attending thereby a high level of trust in business transactions. An even more fundamental reason for studying culture is that our globalised world demands cross cultural expertise if we are to survive.

Culture expresses itself at various levels starting from the macro level i.e. the global culture to the micro level i.e. the culture at the individual level. A global culture holds all cultures of the world together. It comprises of various countries which have their own unique tradition and practices. The national culture in turn is a conglomeration of various regional cultures.

With organisations having operations in different countries organisational communication is impacted by the regional culture. Organisations are in turn made up of individuals who carry their own unique set of characteristics and therefore while understanding cultural similarities it is important to take into consideration individual differences as well.

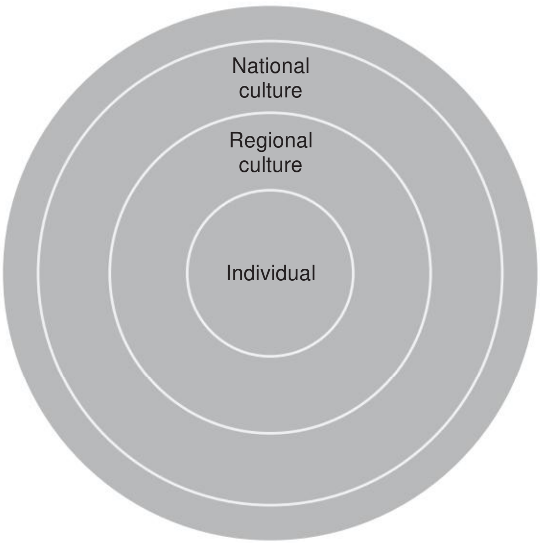


Figure P.1

Elements of Culture

Culture comprises various elements that determine the context for differentiating the communication behavior of individuals of different cultures. These elements can be classified into the following

1. Language: Language forms the basis of all communication and includes spoken language, written language, official language, body language.
2. Religion: Another important element of culture is the religion followed by an individual which includes the religious beliefs and norms, sacred objects, philosophical systems, prayers and rituals. In fact, many times religious beliefs and practices become synonymous with culture.
3. Values and attitudes: The underlying values and attitudes towards time, achievement, work, change, risk taking etc. are also an important part of culture.
4. Education: Education which to a great extent influences our world view is an important element of culture.
5. Social organisation: Social institutions, the authority structure, interest groups, status systems and the extent of social mobility are also impacted by the culture.
6. Technology: Technology that encompasses scientific temperament, invention, communication, urbanisation is an essential part of culture. For example with the growth in access to technology and explosion of interest in social networking one observes a dramatic shift in the social and cultural fabric of urban India. It is difficult to fathom whether technology influences culture or culture influences technology. Perhaps it would be wise to say that both are true.
7. Politics and Law: Political ethos comprising of nationalism, national intents, power, ideologies, political risks, sovereignty, law of the country in which the organisation operates, regulation imposed, etc. are influenced by the culture.

Dimensions of Culture

There are various approaches to understanding the different dimensions of culture

A. Edward Halls –
   a. High context vs. Low context culture
   b. Monochronic vs. Polychronic culture (has been discussed under Chronemics)

B. Hofsted's classification –
   a. Individualism vs. Collectivism
   b. Power distance
   c. Uncertainty avoidance
   d. Masculinity
C. Deal oriented vs. Relationship oriented culture
D. Chronemics

Edward Hall's High context vs. Low context cultures

High context cultures The meaning of an utterance is highly dependent on both context and its denotative or literal meaning. These are cultures in which the context of the situation takes prime importance while interpreting or deriving meaning. Communications in such contexts have multiple meanings and need to be interpreted by reading the situation and the non verbal clues as well. In written communication it manifests itself as indirect style of communication where interpretations tend not to be specific and direct. A lot of skill and familiarity in understanding of the shared context is required to draw out the appropriate meaning which at times may be embedded and not overtly apparent. Asian and Arabic cultures are amongst the highest high-context cultures in the world.

Low context cultures On the other hand in low context cultures people tend to be more deal oriented i.e. people meet to accomplish objectives and adopt a direct focused communicative style. The meaning is explicitly evident as words provide most of the meaning. In such cultures words mean exactly what they say and legal sanctions are important. German, Swiss, Scandinavian and North American cultures are low context cultures where the meaning is explicit in the language.

Hofsted's Classification

Individualism vs. Collectivism In individualistic cultures the individual is extremely important and individual decision prevails over group decision. Individuals in this type of culture take responsibility of their actions from a very young age. In collectivist cultures on the other hand group decisions override individualistic decisions. One can understand this from the following example. Marriage decision in most parts of India is more of a collective decision taken by the family. Family approval of the prospective partners takes precedence over ones individual's views. Such behavior is also observed in more routine activities like buying a vehicle in which a man in his mid thirties might still like to consult his immediate and extended family before taking a decision. In contrast to this, an American youth between 16-18 years feels independent enough to start out on his own by taking his own decision. In fact, research shows that this dimension of individualism is fostered by the differences in parenting prevalent in individualistic and collectivist societies. American parents put infants as young as six months to sleep in a separate room. The child grows up in his own space from a very tender age. As opposed to this, children in most families in India sleep along with their parents till much older.

Collectivistic culture stress on cooperation, conflict avoidance, solidarity, loyalty and relationships gain priority over tasks. Also the group affiliates take precedence over individual goals and group decision making is the norm. As against this individualistic cultures stress competition and self motivation. Tasks take priority over relationships and individual goals take priority over group affiliates.

Individualistic cultures	Collectivistic cultures
1. Stress competition	1. Stress cooperation and conflict avoidance
2. Self motivated individuals	2. Stress loyalty and solidarity
3. Put tasks before relationships	3. Put relationships before tasks
4. Individual goals take precedence over group affiliates	4. Group affiliates take precedence over individual goals
5. Individual decision making	5. Group decision making

Relationship orientation

Low ⟵⟶ High

Individualistic culture — Collectivistic culture

Figure P.2

Power distance Power distance is the perceived distance between different levels or hierarchies. It can also be described as the extent to which the less powerful accept authority and consider it normal. This may be in both organisational and societal contexts. In organisational context a high power distance will manifest itself as a physical distance kept between two individuals while talking and fear to express disagreement to a person higher up in the hierarchy. The fear to express disagreement can actually lead to a lot of pent up emotions which can be detrimental to the working relationship in the long run.

Low power distance on the other hand results in consultative relationships as people are viewed as being at the same level. Asian societies are high on power distance which in organisational context may be indicated by the boss having the largest office in the organisation. Due to the heightened power distance between different levels in the organisation upward communication may be hampered. On the other hand organisations operating on a low power distance give equal space both physical as well as in terms of expression to their employees. This could manifest itself in the form of a uniform, that all employees belonging to the organisation wear.

High power distance cultures accept power as a part of the society. Power is centralised and a lot of importance is given to status rank and protocol. Since decision making is centralised subordinates are excluded from decision making. Low power distance cultures are egalitarian i.e. such cultures stress on equality and hence superiors and subordinates are considered equal. The level of interaction is high between superiors and subordinates.

Uncertainty avoidance Based on the extent to which cultures are comfortable with the levels of risk and ambiguity they can be classified as

- Low uncertainty avoidance cultures
- High uncertainty avoidance cultures

Low uncertainty avoidance cultures are characterised by high degree of acceptance of risk and ambiguity. Such cultures act on less information as they may not go in for detailed planning. They prefer innovation and risk taking and therefore the change rate is comparatively higher in such cultures. Example—Cultures of countries like Singapore, China and Hong Kong.

High uncertainty avoidance cultures are characterized by risk aversion avoidance of ambiguity. Since decisions are taken based on detailed planning, traditional rules, laws, standards and rituals play an important role in such cultures. Example—Cultures of countries like India and Japan and the South Asian cultures.

Masculinity This dimension refers to the degree to which masculine/feminine traits are valued in a culture. Masculinity traits for example are characterized by competition, assertiveness respect for things which are large, strong and fast. It also encompasses the concept of 'live to work'. The most important feature of masculine cultures is the strong separation of roles between men and women. High earning, recognition, advancement, assertiveness and personal accomplishment take centre stage in such cultures.

As opposed to this there are cultures in which there is a thin line of separation of roles between men and women. Dominant characteristics of these cultures are nurturing, high emotional quotient and cooperation. They follow the dictum 'work to live'. These characteristics are reflected in good working relationships, cooperation and employment security. For example, China, Japan and Korea have highly masculine cultures while cultures of Turkey, Mongolia and Vietnam tend towards being more feminine. India and Hong Kong exhibit both characteristics

Deal oriented vs. Relationship oriented This is the 'Great Divide' between business cultures. This orientation often dictates the way a potential buyer/partner makes the first approach. This is perhaps the most important dimension managers must recognise and adapt to while communicating either verbally or through written messages with people of another culture. Members of cultures which are relationship oriented like and expect to be asked about family and general well being at the onset of any communication interaction. They may also feel offended if the communication goes straight to the business agenda. Thus making small talk is extremely important for them as the focus is on building and maintaining long term relationships with business associates. They follow the dictum 'if you can't do small talk you can't do big talk'.

Deal oriented cultures are more focused on the 'deal' or business at hand and might perceive 'small talk' as unnecessary and a waste of time. They are more comfortable when business issues are discussed upfront and have a clear line of demarcation between business and personal life. They seldom feel the necessity of mixing the two.

Deal focused cultures

- North America
- Great Britain
- Australia & New Zealand
- Nordic & Germanic Europe

Moderately deal focused cultures

- Hong Kong & Singapore
- Central & Eastern Europe
- South Africa

Relationship focused cultures

- Arab world
- Most of Africa
- Asia

Chronemics

Another dimension on which culture can be categorised is chronemics. This refers to the attitude towards time which differs from culture to culture. Based on time dimension culture can be divided into monochronic and polychronic culture. Monochronic cultures attach a lot of meaning to time. They are one dimensional, linear and tend to focus on one task at a time. Schedules are very important and time is something that can be controlled and should be used wisely. People in such cultures stick to deadlines and expect others to respect their time as they see time as scarce, valuable and something to be saved. In polychronic cultures people are more relaxed about time as the focus is more on relationships than schedule. There is higher value on personal involvement than on getting things done on time. Schedules get subordinated to personal relationships. Such cultures are multi dimensional in which people tend to do several things at the same time. In monochronic cultures people tend to take a rigid view of time as against a polychronic culture where time is viewed as fluid. Thus people from monochronic cultures view their fluid time counter parts as lazy, undisciplined and rude. On the other hand, people with a fluid time view of culture view their rigid time counter parts as arrogant and enslaved by the clock.

The phrase 'time is money' applies to monochronic cultures while polychronic cultures do not like to be enslaved by the clock. Very monochronic cultures include cultures of North America, Japan and Nordic and Germanic Europe. Monochronic cultures include cultures of Australia, New Zealand, Russia, Hong Kong, Singapore, Central and Southern Europe. Polychronic cultures include cultures of the Arab World, Africa and Latin America.

When people from monochronic cultures meet business associates coming in from polychronic cultures they need to understand that meetings and discussions may not always start on time. This does not necessarily translate to rude behaviour. In fact, in a country like India due to high power distance in many organisations even today, top management associates coming late for an appointment as a reflection of their authority and status. This behaviour is also exhibited during social functions where it is considered quite appropriate to be fashionably late.

Culture and Non-Verbal Communication

Managers need to be conversant with cultural implication of non verbal communication. Cultures also differ in their expression of body movement including facial expressions, eye contact, posture and gestures. Organisations are increasingly using chromatics which is the use of color to communicate.

Organisation culture also differs on the dimension of personal space. **Proxemics** is the study of the way people use physical space to convey messages. Intimate distance is used for talking with family and close friends. Social distance is used to handle most business transactions while Public distance is used when interacting with a larger group. Cultures across the world differ greatly in their perception of physical space. For example Americans value their personal space a lot. This is observed when they stand in a queue. The distance between two individuals is much more than an arms length. The sensitiveness that Managers need to develop with respect to use of personal space in places such as the elevator have been discussed in Chapter 11.

Haptics (study of touch) is another aspect of non-verbal communication which needs to be understood and requires careful handling when operating in cross cultural environment. For example in most of the business world hand shakes are the normal acceptable from of greeting. But in a country like India and Japan where there is an alternate form of greeting available it may not be culturally appropriate to use handshakes especially with very senior business associates or women, in a business or social setting.

Overcoming Barriers in Cross Culture Communication

Operating in a globalised business environment it is paramount to remember to reduce prejudices and eliminate the belief "Different from me is less than me". One also needs to let go of the stereotyping that occurs when dealing with culturally diverse groups. Effective communication can be achieved by showing mutual respect and understanding of different cultures. There is really 'no right way' of doing things as different cultures follow their own systems and ways of approaching the same issue. It is also important in cross cultural interactions to avoid assumptions. It is always better to ask for clarifications so that chances of miscommunication are minimised. Follow the dictum 'when in doubt, ask'. It is critical therefore to honour and appreciate other people's opinion which perhaps may be different from your own.

Case: Internship*

Scene 1

An intern arrives at the finance department of a leading organisation not knowing what to expect. The intern sees a group of young men and women around one coffee table, making their own coffee and chatting. A man is cracking a joke and there are two ladies laughing out loud at his jokes; within minutes they are ready with their cup in hand, fingering their laptops and discussing the group project. They notice the intern coming in; one person who seems like the leader of the group waves out and says 'hi come, I guess you are the new trainee assigned

*Contributed by Shirley Thomas, Lecturer, CCE, Sultan Qaboos University, Muscat.

to our group project-pull a seat and join us'. The intern could see that they were trying to involve him by giving a brief on the project and asking for comments. The intern is pleased that things have taken off well.

Scene 2

An intern arrives at the finance department of a leading organisation not knowing what to expect. The intern sees a group of young finance professionals from the same gender around one coffee table, making their own coffee and chatting. One of them recognises the intern as a junior at college who says, 'hello, how are you, how is life-how are things? Your family, are they fine? Etc. etc'. The introduction extends to the other members present and the same elaborate greetings take place. It takes a while before they get talking shop. The intern gets a feel of belonging and is happy over the choice of this organisation.

1. What major differences were at play in these two scenarios?
2. What factors could have contributed to the different experiences and reactions for the two MBA interns?
3. How would you rate both experiences in terms of acceptability?
4. Do you see yourself being objective while rating the two experiences? If not what is happening to you?

CRISIS COMMUNICATION

A crisis is a critical situation suffered by an individual, group, organisation or system. Survival during a period of crises depends on the capabilities of individuals to respond to the challenges that would emerge after a crisis. Organisations have an image to manage and protect. Therefore it is essential to have a consistent, coordinated and responsive process for crises. The process of how an organisation communicates during and after a crises should be made much before a crises arises. It is essential to be aware of the fact that public perception would affect the bottom line. It becomes important to maintain the reputation and credibility of the organisation by demonstrating the organisations concern for people and the communities where it operates. Any crises situation needs to be managed properly to reduce potential negative impact. Factual information needs to be delivered to key audiences. Key messages need to be communicated clearly and consistently. Rumors, speculations and exaggeration need to be stopped. The aim should be to restore normalcy as soon as possible.

Preparing a Crisis manual early on would help in dealing with a crisis in a systematic manner. It also helps organisations train their staff and develop crisis management teams. The manual should contain the organisations crisis management principles and their communication strategy. A list of the crisis team member contact information list, their responsibilities, key messages, sample news releases and crises media statements, potential questions to expect from the media, media lists by region, and the teams responsibilities during and post crisis. Preparing and keeping such a manual ready has immense value to the organisation. It is often said that most people 'talk to the media'. It is essential to 'talk through the media' to deliver key messages 'to your key audience'. In a crisis situation speed and consistency of information is critical. It should also be remembered that questions don't do the damage, only answers do. It therefore becomes essential to monitor media coverage and correct errors if any as soon as they arise.

1. Have crisis plan in place
2. Identify crisis
3. Mobilise crisis team
5. Assess situation
6. Gather facts
7. Determine media strategy
8. Prepare media statement or news release
9. Anticipate questions, develop answers
10. Update media
11. Monitor media coverage
12. Correct errors
13. Evaluate process, learn

Every crisis would typically have some key dimensions, like Trust, Credibility, Victims, Behavior, Ethics, Operations and Lessons Learned. There are in fact five major components to crisis management:

1. **Preauthorisation:** An important aspect of crisis management is making decisions ahead of time so that there is no compromise with respect to the speed of implementation when a crisis occurs. If there has been adequate preparation and simulation, speed of implementation would not become an issue.
2. **Conclusive Action:** Crisis often occur with speed and leave tremendous amount of problems behind to resolve. Plan to emphasise positive, conclusive action.

3. **Unacceptable behaviour:** Often during crisis, surprise results in embarrassment, which in turn results in fear that makes managers behave foolishly. What should be done should be done promptly and carefully and what is said should be brief and important.
4. **Humane words and behaviour:** A mistake managers often commit during a crisis is that they appear cold and arrogant when bad things happen and there are victims. This results in employees becoming angry and often leads to frustration and resentment which can also lead to litigation and bad media coverage. Learn to say sorry and empathise with the victims and help them however best you can.
5. **Personalise:** Deal directly with victims and other affected parties, like customers, vendors and employees. Leadership needs to act personally during a crisis to minimise opposition.

Speed of action is the bottom line during a crisis.

IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT

Impression management is used when a person wishes to create and maintain a specific identity. This goal is achieved by intentionally exhibiting certain behaviors, both verbal and nonverbal, that perhaps lead others to view the person in a specific manner. Impression management is the process by which people attempt to influence the image others have of them (Rosenfeld et al., 2002). Impression management is used when a person wishes to create and maintain a specific identity.

Use of impression management techniques by organisations and employees to influence external stakeholders is common. Also more often than not, subordinates try to influence their superiors using impression management techniques though vice versa is also true. Supervisors also aim at creating a good impression in the eyes of their subordinates. Research shows that individuals are more likely to engage in impression management when the benefits they receive from pleasing others are greater. With more and more organisations resorting to 360 degree feedback performance appraisal this question becomes very relevant. Supervisors want the subordinates to view them as competent, knowledgeable, humane and proficient.

SUMMARY

With businesses going global and operating in geographically and culturally dispersed locations a number of communication related issues have become relevant and require focus. The section focused on the some of these communications related issues. It stressed the need to develop cross cultural mediated communication skills. Networking which includes both online and face to face networking along with various dimensions of cross cultural communication and effective crisis communication were also discussed. Another issue which the chapter covered was impression management.

QUESTIONS

1. Write short notes on Computer Mediated Communication, Social net working and Cross Cultural Communication.
2. Discuss two merits and demerits of communication technology.
3. Discuss how social networking sites might bring about a change in the social fabric of a country.
4. Search the web and list out different ways in which organisations use Organisational Blogs for Impression Management.
5. Discuss how Impression Management is used in the field of Marketing.
6. Contrast how employees of Public vs. Private sectors use different types of Impression Management techniques to influence their colleague's perception of themselves.
7. How important is culture in Business Communication. Do you think that managers can communicate effectively without keeping the cultural aspect of communication in mind?
8. Do you think managers, while communicating, need to be careful about stereotyping people according to the culture they belong?
9. Search the web and collect information and pictures about your country's culture. Identify and discuss in class different cultures and sub cultures.
10. Discuss the statement 'culture can't be taught, it has to be lived'.
11. Discuss the different aspects of communication you need to keep in mind while video-conferencing.

12. Explain the statement 'speed of communication' is most important in a crisis communication situation.
13. Discuss the Crisis Communication Strategies adopted by at least three organisations to handle their crisis situation.
14. Discuss in class, the Crisis Prevention and Management measures taken by your organisation.
15. Debate in class, what Communication Mediums can be used to raise awareness levels of the general public in your city, towards being prepared for a crisis situation.

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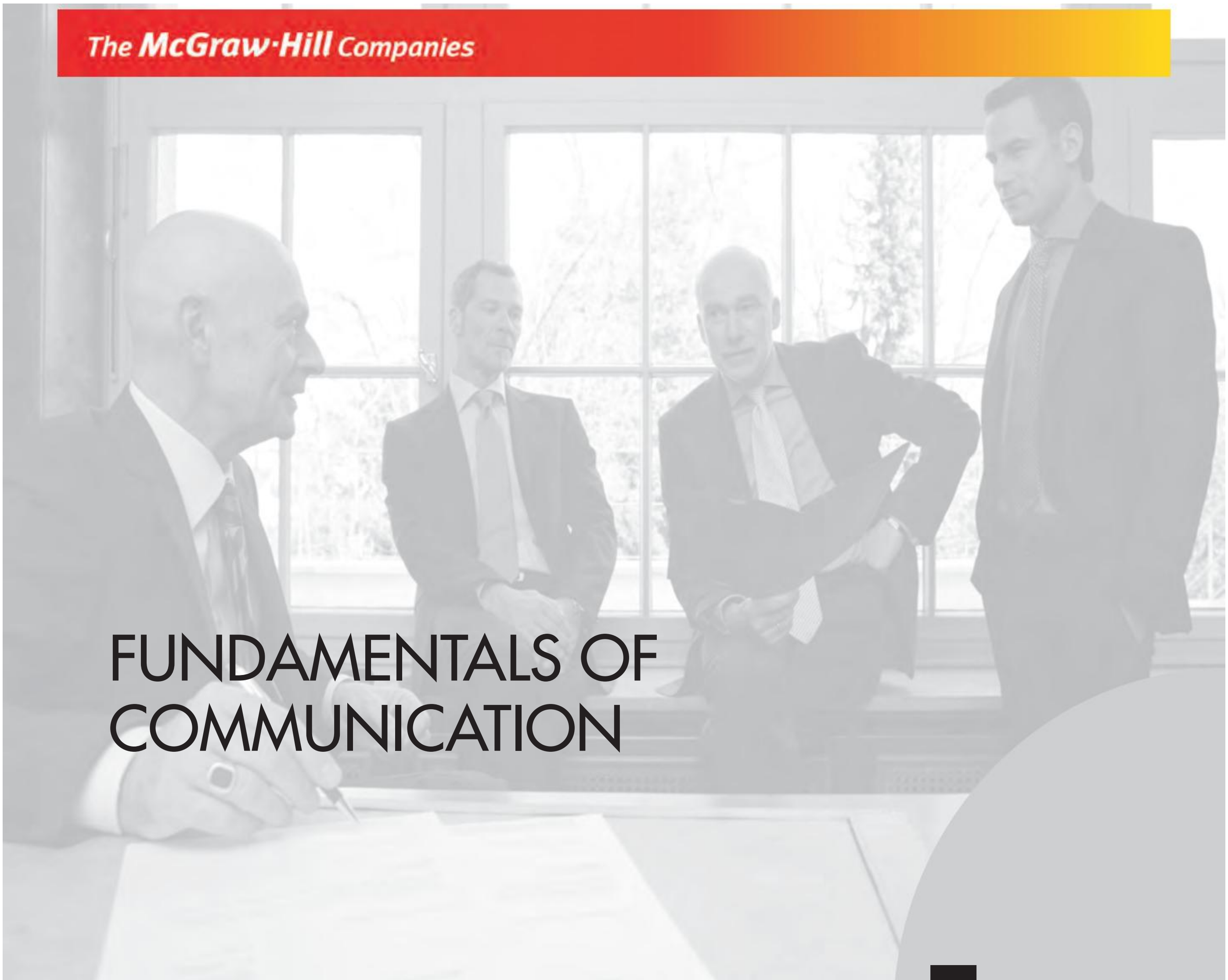

FUNDAMENTALS OF COMMUNICATION

chapter 1

THIS CHAPTER WILL HELP YOU IN:

- Understanding the meaning of communication
- Discussing the characteristics of communication
- Listing out the types of communication
- Discussing the barriers to effective communication
- Listing guidelines for effective communication

- Familiarising the reader with various models of communication
- Understanding the concept of reality and perception in relation to communication
- Discussing the importance of non verbal communication and introducing categories of non verbal communication such as Kinesics, Proxemics, Haptics, Chronemics, Paralanguage, Chromatics

The chapter gives an overview of the exciting process of communication. It goes on to define communication, gives the characteristics of communication and outlines the various types of communication. It further describes the various barriers to effective communication and guidelines to overcome them. It explains the role of communication in organisations and describes the various models of communication. The chapter explains the concept of reality and perception in relation to communication. The importance of non-verbal messages in communication too cannot be denied. The chapter also introduces various categories of non verbal communication *viz*. Kinesics, Proxemics, Haptics, Chronemics, Paralanguage and Chromatics.

> *"If I went back to college again, I'd concentrate on two areas: learning to write and to speak before an audience. Nothing in life is more important than the ability to communicate effectively."*
>
> GERALD R. FORD

> *"You can't not communicate. Everything you say and do or don't say and don't do sends a message to others."*
>
> JOHN WOODS

COMMUNICATION

Communication is central to all activities we perform. In fact, it is central to our very existence. Since the time we are born we start to communicate. A baby communicates its needs and wants initially by crying. Later on it starts to babble, then gradually learns, to speak in words. It also quickly learns to combine these words to make sentences. More importantly, it observes intently, learning the effective use of silence, body language, gestures, facial expressions, posture, clothes and other behaviour to make sense of this world and get what it wants! Communication skills are different from our language competence skills. Being good speakers of a particular language does not necessarily make us effective communicators.

Much of our life is spent communicating with each other—be it at our work place or in our personal life. The term communication is derived from the Latin word '*communis*' which means common. Thus communication is making common—ideas, opinions or information i.e., sharing of ideas, opinions or information. Communication is defined as the interchange of thought or information between two or more persons to bring about mutual understanding. Robert Anderson has defined communication as the interchange of thoughts, opinions or information by speech, writing or signs. According to Louis, "Communication is the sum of all things one person does when he wants to create understanding in the mind of another; it involves a systematic and continuous process of telling, listening and understanding". Keith Davis has defined communication as the transfer of information and understanding from one person to another. It is a way of reaching others with facts, ideas, thoughts and values. In the words of Peter Little, "Communication is the process by which information is transmitted between individuals and/or organisations so that an understanding and response develops". W.H. Newman and C.F. Summer Jr. have very simply defined communication as "an exchange of facts, ideas, opinions or emotions by two or more persons".

When communication is referred to in an organisational context it is known as organisational communication. According to William Scott, "Administrative communication is a process which involves the transmission and accurate replication of ideas ensured by feedback for the purpose of eliciting actions which will accomplish organisational goals. Interdependence between people in an organisation calls for co-ordination of activities which ensures that individual tasks would be carried out so that the objectives of the organisation are achieved. This co-ordination requires communication. Rather than being relegated to a superficial aspect of organisational life, communication needs to be seen as a core organisational process capable of achieving strategic goals within organisations. It is the underlying fiber/texture that binds an organisational set-up. Indeed, developing better interpersonal communication skills may, more often than not, lead to a successful career. Furthermore, with organisations becoming more complex, both in structure and technology and people at work, especially the younger ones, expecting more from their employers—not just higher wages, but also greater personal and job satisfaction, communication within organisations assumes paramount importance. It is quite clear that for people to be able to communicate effectively requires them to have a high degree of sensitivity to the issue.

Moreover, the success of communication depends a lot on the nature and quality of information received, and this in turn depends on the nature and quality of relationship between the people involved. More often than not, managers /leaders have to work with people with whom they have not developed close relationships in order to achieve organisational objectives. Though overtly people may be polite and co-operative, but misunderstandings may still occur as underlying interpersonal issues have not been addressed. The quality of interpersonal communication in such cases remains poor.

The quality of interpersonal communication is influenced primarily by personality and perception of people. These, cause people to behave differently towards each other in different situations and may result in communication problems. Personality is determined and developed by both the influences of our inherited genes and our social and physical environment and experiences. All these factors create individually different frames of reference, with the result that each person looks at the world in a unique way. Perception, on the other hand, is a process by which we select, organise and interpret sensory stimuli and information in terms that are consistent with our own frames of reference and view of the world. It takes *'all sorts of people to make the world go round'*, goes a saying and therefore the process of communicating effectively with people becomes increasingly challenging. It is of course much easier when we get to know and understand people! How many times at a first meeting have you thought, 'I don't like this fellow, I can't get through to him?' First impressions tend to last, and we tend to selectively reject cues to the contrary. When we interact with people there are elements of ourselves—our attitudes, behaviour and personality with which we are familiar and which are also apparent to others. Similarly, other people may observe some of our facets, of which we are quite unaware. For communication to be effective we need to jointly work with others on two conscious sets of activities—self-disclosure, and feedback. Self- disclosure is giving free information about us to others and feedback which is best if specific and directed towards behaviour which the receiver can do something about. Further more, one of the most talked about and least practiced communication skill is listening. An effective listener capitalises on the fact that 'thought' is more rapid than 'talk' a skill that he develops by careful attentive practice. 'Words' are not the only tools one has *'to take some ones heart away'* as a popular song suggests, decoding hidden messages in different forms of non-verbal communication such as, appearance, facial expressions, gestures, voice etc. all have equal communicative value. The key lies therein to become sensitive to these different 'gateways', thereby, leading to effective communication*.

Based on the above definitions there are certain characteristics of communication which can be identified. These are:

(i) Communication involves at least two persons—the sender and the receiver.

(ii) It involves transfer of ideas, facts, emotions, gestures, symbols and action from sender to receiver.

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*Adapted from Sethi, Anjanee (2006), *Effective Communication* in the 'Education Special' issue of ***Gurgaon Explorer*** (a weekly lifestyle newspaper, Jan. 2006) Reproduced with permission.

(iii) Understanding is an essential component of communication i.e., the ideas, opinions, emotions etc. conveyed should be accurately replicated in the receivers mind.
(iv) Communication may be intentional or unintentional.
(v) The purpose of communication is to elicit action, inform or to express a certain point of view.
(vi) Communication is a two way process i.e., feedback from the receiver to the sender is an essential component of communication.
(vii) Communication is a dynamic process i.e., it grows and develops.
(viii) Communication is systemic i.e., every component of the process is affected by every other component. For example, if there is a fault in the telephone (channel of communication) it will affect the message received by the receiver.

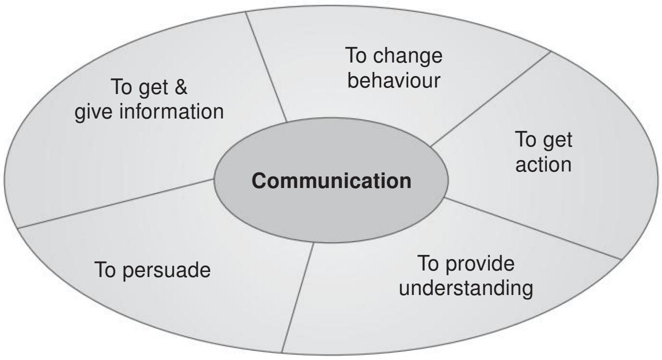


Figure 1.1 Purpose of Communication

As communicators we all know that communication is neither easy nor perfect. It is also important to understand that the act of communicating is not exactly the same thing as the process of communication. Merely sending a message does not mean that you have communicated effectively. Numerous factors like noise, perception, apprehension, stereotyping etc. hamper the communication process. As communicators we also recognise that during face to face communication receivers of the message are constantly giving us feedback. Listening to both verbal and non verbal aspects of feedback is perhaps one of the important aspects of communication. To be effective managers we must train ourselves to listen to not just what is being said but more importantly what is not being said. Along with listening, reading, which is also a part of reception in the whole communication process is equally important. With the advent of the internet, reading has taken on a new form. It would be incorrect to say that reading has taken a backseat as research shows that there is a tremendous amount

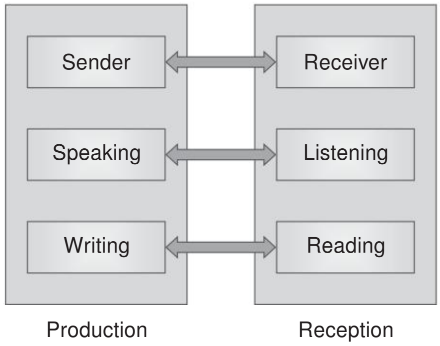


Figure 1.2 Elements of Communication

of information which is being read by people especially on the internet. In fact, there is a whole new problem of information overload that individuals are grappling with. Given the time constraints that employees face in the organisations it helps managers to be conversant with fast reading techniques like skimming and scanning.

Classification of Communication

Communication in an organisation can be broadly classified into two types, formal and informal**.** This classification is based on channels of communication used. Channel of communication is the path through which the information is transmitted. Formal communication refers to the official communication which follows the formal channel. Formal channels are the paths of communication which are institutionally determined i.e. by the organisation. This communication follows the scalar chain of command. Formal communication can be oral or written. Oral communication can take the form of interviews, meetings, presentations etc. Written communication can take the form of notes, memos, letters, reports etc. There are certain advantages of formal communication, namely, it is systematic and ensures an orderly flow of ideas. The source of communication can be easily located, it also provides support to authority of superior over subordinate, i.e., it facilitates control if required. On the other hand, it is slow moving since it flows through the scalar chain of command. It is also impersonal i.e., personal warmth and involvement could be lacking. Sometimes accurate information may be withheld due to likelihood of unfavorable effects or to avoid criticism. Formal Communication can be classified into:

- Downward communication
- Upward communication
- Horizontal or Lateral communication
- Diagonal communication

Downward vs. Upward Communication

Downward Communication	Upward Communication
1. It represents flow of information from the higher levels to the lower levels of the organisation i.e., from superiors to the subordinates.	1. It represents flow of information from the lower levels to the higher levels of the organisation i.e., from subordinates to superiors.
2. The purpose is to give orders and instructions, explain organisational policies, procedures and processes, and motivate or train employees or subordinates to perform better.	2. Purpose is to keep superiors informed about work progress, suggest measures of improvement, communicate grievances and create a feeling of belongingness through participation. It helps management to know the attitude of employees.
3. It takes place through verbal and written orders and instructions, notices, circulars, letters, memos, posters periodicals publications etc.	3. It takes place through activity reports, progress reports, suggestions, grievances, recommendations, and complaints.

Horizontal communication refers to the flow of information between persons at the same hierarchical level. Its main purpose is task coordination. It also provides emotional and social support to the individuals. Diagonal communication refers to flow of information between persons of different levels who have no direct reporting relationship. This communication pattern does not follow the organisational hierarchy but cuts across the chain of command. This kind of communication speeds up information flow, helps improve understanding and helps in coordination of efforts towards achievement of organisational objectives.

Informal Communication

Informal communication refers to communication between individuals and groups which does not follow the officially recognised channel. It is a result of social interaction among the various organisational members. The transfer of information may be related to work or other matters and it cuts across official lines of communication. The network or pathway of informal communication is called *grapevine*. The untrue part of the grapevine is called *rumour*. In a grapevine, flow of information takes place in all directions. Transmission of information is rapid because chain of command is not followed. It is selective about people who receive the information and it tends to extend beyond the formal hierarchy system. Grapevine may be of the following types:

(i) Single strand Chain: In this the individual passes on the information to another person who in turn passes it on to another person and so on. It is least accurate in passing information.

(ii) Gossip Chain: The individual communicates with everyone non- selectively.

(iii) Probability: In this the individual communicates randomly with others according to the law of probability.

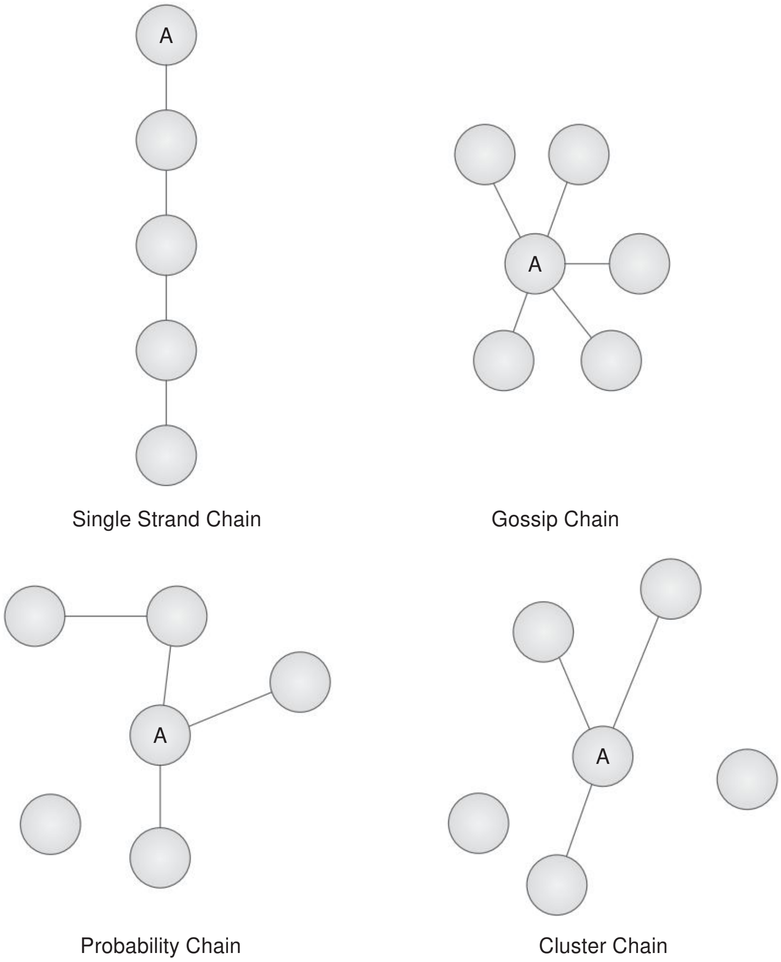


Figure 1.3 Types of grapevine

(iv) Cluster Chain: This is the most popular kind of grapevine. The individual communicates with only those people he trusts.

There are certain advantages of informal communication, like, it gives opportunity to form social groups and communicate with each other. Informal communication satisfies an important urge of people to know what is happening in other parts of the organisation and have the knowledge of the latest information. It is also very useful when information is required to be communicated very quickly. It is easier for people to express their fears and apprehensions through the grapevine. Smart managers should learn to use the grapevine to their advantage. There also exist certain disadvantages of informal communication, namely, it may not carry complete information. The

Comparison of Formal and Informal Communication

Formal Communication	Informal Communication
1. It follows officially established chain of command and lines of communication.	1. It is independent of authority relationships in an organisation.
2. It is a slow moving process.	2. It carries messages at a fast speed.
3. It is easy to pinpoint the source of the communication.	3. It is difficult to locate the source of the communication.
4. It consists mainly of work related matters.	4. It consists of work related as well as social matters.
5. It is orderly and systematic as regards direction of flow.	5. It is disorganised and unsystematic as regards direction of flow.
6. It serves organisational needs.	6. It serves organisational as well as social needs.

information may be distorted. Very often it is unreliable. Confidential information often leaks out through informal channels.

Methods of Communication

There are various methods which can be used to communicate. These are oral communication, written communication, verbal communication and non-verbal communication. Each of these has its own advantages and disadvantages based on which one can select the most appropriate method or a combination of methods under a particular set of circumstances.

Verbal Communication

Communication by using language is called verbal communication. It can be either oral or written. Communication through the use of signs and symbols is non-verbal communication. It includes non-verbal visual and non-verbal aural.

Oral Communication

Oral communication involves exchange of messages with the help of spoken words. It is most frequently used. It may take place through

- Face to face communication
- Mechanical and electronic devices

Advantages of Oral Communication

(i) It provides immediate feedback and clarifications. Receiver can immediately ask questions.

(ii) It builds up a healthy environment by giving a personal touch to the relationship between superior and subordinate.

(iii) It can be made more effective with supporting gestures and demonstrations.

(iv) It is time saving and cuts down paperwork.

(v) It is the most effective tool of persuasion and for resolving conflicts.

(vi) It is effective for group interaction.

(vii) It is economical both in terms of money and time.

(vii) It is flexible as it provides ample scope to the sender to make himself clear and make amendments unlike written messages which cannot be changed.

Disadvantages of Oral Communication

(i) It does not always save time and money. Very often meetings go on without results.

(ii) It is not always effective since it depends a lot on attitude of sender and receiver.

(iii) Limited human memory allows only limited retention of the messages. No records can be maintained.

(iv) In the absence of recorded or taped messages, oral messages do not have legal validity.

(v) Oral communication is not possible when parties who intend to communicate are at distant places and no means of communication is available.

(vi) It is not feasible when the message to be conveyed is very lengthy.

Written Communication

Written communication is transmitted by written words in the form of letters, memos, circulars, bulletins reports, instruction cards, pamphlets, newsletters, handbook etc. It offers several advantages. It is suitable for lengthy messages which are not possible to convey through oral messages. It is less likely to get distorted because it is difficult to alter the contents of written matter. The receiver too gets sufficient time to analyse and evaluate the message therefore the response is well thought of. Records can be easily maintained. It is possible to communicate figures, diagrams etc. better through written communication. It also has certain disadvantages as it is often difficult to make amends once the written message has been dispatched. The efficacy of the message too is largely dependent on the language drafting skills of the sender. It also takes longer than oral communication to convey the message and seek clarifications. It cannot be emphasised upon by the use of non-verbal messages which makes it less rich in terms of the cues present.

Non-verbal Communication

Speech is not the sole means of communication. People communicate even when they choose not to speak. When a person listens to someone speaking he does not merely interpret the words that are spoken to understand the message. He also looks at the person who is speaking and derives meaning from his gestures, the way the words are being said, appearance of the speaker etc. to understand the message in totality. Thus the receiver processes both verbal and non-verbal cues while receiving the message. Communication not involving the spoken word is referred to as non-verbal communication. Non-verbal message is a major part of the communication process. According to the classical Mehrabian communication model, words constitute only seven percent of the entire communication or the meaning we attach to the communication. 38 percent of the meaning derived is paralinguistic i.e., the way the words are said and 55 percent of the meaning is derived from gestures.

Research in communication has proved that non-verbal communication is extremely important in communicating the message. In fact, many times it is more important than verbal communication as non verbal messages may be used to repeat, accentuate, complement, contradict or substitute verbal communication. Non-verbal communication involves sending and receiving messages through gestures, body language, posture, facial expressions, clothing, appearance, managing time, symbols etc. Another aspect of non-verbal communication which to some extent is dependent on the spoken word is paralanguage which includes voice quality, intonation, stress, rhythm etc. As it is not language dependent, it can be said to have a universal appeal. Though, it varies a great deal with respect to culture. Common examples of non-verbal messages include looking at one's watch (when in a hurry), putting a finger on the lips (meaning to keep silent). It may be deliberate and conscious or unintended but generally it is less deliberate and conscious.

Though much of the focus of non-verbal communication is on face-to-face interaction, written text also have non-verbal elements which include hand-writing style, spatial arrangement of words or the use of emoticons (symbols used to covey emotional content in written message).

Characteristics of Non-verbal Communication

1. Non-verbal communication is less prone to manipulation as it exists at a more subconscious level. Individuals are more often than not, unaware of how they communicate non-verbally.
2. It is more factual/true as compared to verbal communication. Since it is less prone to manipulation, it represents a truer picture of the individual.
3. Non-verbal communication also tends to be less consistent with respect to interpretation. For example the likelihood of a gesture being misinterpreted is very large as different individuals would interpret the same gesture differently.
4. Many non-verbal cues need to be considered perhaps together at times to arrive at an appropriate interpretation. Non-verbal communication may complement or contradict verbal communication.

Case Study – The New Hire

Preethi's Story

Preethi Agarwal was very pleased to be starting a new job. It was a real break as jobs were few and she managed to land one as soon as she had finished her secretarial training. She arrived a good ten minutes earlier on her first day of work to create an impression on her boss, Mr. Guarav Bhatia, a manager in the marketing department. She had to stop at Personnel first to complete paper work which took about half an hour. As she got off the elevator on the fifth floor, she smiled and nodded to several women who were standing by the elevator. She asked one of them for directions to Mr. Gaurav Bhatia's office, and after a brief pause, the woman gave her the directions. When she arrived at the office, Preethi knocked on the open door. Mr. Gaurav Bhatia immediately stood up from his large desk and came to the door to shake Preethi's hand. He directed Preethi to one of the 'visitor' chairs and then leaned against the desk next to her, making her feel right at home. The next fifteen minutes were spent going over her duties, with her making a list and he occasionally leaning over her to check this list. Preethi grasped the work details well and she responded by smiling and speaking pleasantly. Mr. Gaurav Bhatia then showed Preethi to her desk and she began to work.

Arya Iyer's Story

Arya Iyer has been with the company for four years and in that time she had seen seven secretaries come and go. She figured something was wrong with Mr. Gaurav Bhatia and his secretaries, but nobody ever said anything about it. When the new secretary came in, Arya was surprised that she was so late , but not surprised at how she looked. Arya commented to her friend: "Here comes another sweet young thing for Gaurav to feed on. Have you noticed all his secretaries are young and naive?" Her friends laughed, and they went on with their work. Later, Arya looked into Gaurav's office and noticed that he was acting pretty chummy with Preethi.

Mr. Gaurav Bhatia's Story

Mr. Gaurav had the worst luck with secretaries. They seemed to come and go faster than the seasons and he desperately needed someone to keep up with the work load. He hoped this new one would be okay as he spent much time at work and needed to be compatible with the staff. When Preethi showed up at the door, he was pleased at her looks and thought she would liven things around here. Sitting on the edge of his desk, as he tended to do, Gaurav went over Preethi's duties. She seemed nervous, so he tried to be reassuring to her. As he did so, she responded with what seemed like a flirting behavior. Gaurav was not quite sure what to do about that, but he said nothing. Later he escorted Preethi to her desk, and he went on with the rest of his duties.

Discussion Questions

1. What non-verbal cues were at play in this scenario?
2. What meaning and functions were attached to the behaviors?
3. What factors may have led to so many different meanings for the same behaviors?
4. Was one of the interpretations best? Why?

Contributed by Shirley Thomas, Lecturer, CCE, Sultan Qaboos University, Muscat.

(Adapted from '*Non-verbal Communication in Organizations*' in **"Organizational Communication—Theory and Behavior"**, edited by Peggy Yuhas Byers, published by Allyn and Bacon, 1997).

Classification of Non-verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication can be broadly classified into the following categories:

Kinesics
Proxemics
Haptics
Chronemics
Paralanguage
Chromatics

1. Kinesics It is a science that deals with body movements. It includes gestures, facial expressions, posture, eye movement, appearance etc. Most of these body movements are instinctive and occur almost unconsciously but carry a substantial amount of the message. It is important to keep in mind that non-verbal communication interpretations on the whole vary from culture to culture.

2. Proxemics It studies how we communicate through the space around us. Anthropologist Edwar T. Hall classifies space in terms of distance or zones. Placing ourselves at the centre he talks about four zones *viz.* intimate zone, personal zone, social zone and public zone.

(a) Intimate zone – This zone is generally reserved for family members and close friends. This zone ranges from a distance allowing physical contact or touch to a distance of 18 inches. In business context this takes the form of handshakes in which the distance between individuals is 18 inches or so.

(b) Personal zone – This zone ranges from 18 inches to 4 feet. This zone represents conversation that takes place between close friends, colleagues, associates, with whom there is a certain sense of familiarity. This can be observed when certain important decisions are being taken or when conversation is more personal in nature.

(c) Social zone – The distance in this zone ranges from 4 feet to about 12 feet. Most official and/or formal interactions fall into this category. Most communication in organisations happens in this zone.

(d) Public zone – It ranges from about 12 feet till perhaps 'where the eye can see'. Most presentations and public speaking is done keeping this distance in mind.

Space is used differently by different people in organisations. For example, in the Indian context, traditionally it is considered polite to keep a considerable distance between a senior person and yourself as a sign of respect. Allocation of 'office space' also falls into the category of proxemics. Traditionally, senior people have always had larger, more spacious and better quality offices. Another way in which space has been classified is fixed space and semi fixed space. Fixed space consists of all permanent features like enclosed areas, walls, size of the room, shape of the room etc. Fixed space impacts communication by determining who interacts with whom, how accessible an individual is to others and for how long the interaction will take place. For example, closed spaces are generally meant for people higher-up in the hierarchy, making them less accessible to subordinates. On the other hand, a reception counter is an open space to facilitate accessibility. Similarly the design of a cash counter in a bank ensures that only the required amount of time is spent by the individual at the counter.

Semi fixed space refers to those features in the space around us which can be rearranged, changed or moved. Furniture, wall fixtures and other artifacts in the space around us comprise this aspect. For example, the kind of furniture in a conference room would be quite different from that found at the reception area of an organisation.

3. Chronemics Chronemics is the science that deals with the perception of time. It is one of the most important parameters from a business perspective. Our perception and attitude towards it is greatly influenced by the culture we belong to. Businesses worldwide lay a lot of emphasis on time and its optimal management. As managers, it is very essential to be extremely sensitive to time and the way its perception ranges from 'time is money' to a more 'flexi time' concept. Flexi time or stretchable time is based on a perception that relationships are more critical to businesses rather than time and therefore time is stretchable and subsequently less important.

4. Paralanguage As the name suggests paralanguage is something existing on the periphery of language. It is thus closely aligned to language. In fact, all oral messages have paralanguage. Elements of language such as voice, speed, pitch, pause, rhythm, volume, stress and tone comprise paralanguage. It is often described as the 'how' of an utterance and not just the 'what' part. Most often 'how' we say something is perhaps more crucial than 'what' we say. Paralanguage is the non-verbal aspect of communication. In simpler terms it refers to the tone in which a message is spoken or written. In written communication tone is perceived as attitude and may loosely translate to positive, negative, crude or helpful attitude. For example, remember the number of times you got offended due to the wrong attitude of a person in office or thought highly of a company because of the positive and helpful attitude of an employee who went out of his way to help you. It is therefore very critical that we pay equal attention to not just the content of the message but also how it is being delivered in both oral and written communication.

5. Chromatics The use of color to communicate is not new. In fact, since time immemorial, colour has been used symbolically in different cultures. For example, the color purple has often been associated with royalty in various cultures. Similarly, white is associated with chastity or peace. In organisations today colour is increasingly used to express organisational culture. BPO's/MNC's now use bright and colorful walls and upholstery to indicate that it is a 'happy' , 'cheerful' and 'fun' place to work in.

Barriers to Effective Communication

'Barrier' means hurdle, hindrance or obstacle. Thus a barrier to communication refers to any obstacle which comes in the way of smooth flow of information between the sender and the receiver. Barriers are undesirable as they result in miscommunication, misunderstanding, confusion and even conflict. 'Noise' is another undesirable element in the communication process which interferes with the flow of information. Noise may be defined as the disruption or interference in the communication process anywhere along the way. It can occur at any point along the communication process, i.e., it can occur when the message is flowing from the sender to the receiver or when the feedback is being transmitted from the receiver to the sender.

Problems/Barriers/Noise may arise at the following levels in the communication process

(i) Sender's Level
- During the process of formulating/organising thoughts, ideas and message by the sender
- During the process of encoding the message

(ii) Receiver's Level
- During the process of receiving the message
- During the process of decoding the message
- During the process of understanding/interpreting the message

(iii) Transmission Level
- While the message is (in the channel) being transmitted between the sender and the receiver

(iv) Feedback/Reaction Level
- During the process in which feedback is being formulated in the mind of the receiver
- During the process of transmission of the feedback
- During the process of receiving/interpreting

Barriers to communication can be classified into four types

(i) Language or Semantic barriers
(ii) Psychological barriers
(iii) Organisational structure barriers
(iv) Personal barriers

Language or Semantic barriers

Information and ideas require a language to be carried from one person or group of persons to another. A message delivered in a language not known by the receiver will not be understood by the recipient. Apart from an unfamiliar language there are other semantic barriers which hinder the communication process. The most common types of semantic barriers are

(i) Unclear message

An unclear message lacks clarity and precision and thus is poorly expressed. Poorly chosen words, bad organisation of ideas, lack of coherence, poor sentence structure and inadequate vocabulary lead to unclear messages.

To avoid sending unclear messages, great care should be taken in encoding the message.

(ii) Faulty translation

Every manager receives various types of communication from superiors, peers, subordinates and he must translate information meant for superiors, subordinates and peers into a language suitable for each. Hence it is important that the message or information be translated into appropriate words which the receiver understands. If there is a fault in the translation it will lead to misinterpretation.

(iii) Specialist's language

Use of technical jargon not understood by non-technical people or people belonging to a different field hinders communication because of the receiver's ignorance of the technical words resulting in his inability to understand them.

(iv) Assumptions

Many times confusion is caused due to assumptions, which underlie messages. Though messages may appear to be clear and specific the receiver may make certain assumptions on his own regarding the message which may differ from what the sender intended. This leads to miscommunication and can be overcome by proper feedback or seeking clarification when in doubt.

> *"Accept complete responsibility both for understanding and for being understood."*
>
> BRIAN TRACY

Psychological Barriers

The psychological state of both the receiver and the sender has an important role to play in listening, interpreting, encoding and decoding of messages. The following are some of the psychological barriers inhibiting communication.

(i) Differences in perception Different individuals perceive the same thing differently. Differences in perception arise because of individual differences, different job experiences, educational backgrounds, value systems and so on. Due to differences between individuals in the way they perceive, organise and understand their environment, perceptual barriers may arise. Accordingly the receiver will interpret the message based on his own background.

(ii) Closed minds This refers to the unwillingness on the part of the receiver to receive the information. A receiver with a closed mind considers all information communicated to him as an unnecessary overload and may not receive the message.

(iii) Inattention Communication will cease to be effective and will lose its purpose if people do not pay the required degree of attention to listening and understanding the message. Inattention may be a result of disinterest in the message or preoccupation of the mind with other thoughts.

(iv) Premature reaction Many times the receiver is too quick in commenting or reacting to the information without waiting for the full information. The receiver's reaction is thus based on incomplete information and this again leads to faulty communication.

(v) Emotions The emotional state of the receiver and sender also influence the communication process. Extreme emotions like anger, depression etc. may have a negative impact on the way the message is conveyed or received. Stress may also hinder the smooth flow of information.

(vi) Distrust of the Receiver Distrust of the speaker by the receiver leads to faulty communication because even if the message has good intentions the receiver tends to receive it with hostility. To facilitate open and honest communication a climate of trust is necessary.

Organisational Structure Barriers

Organisations have a definite structure and designated processes for attainment of organisational goals. Sometimes the structure and processes may act as barriers to effective communication. Organisational barriers include:

(i) Status relationships Organisation structure creates a number of status levels among the members of the organisation. This creates hindrances in two way communication especially in the upward communication between subordinate and superiors. If flow of feedback from receiver is blocked, understanding is likely to suffer. Non-listening habit of superior, desire to keep maximum information with oneself, hesitation on the part of subordinates to seek clarification from superiors and vice versa act as a hurdle to communication.

(ii) Organisational structure Organisational structure has an important influence on the ability of members of the organisation to communicate effectively. Businesses are growing in size and big organisations are characterised by

- Several hierarchical levels
- Long communication lines
- Coexistence of specialists
- Greater organisational distance between workers and top management

Organisational structure thus creates problems because communication may breakdown at any level due to faulty transmission

(iii) Rules and regulations Rules restrict the flow of certain information and also delay the messages at times. This barrier is strongly operative in bureaucratic organisations where observance of rules and regulations is very rigid and deviations from the same are not encouraged.

(iv) Physical distance Geographical distance between the sender and receiver may prevent the receiver from seeking an immediate clarification if he needs to. The receiver thus implements the message/instructions the way he understands it which may not be what is intended by the sender which results in faulty communication. However, due to advances in modern communication technology this barrier has been overcome to a large extent.

(v) Physical barriers Physical factors such as noise, pollution, dust etc also distort communication.

(vi) Mechanical barriers Any defect in the equipment used for the purpose of communication will also obstruct or distort the message being transmitted therefore it is important that the equipment be in perfect working condition.

(vii) Organisational facilities Organisational facilities provided to facilitate communication can be in the form of meetings, conferences, open door systems, suggestion boxes, social and cultural gatherings etc. If these are not properly emphasised people fail to make effective communication.

Personal Barriers

These barriers relate to factors internal to the sender and receiver. Since the sender and receiver are the two major parties in the communication process their characteristics have a significant impact on the communication process. Personal barriers include the following:

(i) Attitude of the superior The attitude of the superior i.e., how favourable he is to open and honest communication influences the effectiveness of the communication.

(ii) Fear of challenge to authority Superiors may withhold information because they may feel threatened and holding information provides them with a sense of importance.

(iii) Insistence on proper channel Superiors insist on the proper channel being followed however long it may be. Many times this results in delays reducing the efficacy of communication.

(iv) Ignoring communication Sometimes superiors deliberately ignore the communication from their subordinates to show their importance.

(v) Lack of time Many times superiors feel overburdened with work and they have little time to talk to their subordinates.

(vi) Filtering of information Sometimes the sender intentionally screens the information which will look unfavorable to the receiver. Filtering means that a sender manipulates information in such a way that it will be seen to be more favourable to the receiver. For example, a manager likes to tell his boss what his boss wants to hear. In the process he is filtering information. The result of filtering is that objective information is not transmitted.

(vii) Loss by transmission When messages pass on from person to person in a series of transmissions they are likely to become less and less accurate. They get diluted on the way.

Making Communication Effective

(i) Clarity in idea

The communicator should be quite clear about what he wants to communicate. Communication is a process that starts with a generation of ideas which are meant for communication. This is the subject matter of communication and may include opinions, attitudes, feelings, views, suggestions, orders etc.

(ii) Purpose of communication

Every communication has some purpose; the basic purpose of any communication generally is to generate a behavioral response from the receiver of the communication. For example, getting an order accepted by the subordinate. The communication should be directed towards this objective through the efforts of the communicator.

(iii) Empathy in communication

The way for communication is to be sensitive towards the receiver's needs, feelings and perceptions. This is what psychologists call empathy in communication implying putting oneself in other's shoes. When the sender of the message looks at the problem from the receiver's point of view much misunderstanding is avoided and communication improves drastically.

(iv) Two way communication

Communication is a two way traffic, which brings together two minds. It involves a continuous dialogue between the sender and the receiver of the message. Upward communication can become a reality in the organisation and effective if this fact is recognised.

(v) Appropriate language

The subject matter of communication is transmitted by decoding it into some symbols. Such symbols may be in the form of words either spoken or written or gestures. If words are used, the language used for communication should be such which is understood by the receiver. Technical terminology and multi-syllable words may be impressive looking but they can also be troublesome to the listener. One way of making the communication effective is to use language with which the receiver is familiar.

(vi) Supporting words with action

Often it is said that actions speak louder than words. While communicating the sender may use actions to emphasise a point. This enhances the understanding as well as emphasises the point while communicating.

(vii) Credibility in communication

One criterion for managerial communication is that it has credibility or believability. Subordinates obey the orders of the superior because they trust his competence.

(viii) Good listening

A communicator should be a good listener too. By listening, he not only gives others a chance to speak but also gathers information for further communication. By concentrating on the speaker's explicit and implicit meanings, the manager can obtain a much better understanding of what is being said. Unfortunately, managers suffer from bad listening habits though much of their time is spent in listening. Managers need to stop talking, put the listener at ease, show the speaker that they want to listen, remove distractions, empathise with the speaker, be patient, hold their temper, go easy on arguments and criticism, and ask questions to improve their listening skills.

Role of Communication

Communication is the life blood of every organisation. Managers communicate with subordinates to get work done. Subordinates seek clarifications and report to their superiors. Communication occurs at all levels in the organisation. With globalisation and breaking of boundaries between nations, the importance of communication has further increased. Increase in size of organisations, technological advancement and increasing competition all have contributed to the importance of an effective communication system. Communication can be internal i.e., transmission of information within the organisation or external i.e., transmission of information outside the organisation. Both are equally important.

Internal communication is communication within the organisation. It integrates and co-ordinates all the managerial functions, i.e., it facilitates planning, organising staffing, directing and controlling. Internal communication is thus considered important for the following reasons:

(i) Facilitates planning

Effective communication system facilitates both establishing and disseminating of objectives in an organisation. It further helps in planning for the achievement of these objectives by collecting timely and accurate information. In fact, the success of planning is largely dependent on the quality of information on which it is based.

(ii) Increasing complexity of business

Businesses are becoming increasingly complex. Due to specialisation, different functional areas like advertising, finance, sales, production, training, recruitment etc. are handled by different departments. For coordination of the various departments effective communication is essential amongst them. For example, the planning department may have spent a month to work out the details of a new project, but it will all prove futile if finances are not available to execute the project, or employees are not adequately trained.

(iii) Growth of businesses

Organisations have a number of branches both within the country and abroad. Therefore, for healthy and even growth there is a need for an effective and efficient network of communication. This will facilitate effective information transfer amongst various branches and also update information at the head office to facilitate planning and decision making.

(iv) Promotes cooperation and understanding

If there exists effective and smooth communication between the management and employees, it helps to bring about an atmosphere of mutual trust and confidence which is beneficial to both the parties. Management gets better returns as there is an increase in productivity. The employees get increased job satisfaction and they also develop a sense of loyalty and belongingness to the organisation.

(v) Helps in decision-making process

A decision-making process like planning is also based on availability of information. If the right type of information is not available at the right time due to lack of effective communication, the management will be unable to consider all the pros and cons before taking the decision. Effective communication results in high quality decision making.

(vi) Increases employee morale

Communication in organisations is the basis of morale building. The employees through an effective communication system can bring their grievances to the management and get them redressed satisfactorily. It thus creates trust and ensures job satisfaction.

Importance of External Communication

External communication is the exchange of messages of the organisation with external agencies—both government and private. External agencies include government agencies and departments, distributors, retailers, individual customers, competitors etc. Business organisations are required to deal with licensing authorities, foreign trade offices, banks, custom offices, income and sales tax offices, transporters etc. and all this calls for effective communication. Modern businesses are highly competitive and organisations which communicate better are undoubtedly more successful. External communication is thus considered important for the following reasons:

(i) Facilitates contact with the external environment

Organisations do not exist in isolation. It is important that they keep in touch with the external environment to follow the changes taking place and the effect they will have on the functioning of business. Good communication networks will enable organisations to anticipate changes and prepare accordingly.

(ii) Improves ability to handle competition better

This is an era of competition for businesses. Effective communication helps in handling information about competitors, their products, policies etc. to meet challenges of competition. The right kind of information at the right time can help in handling competition better.

(iii) Improves public relations

Communication helps in building relationships with all stakeholders who include customers, suppliers, competitors, press etc. Good communication promotes goodwill among various stakeholders.

Models of the Communication Process

Models of communication can be broadly classified into, Linear models and Interpersonal models:

Linear Models

These models view communication as a linear one way process. There is no provision in these models to know the response of the receiver. The models included under the linear category are

- Aristotle's Model
- Shannon-Weaver Model
- Harold Laswell's Model

Aristotle's Model This is one of the first models of the communication process. It is a very simple and elementary model. According to it, the communication process has three main elements viz., the speaker, the speech and the audience.

Shannon–Weaver Model In 1949, C.E. Shannon and Weaver developed the Mathematical Theory of Communication. This theory popularly called Shannon and Weaver theory concentrated on the technical aspects of communication. According to him the nine elements of the communication process include

- Information source
- Transmitter—to convert a message into transmittable signals
- Channel
- Receiver—who reconstructs the message from the signals
- Destination—the person or machine to whom it is intended
- The message
- Transmitted signals
- Received signals
- Noise source

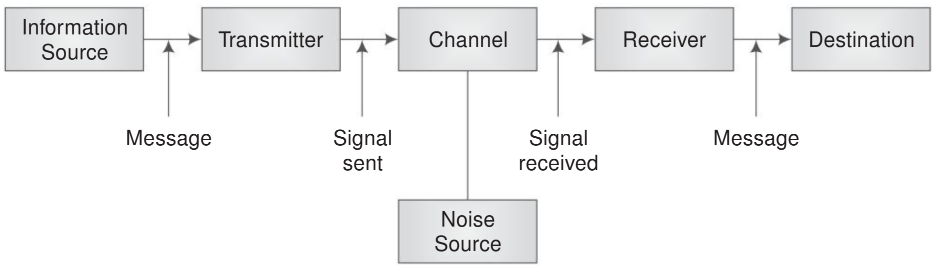


Figure 1.4 Shannon and Weaver Model

Harold D. Lasswell's Model Lasswell emphasised on the behaviour aspects of the sender. It has five elements *viz.* Who says What, through Which channel, to Whom and with What effect?

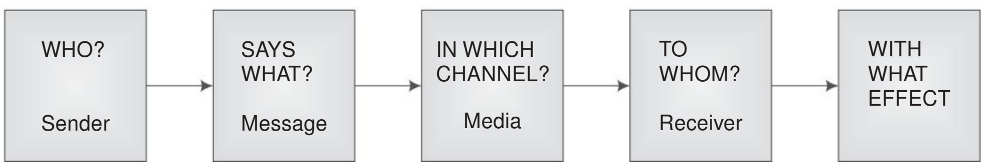


Figure 1.5 Lasswell's Model

Interpersonal or Interactional Process Model

The interpersonal model of communication is also called 'Circular' 'Cyclical model'. The element of feedback which was not there in the linear model has also been introduced in this model. Feedback is meant to measure and evaluate the message received by the receiver as well as to plan for future communication.

The following elements are essentially present in this model

Message, idea or stimulus

- Sender or transmitter or communicator
- Encoding
- Channel
- Medium
- Receiver
- Decoding
- Action or behaviour change
- Feedback

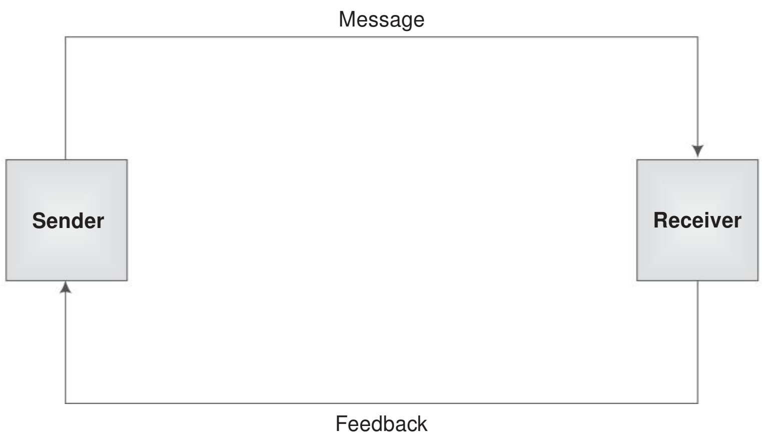


Figure 1.6 Communication Process Model

Perception and Reality

The communication process involves the symbolisation of our reaction to perception of reality. Our perception may differ from reality or may coincide with reality. To further clarify the understanding of the communication process the concept of reality and perception needs to be clarified. What is reality? Reality is all that exists actually in the real world in contrast to what exists in the minds of human beings. The reality that surrounds us can be classified into four kinds. Reality with substance, reality without substance, reality of events and reality of position relationships.

(i) **Reality with substance:** This reality includes those things which have distinct physical shape, form and composition. It is possible to see or touch this reality, like book, chair etc., all that we commonly call matter. This is the tangible aspect of reality.

(ii) **Reality without substance:** This kind of reality includes those elements which have no physical shape, form or composition, like air, colour, time etc. This is the intangible aspect of reality. This reality has greater composition in the world as compared to substance reality.

(iii) **Reality of events:** Reality of events refers to the events that take place in the world, like rising of the sun, falling of snow, blowing of wind etc. Parts of reality exist in relationship to one another. These relationships change and these changes are what constitute events.

(iv) **Reality of position relationships:** The fourth part of reality refers to the way components of reality are physically arranged in space. For example, the position of objects on the table in front of you refers to position relationship reality.

Perception on the other hand is the process by which individuals organise and interpret their sensory impressions in order to give meaning to their environment. Perception refers to attaching meaning to the stimuli. Many times what we perceive is different from what exists in reality, leading to errors in the communication process. The perception of reality also differs between individuals. This is because our positions of reference differ. For example, the left direction is not the same from different locations. Many times there exists a difference in our perception and reality. This can be attributed to three characteristics of reality *viz.* Infinity of Reality, Uniqueness of Reality and Changing Nature of Reality.

Infinity of Reality

Reality is infinite. It is humanly impossible to know all the aspects of an object or event. Our perception of reality is thus restricted to a small part of a much larger whole. There are two reasons why we cannot perceive the infinity of reality. These are inadequacy of our sensory organs and the non uniformity of our perception.

(i) Inadequacy of our sense organs Our sense organs pick up only some of the details of the selected object or event. They cannot pick up everything. For example our eyes cannot detect the microscopic details of an object. Our ears can only detect a small percentage of the sounds around us. Since there are too many details in reality and our sense organs can only perceive a small part of the whole, there is a difference in what we perceive and what actually exists.

(ii) Perception differences Different individuals perceive reality differently. No two perceptions are the same. Due to reality being infinite it is natural that different individuals will perceive different aspects of reality. There are so many complexities and variations in the real world that two individuals do not generally perceive precisely the same aspect. Further, when we communicate we do not communicate about the same aspect of reality due to differences in perception. This often leads to difficulties in the communication process.

Uniqueness of Reality

There are no duplicates in reality. Everything is one of its kind i.e., unique. No objects are absolutely identical. Neither are any two events absolutely identical. Some differences are readily visible while some may be detectable only at microscopic level. We may have to go to extremes to detect these differences. This effects our perception and consequently the communication. Communication difficulties stem because of our failure to perceive the uniqueness of objects and events. Objects, which we perceive as similar, are in reality different. If we condition ourselves to stress on differences in what we perceive, more effective communication will occur.

> *"To effectively communicate, we must realize that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our communication with others."*
>
> Anthony Robbins

Changing Nature of Reality

The third characteristic of reality that affects correct perception is the changing nature of reality. Nothing remains static. Things that appear static are also in reality not static. For example a book lying on the table untouched may appear to be static. But if we observe it at microscopic level it is changing. Its colour may fade or its pages may begin to get yellow. These changes are apparent only over long periods of time. On the other hand there are changes which are immediately apparent, for example the position of the sun during the day. We fail to properly consider the changing nature of reality when we perceive reality. When we perceive certain reality as static it results in problems in communication.

> *"Communication is a two-way street. And while we revel in the reality that we can always get through to heaven, our concern should be whether our Lord can always get through to us."*
>
> Joseph Stowell

SUMMARY

This chapter focused on communication as an important skill. It discussed characteristics of the communication process and also explained the various types of communication along with their advantages and disadvantages. The chapter classified the various barriers to communication into four categories *viz.* language related barriers, psychological barriers, organisation structure related barriers and personal barriers—related to sender and receiver. It also discussed means of making communication more effective. It further explained the importance of organisational communication i.e., both internal and external communication. It introduced the concept of reality and perception in relation to the communication process.

> *"Your ability to communicate is the most important skill you can develop to get on to the fast track in your career."*
>
> BRIAN TRACY

QUESTIONS

1. Read the following situations.

(a) While in college, Mrs. John crossed a group of students whom she had taught the previous year. Mrs. John smiled at them and expected them to respond in acknowledgement and wish her. She felt hurt when they 'looked through' her and did not even recognise her existence.

(b) Mr. Mehta was a diligent clerk who worked in the accounts department of a public sector company in India. Though popular, diligent and hard working he was a man of few words. His colleagues perceived him as rude and arrogant.

(c) Mrs. Khanna and Mrs. Subramaniam are good friends. One day Mrs. Khanna called up Mrs. Subramaniam and asked her if she would like to go for shopping. Mrs. Subramaniam confirmed that they would meet at the Grand Mall at 1.00 pm on the coming Wednesday. Mrs. Khanna reached the designated spot and waited for Mrs. Subramaniam for over an hour constantly trying to reach her on her cell phone that remained unreachable. Frustrated and angry, she shopped for a while before getting back home.

(d) The management of Sri Krishna Autos, Trivandrum, announce that the Marketing Manager Balasubramania is to retire and will be replaced by Mr. Pillai. One of the employees spreads the rumour that Mr. Pillai is a very arrogant man who favours only 'yes-men'. When Mr. Pillai finally joins the company, every statement and action of his are treated as threats. There is a general lack of trust and all actions of his are scrutinised for favoritism.

Analyse and discuss the above mentioned situations with respect to failure/barriers to communication.

2. 'Communication is defined as the interchange of thought or information between two or more persons to bring about mutual understanding'. Discuss the statement.
3. What are the various elements in the interpersonal model of communication?
4. Describe the various semantic barriers that hinder the communication process?
5. Write a short note on
   (a) Downward vs Upward communication
   (b) Written vs Oral communication
   (c) Grapevine
6. 'Communication is the life blood of every organisation'. In light of this statement describe the importance of internal and external communication.
7. Classify the given examples (B) of communication into one of the following categories (A) of communication
   (A) Interpersonal face-to-face communication
   Group communication
   Speaker - audience communication
   Written communication
   (B) Examples: reports, negotiation, speeches, debates, conferences, proposals, seminars, job interviews, proposals, workshops, oral presentations, group discussions, e-mails, letters, panel discussions, casual coffee shop conversations.
8. Match the following action with the kind of communication:

Action	Kind of Communication
• Worker voicing a grievance to his supervisor regarding his leave record • Factory hooter blowing to indicate lunch time • A 'No Smoking' sign outside the factory premises	• Non-verbal (Aural) communication • Written communication • Upward communication

• Notice regarding change of timing being put on the company notice board • Two co-workers gossiping about the probable reasons for the transfer of an employee	• Informal communication • Non-verbal (visual) communication

9. 'Communication is a two way process'. Explain with a suitable example.
10. Your boss calls you to his office and tells you that you need to take a vacation. What are the different ways in which you can interpret his statement?
11. Apply the communication model to
    (a) A telephonic conversation
    (b) Person reading a newspaper
    (c) Meeting
12. List three examples from your work place/college of the following types of communication
    Formal communication
    Informal communication
    Written communication
    Oral communication
    Upward communication
    Downward communication
    Horizontal communication
    Non-verbal visual communication
    Non-verbal oral communication
13. Imagine a situation in which you are explaining the features of a product to a customer. List out any three barriers which you are likely to face while communicating.

The McGraw·Hill Companies

EFFECTIVE LISTENING AND READING

chapter **2**

THIS CHAPTER WILL HELP YOU IN:

- Understanding listening and reading as important communication skills
- Discussing the various approaches to listening and reading and steps involved in the process
- Identifying poor listening habits, barriers leading to inefficiency in listening and ways to ensure better listening
- Explaining in context of effective reading the activities of selective reading, reading rate adjustment and note taking

"Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen."

WINSTON CHURCHILL

"The greatest compliment that was ever paid to me was when one asked me what I thought, and attended to my answer."

HENRY DAVID THOREAU

The chapter introduces listening as an important communication skill for managers. It describes objectives and importance of listening. It describes in detail the various stages of the listening process. In addition, it discusses the various levels and types of listening. It further lists out the poor listening habits leading to inefficiency in listening, the barriers to effective listening and tips on how to improve the listening process. The chapter introduces reading as an important intra-communication skill for learning. It goes on to highlight the purpose of reading. It describes the two approaches to reading, *viz.* the fast reading style and the slow reading style. Fast reading style covers the techniques of scanning and skimming. Slow reading style describes analytical reading and critical reading techniques. The section also delves into the various stages of the reading process. It further describes certain activities like selective reading, note taking and reading rate adjustment to improve reading efficiency. Finally, it lists out some tips for improving reading skills for managers.

LISTENING SKILLS

Effective listening is the process of analysing sounds, organising them into recognisable patterns, interpreting the patterns and understanding the message by inferring the meaning. Listening is not to be confused with hearing. Hearing is a physiological process which involves receiving the sound waves by the eardrum and transferring them to the brain. Listening is more than hearing. It involves the process of interpretation and inference. Listening is extremely important in the communication process. Many of the problems we experience with people are primarily attributable to ineffective listening or lack of listening. Good listening skills are the foundation of effective human relations. Good listeners can be good negotiators and can handle crisis situations successfully.

One spends a lot of time in listening. One quarter of our waking time is spent in listening. Research shows that at the workplace on an average, employees spend about 32.7% of their time in listening, 25.8% in speaking and 22.6% in writing. Effective listening is one of the most crucial skills for becoming a successful manager. This requires paying attention, interpreting and remembering what is being said. Listening is an important skill to be inculcated by managers and workers. Communication is not complete without effective listening. In fact, an attentive listener stimulates better speaking by the speaker. A good listener learns more than an indifferent listener and can restructure vague speaking into clearer meaning. A good listener also learns to detect prejudices, assumptions and attitudes.

"Nature gave us one tongue and two ears so we could hear twice as much as we speak."

Epictetus

THE LISTENING PROCESS

For listening to be effective and meaningful, the process of listening should involve hearing, filtering, comprehending, remembering and responding. These, in fact, can be called the five steps of listening. Hearing is the first essential step in the listening process and relates to sensory perception of sound. The listener further processes the perceived sound. For learning to be effective, hearing needs to be done with attentiveness and concentration. The next step involves sensing and filtering of heard sounds. The heard message is categorised as wanted or unwanted, useful or useless. The unwanted message is discarded. In this step the sense of judgement of the individual comes into play, i.e. the filtering process is subjective and a person chooses to retain what makes sense to him. The next level of listening consists of comprehending or understanding. The listener understands or interprets what the speaker has tried to convey. This activity can be described as absorbing, grasping or assimilating. For grasping, the meaning of the message the listener uses his knowledge, experience, perception and cognitive power. The verbal and auditory message is coupled with non-verbal communication to understand it.

Remembering relates to a process whereby the assimilated message is stored in memory to facilitate future recall. Remembering assumes significance because many times messages received are not meant for immediate consideration but for future use. For listening to be completed a response is important. Responding to a message may take place at the end of the communication, earlier or later. When it is stored for future uses response may take place later. However, if there is a need to seek clarification

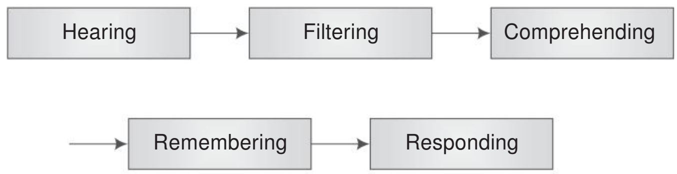


Figure 2.1 Listening Process

or need to empathise with the listener, it may take place earlier. Responding may also take the form of prodding or prompting that the message is being received and comprehended.

LEVELS OF LISTENING

Based on the effectiveness of the listening process, three levels of listening have been identified. Level 1 is Non-Listening and is the least desirable, followed by Level 2 which is Passive Listening. Level 3 is Active Listening which is the most desirable. Though we listen at all the three levels during the course of the day depending on our interest and situation, it is beneficial to move to Level 3 for maximum listening effectiveness. Good managers and leaders spend more time listening at Level 3.

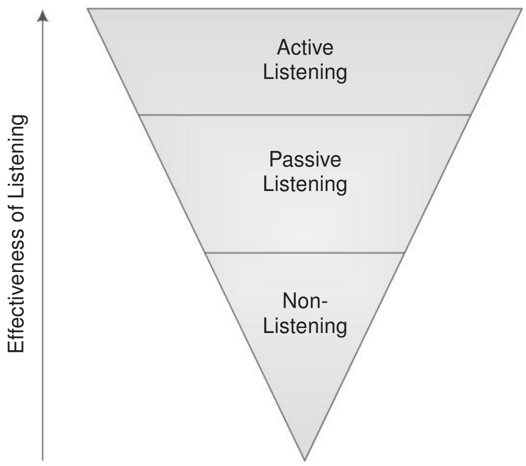


Figure 2.2 Levels of Listening

Level 1 - Non-Listening

Here the listener may appear to be listening but actually he is more occupied with his own thoughts. He is minimally aware of the speaker speaking. He is likely to appear detached and will be unresponsive and passive.

Level 2 - Passive Listening

Passive listening is more of hearing than actually listening. The listener superficially hears the words but does not understand in depth what is being said. He concentrates on the word content of the message rather than the feelings and emotions associated with the message. He does not involve much in the activity and rather than contributing equally to the conversational exchange he is merely talked to.

Level 3 - Active Listening

This is the most desirable form of listening wherein the active listener gives full attention to what is being said. The listener concentrates on what is being said and also motivates the speaker to speak, making it easier for the speaker to deliver the message. An active listener not only comprehends the message better but also is in a better position to remember and recall the message. He not only pays attention to the word content but also concentrates on the emotional and non-verbal aspect of the message. In active listening, the listener is directly involved in the conversation. He provides feedback to the speaker and voices his opinion.

> *"The most important thing in communication is to hear what isn't being said."*
>
> PETER F. DRUCKER

TYPES OF LISTENING

Listening could be of many types, namely, Discriminative Listening, Comprehension Listening, Evaluative Listening, Attentive Listening, Pretending Listening, Selective Listening and Intuitive Listening.

Discriminative Listening

This is the most basic type of listening. It involves identifying the difference between various sounds. It also enables one to differentiate between familiar and unfamiliar language. The subtleties of accent and pronunciation, typicality of a language can be identified by this kind of listening.

Comprehension Listening

This type of listening involves something more than just differentiating between various sounds. It involves attaching meaning to what is being listened to, i.e. comprehending the message. It may also include comprehending the non-verbal message being conveyed intentionally or unintentionally by the speaker.

Evaluative Listening

It's also called as critical listening. It involves not only comprehending the message but also evaluating and analysing the message being received in the light of ones own background. It involves judging the acceptability of what is said depending on how logical one finds it to be.

Attentive Listening

It involves paying attention to the words that are being spoken rather than understanding the head and heart of the person's message. It involves making a conscious effort to listen attentively and decode the message. The concentration is more on the verbal part of the message rather than the non-verbal aspect.

Pretending Listening

This is more of hearing than listening. It means pretending through facial expressions that the communicated message is being listened to when actually, it is not. It is observed mostly in boring class rooms or in meetings.

Selective Listening

Listening is done only partly or selectively. It involves selecting the desired part of the message and ignoring the undesired part of the message. The attention of the listener is not focussed and the listener keeps 'switching' himself on and off.

Intuitive Listening

It is a higher form of listening. It means listening through the intuitive mind by silencing the other forms of internal dialogues going on simultaneously.

> *"It seemed rather incongruous that in a society of super sophisticated communication, we often suffer from a shortage of listeners."*
>
> ERMA BOMBECK

INEFFICIENCY OF LISTENING

Research shows that after two days we retain only one fourth of what we hear. In fact, we do not hear all that is said and forget many of the things we hear. This is a reflection of our poor listening habits. Inefficiency of listening can be harmful for the organisation too. Some people like to talk more than they like to listen, some listen selectively, some cannot concentrate for long on what others are saying or some may just listen superficially. All this leads to ineffective listening. It is possible to improve your listening habits by identifying the poor listening habits and then working upon them to change them. Some of the most common poor listening habits are:

1. Inattentiveness: Not paying attention to the speaker is one of the major causes of inefficient listening. The listener may get distracted or may not want to hear what is being said. The listener withdraws attention and starts day dreaming.
2. Faking attention or "Pseudo listening": Often people who are not actually listening and are thinking about something else deliberately try to look as though they are listening. The listener may do so, not to appear rude or discourteous to the listener. At times this may lead to disasters in communication because such pretense may leave speakers with the impression that the listener has heard some important information or instructions offered by him.
3. Focusing on delivery: Sometimes a person concentrates on how someone says something and he pays little attention to what he or she is actually saying. The listener may focus on the appearance and other nuances of the speaker and in this way he/she misses out the real meaning of what is being said.
4. Rehearsing: If the listener is thinking about his reply before the other person has finished, then in all probability he is not listening. Some people listen until they want to say something; then they quit listening, start rehearsing what they will say, and wait for an opportunity to respond.
5. Interrupting: Some people prefer to speak rather than listen to someone speaking. Such a listener does not wait for the speaker to complete what he is saying so that the complete meaning can be determined, but interrupts, often resulting in a break of chain-of-thought of the speaker, and thus, hampering the communication process. Unnecessary interruptions may discourage and irritate the speaker.
6. Hearing what is expected: People like to hear what they want to hear. Very often people think they heard speakers say what they expected them to say. Further, people tend to accept only those communications that are consistent with their existing beliefs. Alternatively, they refuse to hear what they do not want to hear when someone speaks against their beliefs and perception. Poor

listeners tend to filter those parts of the message from their understanding, which do not readily fit with their own frame of reference.

7. Avoiding difficult and uninteresting material: The listener may just switch off listening when he finds the material is difficult to understand or uninteresting. This may become a habit with the listener and he will conveniently stop listening every time he encounters some difficult or uninteresting material. Many-a-time the listener may assume in advance that the subject is boring, unimportant or difficult.
8. Getting defensive: Sometimes listeners feel threatened by what the speaker is saying and they immediately become defensive, i.e. they try to justify their stance on whatever is being said. They may just over react to certain words and phrases. They get so involved in guarding themselves that they fail to comprehend the actual meaning of what is being said.
9. Being on the offensive: Some listeners seem to wait for the chance to criticise someone. They listen intently for points on which they can disagree and vent out their criticism. They constantly try to counter what is being said. Here too, they miss out the actual meaning of what is being said.

"There are people who, instead of listening to what is being said to them, are already listening to what they are going to say themselves."

ALBERT GUINON

BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE LISTENING

There are many factors that hamper or act as barriers to effective listening. These impediments to effective listening can be classified into:

Physical Barriers

Noise, poor acoustics, malfunctioning of the mechanical devices being used, frequent interruptions and uncomfortable seating arrangements are physical barriers which hamper effective listening. The first step in the listening process is hearing. Extraneous noise disturbs the hearing process. It disturbs both the listener and the speaker. In case a device like a microphone or telephone is being used, then malfunctioning of the device may result in failure of transmission from the speaker to listener. Poor acoustics of the room or uncomfortable seating arrangements may make it difficult for the listener to concentrate on the speaker. An interruption by people or the telephone while someone is speaking to you disturbs the concentration of the listener, frustrates the speaker and makes the listening process less effective. Message overload, which involves listening to a lot of information, one after another also makes it impossible to listen attentively beyond a point. Both the speaker and the listener influence the communication process. People related barriers can be both physiological (state of health, impairments and wandering attention) and psychological, i.e. related to attitudinal and behavioural factors.

State of health

The physical condition of the individual affects their listening ability. Fever, pain or any other form of bodily discomfort makes it difficult for an individual to listen attentively. Similarly, poor health conditions of a speaker reduce his ability to speak well and this in turn reduces the listening efficiency of the listener.

Impairment

As discussed earlier, hearing is the first step of the listening process and, therefore, a hearing impairment may lead to poor listening. Similarly, speech disorders of the speaker may make a speech incoherent to the listener. At times, the speaker's accent, though not a disability, may make it difficult for the listener to comprehend what is being said. Similarly, a speaker who speaks very rapidly is often problematic as an unclear message reaches the listener.

Wandering attention

Research shows that the human mind can process words at the rate of about 500 per minute, whereas a speaker speaks at the rate of about 150 words per minute. The difference between the two is quite large, i.e. 350 words per minute. This leaves the listener with sufficient time to let his mind wander. The listener has to be careful of this and rather than letting his mind wander, spend the time concentrating on the message and analysing it. This would improve listening ability greatly.

Psychological Barriers

These barriers relate to attitudinal and behavioural aspects. These include not being sure of the speaker's ability, personal anxiety, attitude, impatience or facing an emotional block. These are elaborated below:

Unsure of the speaker's ability Based on past experience or inputs from other sources, the listener may have a preconceived notion of the speaker's ability. He may perceive the speaker to be ill-informed, or lacking in depth and ability. This acts as a barrier to the listening process as the listener does not like to listen.

Personal anxiety Sometimes we are preoccupied with personal concerns and anxieties. This makes it difficult to perceive what is being said and thus, acts as a barrier to effective listening process.

Attitude The attitude of the listener may at times act as a barrier to effective listening. The listener may be highly ego-centric with a "know it all attitude" and may not listen because he feels that he already knows what the listener has to say. A casual attitude on the part of the listener towards listening, assuming it can be done without much concentration and effort, also acts as a barrier to effective listening. Similarly, an excessively critical attitude of the listener may shift the focus from listening to, trying to find errors in accent, delivery, grammar and even at times, appearance of the speaker.

Impatience The listener may not have patience to wait for the other person to finish what he has to say. He may be intolerant or may be eager to add his own points to the discussion. As a result, his desire to speak overrides his desire to listen.

Emotional blocks Deep-seated beliefs may make it difficult for the listener to listen to ideas which go against his beliefs. He may hear such an idea wrongly or it may get distorted in his mind to match his perception. He may also at times completely block it off by not listening to it. Many times he blocks something off completely because of painful memories associated with it.

> *"There is no such thing as a worthless conversation, provided you know what to listen for."*
>
> JAMES NATHAN MILLER

IMPROVING YOUR LISTENING ABILITIES

Effective listening calls for efforts on the part of the speaker, listener as well as others concerned with the process to remove the barriers that come in the way of effective listening. As stated above, conscious efforts have to be made by the listener to improve his listening ability and develop effective listening skills. Some important guidelines to develop listening skills by the listener are:

1. Concentration

   To be a good listener, one must pay attention to the speaker. When a speaker is a dull conversationalist or it is difficult to follow the speaker because of voice problems like a regional accent, etc., a listener may have to make an extra effort to keep himself from being distracted. Research shows that the more motivated a listener is, the more receptive he is.

2. Preparation

   Sometimes it is better to make some preparations beforehand in order to improve listening, especially in case of topics which are perceived as difficult. Preparations may include gathering information about the topic or removing distractions in the environment. This will help in developing an interest in what the speaker is saying and will also help in focusing on the message.

3. Show interest

   Show that you want to listen by being and looking attentive. It is important not only to focus on the speaker, but to use non-verbal cues (such as eye contact, head nods, and smiles) to let the speaker know that he is being heard. A listener may ask appropriate questions at the right time to show his interest in what is being said.

4. Listen for the whole message

   Listen not only through your ears but use other senses also to get the complete message. This includes looking for meaning and consistency or congruence in both the verbal and non-verbal messages and listening for ideas, feelings, and intentions as well as facts. Pay attention to the voice intensity, inflection, emotional cues, body movements, etc. while listening to the speaker to ensure getting the message in totality.

5. Empathy

   Empathise with the speaker, i.e. put yourself in the speaker's shoes. This will help the listener better understand what the speaker is trying to say rather than what he wants to listen. For listening to be effective and achieve its objective, it is important that the listener understands the message from the speakers' point of view.

6. Listening before evaluating

   Listening to what someone says without drawing premature conclusions is a valuable aid to listening. Premature judgment hampers effective listening. Listen patiently to what the speaker has to say. Give him time to complete what he has to say. By questioning the speaker in a non-accusing manner, rather than giving advice or judging, the listener can often discover exactly what the speaker has in mind which at many times is quite different from what the listener has assumed.

7. Note taking

   Many experts recommend note taking as an important technique to improve the efficacy of the listening process. Taking down notes not only enhances the attentiveness of the listener but also helps him record what is being conveyed. Further, when the speaker sees that his listeners are sufficiently interested to take notes, it generates confidence in him and motivates him to speak better.

8. Paraphrasing

   Paraphrasing is simply restating what another person has said in your own words. It serves a dual purpose as firstly, it acts as a control device to check whether the listener has listened carefully and secondly, it checks accuracy because by restating what has been said and feeding it back to the speaker, the listener verifies the accuracy of his understanding. The best way to paraphrase is to listen carefully to what the other person is saying. It is important that the listener paraphrases often so that he eventually becomes habitual of it.

9. Body Language

   The listener should maintain a positive body language which reflects the listener's interest in what is being said, like an upright posture and maintaining eye contact with the speaker. An upright posture also helps a listener have better concentration. At the same time, if the listener leans forward slightly it shows that the listener is interested in what the speaker is saying. Constantly fidgeting, too much movement, etc. reflect a lack of interest on the part of the listener and this may de-motivate the speaker.

"Those who treasure the sound of their own voice above all others are truly deaf."

Steve Bersani

Since communication is a two-way process, the onus of improving the communication process lies not only with the listener but also with the speaker. The speaker too can influence the way in which the listener listens to the message. For facilitating effective listening by the listener, the speaker needs to have clarity of thought and purpose, i.e. he should be clear about what he is conveying to the audience. The speaker should also try to make the message lively, stimulating and relevant to capture the attention of the listener. The speaker should also try and empathise with the listener/s. He should imagine himself in their position as this would help him know if the listeners understand the message or they are bored or confused. The speaker should also modulate his delivery to retain the attention of the audience as a dull and monotonous voice may induce the listeners to switch themselves off.

"To listen closely and reply well is the highest perfection we are able to attain in the art of conversation."

Francois de La Rochefoucauld

"Who speaks, sows; who listens, reaps."

ARGENTINE PROVERB

READING SKILLS

Reading is an act of communication. It is a type of intra-communication meaning a communication that a person makes with herself/himself. Reading serves the objective of discovering information, of expanding ones knowledge and understanding of a subject, and is often a very enjoyable activity. Though it is generally assumed that 'everyone knows how to read' not everyone does, and those who do, often do not read as effectively as they could possibly do. Research shows that on an average, people generally read 250-300 words per minute comprehending about 65% of what they read. However, individuals are capable of reading better and much faster, i.e. at almost double the speed but poor reading habits generally slow them down.

Reading as a skill is learnt much after listening and speaking. Active reading, i.e. reading with comprehension requires concentration, perception, comprehension and later interpretation and retention. Reading can be made more effective and enjoyable by working on enhancing the reading skills to increase not only the speed of reading but also the comprehension and consequently the retention. In general, we read keeping a particular reason in mind, be it a newspaper or a course book. Why we are reading a particular written document determines the way we read it. The speed at which we read also varies with what/why we are reading. Good reading strategies help us to read in a very efficient way.

PURPOSE OF READING

Before actually beginning to read it is important to know the purpose of reading, i.e. why reading is being done. When the purpose of reading is known, it greatly enhances the effectiveness of reading. Also, the knowledge of the purpose can help one adopt a style of reading, best suited for that purpose. One of the basic purposes of all reading is to provide the missing link to the reader between what he knows and what he needs to know.

Some of the reasons for reading a particular text have been summarised in the website *http://www.learnline.cdu.edu.au*. These include pleasure and enjoyment and also other practical applications such as to obtain an overview, to locate specific information, to identify the central idea or theme and, perhaps also, to develop a detailed and critical understanding of a concept.

(i) Pleasure and enjoyment

This is probably the best reason to read anything. One often chooses a reading material with the purpose of deriving pleasure and enjoyment. Reading entertains and, even relaxes. However, this is rarely the purpose behind the reading that one needs to do for academic purposes.

(ii) Practical application

Here, the purpose is to gain information that one can apply or use in a practical situation. Books such as laboratory manuals, computer manuals, instruction booklets, and recipe books are all texts that one refers with the purpose of gaining specific information.

(iii) To get an overview

The point here is to get a general feel of the material, to determine whether it is relevant, useful, up to date, and to get a sense of how the topic is treated by the author. This is likely to be the main purpose behind reading when one is given an extensive reading list for an assignment or when one is conducting an initial library research for an essay, tutorial, research report or similar assignments and needs to decide which texts are most relevant or useful for the assignment.

(iv) To locate specific information

Sometimes we know what we are looking for but do not know exactly where to find it. For example, one might be looking for a specific quotation, an evidence to support a particular argument, details about a specific person or event, a map, a diagram or a table of statistics. To find this sort of information might mean referring several books or sources. In these circumstances the reading aim would be zeroed in on the information one is looking for.

(v) To identify the central idea or theme

The purpose here is to extract the essence of what the written material is trying to convey. For example, one might want to identify the major findings in an experimental article in a journal, or the core issue of a discussion paper.

(vi) To develop a detailed and critical understanding

On many occasions, one may need to master fully the material in a book, journal, article or manual to evaluate its arguments, perspective, and/or evidence. This will require reading the material thoroughly, making effective and relevant notes and keeping an open mind by being aware of one's own ideas and opinions regarding the issues involved.

READING STYLES/APPROACHES TO READING

After one is aware of the purpose of reading one has to decide on the style which needs to be applied to best suit the purpose and the reading material. Deciding the approach to reading, answers the basic question, "How to read?" There are two approaches to reading, namely, fast reading approach/style and slow reading approach/style. To be an effective reader, one needs to use a mixture of the above techniques; varying the type of reading one employs, and the speed at which one reads.

Fast Reading Approach/Style

This approach is best suited when the purpose of reading is to select the relevant material from a large amount of reading material, get an overview of what is contained in the reading material, look for certain specific words, information, dates, etc. or identify the core theme or message being conveyed. Scanning, including spotting key words and skimming, are techniques that can be used for fast reading.

(i) Scanning

Scanning is a fast reading style in which the reader examines the text to look for specific information. This type of reading is usually done for searching information through a list of numbers or addresses for a specific one. It is usually done very quickly. One just sees the words on the page and does not actually read. In fact, some people consider scanning not as a reading technique but as a search technique. It involves quickly spotting the required key words or numbers. Scanning is extensively used while browsing the web pages to look for specific information. The following are the steps involved in the scanning process when one needs to search for specific information in a book: look at the table of contents and look for the information in the chapter titles or sub-titles. If the information is not found in the chapter titles or sub-titles go to the index at the back of the book. Search for the relevant topics or key words in the index. Once one finds the relevant topic/key word either in the table of contents or in the reference index at the back of the book, one can go to the specified page/section and read the appropriate paragraph. One can evaluate if the topic is relevant to what one needs. It may be helpful to read the preceding/succeeding paragraphs too.

Scanning also includes spotting of key words which means looking for key words in the given passage or paragraph. Key words are those words that are relevant for the topic, i.e., for the topic for which one is searching. While searching for key words one must pay particular attention to opening paragraphs, sub-headings, underlined, bold and italicized words. It is suggested to move your eyes in a "Z" shaped fashion to locate the key words, i.e. begin from the top left hand corner of the page and move from left to right as you move down.

(ii) Skimming

This type of reading is done when one wants to identify the core/main idea of the material. It provides a broad overview of what is primarily contained in the material.

It is useful in selecting relevant material that can later on be read in detail. It saves a lot of time by not spending too much time on reading what could be of little relevance to the reader. It is also suitable when a lot of material has to be read in a limited time as one does not read word by word. It is of course no substitute for thorough reading and should be used only to locate material quickly or where no in-depth understanding of what is being read is needed. Generally, it involves going through the chapter headings and sub-headings, introductions and summaries. There are two basic skimming techniques namely, 'Start finish technique' and the 'First sentence technique'.

Start finish technique This technique involves reading the beginning and ending of each chapter/section/sub-section. This technique is based on the assumption that largely written material is structured into three parts – introduction, body and conclusion. Also, the central theme will briefly appear in the introduction and the conclusion and will be discussed in detail in the body of the text. Therefore, reading the beginning and the ending of the text will give an idea of the central theme of the text, i.e. what the material is all about.

First sentence technique This technique involves reading the first sentence of each paragraph. This technique is based on the assumption that the first few sentences or the opening sentence of each paragraph introduces the main points that will be discussed in that paragraph. Thus, reading the first sentence of each paragraph gives a fairly clear understanding of the major contents and structure of the material being read.

Slow Reading Approach/Style

Reading is generally an enjoyable activity but at times, it becomes tedious when the person reads in a language which is unfamiliar or he lacks fluency and his attention gets divided between the content of the message and the language. Research also indicates that decoding of a message is also very important, because without decoding the message, the reader fails to 'understand' it, as is the case when children read without actually understanding what they are reading. It is only after decoding the message does learning take place.

Slow reading is required for an in-depth thorough analysis and understanding of the material. It involves paying attention to detail. Unlike scanning and skimming which take less time, slow reading requires more time and concentration. Comprehension is greater in this kind of reading though it is time consuming and generally involves word by word reading. This style is ideal when the purpose of reading is to remember and analyse what has been read, follow technical instructions, gain an in-depth understanding or critically evaluate the material. It is used when the material being read is comparatively difficult to understand and requires careful analysis.

Slow reading is suitable for technical material, text containing unfamiliar words, etc. Analytical reading and critical reading are two 'slow reading techniques'. Analytical reading involves active reading in which the reader gains an in-depth understanding of what he is reading by simultaneously analysing it. Critical reading, on the other hand, involves evaluating the arguments presented by the writer. To gain deeper understanding of concepts it is useful to critically read the text. Critical reading provides an answer to the following questions—Are the arguments used logical? Are statements backed by adequate evidence? Are both sides of the case presented evenly? Thus, a critical reader tries to answer the question whether he agrees with the writer and if not, what is his argument to counter the writer's point of view.

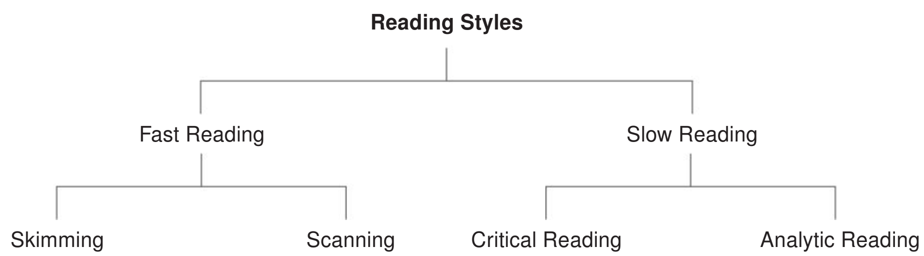


Figure 2.3 Reading Styles

READING PROCESS

One of the popular methods of reading is the SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recall, Review) method and involves the following steps:

Survey

This, in fact, is a pre-reading step where you survey the material prior to your actual reading by scanning the title, headings and any summary or abstract that it might have. Before you actually begin reading the material, skim the entire reading material. Understand the organisation of the reading material by going through the title page, table of contents, preface, appendix, bibliography, etc. Next, survey each chapter, i.e. go through the chapter objectives, chapter summary, headings, sub headings, etc. Also, go through the illustrations, tables, graphs, charts, etc. All these help in getting an idea about what the author is trying to convey.

Question

Before reading, put down specific questions you would like to answer. This not only clarifies your purpose of reading, but also helps you focus and remember what you have read. Turn headings given in chapters into questions. The five cardinal questions – Who, Why, What, Where and How—need to be answered. While reading, think of these questions as this would help you concentrate on reading. At the end of the reading, again think of these questions to get an idea of how successfully they have been answered. Use the questions during revision to help you remember what you have read. Be an active reader. Question the author's thoughts and ideas. Read critically and do not passively accept what the writer is presenting in the text. A questioning attitude of the reader actually facilitates learning.

There are three stages in reading. The first is the information that is being presented on the page for all to read. This stage is called literal recognition because it just involves drawing literal meaning from the words of the writer. The second stage is reading between the lines, i.e. inferring what the author is trying to convey through the text. This is called interpretative recognition. It involves understanding what the writer means, i.e. the writer's interpretation of the text. The final stage is going beyond the text and generating new and creative thoughts based on the reader's previous knowledge learning and experience. This is called connective recognition. It results in generating new ideas, solutions, looking at things with a new perspective or a change of views. Try to move to this final stage while reading so as to actually benefit from reading.

Read

Read the material twice. Read the first time without making notes. Also, compare the diagrams and illustrations with the written text and re-read parts that are unclear. This may reduce your speed of reading a bit though. On your second reading, take notes, and look for important details, supporting evidence and examples.

Recall

Try to recall what you have read by closing the book and making notes of what you remember. Recalling helps send the main points to long term memory of the reader. Recall at regular intervals to check your understanding of the material.

Review

Check to see that you have answered all the questions you wrote down at the beginning. Note down any other point that you think is important.

ESSENTIALS OF EFFECTIVE READING

There is a plethora of information available to us which needs to be read. To gain a competitive edge over others, one needs to know more than others and for this an effective reading is vital. It is important to read quickly and also to remember and understand the information read. Some of the activities which contribute towards better reading have been summarised in the following sections. These include selective reading, reading rate adjustment and note taking. Let us elaborate each of these:

Selective Reading

Since a lot of information is available to us it is important to be selective and choose only that which is relevant to us. One of the strategies of selective reading is Layered reading. Layered reading strategy involves four stages, *viz.* overview, preview, read and review:

Overview

Spend about 5-10 minutes looking at the entire reading material rapidly and getting an idea about its organisation, structure and contents. Overview determines whether you want to read the material further or not.

Preview

Preview each chapter at a rate of approximately 4-5 seconds per page. Mark out the relevant sections that you wish to read.

Read

Read the relevant portions at a speed you think appropriate, depending on the kind of material and the purpose.

Review

After reading each chapter/section, review what you have read. This helps in better retention and understanding.

Reading Rate Adjustment

One of the keys to gaining efficiency in reading is to adjust the rate of reading as you read along depending on the difficulty level of the material and the purpose. The rate can range from maximum for easy, familiar, interesting material or material which needs to be scanned or skimmed as against a minimal speed for material which is technical, difficult, and unfamiliar in content and language or which needs to be critically evaluated, analysed or retained.

There are two kinds of reading rate adjustments which may be required to be done by the reader.

Overall adjustment to the material as a whole

This establishes a basic rate at which the material needs to be read depending on various factors listed above, *viz.* purpose, difficulty level and familiarity.

Internal adjustment in the material

This establishes necessary variations in rate of reading for sections and sub-sections of the reading material. One needs to decrease the rate of reading in the following situations: when text contains unfamiliar words or technical jargons, when text has difficult sentence and paragraph structures or when text consists of detailed technical information or material that you need to recall or retain. One also needs to decrease the rate of reading when the material is in a language you are less familiar with or when the text explains a complicated concept.

On the other hand, one can increase the rate of reading when the material is simple and easy, comprises of familiar concepts or contains detailed elaboration which one is familiar with. It also comes in handy when the text consists of unnecessary illustrations and examples which are not needed or a summarisation of what is contained in the previous paragraphs. Thus, an ability to vary the rate of reading both from article to article, and also within a given article, helps one to become an effective reader.

Note Taking

Note taking is an important component of reading. The purpose of taking notes while reading helps you to remember what you read. It not only improves retention of the read material, but also enhances understanding. In fact, good notes can save you the trouble of having to read the text again. Notes should include a reference to the text, author's name, title, publisher, and place and date of publication. Notes should be taken down clearly and legibly because you will need to refer to them again. Highlight/underline the key words as this helps in better recall. You can also underline some important sentences. However, be selective in what you underline. Only underline what is essential. Marginal note taking is also an effective technique. This involves writing the key words/central idea pertaining to each paragraph in the margin adjoining the text. Avoid taking notes the first time you are reading the material. First read a part of the material and understand it. Locate the main idea and then paraphrase it in your own words. Avoid copying the text directly from the reading material. It is a good idea to review the notes to ensure that these are logical and comprehensible, conveying what is intended.

TIPS FOR IMPROVING READING SKILLS

It is essential to read with a purpose. In-depth reading may prove worthless if the material you are reading is not relevant to what you need. Remind yourself periodically to the questions to be answered.

Preview the material you are planning to read by scanning the table of contents, headings, introduction, and conclusion before you actually start to read. When searching for specific information follow the 80-20 rule, i.e. get 80% information in 20% of the time. Also, for a better understanding you can underline/highlight the main points, put a question mark next to sentences that you are unclear about or use marginal noting technique to summarise key ideas in the paragraph. It is also a good idea while reading difficult text to divide the sentence into shorter parts. One can also increase the speed of reading by focusing on groups of 2-3 words rather than individual words. Improve your vocabulary by familiarising yourself with new words. This will help in better understanding and will also prevent you from getting stuck with new words. Read a lot as this will also help you read better. Be an active reader. React to the reading – agree, disagree, question—to help you to understand and retain what you have read. Be prepared to read the material twice. Taking notes while reading helps one to remain focused and also improves retention. Reading speed can further be increased by focussing on the key words and ignoring filter words, skipping what you already know, and which is of no relevance to you. Material which seems particularly difficult, can be skipped initially. You can come back to it later. You could also use your index finger to move down the text at a pace faster than your reading speed. You should of course reread your notes on a regular basis to maximise the retention of information.

SUMMARY

The chapter focused on listening as an important communication skill. It discussed the objectives and importance of listening. It explained the five stages of the effective listening process, *viz.* hearing, filtering, comprehending, remembering and responding. It further explained the various levels of listening and types of listening, *viz.* discriminative listening, comprehension listening, evaluative listening, attentive listening, pretending listening, selective listening, and intuitive listening. It also listed out poor listening habits and barriers to effective listening. Finally, it listed tips for the speaker and listener to improve their listening efficiency. The chapter also focused on effective reading. It discussed the purposes of reading. It also discussed the styles/approaches to reading, viz. fast reading style and slow reading style wherein it familiarised the reader with reading techniques like scanning, skimming, analytical

reading and critical reading. It further explained the steps in the reading process. It also dealt with good reading strategies like selective reading, note taking, etc. that help you read in a very efficient way.

QUESTIONS

1. What is effective listening? Explain its importance with special reference to organisational communication.
2. Differentiate between listening and hearing.
3. Briefly explain the types of listening.
4. What are the objectives of listening?
5. Discuss various stages of an effective listening process.
6. List the barriers to effective listening.
7. Describe the various techniques to improve listening skills.
8. What is the purpose of reading?
9. What is the difference between skimming and scanning?
10. Write a short note on layered reading.
11. What is critical reading?
12. Discuss the various steps in the reading process.
13. List out some guidelines to improve reading skills both in terms of comprehension and speed of reading.
14. Describe various approaches to reading along with the techniques used therein.
15. Read the following two articles or have someone read them to you. See how many ideas in the articles you can recall.

1. ARE YOU JEALOUS?

Jealousy, the green-eyed monster, is closely related to envy, a deadly mix of inadequacy and anger that will torment you if your self-esteem is on shaky ground.

While on one hand, it is generally assumed that men are more vulnerable to the feelings of jealousy than women in certain areas, particularly in their intense desire for power, position, status, possessions and reputation, on the other, women could be jealous about things as trivial as their neighbour's car, the wall texture on the neighbour's wall to the more profound that might include a jealous mother-in-law of the type we often see in today's television serials.

A jealous person must possess the object another has, must gain security through performance and must gain acceptance of a higher authority. The problem gets compounded if it starts to distract you from your own life. You are so preoccupied with someone else's circumstances; you end up ignoring your own. Jealousy and envy of course can do you immense good if they motivate you to improve your appearance, loose those extra pounds learn a new skill or work on your self-esteem.

As much as we hate to admit it, we've all been jealous of someone else at one time or the other. We hate to admit it because the emotion we feel is a deep, dark, nasty feeling. Jealousy is the surface lesion that hints at the real wound: a sense of personal loss, a lowering of self-esteem and, at times, a feeling of self-criticism. These deeper emotions seep out in the form of jealousy and they can be tough to deal with in the workplace, where there is immense competition for rewards and opportunities.

Employees who find themselves the object of envy and jealousy may be victims of what is called the Cinderella Complex. Merely doing ones job well can arouse a sense of inferiority in others that leads to resentment and hostility at work resulting in the group of the low self-esteemer's who think work is very competitive, where people are pitted against each other.

As technology grows ever more complex, jobs become increasingly specialised. That means workers rely on each other more than ever to generate products and services. If problems or tensions hamper these interdependent relationships, organisations become vulnerable.

Gossip, backbiting and jealousy are evil attitudes that erupt into harmful words, and there's no doubt they do great harm. As you know, gossip and backbiting are absolutely no fun unless you have someone to listen and to agree. When others gossip and backbite, if we could just keep quite and make no response whatsoever, jealously would often die its own death.

Source: Sethi, Anjanee (2006), 'Are you Jealous?' for the column 'People Dynamics' in *Gurgaon Explorer*, a weekly Lifestyle Newspaper, Dec. 3, 2006

2. CORPORATE CULTURE AND INDUCTION PROGRAMS

Hey there! Preparing to join that dream organisation? Here is something which would help you become part of your organisation rather quickly.

All those years spent at college were really fantastic, but college life is totally different from the corporate world you are going to enter. No more bunking classes (study responsibilities). No more time pass. No excuses for non-submission of assignments. Soon, they would become part of the past. You would be required to learn the corporate culture and organisational ethics.

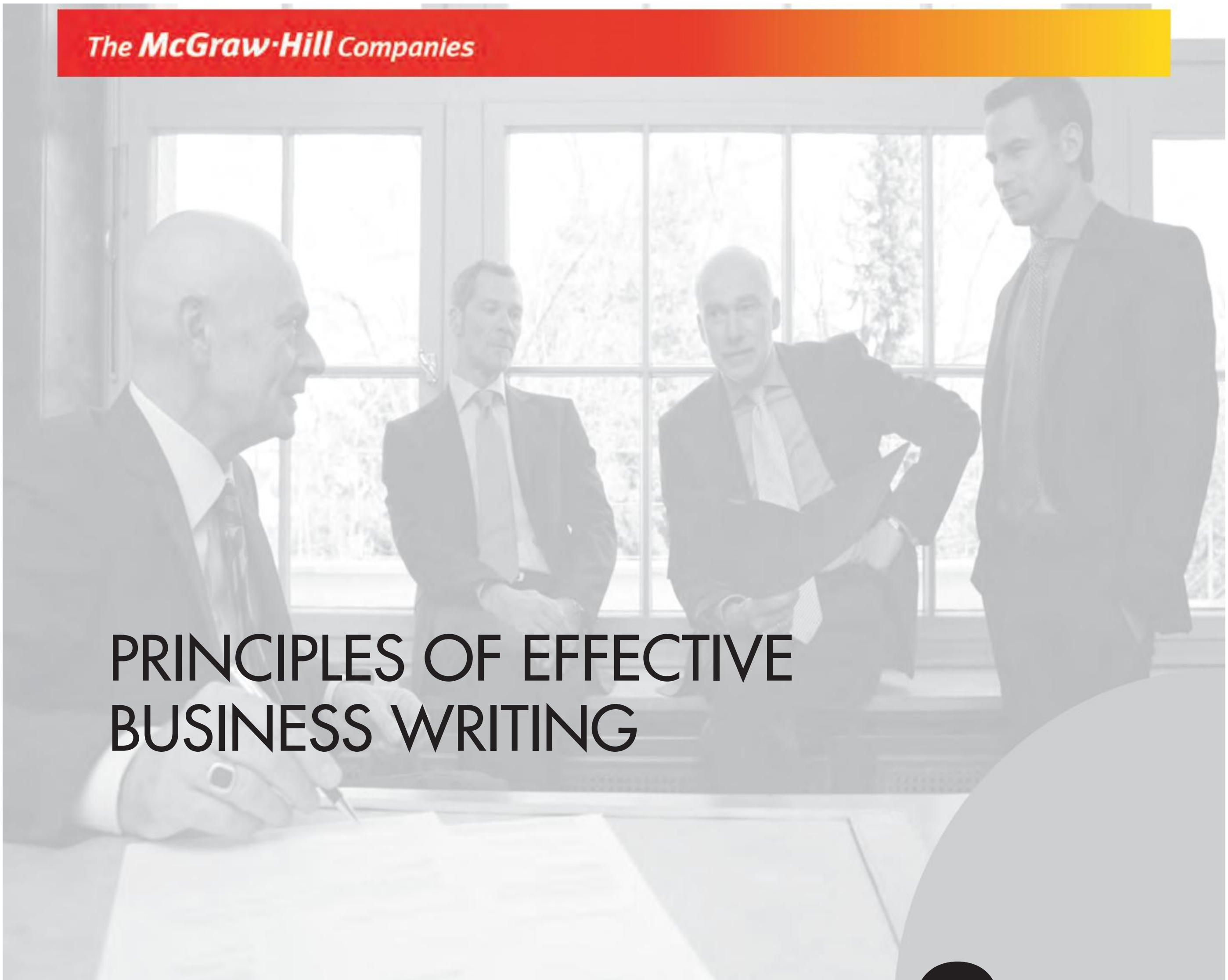
Remember, every organisation will have their own set of rules but at a broader level, the culture remains the same. Now get ready to be punctual, learn to talk formally with colleagues and present yourself appropriately.

However, there is no cause of worry regarding learning everything before you join. Most of the organisations would provide you basic training so that you can adapt quickly. There are tailored programmes (known as Induction Programme) which would equip you with basic organisational information—core values, vision, organisation structure, hierarchy, departments and their representatives—and will guide you through its own unique culture.

What you need to do is to learn and adopt these as fast as you can. The faster you learn it, the better your life is going to be. It's not only the work by which you would be judged, but also how you work with your team, how you jell with them and other organisational aspects. Normally, your HR would be guiding you through this, but equally important is your own adaptability.

In the absence of these induction programmes, you would find yourself having little knowledge about your organisation, its various processes and structure. This definitely will affect your individual performance. Also, this has bigger impact on organisations. Those organisations which do not have this important programme, find themselves struggling to manage its resources. And the resource without adequate information will tend to take more time for its routine work.

So be prepared to take that induction programme when you join and try to gather as much information as you can. It will mark the beginning of your career.



PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE BUSINESS WRITING

chapter 3

THIS CHAPTER WILL HELP YOU IN:

- Introducing written communication and its importance in business
- Discussing the purpose of writing
- Discussing principles of writing
- Familiarising the reader with the various steps in the writing process
- Developing writing skills.

The chapter introduces managers to effective written communication and its advantages. It discusses the purpose of business writing. It describes in detail the various principles of effective writing. It also describes the various stages in the writing process *viz.* planning, drafting, revising, formatting and finally proofreading.

> *"Writing comes more easily if you have something to say."*
>
> SHOLEM ASCH

BUSINESS WRITING

Written communication is imperative for every business. Writing is a creative activity. While verbal communication is based on spontaneous reaction, written communication is more carefully thought out and the information gathered is processed logically (at least most of the times!). It involves a certain time factor. The writer can take his own time in formulating the message. It also takes a while to reach the receiver. The receiver then takes his time in understanding and interpreting the message and responding to it. Written communication though has fewer cycles than face-to-face communication, i.e., as compared to face-to-face communication the messages are sent to and fro between the sender and the receiver fewer number of times.

Written communication has the following advantages over verbal communication:

(i) Has an extremely wide reach.
(ii) Can be well organised to convey the precise message.
(iii) Written communication creates records. In turn, maintenance of proper records, letters and reports builds up the legal defenses of the organisation.
(iv) Written communication promotes uniformity in policy and procedure.
(v) It can be exactly reproduced or repeated.
(vi) It can be targeted to reach specific individuals/sections.
(vii) Written communication can be prepared at a time that suits the communicator.

Business writing requires one to adapt and select words carefully. It also requires clear sentence construction, organisation, appropriate tone and writing for effect. Adaptation means using words, the reader of the message is likely to understand. Also remember that proper sentence construction and an appropriate tone can increase the effect of your message. While writing the first draft of the message one should concentrate on the content. The subsequent drafts should focus on the style of writing and the mechanics (spelling, punctuation, abbreviations etc.).

We generally write to express our thoughts, feelings, share ideas, inform people, and give instructions or perhaps to influence and persuade people. Further there are different ways in which we write or what we call 'styles' of writing. Different people have different styles of writing and they adapt their style of writing to different kinds of writing such as academic papers, business letters, e-mails, thesis, SMS, curriculum vitae etc.

> *"The problem with communication is the illusion that it has occurred."*
>
> GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

Purpose of Writing

For writing effectively, it is important to identify the purpose of the communication. Identifying the purpose of writing serves as a yardstick for evaluating the effectiveness of the communication. What actually judges the effectiveness of the writing, is the extent to which it has been successful in achieving its goal. In business situations we can broadly classify the purpose of written communication into two categories, namely, to inform and to persuade.

(i) Writing to Inform

Writing to inform is called expository writing because it expounds ideas and facts. When the primary purpose of the written communication is to give and explain information, it is called expository or informative writing. Informative writing gives information related to the subject concerned. It does not give opinion, but states facts. The information has to be logically arranged and conveyed objectively with no bias. Business reports, technical reports, fact sheets, schedule progress reports etc. are examples of informative writing.

(ii) Writing to Persuade

Writing to persuade is called argumentative or persuasive writing. When the writer aims at convincing the reader about any issue, it is called persuasive writing. It often expresses opinions, that may be backed up by facts, to increase the credibility of the message. Unlike informative writing, the focus of which is on the subject matter under discussion, in persuasive writing the focus is on the reader. It aims to influence and consequently change the thinking of the reader. Advertorials, essays, editorials, letters to editor, sales letters, advertisements etc. are examples of persuasive writing.

Writing Style

Writing style refers to the way in which the information is expressed and not the substance. It is related to the choice of words and their arrangement into sentences, paragraphs and the complete message. The effectiveness of the message and overall tone of the message largely depends on the style. Effective writing not only needs to be error free, but also should have style. Writing style is about mechanics of writing. Mechanics are elements of writing that are of relevance, when the message is in written form. Mechanics of writing include spelling, punctuation, capitalisation, abbreviation etc.

Some of the characteristics common to effective writing style include:

(i) Use of short and simple words
(ii) Varied vocabulary
(iii) Crisp, concise and clear writing
(iv) Use of positive language
(v) Logical flow of ideas in paragraphs
(vi) Optimum paragraph length i.e., paragraphs which are neither too long nor too short
(vii) Use of a variety of sentence types and
(viii) Reflecting courtesy

"Communication skills are the lifeblood of a successful life...if you plan on spending any time there..."

DOUG FIREBAUGH

Principles of Effective Writing

Written messages can be broken down into the following parts:

- Words
- Sentences
- Paragraphs

Words are the fundamental unit of writing. Words combine to make sentences and sentences are arranged logically to form paragraphs. In addition to this, paragraphs combine to set the overall tone of the message. Writing principles apply to these four elements of the written message. A good way of improving your language skills is to expand your vocabulary by learning a couple of new words every week. Of course it is important to remember to get to use them too! Check out the websites listed below for a start.

- www.vocabulary.com
- www.better-english.com/vocabulary.htm

The following are the principles of effective writing:

1. Clarity of Writing

For the written message to be clear and understandable to the reader, both clarity of thought and clarity of expression are required on the part of the writer. Being clear about the purpose of the message and knowing exactly what needs to be conveyed to the reader, can obtain clarity of thought. The writer needs to arrange his thoughts logically before writing them down. Clarity of expression needs the message to be well expressed, because if encoding is faulty, the message may be misinterpreted. Clarity of expression can be achieved by the following means:

(i) Use simple words Short and simple words are easily understood and are less likely to be misused. Of course variety in vocabulary makes the writing impressive, but too many long words in a sentence should be avoided. They distract the reader and do more harm than good. It is a myth that, the bigger the word the greater is the intellect of the writer. One needs to remember to write to express, rather than to impress.

Given are some short substitutes of words which can be used in place of their longer counterparts to enhance clarity.

- Visualise – See
- Recapitulate – Review
- Endeavour – Try
- Facilitate – Help

> *"Our admiration of fine writing will always be in proportion to its real difficulty and its apparent ease."*
>
> CHARLES CALEB COLTON

(ii) Use familiar words Use words which are familiar to you as a writer and are also likely to be familiar to the reader. For this you need to possess a good vocabulary to enable you to select the words most appropriate for the reader. Unfamiliar words unnecessarily confuse the reader and ultimately he may get disinterested.

(iii) Use short sentences To enhance the clarity of the writing, one should use shorter sentences. Long sentences can be confusing and many a times they may be misinterpreted. If the sentence is of more than thirty words, break it up.

(iv) Use concrete expressions and not vague expressions While writing, choose words that have definite and specific meaning. If the words chosen are ambiguous, the reader is likely to act based on his own interpretation which may be different from what the writer intended. For example, consider the sentence, "The goods are being dispatched soon". Here the word 'soon' is vague and can mean different time spans for different people. It would be worthwhile revising this sentence to, 'The goods are being dispatched by 12th July'.

(v) Avoid unnecessary use of jargon Jargon refers to technical vocabulary used by members, to communicate within a specialised group. It is alright to use jargon to communicate within the same specialist group, as the words will be familiar to the members and hence will be understood by all of them. However, if the reader is from a different field he is likely to either misunderstand the word or not understand it at all. For example the word 'virus' has different meanings for a doctor and a computer specialist. Therefore it is better to avoid use of jargon, specially for communicating outside ones specialised group.

(vi) Avoid ambiguity in framing sentences A message is ambiguous if it means more than one thing. Avoid using ambiguous sentences in your message, as this may confuse the reader. For example from the sentence, 'Please send me two copies of the books *Who moved my Cheese* and *Emotional Intelligence at Workplace*', it is not clear as to what action is expected from the reader. It can mean one copy each of the two books or two copies each of the two books. It is therefore important to clearly specify the message so that it has the desired impact. Faulty punctuation is another cause of ambiguity. The complete meaning of a sentence may change by punctuating it in a different manner as is clear from the following example.

- The new assistant said, 'the manager is very hard working'.
- 'The new assistant', said the manager 'is very hard working'.

2. Completeness

In business communication, completeness of facts is absolutely necessary. This is more so the case with written communication, where immediate feedback is generally not possible. Incomplete information may either result in an incorrect decision or in time being wasted in a follow-up correspondence to complete the gaps in the information. While answering a letter, make sure that you have answered all the questions. While giving some information check for the five 'Ws' for ensuring completeness i.e., tell the reader 'Who', 'What', 'Where', 'When' and 'Why' of the information.

3. Accuracy

The accuracy of the message depends on 'what' is said and 'how' it is said. Thus, the message has to be accurate both in terms of truthful presentation of the contents i.e., the facts and figures mentioned in the message and the timeliness of the message should be accurate as the credibility of the written message depends on its accuracy. For example consider this sentence taken from a message, 'On Monday , January 18, the advisory board took the decision to hold the re-examination', If the reader checks and finds that January 18 was a Sunday and not a Monday the credibility of the message is reduced and the rest of the message also comes into suspicion as regards its accuracy , assuming of course that exams cannot be scheduled on a Sunday.

Check and recheck the message for accuracy of facts and figures especially where important decisions have to be taken based on the document containing the information.

4. Appropriate Tone and Language

It is not only the accuracy of the contents but the tone in which they are expressed, which take away or add meaning to the message. Tone refers to the feelings created by words used to communicate a message. Just as tone of voice is important in oral communication, the tone in written communication too affects the reader. The selection of the appropriate tone depends on the relationship between the reader and the writer and their relative status in the organisation. These factors determine the level of formality of the message. Depending on the level of formality between the writer and the reader the tone of the message can be informal, semi formal or strictly formal. The language, that involves selection of words should also be appropriate. Some of the issues to be considered are:

(i) Avoid Clichés and Slangs Clichés are overused phrases that become boring through overuse. They take away the originality and freshness of the message. Avoid these to present your message from sounding stereotyped and mechanical. Slang is an informal word or phrase which is not a part of the standard language and is often used by individuals. For example 'Hep' is the slang for 'stylish', 'Pie eyed 'is the slang for 'drunk'. Use of slang reflects a high degree of informality and should be avoided in written business communication.

(ii) Use Non-discriminatory Language Avoid use of sexist language i.e., words and phrases which show a gender bias. This involves replacing words such as 'chairman' with 'chairperson', using 'Sir/Ma'am' in the salutation if one is not sure of the receiver. Do not assume that the addressee is a male. With an increasing number of women forming a part of the workforce, this is a common error that is committed. Similarly a sentence of the kind "The manager should try to convince his customers" can be replaced by "the manager should try to convince the customers". Do not use words that lower the dignity of women. Refer to women and men in the same way. Consider the sentence, 'Mr. Ravi Sharma, the lawyer and Ms. Rita Ahuja the lady doctor were present for the meeting'. Here 'doctor' should replace the word 'lady doctor'. Business writing should also be free from bias based on factors such as race, religion, disability etc. It should reflect sensitivity and not offend others.

Examples of use of masculine pronouns for both sexes and their gender-neutral substitutes:

- *Gender biased use of pronoun* – When a new employee joins the organisation, he undergoes an orientation programme of 15 days.
- *Gender-neutral substitute* – A new employee who joins the organisation, undergoes an orientation programme of 15 days.
- *Gender-biased use of pronoun* – When a customer asks for a replacement during guarantee period, he has to be provided one.
- *Gender-neutral substitute* – A customer who asks for a replacement during guarantee period has to be provided one.

Examples of words derived from masculine gender and their gender-neutral substitutes:

Gender-biased words	**Gender-neutral substitutes**
Chairman	Chair person
Businessman	Business executive
Man made	Manufactured
Workman	Worker
Best man for the job	Best person for the job
Sales man	Sales person

(iii) Avoid negative words Some words have a negative connotation associated with them. Avoid using such words. Instead replace them with substitutes that sound positive.

For example, unpleasant, disagree, damage, complaint etc. reflect negativity. Given below are some examples of how negative sounding words can be replaced by words that sound positive:

Negative – We will not be able to dispatch the goods till 12th July.

Positive – We will be able to dispatch the goods by 12th July.

Negative – Complaint department

Positive – Customer Service Department

Negative – Our product is very cheap as compared to others in the same category.

Positive – Our product is economical as compared to others in the same category.

Negative – I cannot attend the seminar.

Positive – I wish it were possible for me to attend the seminar.

5. Courtesy

Incorporate courtesy in your writing. Apologise sincerely for an omission and thank generously for a favour. Do not be rude or harsh. Timely response to correspondence, also reflects courtesy. Follow the golden rule of not replying to any communication, when you are angry or upset. A tone of courtesy and sincerity enhances the effectiveness of the message, by making it more acceptable to the reader.

Avoid offensive statements even though they may be the truth. Such statements may result in humiliating the reader, and are called platitudes and are best avoided. Consider the examples-

Discourteous statement – Don't allow your careless attitude to ruin the project.

Courteous substitute – Be careful while handling the project, as it is very crucial.

Discourteous statement – You have sent the request to the wrong department. We do not handle queries related to domestic electricity supply.

Courteous substitute – We have forwarded your query to the domestic electricity supply department as we deal with commercial supply of electricity.

In addition to the above, courtesy can be achieved by the following techniques:

(i) Personalising the message:

This refers to singling out the reader i.e., address the message directly to the reader, rather than generating a common message for a number of readers. Personalised messages tend to make the reader feel important. However, many a times this may not be possible, but wherever possible write directly to one reader to increase acceptability of the message.

(ii) Adopting the 'you attitude'

Adopting a 'you attitude' in business writing helps build goodwill. It holds the interest of the reader and is a recommended style, especially for persuasive writing. Below are some examples which illustrate the 'I/We attitude' and can be substituted with the 'You attitude' to improve the effectiveness of communication.

'I/ We attitude' phrase	**'You attitude' substitute**
(i) We have received the requested documents. (ii) We have four different schemes in which our customers can invest.	(i) Thank you for the requested documents. (ii) You have a choice of four different schemes to invest in.

6. Brevity

Being brief and to the point also contributes to making the writing effective. A shorter writing saves reader time and is clearer and more interesting. Being brief means conveying only what is relevant and leaving out what is irrelevant or words that are unnecessary. However, brevity at the cost of clarity is not desirable. One could achieve brevity in writing by adopting the following techniques:

(i) Avoid wordiness Avoid using four to five words where one or two words can be used without loss of meaning. The following are examples of how a phrase can be substituted with a single word, without loss of meaning.

Wordy phrases	Shorter substitute
❖ Along the lines of	Like
❖ In very few cases	Seldom
❖ For the purpose of	For
❖ With a view	To
❖ On the occasion of	On
❖ In the event that	If
❖ In spite of the fact	Although
❖ In the mean time	Meanwhile
❖ At the present time	Now
❖ For the reason that	Because
❖ In the near future	Soon

(ii) Avoid surplus words To achieve brevity, eliminate words that add nothing to the meaning of the sentence. Examples of sentences containing surplus words, and their shorter version, are given below:

- The *boys who were dismissed* were asked to leave the college campus.
  The *dismissed boys* were asked to leave the college campus.
- *There are* six poems *that* need to be memorised.
  Six poems need to be memorised.
- The houses *that were* damaged by fire were reconstructed.
  The houses damaged by fire were reconstructed.

(iii) Avoid using redundant words Redundancy means duplication of ideas through the use of different words that mean the same thing. Avoid redundancy, as it serves no logical purpose.

Examples of redundant words include:

- Assemble together
- Longer in length
- Repeat again
- True fact
- Return it back
- Past history
- Basic fundamental
- Free gift

(iv) Brevity can also be achieved in the following ways:

- Avoiding overuse of passive voice
- Dropping out 'which' and 'that' clauses wherever possible

  Example - I need a shirt that is blue in colour.
  I need a blue shirt.
  I received an invitation that was of formal type.
  I received a formal invitation.

7. Appropriate Emphasis

In a message, there are some items that are more important than others and they need to be emphasised to get the desired effect in writing. There are certain techniques which can be used to give proper emphasis to selected parts of the message. These techniques include:

(i) Using position for emphasis The major emphasis positions are the beginning and the closing of each sentence, paragraph or message. Place words, sentences or paragraphs at these positions, if you want to lay emphasis on them. Other parts of the message that do not need emphasis, can be placed between these positions.

(ii) Using space for emphasis It is natural that, the more you say about something, the more likely it is to draw attention. Thus repeating certain points which require emphasis or elaborating them is a useful technique for emphasising important parts of the message.

(iii) Using mechanics for emphasis Using bold letters, italicised letters, capital letters, underlining, using colour or a different font are some of the ways in which a particular part of writing can be emphasised to readily catch the attention of the reader.

8. Unity and Coherence

The message consists of information in the form of words, sentences and paragraphs that need to be logically arranged to give a unified and coherent effect. There is a slight difference between a paragraph that is unified and a paragraph that is coherent.

A unified paragraph gives information directly relevant to the topic and presents it logically. A way of achieving unity in a paragraph, is to give the sentence containing the subject of the paragraph as the opening sentence, as this helps the writer in focusing on the topic of the paragraph, while writing the message.

A message is said to be coherent when each sentence smoothly links to the preceding and following sentence. Various techniques are known to impart coherence to the message and bind together the information that is presented so as to convey the big picture to the reader. These include, use of transitional words and pronouns, repetition of key words and using parallelism in structure. These have been elaborated upon in the following paragraphs:

(i) Using transitional words Transitional words tell the reader, the thought connection between sentences, and the relationship between sentences. Some commonly used transitional expressions are:

'In addition', 'moreover', 'besides', 'also', 'in contrast', 'although', 'but', 'however', 'as a result', 'in the same way', 'likewise', 'thus', 'therefore', 'for example', 'in conclusion', 'to summarise', 'meanwhile' etc.

(ii) Using pronouns Because pronouns refer to words that have been previously used, they help in connecting ideas and words they relate to. Use of pronouns like, 'this', 'that', 'these', 'those', 'he', 'they' etc. too help in relating ideas present in different sentences.

(iii) Repeating key words By repeating key words from one sentence to the next, one can provide a link between two sentences. Avoid needless repetition, but use purposeful repetition to achieve coherence in the message.

(iv) Using parallelism in structure Sentences need to have a parallel structure which means using similar grammatical structure for similar ideas i.e., matching adjectives with adjectives, nouns with nouns, infinitives with infinitives and so on. Parallel sentence structures enhance coherence.

Examples

Incorrect sentence – The player is physically tough and a consistent player.

Correct sentence – The player is physically tough and consistent.

Incorrect sentence – The management consultant will look into issues related to:

- Training and development
- How to reduce turnover
- Managing conflict

Correct sentence – The management consultant will look into issues related to:

- Training and development
- Turnover reduction
- Conflict management

Writing Process

The writing process consists of five steps *viz.* planning, drafting, revising, formatting and proofreading. The amount of time devoted to each step depends on the type of document to be generated, in terms of its length, complexity and requirement. Writers generally adapt the various steps of the writing process to suit their writing style and needs.

Planning

It is the first step in the writing process. Planning the message involves the following components:

(i) Knowing the purpose of the message
(ii) Knowing the audience
(iii) Determining the contents of the message
(iv) Gathering and collecting information
(v) Organising the message

Begin the writing process by determining the purpose of the message i.e., whether the message is meant to give information, persuade, request, instruct etc. Try and determine the purpose as specifically as possible. Knowing the purpose of the message helps the writer in determining what his writing style would be.

The next step of planning the writing, is analysing the audience in terms of, who would be reading the message, what your relationship with the audience is and how the audience is expected to react to the message. The content, organisation and tone of the message depend upon these factors. The tone of the message in terms of the degree of formality of the message is affected by the relative status of the reader and the writer. The content is influenced by knowledge of the audience, their interest and the demographic characteristics of the audience.

Anticipation of the audience reaction also should be taken into account, while planning the writing. If the reader reaction is likely to be positive, you can use a direct approach, by beginning with important details and coming straight to the actual point in the message. A likely neutral reaction of the audience can be converted into a positive reaction by using the first few lines to catch the readers' attention and convince the reader of the importance of what you as a writer are trying to convey. In case you anticipate a negative reaction, build a rapport with the reader in the introduction of the message. Start with a neutral statement and supply lots of evidence and arguments in support of your statements and through logic, increase the acceptability of the message.

The next step is determining the content, meaning what goes into the message. Based on the purpose and the analysis of the audience, determine what the content of the message should be. Avoid including irrelevant information, that wastes the time of the reader. At the same time, do not leave out information which may be vital to the communication. Two common techniques to determine what goes into the content of the message are:

(i) Brain storming One useful strategy is brain storming – jotting down ideas, possible leads, and anything else you think might be helpful in constructing your message. Aim for quantity not quality. Don't evaluate your output, unless you have run out of ideas. Then begin to refine, delete, combine and revise your ideas, to form the basis of your message.

(ii) Mind mapping Another possible strategy is mind mapping (also called clustering), a process that avoids the step by step limitation of lists. Instead you write the purpose of your message in the middle of the page and circle it. Then as you think of possible points to add write them down and link them by a line either to the main purpose or to another point. As you think of other details, add them where you think they might fit in. The visual outline offers flexibility and encourages free thinking.

Once you plan the content, gather all the information that you will need to facilitate your writing. The various sources include reports, past correspondence, journals, newspapers, sales reports etc. The final step in the planning process is the organisation of the message i.e., deciding what goes where in the message. Use direct approach, which involves presenting the major idea first, followed by supporting details for routine and good news messages. For persuasive and bad news messages and messages in which you anticipate a negative reaction, use an indirect approach. Here, you first prepare the reader to receive the message, and then convey the message. The supporting ideas are presented first, followed by the main idea.

Drafting

Once you have the information and a plan to organise the information, start writing. Compose the first version of the message. In the first draft, do not pay much attention to the style or format of the message. Concentrate more on the content part of the message. Just put your ideas on paper. Remember that it is not possible to have a perfect message in the first draft itself. Leave it for the next stage in the writing process.

Revising

Once the draft is ready, revise the writing. You may need two or more revisions to get the writing in the shape you intend it to be. Revise the writing for content, style and correctness. You can revise the writing based on the principles of effective writing discussed earlier *viz.* clarity, completeness, accuracy , appropriate tone and language, courtesy, brevity and appropriate emphasis. Also ensure that you have included all the relevant information. The writing should have an impressive style and should be effective. At the same time, it should be accurate i.e., free from grammatical and content errors.

Formatting

Presentation of the written message, in an impressive layout, with an appealing appearance is essential. Some documents need to follow a standard format. Formatting helps the reader to find certain information in a particular position. It gives a neat and visually appealing look to the document.

Proofreading

This is the final step in the writing process. This is the last opportunity the writer has, to make any changes to the message, before it passes on to the reader. Proofreading ensures the accuracy of the communication. Proofread the message for content, typographical and format errors.

Content errors may arise because relevant information may get left out or inconsistent information may be presented i.e., information which is contradictory or information which might be factually incorrect. Most of the content errors are taken care of in the 'revising stage'.

Typographical errors include spelling and punctuation mistakes, missing out a word, a line or a complete paragraph while typing, duplication of words, or typing figures or words incorrectly from the manuscript. Using the spell-check function available in most word processing software, helps identify many of these errors.

Formatting errors relate to inappropriate font size, font, heading, subheading, position, numbering of section, sub sections etc.

SUMMARY

Written communication is an inherent part of business communication. We generally write to express our thoughts and feelings and to share ideas, instruct, inform or perhaps influence and persuade people. This chapter introduced written communication, and discussed its importance. It elaborated on two main purposes of written communication *viz.* to give information, and to persuade. It further discussed different ways in which we write or what we call 'styles' of writing. People have different styles of writing and they adapt their style of writing to the kind of writing they do. The chapter also explained the various principles for writing effectively which include clarity, completeness, accuracy, appropriate tone and language, courtesy, brevity and appropriate emphasis, which managers should essentially master. It also dealt with the five stages of the writing process *viz.* planning, drafting, revising, formatting and proofreading.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the importance of achieving clarity in writing? With suitable examples, illustrate how clarity in writing can be achieved?
2. Explain in detail the various stages of the writing process?
3. Write a short note on the importance of the following for writing effectively
   (i) Brevity
   (ii) Courtesy
   (iii) Appropriate tone
4. 'Organising the writing is the key to clarity'. Comment.
5. Do you agree with the statement 'typographical errors can negate the impact of good content'? Illustrate with suitable examples from business writing.

BASIC OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE

chapter 4

THIS CHAPTER WILL HELP YOU IN:

- Understanding basic official correspondence
- Understanding the characteristics of internal office correspondence, viz. memoranda, office orders, circulars and office notes
- Discussing business letters as important tools of communication
- Familiarising the reader with various layouts and types of business letters
- Composing the above tools of correspondence suitable to business requirements
- Discussing notices as means of both internal and external communication.

Business correspondence takes two forms—internal correspondence taking place within the organisation and external correspondence which includes correspondence with external agencies like banks, government departments, etc. This chapter touches upon various tools of internal communication, *viz*. memoranda, office orders, circulars and notes. It also discusses in detail business letters, their characteristics, layout and format, components and various types of business letters. Correspondence with banks is an indispensable part of business correspondence for any organisation as a lot of correspondence takes place between companies and their banks. Business letters, notices and reports are means of communicating both within an organisation and with external agencies. The chapter goes on to discuss the principles governing such correspondence.

BASIC OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE

Knowledge of good official correspondence is as pertinent to businesses today as it was earlier. The advent of technology has not made the process of writing effectively any simpler. On the contrary, the amount of writing and reading for employees in organisations and for their customers has actually increased manifold because information can now be accessed, collected, stored and transmitted easily. Therefore, it is essential to keep certain basic parameters in mind while continuously updating oneself of the latest styles used. A well-written official correspondence speaks about your professionalism and reflects your company's culture. Whether the communication is printed on paper or appears on a terminal screen its writer should have applied exactly the same principles and care to structure and style, content and layout in order to communicate clearly, accurately and effectively.

Official correspondence can be broadly categorised into internal and external correspondence. Internal correspondence includes the entire correspondence taking place within the organisation. Since organisations do not exist in isolation, a major part of the correspondence is with agencies external to the organisation that include banks, customers, suppliers, government agencies, etc.

Memorandum

Memorandum literally means 'a thing to be remembered' and is usually abbreviated to 'memo'. Memoranda are business documents that are meant to be seen only by the people who work for the organisation. It is intended exclusively for internal use. The memo is sent to fellow employees within departments or divisions of the same company and is used to communicate information concisely and quickly in a simple standardised format. As memos are used between people who have a professional working relationship, it is assumed that the context is already known, and the receiver understands the jargon, acronyms and abbreviations used.

Like any piece of writing, a memo too should be logically structured as it provides a permanent record for retention and circulation. It should, therefore, be concise, factually accurate and unambiguous. Various advantages of memos as means of communication include convenience and simplicity. Computer screen memos are gaining wide acceptance in organisations as they save on resources in terms of stationery, time and manpower (needed to circulate the memos). However, memos are public documents and lack confidentiality.

The writing style of a memo tends to be less formal than a business letter. This of course does not mean you can always be very informal. The tone you use would depend on whom you are writing to and why. The level of formality should always reflect the relationship between the writer and the reader.

Memos are used in organisations for various reasons, such as:

- to make requests or enquiry
- to supply information
- to confirm arrangements following a discussion
- to ask for comments or suggestions
- to send unsolicited suggestions or ideas
- to explain or clarify a situation or instruction
- to amend existing policies

Format of memos

It is good to be direct and brief while writing memos. In many organisations the stationery used for memos is different. Often memo forms are used.

Exhibit 4.1 Sample Memo Form

MEMORANDUM

Date Reference No.
To
From
Subject

Memos have a standard layout that includes the following:

- To (name of the recipient).
- From (name of the sender and designation, could include telephone number).
- Date (in full, as in a letter).

- Reference (for filing purposes).
- Subject (serves as a title which briefly describes the content).
- No postal address is required.
- No salutation.
- No complimentary closing.
- Memos are not normally signed, but some include a space for the writer's signature.
- Normally a memo has only one subject; if you have two topics to write about, use two memos. This facilitates filing.
- Message is set out in paragraphs as in a letter and should be brief.
- Enclosures: indicates accompanying documents (if any).
- You may send the same memo to several different people by listing their names after the heading 'To'.
- You may send copies to others to let them know what is going on; this is shown by the abbreviation 'cc'.

Note: *cc - originally stood for 'carbon copy'. Since carbon paper is rarely used now, cc: has come to be known as 'courtesy copy'.*

The abbreviation 'bcc': stands for 'blind courtesy copy' and is written only on the copy for the person receiving it. This means that the main recipient does not know that this person has also been sent a copy. If you are using e-mail and you enter a name in the 'bcc' field, the system empties that field before the message is delivered to the main recipients so that they are unaware who else has received a copy.

Sample Memorandum

Given below is a memorandum requesting various branches of the organisation for monthly reports, as shown in Exhibit 4.2.

Office Order

Order means acceptance or compliance. An office order thus, carries a stamp of authority with it and has to be accepted. It is a tool for downward communication. It travels from the higher-ups down to the subordinates. Orders are usually related to postings, promotions, suspensions, termination of services, intimation of disciplinary proceedings, etc.

An office order is a very sensitive form of communication and if misunderstood or misinterpreted, it can lead to serious unintended consequences. Following points should be kept in mind while drafting an office order:

Exhibit 4.2 Sample Memorandum

XYZ Engineering Works
Ghaziabad

MEMORANDUM

Date : July 27, 2008
From : Amit Jain, Marketing Manager
To: All Branch Managers
Subject : Monthly reports

The Board of Directors in its annual meeting held on July 20, 2008, has decided that the sales performance of the branches be reviewed on a monthly basis. Therefore, you are requested to kindly ensure that your sales report reaches the Head Office by the 5th of each month.

Thanking you,

cc: Mr Raghav Sharma, Branch Manager, Kolkata
Mr Keshav Kapoor, Branch Manager, Delhi
Mr Venkat Iyer, Branch Manager, Chennai

(i) It should be concise and should not contain any unnecessary details.

(ii) The language should be inoffensive and since sensitive issues are often dealt with, the writing style should ensure that the receiver does not raise objections.

(iii) The language should be clearly understood by all. Idioms, phrases and slang's should be strictly avoided.

(iv) It should specify clearly whom it is meant for:
- Some are sent to individuals with copies to concerned departments
- Some are meant for display on notice board

Sample Office order

Given below is an office order regarding the posting of a new recruit to a department, as shown in Exhibit 4.3.

Office Circular

Office circulars are meant to convey the same information to a large number of people. Such information is usually of general nature and not confidential. The subject of the circular must be mentioned on the top.

Some of the purposes for which circulars are used include
- To emphasise certain aspects of office conduct
- To intimate changes in working hours
- To inform employees about changes in rules

Exhibit 4.3 Sample Office Order

XYZ Engineering Works
Ghaziabad

Ref: Per/602/22 Date: December 19, 2008

ORDER

Shri Anil Gupta has been posted as Sales Executive w.e.f December 30, 2008. He will be reporting to Shri. C.M. Sharma, Area Sales Officer.

Sd/- S.K. Jain
Deputy Manager (Personnel)

Copies to:
Shri Anil Gupta
Shri C.M. Sharma
Accounts Department

Sample Office Circular

Given below is an office circular informing employees about change in office timing, as shown in Exhibit 4.4.

Exhibit 4.4 Sample Office Circular

XYZ Engineering Works
Ghaziabad
Circular No 21/20

Date: March 15, 2008

Subject: Change in office timings

This is to inform all that from April 1, 2008, the office timings will be as follows:

8:30 a.m. – 12:30 a.m.	Morning session
12:30 a.m. – 1:30 a.m.	Lunch
1:30 a.m. – 5:30 a.m.	Evening session

Employees are expected to strictly adhere to these office hours.

B.K. Mittal
Personnel Officer

Office Notes

Office notes are tools used for horizontal communication. They are exchanged between departments or between officers of almost equal rank asking for suggestions or seeking or giving information about some matters concerning their respective departments. They usually follow the memo format.

Sample Office Note

Given below is an office note from the stores department to all other departments informing them of the stock-taking.

Exhibit 4.5 Sample Office Note

XYZ Engineering Works
Ghaziabad

Ref: T/23/19 Date: March 5, 2009
From: Stores Department
To: All Departments

Subject: Stock taking for the year ending 31.3.2009.

The stores department will remain occupied on 30th and 31st March, 2009 in stock-taking for the purpose of closing the accounts for the year ending 31st March, 2009. All the departments are requested to draw their requirements latest by 29th March, 2009. The stores department would also be unable to make supplies to the customers on both these days.

MK Bedi
Stores Officer

Business Letters

A letter is a permanent and tangible record of a business relationship. It is generally written for enquiry, to give information or instruction, or to persuade the recipient towards the desired action. A well-written business letter can achieve much for a business. It can act as an effective sales person, create goodwill, strengthen the relationship with customer and act as a source of reliable, useful information.

Because of its importance, it is a must that business letters be effectively written and maintain conformity to certain standards. A badly written letter reflects poorly on the organisation and is a cause of embarrassment to the writer. Some of the deficiencies that a badly written letter may have are summarised below and need to be avoided.

- Lack of clarity
- Poor use of words and expressions
- Incorrect spellings and grammatical errors
- Too short or very lengthy
- Too many ideas concentrated in a single letter
- Factually incorrect
- Not suited to the readers' wavelength
- Too much of jargon and technical words
- Lacking in aesthetic sense
- Absence of personal touch
- Offensive in nature
- Lacking in courtesy
- Absence of relevant information
- Use of poor quality ink, paper, etc.
- Wrong address

Standard Parts of a Business Letter

A business letter consists of the following essential parts

(i) Heading
(ii) Inside name and address
(iii) Opening salutation
(iv) Subject
(v) Body of the letter
(vi) Complimentary close
(vii) Signature
(viii) Enclosures

Heading Business letters are written on letter-heads that show the name and address of the organisation, its telephone and fax numbers, the website and e-mail addresses along with the logo of the company. At the foot of the page, the address of the 'registered office' and a registration number might appear.

Only the first page of any letter should be written on the letter-head and the subsequent pages on blank papers. The heading also consists of -

- Reference – This could be a file number. It indicates the company's reference or the recipient's, if this is a continuing correspondence.
- Date – This is the date of writing the letter. There are two ways of putting down the date. The English style (25th April 2008) and the American style (April 25, 2008)

Name and address of the recipient The name and address of the recipient as it will appear on the envelope is also mentioned in the letter. This ensures that the letter reaches the correct person even if the envelope gets damaged. The name includes the title of the person (Mr., Ms., Dr.).

Opening Salutation Salutation is a way of addressing the addressee. The words generally depend upon the relation of the writer with the addressee.

'Dear Sir' or 'Dear Madam' is a little old-fashioned and organisations now prefer to use a more personal approach though 'Dear Sir' or 'Dear Madam' is still used in every formal correspondence.

Subject line This is often omitted, but its inclusion means the reader can quickly see what the letter is all about. Subject heading is prefixed with the word "Subject: or Sub or Ref:" and underlined to make it more prominent.

Example

Subject: <u>Request for Quotation</u>

Ref: Our letter No Pur/134/ 08 Re: Delay in receipt of goods

Main body of the letter This part contains the actual message/content of the letter. This part consists of several paragraphs. A line space should always be left between paragraphs. The first paragraph is the introductory paragraph which may include a reference to a previous correspondence or a telephonic conversation, etc. The middle paragraphs constitute the main body and deal with the subject matter. The last paragraph is the concluding paragraph and states the action expected from the reader.

Complimentary close It is a polite, formal way to end a letter. Standard forms are *yours faithfully* or *yours sincerely*. The complimentary close must match the salutation.

- *Dear Sir or Dear Madam* matches with *yours faithfully*
- *Dear Mr. Smith* matches with *yours sincerely*

Signature space Leave space for the writer to sign the letter, usually about 5 blank line spaces. The signature is written in handwriting below the complimentary close. The name and designation of person signing letter – writer's name and job title are printed below the signature for clarity.

Enclosures In case any documents are being sent with the letter, its indication is on the left hand bottom corner of the letter. It is abbreviated as 'Encls' or 'Encl' and the number of enclosures are indicated.

Layout of a business letter

These days there is a tendency to adopt a friendly informal style. However, one should follow an established type or form to avoid inconvenience, confusion and wastage of time. The company's in-house style includes rules on the layout of its business letters. A proper layout also gives the letter a formal look.

For most business letters single line spacing is used as this gives the letter a compact look. In case the letter is very short one may need to use double spacing .There are various styles of layouts available for business letters. In different forms there are different systems of indentation followed. The various styles include

(i) Fully indented style
(ii) Semi indented style
(iii) Fully blocked style
(iv) Modified blocked style

Fully Indented Style This style has become old fashioned and is being fast replaced by other styles. Each paragraph appears prominently in this type of layout. This style is at times found cumbersome because of its numerous indentations. It has the following characteristics:

(i) The name, address and paragraphs of the body are five spaces indented.

(ii) The letter is typed in single-line spacing.

(iii) The subject heading is two-line spacing below the salutation which is three line spacing below the inside name and address.

(iv) The paragraphs are separated by double line spacing.

(v) The complimentary close begins at the centre of the typing line and the typed signature and designation follow ten spaces and five spaces as is determined depending on the length of the two.

(vi) The inside address is offset to give the letter a balance.

Semi indented style This is a modified version of the fully indented style. It has the following characteristics:

(i) The inside name and address does not have any indentation and is in a block form.

(ii) The complimentary close and designation are typed evenly across the centre of the typed line. However, sometimes they are placed to the right hand side.

(iii) This style provides a neat and compact look because of the block form of name and address.

Fully blocked style This is a modern style and is most commonly used. Earlier, the 'indented' format was used for business letters, but as a result of word processing, the 'fully blocked' format is the most commonly used one now, as it saves time setting up tabs and indents and the letters look more neat and tidy. It has the following characteristics:

(i) All typed entries including date, inside name and address, subject line paragraph, complimentary close, signatures begin at the left-hand margin, forming a vertical line down the page.

(ii) There is a complete absence of punctuation marks from the date, salutation, the complimentary close and the end line of the inside name and address.

(iii) In some letters, the date and complimentary close are placed towards the right margin so as to give the letter a more balanced appearance. This style is known as semi blocked style.

Modified blocked style This style is similar to the fully blocked style. The difference in this style is that the date, subject heading and the complimentary close signature are placed like semi indented style. There is triple line spacing between paragraphs to differentiate between paragraphs as paragraphs are not indented.

Form letters When a number of identical letters are to be sent to many individuals or organisations on a regular basis form letters may be used. These letters are printed and blank spaces are left for filling in the name, date, address and sometimes some

Fully Indented Style

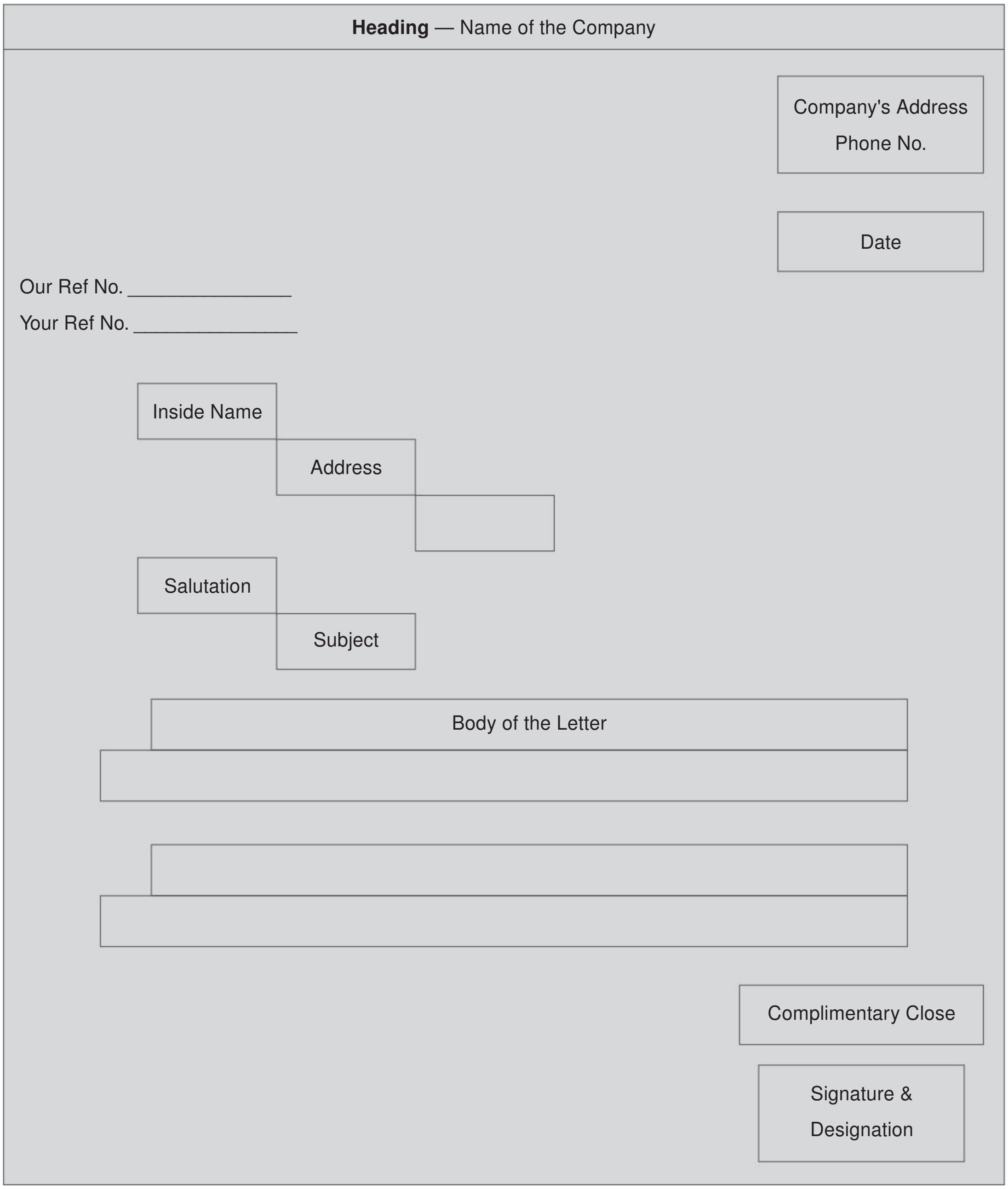


Figure 4.1

Semi-Indented Style

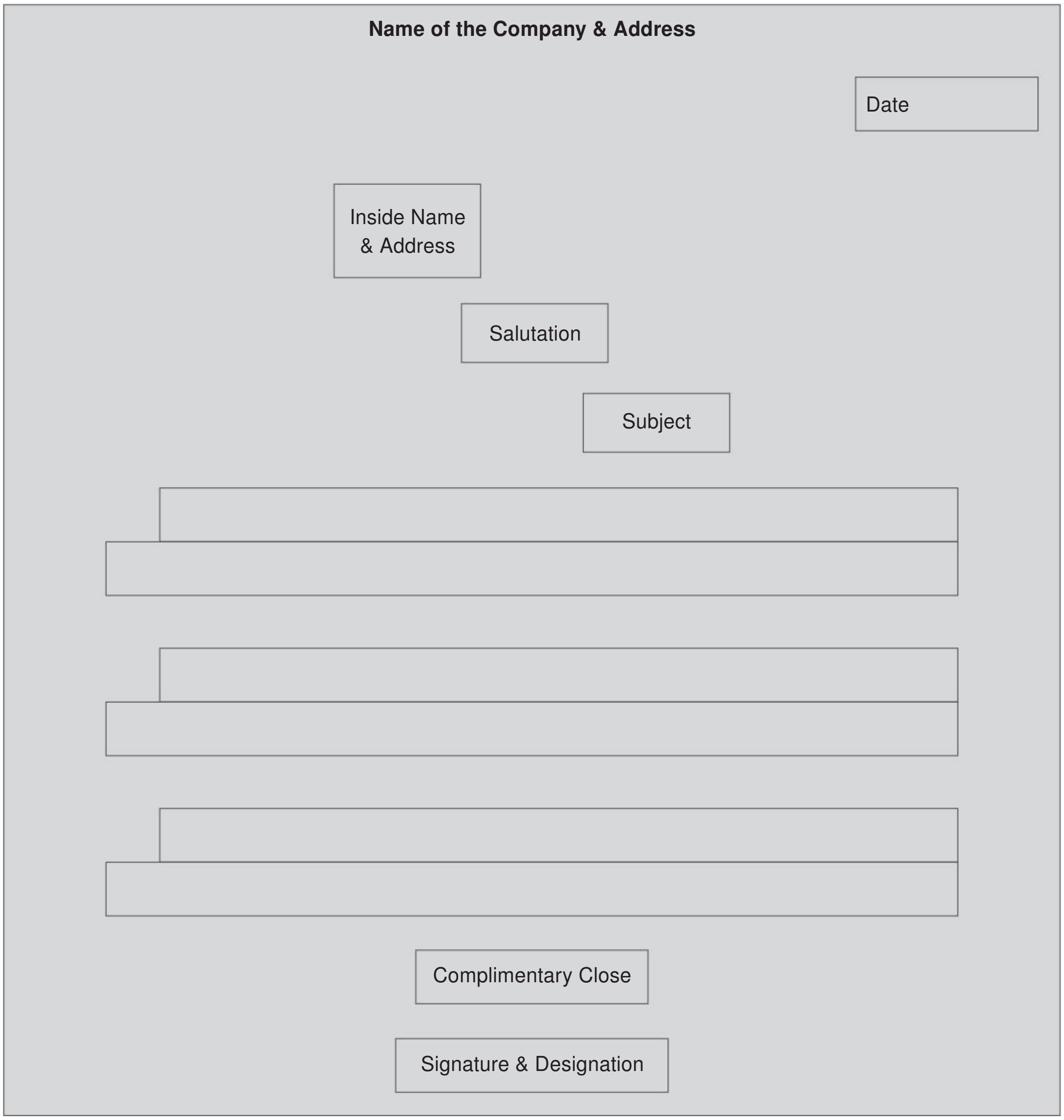


Figure 4.2

other minor details. These types of letters are generally used for acknowledgement of orders, debt collection, etc.

Use of form letters saves time and even a clerk can deal with this kind of correspondence. However, these letters lack personal touch and flexibility.

Fully Blocked Style

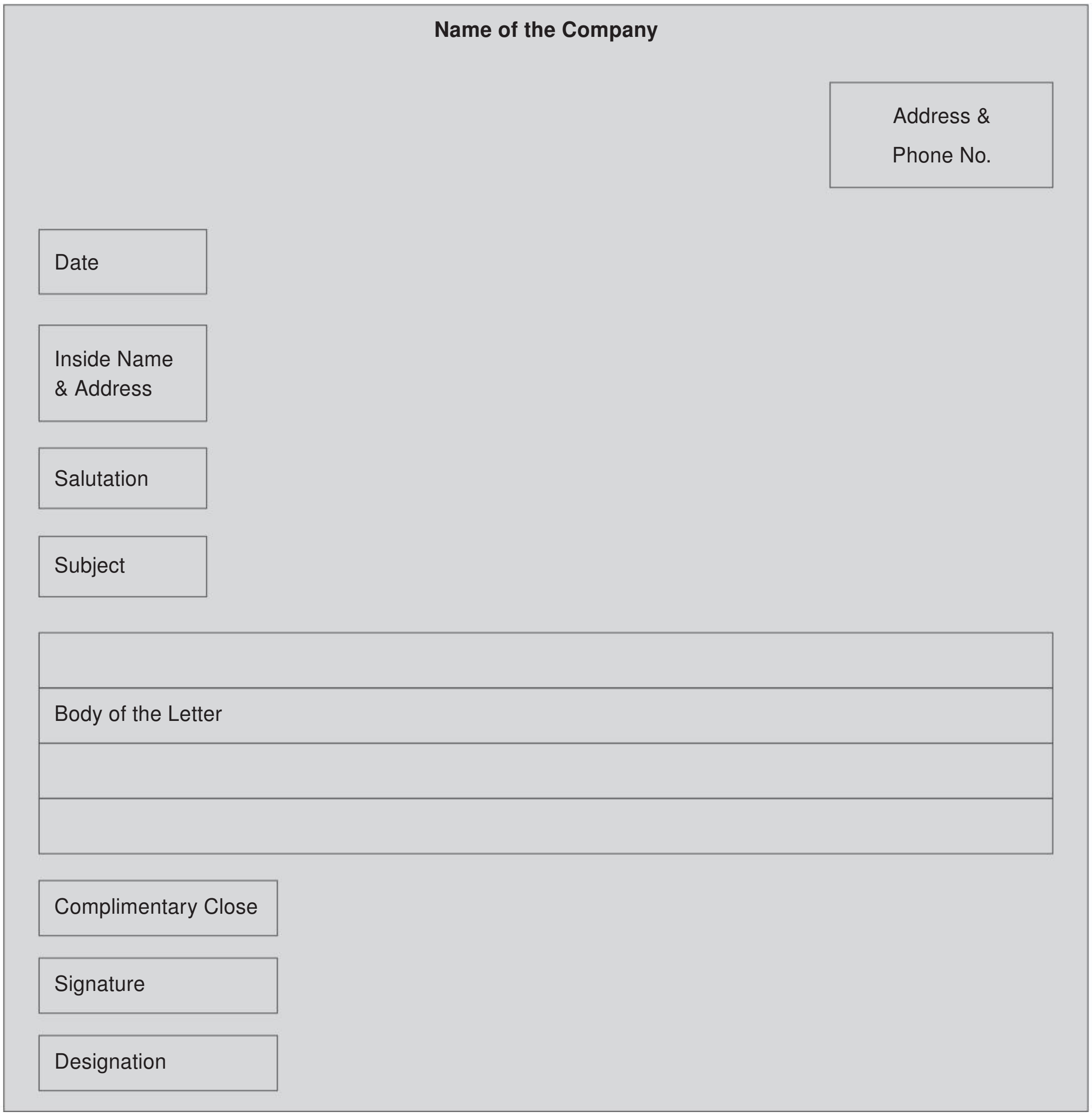


Figure 4.3

Guidelines for writing effective business letters

Following are some guidelines for writing business letters

(i) Business letters, like all other types of correspondence, should follow the structure of a beginning, a middle and an end.

Modified Blocked Style

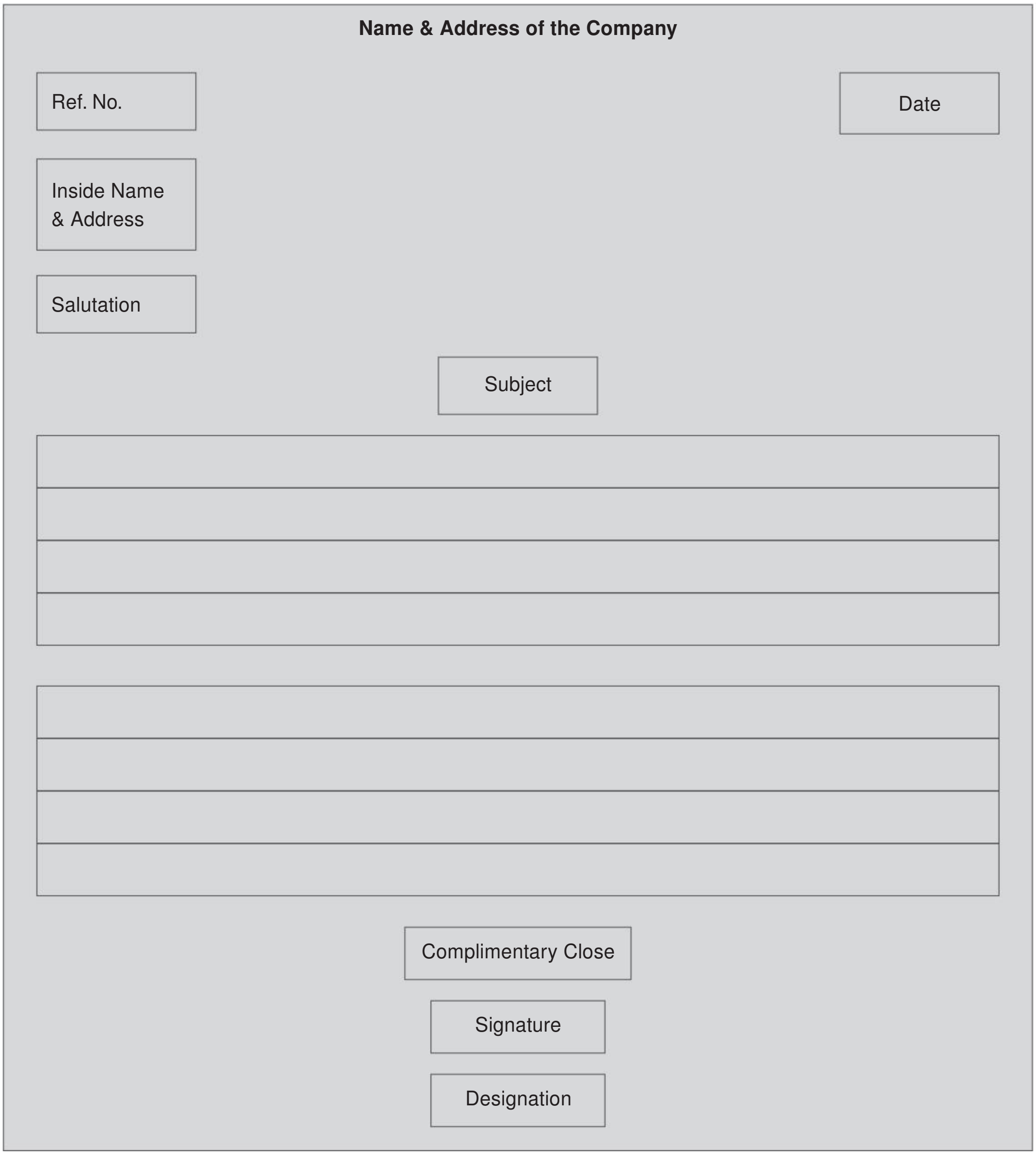


Figure 4.4

(ii) The first paragraph would be the introduction and should state the reason for the correspondence.

(iii) The middle should add details to the information in the introduction.

(iv) The ending is the conclusion and should state clearly what action one hopes or expects the recipient to take.

(v) Words should be effectively used so as to appeal to the level and sensibilities of the recipient.

(vi) Keep to the point.

(vii) Be brief without being curt.

(viii) Always be polite.

(ix) Try to use short active words rather than long abstract passive ones.

(x) Use short simple sentences rather than long rambling ones.

(xi) Use gender neutral language as business people are both males and females. For example, sales force or salespeople is better instead of the traditional salesman. *Supervisors should inform staff of their duties* is gender neutral and better than *Each supervisor should inform his staff of his duties*.

(xii) Using the alternate forms—s/he, he/she can look awkward if used too often.

(xiii) Check spelling and punctuation.

(xiv) Use the 'You' attitude rather than the 'We' attitude.

(xv) Don't use officious, clichés or pompous language as it has now become obsolete. For example, *We beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter* can simply be written as *Thank you for your letter.*

Correspondence with Banks

Correspondence with banks is an indispensable part of correspondence for any organisation. A lot of correspondence takes place between companies and their banks. Banks finance not only new companies, but also are a source of funding for expansion programmes of existing companies. Transfer of money to suppliers, receipt of payment from customers or any other financial transaction is done through the company's bankers.

Most of the correspondence with banks are of routine nature like opening of account, request for cheque book, availing overdraft facility, request for stop payment, etc. Form letters are available in most banks for correspondence of routine nature though these form letters are not used always. Letters serving other purposes also need to be written to the bank. Correspondence with banks follows the same principles as those of other business letters. These include:

(i) Clarity: To make sure that your letter elicits the desired response the letter needs to be clear and understandable to the reader.

(ii) Completeness: As in case of other business correspondences, completeness of facts is absolutely necessary in correspondences with banks also. Remember to give your account details and other related facts and figures in each of your letters. Incomplete information may either result in an incorrect decision or in wastage of time due to follow up correspondence to complete the gaps in the information.

(iii) Correctness: Letters to the bank involve financial details and, therefore, it is important to ensure the accuracy of figures. An incorrect account number or an additional zero may result in a wrong transaction leading to unnecessary hassles and wasted time and effort.

(iv) Brevity: Being brief and to the point also contributes to making the writing effective. Being brief means conveying only what is relevant and leaving out what is irrelevant or words which are unnecessary. However, brevity at the cost of clarity is not desirable.

(v) Courtesy: Incorporate courtesy in your writing. Apologise sincerely for an omission and thank generously for a favour. Do not be rude or harsh. Timely response to correspondences also reflects courtesy. Follow the golden rule of not replying to any communication when you are angry or upset. A tone of courtesy and sincerity enhances the effectiveness of the message by making it more acceptable to the reader.

(vi) Confidentiality: In addition to the principles applicable to other business correspondence, confidentiality of the customer is needed to be maintained in correspondence with banks. It needs to be confidential because financial details of the company are involved.

Sample of correspondence with banks

Given below are samples of correspondence with banks, for opening of a bank account, stop payment of a cheque, account statement and overdraft facility.

Exhibit 4.6 Request for opening of bank account

The Manager
ICICI Bank
Lawrence Road
Amritsar.

Dear Sir/ Madam

Sub: Opening of a current account

We are desirous of opening a new current account in your bank in the name of our company "XYZ Engineering Works Pvt. Ltd., Ghaziabad". The application form, duly filled in, and the following documents as required for opening of an account are forwarded herewith.

- Certificate of Registrar of Companies granting permission to the company to commence business
- Letter of introduction by Mr. B.R. Sharma, an account holder with your bank
- Certified copy of the proposal of the Board of Directors to open a Current Account duly signed by the Chairman

We are sending Rs. 15000/- in cash through Mr. Amit Chopra as the initial amount to be deposited in the account. We would be grateful if you could kindly open the account in the name of the company.

Mr. Anuj Adhikari, Managing Director of our company is authorised to operate this account. His specimen signatures are appended below.

You are requested to send us the cheque book, passbook and pay-in slip book to enable us to operate the account.

We look forward to a fruitful association with your bank.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,
ABC
Encl: Four

Exhibit 4.7 Form letter for request for 'Stop Payment' of cheque

ICICI Bank
Branch……………..

Date ………………..

Account Number…………………
Name………………………………………………..
Address…………………………………………..

I/ We request you to stop payment of the cheque, details of which are as follows
Cheque number………….. Dated…………. Amount …………..
In favour of …………………………
Reason why payment has been stopped………………………………………

Signature……………………

Exhibit 4.8 Request for account statement

The Manager
ICICI Bank
Lawrence Road
Amritsar

Dear Sir/Madam

Sub: Request for current account statement

We hold a current account in the name of our company "XYZ Engineering Works Pvt. Ltd., Ghaziabad" in your bank. Our account number is C 987345123 . The account statement for the quarter January – March, 2009 has not been received by us.

We would be grateful, if you could send us the account statement for the period 1st January – 31st March, 2009, at the earliest to enable us to reconcile the bank balance.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,
XYZ

Exhibit 4.9 Request for overdraft facility

The Manager
ICICI Bank
Lawrence Road
Amritsar

Dear Sir/Madam

Sub: Request for overdraft facility

We hold a current account in the name of our company "XYZ Engineering Works Pvt. Ltd., Ghaziabad" in your bank. Our account number is C 987345123.

Our business has been growing at a steady rate since its establishment in January, 2004. The turnover has doubled since establishment and the profits are growing steadily. In the coming festival season we expect a further rise in our turnover and our new manufacturing unit is also expected to start production in the coming month. On account of a tight money market, our usual suppliers have expressed their inability to grant us credit for a period of more than a month.

Under the above mentioned circumstances, we would be grateful if you could grant us an overdraft of Rs. 1,00,000 which would be sufficient for us to finance a part of our stock of raw material. We require this amount for a period of two months by the end of which we will be able to deposit the amount in our account.

We also wish to draw your attention to the operation of our current account with your bank. We have been regularly maintaining a fair balance, and bills and other obligations are met promptly. We are also enclosing audited copies of the Trading and Profit and Loss Account and Balance Sheet for your information.

We hope for a positive reply from your end.

Thanking you

With regards
Yours sincerely
***

Notices

As the name suggests, notices are written messages which are meant to be noticed by a number of people. Generally notices are categorised as tools of internal communication, i.e., they are used for communication within the organisation. However, this need not always be the case. Notices are also used for external communication and such notice may take the form of Public Notice, Auction Notice, Tender Notice, etc. One feature which all notices have in common is that they reach out to a number of people for whom they are meant.

Notices for internal office communication

Notices are widely used in offices to disseminate information. Mostly they are used for downward communication. Notices are generally pinned on a notice board or a wall and are a popular way of effectively reaching out to the persons for whom they are meant. Notices follow more or less a standardised format though the format may vary slightly from organisation to organisation. While drafting notices one needs to be very careful. Persuasiveness and tactfulness ensure that they are acted upon and add to their effectiveness. Notices need to be precise, clear, polite and simple. Notices need to adopt a requesting tone rather than a commanding or threatening tone. They are mostly signed by the concerned issuing person.

Exhibit 4.10 Sample Notice

> XYZ Engineering Works
> Ghaziabad
>
> NOTICE
>
> This is to inform that a lecture is being organised at the company auditorium at 2: 00 pm on June 26, 2009. The topic of the lecture is 'Effective Time Management' and the speaker is Prof. S.K. Murthy from IIM Lucknow. All are requested to be seated by 1:55 pm. The lecture will be followed by refreshments.
>
> K.M. Shah
> June 21, 2009

Notices for external communication

Public notices, notices to invite tenders and bid, auction notices etc. are notices which are used to communicate with people and groups outside the organisation. These notices are a regular feature in all newspapers. A 'Public notice' is an important announcement giving information to the public. It should essentially possess the following characteristics:

(i) The writing style should be such that it catches attention

(ii) It should contain complete information covering all aspects

(iii) The language should be clear and precise

(iv) It should have a suitable heading indicating the subject matter

Tender notices are invitations to contractors giving details of construction or engineering works to be done and asking interested parties to submit estimates for the completion of the works. Invitation for bids, ask suppliers to send in estimates for supplying specific specialized goods or services detailed in the bidding document.

(i) All such notices must clearly state the purpose for which they have been sent to the press.

(ii) Both active voice and passive voice are used in drafting these notices. However, as there is no personal involvement passive voice is more prominent. It is important to note that the notice speaks for the organisation and not for a person.

(iii) Sometimes the tender notice begins with active voice for example, like this

"ONGC invites sealed tenders……………………"

(iv) All details of the works to be completed, items to be supplied, articles/ materials to be auctioned must be clearly stated.

(v) The terms and conditions of business requirement of the organisation, eligibility requirements of the applicant must be clearly laid down in the notice.

(vi) As far as possible the notice must be brief. Nothing important should, however, be left out.

Sample Public Notice Notice for grant of environmental clearance to Western Coalfields Limited for its expansion programme.

Exhibit 4.11 Sample Public Notice

Western Coalfields Ltd.
(A subsidiary of Coal India Limited)

NOTICE

Sub: Environmental Clearance for expansion of Durgapur Rayatwari Underground Coal-mine Project (increase in production from 0.30 MTPA to 0.92 MTPA) of Western Coalfields Limited located in Village, Tahsil & District Chandrapur (Maharashtra)

Ministry of Environment and Forests has accorded Environmental Clearance for expansion of Durgapur Rayatwari Underground Coal-mine Project (increase in production from 0.30 MTPA to 0.92 MTPA and increase in lease area from 529.29 ha to 779.29 ha) of Chandarpur Area of Western Coalfields Limited. Copy of clearance letter is available with the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board and may also be seen at the website of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, at http://envfor.nic.in

Exhibit 4.12 Sample Tender Notice

Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited
(A Govt. of India Enterprise)
Office of the General Manager Telecom
Wardha –442 006

TENDER NOTICE

Sealed tenders are invited by the General Manager Telecom, Wardha, on behalf of Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited, for **Cleaning and Upkeep of departmental telephone exchange/administrative office building and premises in Wardha Telecom district**. Last date of issue of tender form; up to 1400h of 16.7.2008. For further details, kindly visit our website www.maharashtra.bsnl.co.in or contact on telephone number 07212-253131**.**

A.G.M. (Administration and Planning) O/o G.M.T., Wardha

SUMMARY

Knowledge of good official correspondence is pertinent to businesses. Whether the communication is printed on paper or appears on a terminal screen its writer should have applied exactly the same principles and care to structure and style, content and layout in order to communicate clearly, accurately and effectively. Official correspondence can be broadly categorised into internal and external correspondence. The chapter discussed office memorandum, office order and office circular, notes as tools of internal communication. Business letters, notices and reports which are means of communicating both within an organisation and with external agencies. Correspondence with banks forms an essential part of business communication. This has been dealt with in detail along with sample letters.

QUESTIONS

1. How has the format of letters been affected by the use of computers?
2. M/s Glass House receive from New Glass Co. Ltd. a consignment of glass crockery in which some pieces of crockery are damaged probably due to carelessness in packing. Write a letter informing them about this and asking for compensation.
3. Write a letter to the General Manager, Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Ltd., requesting for shifting the telephones in your office from the old office premises to the office in a new location.
4. You are the Finance Manager of your company. Apply to your bankers for credit of Rs. 10 lakhs.
5. Your company has an overdraft facility with State Bank of India for Rs. 3,50,000. Write a letter to the Manager requesting it to be raised to Rs. 5,00,000.

TECHNICAL WRITING

chapter 5

THIS CHAPTER WILL HELP YOU IN:

- Understanding the characteristics of technical writing
- Discussing the objectives of technical writing
- Listing the stages in the technical writing process viz. Planning, Drafting, Revising and Finishing (editing and proof reading)
- Discussing the characteristics and types of business proposals

- Discussing the guidelines for writing business proposals
- Familiarising the reader with various aspects of writing technical papers and referencing styles
- Discussing business reports, types of business reports and their importance
- Writing effective business reports by understanding various components and essentials of business report writing

The chapter focuses on the various aspects of technical writing—its characteristics, purpose and the process of technical writing. It discusses in detail technical proposals, which includes describing the characteristics, types and contents of a technical proposal. This chapter also familiarises the reader with various aspects of writing technical papers with emphasis on writing references. Lastly this chapter deals with reporting that is an integral part of an organisation's activity. Managers are constantly required to submit reports to supervisors and executives to enable them to take informed decisions about changes in policies. Various types of reports, their purpose, and structure have been dealt with in detail.

TECHNICAL WRITING

Technical Writing is the practical writing that most managers do as a part of their job. It is an inherent part of written communication in all organisations.

Objectives of Technical Writing

Technical writing has three basic purposes

- To inform
- To instruct and
- To persuade

For carrying out various activities in the workplace, managers need to receive and supply information, e.g. budget allocation, agenda for a meeting etc. Technical writing is also used to give instructions. Written instructions may involve directions for using an equipment or for performing duties. Technical writing is used to persuade the readers to follow a particular course of action. For example a technical report may be used to persuade a reader to select a particular site for setting up a new plant. A business proposal may be used to generate funds for starting a new venture.

Characteristics of Technical Writing

Technical writing has the following four characteristics:

1. Technical writing is aimed at a specific audience. Technical writers generate documents keeping the audience characteristics and requirements in mind.
2. Technical writing is framed in simple objective language with terminology that the audience understands. Unnecessary elaboration of feelings or emotional interpretation of the subject is avoided.
3. Good technical writing is well structured, thus enabling the reader to easily assimilate the information.
4. Technical writing generally is aided with the use of visuals like graphs, tables and drawings. These enhance the effectiveness of the written document.

Though the basics of technical writing remain the same, there are many types of technical documents which can be generated to suit different purposes and different audiences. The technical documents which would be discussed in this chapter are reports, technical papers and technical proposals.

Technical Writing Process

Technical writing process can essentially be said to be consisting of the following steps:

- Pre writing: Planning
- Writing: Drafting and Revising
- Post Writing: Finishing

Planning involves collecting all relevant information about the communication and working out a tentative plan to create the document. Drafting is selecting and organising all the information to be presented in the document. Finally finishing involves editing the document and getting it into a presentable shape.

Planning

Planning is the basis of any activity and the same is true for technical writing. The more you plan the better will be the final document.

Some of the issues to be kept in mind while planning the document are:

(i) Audience One needs to know the following details about the audience:

- Who are the audience who will be reading the document?
- Will it be an individual or a group?
- How much does the audience know about the topic?
- How important is the topic to the audience?

(ii) Goal of the writing process This involves having an answer to the following questions:

- What is the theme of the document?
- What is the purpose of the document?

(iii) Constraints Constraints are social and physical factors that affect both the ability to write the document and the reader's ability to respond to it. This involves having sufficient information regarding the following:

- The format to be followed
- The number of pages in the final document
- Time given for preparing the material

(iv) Gist of the document You need to plan the major theme and the sub themes on which the document will be based. Develop an outline of the document by deciding the various sections and their sequence. Also decide on the kind of visual aids that will be used, for example tables, pie charts, bar graphs, maps etc. could be used to enhance the quality of the document.

Drafting and revising

Once the planning stage is over, actual writing begins. This step of the writing process takes considerable time. Write the first draft of the document based on the complete information collected during planning stage. Let ideas flow smoothly and write them down. Do not worry about the correctness, style or format. Some writers rather than writing the document in a pre-determined sequence prefer to write important sections and subsections first and then combine them with the other sections.

After having produced the first draft of your report leave it aside for some time as this enables you to give a fresh look to the document (this may not be possible if the finished document is to be provided urgently). Revise the document for the following:

Content Make sure that all the relevant information has been included. It should be presented in a logical sequence that the reader is able to comprehend easily.

Style Review the complete document from the point of view of style of writing. Style of writing should be consistent and impressive.

Accuracy The information presented should be correct in terms of content and mechanics too.

Finishing the document

This is the final stage. It involves editing and micro editing the document and producing it. Editing means changing the text till it is consistent and accurate. The document needs to be put into a format which is consistent and visually appealing. Major headings and minor headings need to be differentiated. For this, different styles, fonts, sizes etc. can be used. Some documents have to be presented in a standard format which is provided by the concerned organisation or authority. Proof reading involves checking the document for spelling, punctuation, basic grammar, formatting and accuracy of facts. A well proof read document is free from errors and provides credibility to the document. The document is then produced on the desired stationery.

Technical Proposals

It is a written document to persuade the reader for a suggested plan of action. For example a proposal may aim to obtain a grant from the government to carry out a survey on communication practices in organisations.

Characteristics of Technical Proposals

Some of the characteristics of proposals include:

- Proposals are persuasive documents, as these try to convince the reader of the suitability of a particular course of action.
- They are generally written for an external audience, though in some cases they may be made for internal purpose by one department for another or by an individual for management.
- They may be solicited or unsolicited.
- They vary from a couple of pages to several pages in length.
- Proposals may be made by individuals or organisations to individuals or organisations.

Types of technical proposals

Proposals may be solicited or unsolicited. ***Solicited proposals*** are invited i.e., the awarding organisation calls for proposals from interested individuals or parties. The awarding organisation describes the requirement that the proposal should contain. In many cases a standard format is provided for the parties to submit their proposals. Government agencies routinely ask for proposals from potential suppliers.

Unsolicited proposals are also called as prospecting proposals. They are more detailed and should catch the receiver's attention. They require more background information and should be persuasive so as to convince the reader of the suitability of the proposal. In addition to the above, proposals may be typically research proposals which include details on the plan, need, objectives and budget of the research.

Format/contents of Proposal

The proposal may be in the format of a letter (mostly in the case of proposals being sent within organisations), form proposal (in which the form is supplied by the organisation calling for proposals) or a proposal in a detailed report form.

The following are the topics under which the information can be provided while writing a proposal. Depending on the complexity of the proposal and its length these eight topics can be combined or further subdivided.

(i) Objective statement The opening statement should present the purpose/objective of the proposal i.e., what the presenter is proposing to do. It should be linked to the need of the receiver to gain acceptability. The problem or objective should be stated clearly. In case of solicited proposals it is important to link the objective statement with the topic for which proposals are invited. In case of unsolicited proposals, the objective should be of interest to the organisation where the proposal is being submitted and it should also catch the reader's attention. This can be effectively done by summarising the benefits of the proposal.

(ii) Background Provide the reader with the background information of the problem. This helps the reader in better understanding the problem and seeing it in the right perspective. For example, a proposal of a research organisation to a company for carrying out a survey on consumer behaviour, may be backed by information related to declining sales due to changing consumer needs.

(iii) Need Need for what is being proposed is an offshoot of the background information. Based on the background information, the need is established so that the reader is able to understand its advantages clearly.

(iv) Procedure/Discussion of the plan Here details are provided as to how you will go about achieving the objectives listed out earlier. Give a step by step description of your plan of action, proposed schedule of activities and an estimated budget. This is the heart of the proposal and needs to be written very carefully, concisely and logically.

(v) Qualifications Give the qualification and experience of the people who would be involved in the proposed project. This is given with a view to provide evidence of their ability to handle the project. Details of previous experience of the organisation/individuals in handling similar projects, availability of facilities, equipment, expertise etc. provide credibility to the proposal.

(vi) Request for Approval To conclude the proposal you may briefly summarise it in a couple of lines followed by a direct request for approval. This may not appear as a separate heading but may take the form of a few lines at the end.

(vii) Appendix Any supporting information relevant to your proposal may be included as appendix towards the end of the proposal.

Use straightforward language, facts and figures to support your idea in the proposal. It is essential to stress reader benefits, as there is generally a commitment of money involved, so the reader needs to know clearly what they would get in return.

Technical Paper

Characteristics of technical paper

Technical papers which are sent for publication to journals, conference proceedings and symposia publications need to have a scientific and professional style of writing. Some of the characteristics which technical papers should possess are:

(i) The paper should be of relevance to the theme of the journal/conference and of interest to the reader of the journal.

(ii) It should have value i.e., it should contain discovery of a new fact, method or theory or a critical review. It may challenge the current concept or practice.

(iii) It should have a professional tone and for this it is advisable to write the paper in third person. It should present the research findings exactly and clearly.

(iv) Technical papers contain original quotes from other researchers for which appropriate references need to be included.

Layout and contents of a technical paper

Most papers have a limitation on the length of the paper. It is important to follow the specified word limit, therefore great care has to be taken in selection of material to be included. The usual layout of the paper is as follows:

(i) Title of paper

(ii) Name of author

(iii) Key words and abstract

(iv) Footnotes about the author

(iv) Main text (introduction, main body and conclusion)

(v) References

(vi) Appendices

(vii) Footnotes

Title of the paper should reflect the contents of the paper. It should not be too long and preferably be restricted to one printed line length. The title is followed by the name(s) of the author(s) and a footnote giving their qualification, position and organisation affiliation. This is followed by an abstract of about 150 words. Many journals require the authors to give key words for their paper for proper listing.

The introduction of the paper includes the topic of the paper, its objectives and scope. This is followed by the review of similar work, background of the current work, findings and recommendations. The conclusion briefly summarises the paper.

Scientific and technical papers invariably involve mathematical equations. Writing of equations and formulae requires care so as to avoid errors. Use of decimals, commas, exponents, brackets, superscripts, symbols, notations etc. are involved and these have to be written clearly.

At the end of the text is given the list of references and appendix. The various ways of giving reference are covered in the next section. Sometimes an appendix is included at the end of the paper. It contains some information which is useful for supplementing the information contained in the main paper such as a questionnaire which may have been used to collect data for the study.

Footnotes are placed at the foot of a page and the reference is made to it in the text by a superscript numeral, alphabet or a symbol. They may contain information as supplementary to the text or they may give reference to a source of information. Explanatory footnotes are sometimes included under a table, diagram or a chart. The material in the footnote is separated from the text on the page by a line.

Referencing styles

There are several ways in which reference to already published material is given. Reference can be given in the form of a footnote given on the text page where the reference is made. The same superscript number or symbol is used at the point of reference in the text and the footnote. Another way is to mark the references in the text by superscript numerals in consecutive order as they come in the text. Then at the end of the text they are all listed in the same order having the same serial number as contained in the text. Most journals follow the MLA (Modern Language Association) or the APA (American Psychological Association) style of referencing.

However, the most common method of referencing is to refer to the name of the author(s) and year of publication in the text. When there are more than two authors the term *et al.* is used after writing the name of the first author. In the list of references the references are arranged in alphabetical order bringing year of publication with author's name. Examples of references are given below for different types of sources.

- Reference to the chapter of a book

  Madhukar, R.K. "Internal Communication" Chapter 7 in *Business Communication*, Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd., New Delhi, 2005, pp. 110-123.

- Reference to a paper in a journal

  Shivaram, M.N. (2000), "Management of Technical Education in the 21st Century", *The Indian Journal of Technical Education*, 23.3, pp. 16-19.

Technical Reports

Characteristics of technical reports

Reports are an integral part of an organisational activity. Managers are constantly required to submit reports to supervisors and executives to enable them to take informed decisions about change in policies etc. Reports are a good way for management to get a constant and reliable source of information. A report may be defined as a form of systematic presentation of information relating to an event, progress of action or some activity. Reports present facts for interested readers. More specifically, business reports may be defined as an orderly and objective communication of factual information that serves a business purpose.

The characteristics of business reports can be briefly summarised as follows:

- Generally submitted to a higher authority
- Communicate upwards in an organisation
- Logically organised
- Objective in tone
- For a limited audience
- Both short and long

Purpose of technical reports

A report carries information from someone who has it to someone who needs it. It is a basic management tool used in decision making. Reports may be used to provide information (information reports), analyse information and give suggestions (analytical reports), request for action or give recommendations to initiate action. Thus, in a business context, reports serve the following purpose:

- Reports give factual information to the management
- Reports record facts and results of investigations or surveys for future reference
- Reports are useful tools for providing shareholders, customers, creditors and general public with useful information
- Based on detailed investigations, reports give recommendations that can be used in future

Importance of technical reports

(i) Conveyor of information Reports serve as conveyor of information. They provide necessary information to various parties who need it.

(ii) Review and evaluate operations Reports help management to review and evaluate operations continuously. They help in coordinating activities of different departments.

(iii) Decision making A report aims at providing correct , objective and suitable information to people who require it so that correct decisions can be taken at their end.

(iv) Better coordination Reports aim to promote common understanding of information between different groups in the organisation, thus ensuring better coordination.

(v) Tools for measuring performance Reports are useful tools for measuring departmental performance. The operational data from various departments helps management to assess performance of each department.

(vi) Help in making desirable changes Reports help in making and implementing desirable changes to business policies.

Essentials of a good technical report

For a technical report to serve effectively the purpose for which it is intended, it is necessary that it possesses certain essentials. Following are some of the characteristics of a good report:

(i) Accuracy The information presented in a report should be as accurate as possible because on it are based several important decisions and actions. While preparing reports make sure to double check figures to ensure accuracy.

(ii) Clarity The technical reports should be clear and completely understandable. The paragraphs should be logically presented with suitable headings.

(iii) Consistency The report should be consistent with the main theme and should not deviate. It should serve the purpose for which it is meant. Irrelevant information should not be included. At the same time useful information should not be left out while preparing the report.

(iv) Objectivity Objectivity involves freedom from personal prejudices. There should be objectivity in observation, collection of related facts and writing the report.

(v) Completeness The report should be complete in all respects and free from ambiguity.

(vi) Brevity Time is precious both for the writer of the report and the reader. Therefore reports should not be too lengthy. They need to be brief and to the point, excluding all irrelevant details.

(vii) Simplicity Reports are not a test of your command over literary aspects of language. A report should be simple and easily understandable and free from too much of jargon.

(viii) Appearance The arrangement, organisation, format and layout of a report should be pleasing and as far as possible, eye catching. It should be grammatically correct and free from typographical errors.

(ix) Reliability A report should be reliable. Objectivity and accuracy of information contribute towards the reliability of a report.

(x) Timeliness To be useful and purposeful, a report should reach the reader well in time, otherwise it is of no use.

Types of Technical Reports

Reports can be in both oral and written forms, though written reports are preferred. Written reports have the following advantages over oral reports.

- Oral reports can be denied at any time
- Oral reports tend to be vague as compared to written reports
- Written reports can be referred to again and again which is not the case with oral reports
- Written reports can be transferred from person to person without the risk of distortion

Reports can range from one page to those running into several volumes. In all cases reports should be clear, concise and objective in their tone, as decisions are based on them. They can be classified into the following types:

- Informational reports and Analytical reports
- Routine or periodic reports and Special reports
- Informal and Formal reports

Informational reports and Analytical reports Informational reports only contain information in the form of facts and data. They do not contain any analysis or suggestion based on the information presented.

On the other hand, Analytical reports contain both facts as well as analysis of facts and conclusions. Recommendations/Suggestions based on the analysis may also be included in such a report.

Routine or periodic reports and Special reports Routine reports are submitted to management at regular intervals by individuals, sections, departments etc. to help the management manage administration effectively. These are the most common type of business reports. These may be submitted on a daily, weekly, quarterly or monthly basis. These are generally meant for internal consumption by the organisation and are not public documents. Length of these reports may vary from a single page to about ten pages. These include budgets, production reports, monthly accounts; cost reports etc. Special reports are prepared to deal with problems or issues that have specifically developed. They are generally requested for by the concerned authority and are custom prepared to suit the particular purpose.

Informal and Formal reports

Informal reports Informal reports do not follow any fixed form or procedure for submission. They are prepared according to the convenience and requirement of the organisation. Informal reports do not mean the style and language of the report is informal. It only indicates simplicity in terms of structure or format.

The following are some of the forms these reports may take:

Short reports – These reports are presented in simple letter format. They are less than five pages in length. The presentation style of such reports is kept simple, and facts are reported.

Progress reports – These reports contain information regarding the progress of a particular work or project.

Staff reports – These reports are prepared to resolve particular staff problems.

Justification report – These reports are used to justify a particular recommendation or a course of action.

Formal reports When a report is prepared in the prescribed form and is presented according to an established procedure, it is called a formal report. Formal reports have a uniform structure and format which is specific to the organisation.

Characteristics of formal reports

- Longer than an informal report
- More thorough and often based on a detailed examination of the problem
- Formal in terms of format, structure, language

Types of formal reports

Statutory reports – These are reports which are prepared as a mandatory requirement by law. The format of such a report is, as prescribed by the concerned body.

Non statutory reports – There is no legal binding for preparation and submission of these reports, but these are asked for by the management to facilitate the various managerial functions.

Writing a report

A report should be drafted keeping in mind the following points:

(i) Purpose of the report
(ii) Time within which it is to be submitted
(iii) Level of authority for which it is intended

The procedure for report writing includes the following steps:

(i) Determination of the purpose of the report
(ii) Identify the audience who will be reading the report—Collect information regarding their expertise, hierarchical positions, educational background etc.
(iii) Collect the data necessary to prepare the report
(iv) Identify and classify the data
(v) Outline the report
(vi) Prepare the final report
(vii) Present the report

Structure of a report

A report consists of the following parts:

(i) Title page – It may include all or some of these—subject, author, date of completion, file reference, confidentiality
(ii) Table of Contents
(iii) Acknowledgements
(iv) Executive Summary (sometimes called 'Abstract' or 'Synopsis' if the report is academic in nature)
(v) Body of the report
    (i) Introduction
    (ii) Procedures/method
    (iii) Analysis & Findings
    (iv) Conclusion
    (v) Recommendations
(vi) Appendices
(vii) Bibliography

Executive summary

- Very important part of a report
- Extends from a paragraph to two pages in length
- Should include a bit of all components of the report
- No particular part of the report should dominate
- Written after the entire report is complete
- Gives a gist/summary of what is there in the report
- Is an independent document and may be circulated to people who do not have the time to read the entire report

- Should not be a cut and paste activity from the main report
- It should be written afresh
- It should also be very accurate, as decisions might be taken based on just the executive summary

Body of the report The various parts of the body of the report have been discussed briefly:

(i) Introduction: It gives a brief background to the report.

(ii) Procedures/Method: It outlines how the data was collected, observations etc.

(iii) Analysis & Findings: The major findings after the analysis of data is presented in an organised, logical and objective form.

(iv) Conclusion: It states what the findings have shown, objectively. It is different from an executive summary and should not be confused with it. It is generally written in past tense.

(v) Recommendations:
   - Should logically flow from the conclusion
   - Generally expressed in future tense
   - Outlines direct possible course of action
   - No explanation of action is required in recommendations.

Appendices It includes information that doesn't fit into the text but essential, like charts, data and graphs etc.

Bibliography

- List of references used in the preparation of the report including citations of all web sites , books and articles
- Consistency should be maintained while citing references
- Listed alphabetically by author's last name
- Various formats are available for bibliographies

SUMMARY

This chapter focused on the various aspects of technical writing—its characteristics, purpose and the technical writing process. The technical writing process consists of three basic steps—planning the document, drafting and revising the document and finishing the document which involves editing and proof reading. It discussed in details

technical proposals which included describing the characteristics, types and contents of a technical proposal. The contents include the sections to be included in the proposal *viz.* objective, background, need, procedure, qualification, request for approval and appendix. The various aspects of writing technical papers with emphasis on writing references have also been covered in the chapter. Further, Report writing including the purpose, structure and types of report has been dealt with in this chapter.

QUESTIONS

1. What is technical writing? What are its characteristics?
2. Differentiate between solicited and unsolicited proposals.
3. Briefly explain the various styles of quoting references while writing a technical paper.
4. What are the possible objectives of technical writing?
5. What is an 'Executive Summary' with reference to a report?
6. Discuss the various stages of the technical writing process.
7. Explain in detail the components of a proposal.
8. Describe the various parts of a technical paper.
9. What are the main features of reports?

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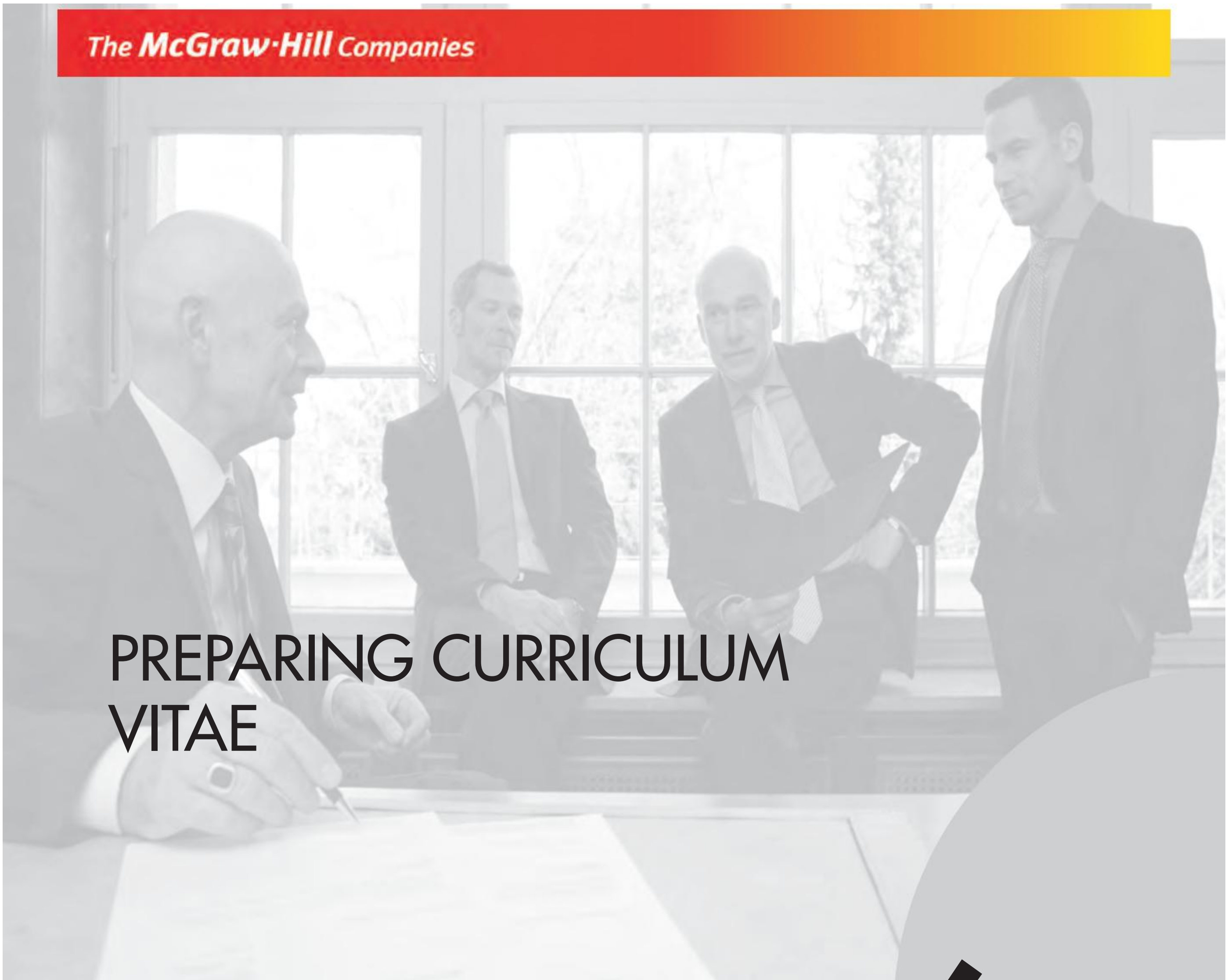


PREPARING CURRICULUM VITAE

chapter 6

THIS CHAPTER WILL HELP YOU IN:

- Understanding the characteristics of curriculum vitae (CV) as an important job search tool
- Discussing the various components of a CV
- Discussing the purpose of a CV
- Discussing the characteristics of various types of CVs.
- Some do's and don'ts of CV writing

- Develop skills to write an impressive CV
- Writing a cover letter

Getting the dream job perhaps figures in the wish list for most of the managers and writing an effective and impressive curriculum vitae (CV) is the first step towards it. The chapter explains various characteristics of a CV and the difference between CV and resume. To be able to write an effective resume, it is essential to keep in mind your goal, audience and the position you are applying for. A well planned and structured resume makes a good first impression. The purpose of CV along with the steps in preparing the CV are also covered. It also discusses the types of CVs that can be used and the effect these have. CVs or resumes should always be accompanied by a cover letter. The chapter also provides guidelines for writing a cover letter.

CURRICULUM VITAE VS RESUME

CV is the abbreviated form of curriculum vitae. Curriculum vitae are Latin words which together mean 'list of life'. It is a detailed outline of your qualifications, education and working experience intended to tell a prospective employer about yourself. A CV is an essential tool in your job search. While applying for a vacancy, you generally first send a CV along with a covering letter. While writing a CV, it is important that we look at it from the employer's point of view. What will make me stand out against competition (the other candidates) and what would the employer want to talk to me for a possible job? You have to ask yourself these questions while writing your CV.

Very often the term curriculum vitae and resume are used interchangeably. Though both serve the same purpose and the same principles are applicable while writing both of them, there is a slight difference between the two. The length of the CV is longer than a resume. A resume is a short account of one's qualification, career and position. It is generally restricted to a page.

On the other hand, a CV is a detailed account of one's qualification, job-related experience, responsibilities shouldered, skills, etc. It also includes details such as research paper publications, conferences and seminars attended, short term courses attended, projects undertaken, etc. A CV may extend to 2-3 pages.

Purpose of a CV

Curriculum vitae is the primary document used to assess your suitability for a job position. It helps you project yourself as an appropriate candidate for a particular job by describing your academic qualifications, work experience, skills, etc. Below are summarised some of the purposes which a good CV serves:

- A CV or curriculum vitae is a marketing tool. With your CV you will be able to market and promote yourself.
- A good CV brings out the basic strengths of the individual in order to get the attention of the receiver.
- On most occasions a CV is the first contact with a potential employer and, therefore, should also be very impressive in the presentation.
- If you are invited for an interview, you get an opportunity to explain and expand on what is there in your CV.
- From an employer's point of view, it helps short list the candidates who best meet the job requirements thus, avoiding wastage of time on interviewing candidates whose profile does not match the job requirement.

Preparation of a CV

Your CV is the only thing that the employer has in hand that will give her/him an impression about you. Hence, everything in a CV—the paper, the presentation, the language, and the overall looks—describes you. It is believed that employers spend less than 30 seconds scanning your CV before deciding whether to put it aside or review it further. Thus, it is important that the CV create a favourable impression on the receiver and for this, utmost care should be taken in preparing a CV as it needs to stand out in relation to the numerous other CVs that the employer receives.

While preparing a CV there are two basic aspects that need to be considered. These are:

- Contents/Essential components of the CV
- Appearance of the CV

Contents/Essential Components of the CV

Broadly speaking we can have two kinds of CVs—a general purpose CV that fits a number of companies and jobs and a custom made or specific purpose CV that is made to suit a particular organisation, job or purpose is preferred. The contents are the heart of the CV because they describe you. Make sure that the contents are accurate and updated. Be honest and truthful about your qualifications and achievements. While framing the contents of your resume, use key words specific to your area or industry. Ensure that your CV is 100% error free in terms of content, format, spelling and grammar.

The following are the essential components of a CV irrespective of whether it is a general purpose CV or a specific purpose CV.

Personal Details

This includes

- Name
- Date of Birth
- Address and Contact details (telephone, email address, etc.)
- Nationality (if required)

Objective: (Optional)

This may include the nature of job sought, position sought and the type of organisation in which the job is sought. This gives the employer an idea of your career goal. The objective may be very specific as given in 'sample objective 1' or may be comparatively general as given in 'sample objective 2' below:

Exhibit 6.1

Sample Objective 1

To seek a position as a Director/Counsellor/Educator/Coordinator

Sample Objective 2

To seek a position in which financial planning skills can be used to help clients increase their wealth over long term, through the use of appropriate investment strategies

Academic/Educational Qualifications

Here you provide a list of your degrees (high school onwards), the names of the schools, colleges/universities or other educational institutions, details of examination boards, the subjects and the grades attained along with the dates you took the examinations, year of passing out, etc. Providing the grades attained and details of subjects, etc. is more relevant for entry level candidates. In case of experienced professionals, mentioning the degree, university and year of passing is sufficient. It is desirable to do the listing in reverse chronological order. Details of any other courses or training programmes attended can also be provided.

Exhibit 6.2

Sample Educational Qualification

Ph. D. from Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore in 2008

Title—A study of factors affecting the communication skills of the hearing impaired

Master's degree in Speech & Hearing in 2004 from All India Speech and Hearing Institute, Bangalore, India with 69% marks

Bachelor's degree in Speech & Hearing in 2002 from All India Speech and Hearing Institute, Bangalore, with 79% marks

Academic distinction (Optional)

Include this if you have some significant academic achievement to convey like medals won, scholarships received, etc.

Exhibit 6.3

Sample Academic Distinctions

Gold medal for standing first in order of merit in MBA

Best Academic Achiever award for record marks in BBA

Best paper award for presenting a paper in a National Conference organised by the School of Management Studies, Nagpur

Work experience

This section is likely to attract the maximum attention of the prospective employers, thus, this needs to be written carefully and be well presented. This will include full-time and part-time employment giving brief details about each job, the period you held the position, the job title, the name and address of the employer and a brief outline of your responsibilities. Here too, it is desirable to start with your current job and move backwards.

Exhibit 6.4

Sample Work Experience

Work Experience : About 8 years

Currently working as a faculty in Institute of Management Studies Ghaziabad since June 2004. The job involves teaching undergraduate (BBA) and Post graduate students (MBA).

Worked as a Research Associate in Indian Institute of Technology , Roorkee from April 2001 to June 2003. The job involved a wide range of organisational and administrative work such as social and community work, conducting surveys and technical and general correspondence.

Worked from February 1999 to March 2001 as a Sales Executive in Midwest Automobiles, Dehradun. The job involved controlling and coordinating a team of Sales representatives and achieving sales targets.

Additional Information

This will *include* anything which you feel is relevant and you feel will help market yourself like, membership of professional bodies, voluntary work undertaken, publications, etc.

References

This will include two names and addresses of people who will verify your suitability for the job, preferably, people you have worked with or somebody who has taught you. These are people holding important positions. It is essential to check with your referees whether they are prepared to give you a reference before you include their names in your CV.

Testimonials

Testimonials refer to letters of recommendation or appreciation. Testimonials are different from references. References are in response to a specific request by an employer whereas a testimonial is not specifically addressed. It is in the form of a certificate. These increase the credibility of the candidate and help him in seeking employment.

Exhibit 6.5

Sample Testimonial

To Whom it may Concern

Mr. Aditya Chopra has served in our organisation as Chief Information Officer for the last 5 years. He joined as Assistant Librarian in June 2002 and because of his high performance he was promoted to the post of Chief Information Officer.

Mr. Aditya Chopra is very sincere and hardworking. He has a pleasing personality and he willingly shouldered additional responsibilities whenever needed. He took the initiative to successfully computerize the library. He is a good team worker and actively cooperates with both his superiors and subordinates to take the task to a successful completion.

Mr. Chopra is leaving the organisation due to personal reasons. He will be an asset to any organisation he joins.

I wish him success in all his future endeavours.

H. S Bedi
Director

Appearance of the CV

The appearance of the CV is as important as its contents. It is important that the CV has an eye appeal to get selected from among the many resumes received by the prospective employer. To make a CV distinctive and attractive, the following aspects need to be considered:

- Length of the CV
- Format and layout of the CV
- Stationery used

(i) Length of the CV

An employer is probably looking at hundreds of CVs, therefore, it is important that the CV be brief and focused. However, brevity at the cost of completeness is also not desirable. The CV should contain all relevant details which are essential for the prospective employer. The desirable length of the CV will vary depending on

- Qualification and experience of the individual
- Nature of the position applied for

Candidates who have little or no experience may have shorter CVs as compared to those who have years of experience behind them. For freshers, the CV should generally be restricted to less than two pages. For experienced candidates who have lots of information to give and whose CV may run into several pages, it is advisable to give a brief one page summary of the major contents of their CV. A summary saves the reader's time and if the reader wishes to have any details, he can go to the head containing the detailed information related to that aspect in the CV.

Exhibit 6.6

Sample Summary

Dr. Sujata Mehta, Director, College of Engineering and Management, Noida has a rich experience of 25 years in the academic field. Starting her career as a lecturer in management with LMS School of Management, Jaipur she has served with some of the leading institutions of the country like FMS-Delhi, XLRI-Jamshedpur and Bajaj School of Management, Mumbai.

Dr. Mehta has a doctoral degree in management from Queens University, Canada. She has an MBA degree from FMS-Delhi and a Bachelor of Engineering degree from IIT-Roorkee (formerly University of Roorkee). Her area of work and interest include business planning, vision building, strategy formulation, knowledge management and public relations. She is the author of two books on knowledge management. She has over 30 publications in leading journals of national and international repute.

Dr. Mehta is a Fellow of IIM-Ahmedabad and is in the Advisory Board of the Indian Society for Technical Education.

(ii) Format and Layout of a CV

As mentioned earlier, the first impression is formed in half-a-minute spent on initial screening of the CV. The space should be attractively used and the CV should be legible, neat and clearly readable. The following general rules can contribute towards making a CV attractive:

- Leave at least one inch margin on all sides of the page.
- Use fonts which are clearly readable. Do not use more than two font styles on a page.
- Limit font size to 10-12 for the body of the text and to 14 for headings.
- Avoid using colours and special effects to decorate the CV.
- Use bullets to arrange sub-parts of a heading clearly.
- Leave a lot of white space on the CV, otherwise it appears cramped.
- For emphasising key information, you may use bold/italic font style or may highlight it using a highlighter. However, remember that areas highlighted using a highlighter does not appear highlighted in a photo copy.

(iii) Stationery Used

- The paper used, the quality of printing and the envelope all add to making a CV appealing.
- The CV should always be formatted on standard A-4 size paper. Do not use odd size paper as that will make it difficult to fit the CV in a standard size envelope and will also create problems later on while filing at the receiver's end.
- Use good quality executive bond paper that is clean and wrinkle free. Preferably, use white paper as it photocopies well.

- Do not use dark coloured paper as they do not photocopy clearly or fax well.
- The printing quality should also be good as printing is what eventually makes your CV readable. Use high quality laser printing to obtain a resume having a professional look.
- Avoid coloured inks and restrict yourself to black coloured ink.
- In case you have sent your CV through e-mail, it is advisable to carry a hard copy with you when you go to meet the concerned employer.
- Use standard sized envelope.
- Sometimes it is advisable to use a large sized envelope of 9″x 12″ in which CV can be mailed unfolded. This is especially useful if the CV is lengthy and has other enclosures. Moreover, if the paper that has been used for printing the CV is heavy, it may cause creases along fold lines making the print illegible in that area.
- Avoid stapling the envelope.
- If you are sending the CV by post make sure to write the correct address clearly and legibly.

Types of CVs

CVs are of various types such as Chronological CV, Functional CV, Combination CV and Scannable CV. Each one of these CVs serves a different function and has a different impact on the receiver. It is essential to keep their characteristics in mind before choosing any of these. For example, a functional CV would typically emphasise skills rather than experience and would thus, be better suited to a person with less experience.

Chronological CV

This is also called the traditional format of CV. Most of the CVs follow this format. The chronological CV shows your career's progression and growth. The information moves from the beginning of your career to the present situation. The CV is easy to read and one can easily go through the career history. Your most recent job is given first at the beginning of the CV, i.e. a reverse chronology is followed. However, it may appear routine and tends to reveal gaps in the career path easily.

It is advised to have this kind of CV, if

- you have a continuous career history with continuation within the same area
- there are no major gaps
- your responsibilities have increased with each in your career change
- the job advertisement specifies this kind of CV

Exhibit 6.7

<u>**Sample CV in Chronological Format**</u>

<u>**Ritika Mishra**</u>

A 1 Rajender Nagar
Hyderabad 500034
Mobile 9849620505
Email <u>ritmis@yahoo.co.in</u>

Summary

6 years of experience in teaching
3 research publications in journals of repute
Well versed with statistical software
Conducted MDPs for 4 organisations

Experience

Organisation:	Institute of Management, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad
Duration:	Since Aug, 2005 till date
Designation:	Senior Lecturer
Responsibilities:	Teaching financial management to MBA students
	Chairperson of the BBA programme
	Editor of the institute journal "SYNERGY"
Organisation:	IIT Roorkee
Duration:	From Jan 2002 to Aug 2005
Designation:	Lecturer
Responsibilities:	Teaching financial management to MBA students
	Administrative responsibilities
	Member of research team carrying out a nation-wide study on 'dividend capture strategy'
	Preparing reports
	Organising short term courses and seminars

Academic qualification

MBA (Finance) (78%) from Osmania University, Hyderabad in 2002
B.Com (75%) Utkal University Bhubaneswar (2000)
XIIth (74%), CBSE Board, Orissa in 1998

Personal Details

Date of Birth: 29th June, 1981
Marital Status: Married

References

Available on request

Functional CV

This type of CV organises your experience based on the function performed or skills developed from a number of different job positions held. It focuses on *what* you have done rather than *when and where*, i.e. it describes your strengths and suitability for the job. Career history generally comes at the end of the CV. It is particularly useful

- if there are gaps in your career path
- if you do not have too much of work experience
- for people making career changes
- for those who need to highlight skills and achievements they have developed away from work. For example someone may have developed most of the skills needed for a particular position through volunteer work or part time work or through irregular free-lance assignments.

Exhibit 6.8

Sample CV in Functional Format

Pankaj Sharma
Flat No 453
Gandhi Nagar
Pune

020-2456372
e-mail ps@gmail.com

OBJECTIVE

To obtain a position where I can utilize my technical know-how and which will offer a high level of challenge, opportunity and continued career growth

SKILLS

COMPUTER

Languages: Java, C++, XML, PL/SQL
OS: Unix and Windows
Database: Oracle, MS SQL Server
Bug tracking tools: Perfect Tracker, Star team, Silk Radar
Prepared a report on Virtual classrooms for NIIT
Designed a web site for an IT organisation

MANAGEMENT

Majored in marketing management: Minored in International Business
Carried out a survey on customer needs for NIIT
Team member in the organisation of several conferences/seminars/workshops of national importance
Have worked on multiple concurrent projects

ADMINISTRATION

Assisted in organising training programmes in IT for professionals from industry
Was the editor for the newsletter
Was a member in an international project for creating awareness of IT for the rural population
Possess ability to work independently or as a part of a team

EDUCATION

Post Graduate Programme in Management (MBA) from International Management Institute, Lucknow in 2000

Honours Diploma in System Management from National Institute of Information Technology, New Delhi in 2003

EXPERIENCE

More than 2 years in the IT industry. Currently working with HCL Technologies, Noida as a Technical Coordinator

Experienced in Quality Assurance of Software on various applications

Possess experience in interacting with customers

REFERENCES

Available on request

Combination CV (Hybrid CV)

- It is a combination of the best of both Chronological as well as Functional CV.
- It includes your education and experience and also your accomplishments and skills. You can also use it when each position or job has unique responsibilities and when a shorter type of CV would not be sufficient.
- It tends to be longer than both Chronological and Functional CVs and also repetitive.

Exhibit 6.9

TAMANNA KRISHNAN

Address

H No 369, Sector 37, Arun Vihar, Noida (Uttar Pradesh)

Phone : 91--120-2430707,09313246773

Email: tamk@yahoo.com

DATE OF BIRTH : April 25, 1974

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION :

- Bachelor's degree in Engineering **(B.E., Mech.)** from Osmania University, Hyderabad, India in 1995 with Distinction (75% marks).
- Master's degree in Business Administration **(M.B.A.)** from Rohilkhand University (now MJP University), Bareilly, India in 1997 with Ist Division. **Major** area of specialisation: *Human Resource Management* and **minor** area of specialisation: *Marketing Management.*

WORK EXPERIENCE : About 7 years

- Currently working (Since April 2005) as faculty in Institute of Technology and Science, Ghaziabad.
- Worked as Research Fellow "A" in QIP Centre IIT-Roorkee (formerly University of Roorkee) from February 2000 to June 2003 under an AICTE project. The project is a nationwide survey covering degree level engineering institutions in the country.
- Worked as a Lecturer in B.R. Institute of Professional Management, Roorkee from January 1999 to January 2000. The job involved teaching M.B.A. students and shouldering various administrative responsibilities of the institute.
- Worked as a Sales Executive in Commercial Motors, Bareilly from December 1997 to December 1998. The job involved controlling and coordinating a team of sales representatives and achieving the sales target.

RESPONSIBILITIES UNDERTAKEN:

Research and Administrative Responsibilities

- Carried out a live project on Competency Profiling of Senior Level Managers at Continental Carbon India Limited.
- Undertaken a comprehensive survey of 18 National Institutes of Technology (formerly Regional Engineering Colleges).
- Prepared a report on "Virtual Classrooms" for IIT, Roorkee.
- Undertook a project on "Intramural Research in Technical Institutions" and prepared a proposal for the same.
- Organised a National Level event "A Date with Disability" on the campus of IIT, Roorkee.
- Had been a team member in the organisation of several conferences/seminars/workshops of national importance.
- Have assisted in the organisation of several short term training courses especially in the area of Educational Technology.

Teaching Responsibilities

- Taught management subjects to B.B.A and M.B.A. level students.
- Taken lectures during Short Term Courses organised by IIT, Roorkee for teachers of various degree level engineering institutions in the country.
- Taken lectures during a Faculty Development Programme organised by IIT, Roorkee for teachers of Hindustan College of Science and Technology, Agra.
- Part-time trainer for GRE, GMAT, TOEFL, IELTS and other competitive exams.

Additional Activities

- Was the Souvenir editor for the National Conference on 'India's Emergence as a Global Hub: The March Ahead' organised by ITS Ghaziabad at India Habitat Centre, New Delhi on 16-17 March 2007.
- On the advisory panel of Sigma HR Solutions Pvt. Ltd. Noida.
- Associated as a volunteer with 'Roorkee School for the Deaf' located on the campus of IIT, Roorkee. Involved in various activities of the school including management, administration and fund raising.
- Was a team member in the execution of a Rotary Project on 'Cooking and Catering' for deaf children.
- Have assisted in the coordination of North Zone participants of Regional Abilympics, National Abilympics and International Abilympics. International Abilympics is an Olympic of Abilities for the handicapped in which participants from countries all over the world participate.
- Have been the Master of Ceremony for many national level events organised in IIT, Roorkee and other universities.

PAPER PRESENTATIONS/PUBLICATIONS

- Paper entitled "Performance Management – A Holistic View" was published in "The Chanakya", journal of Rourkela Institute of Management Studies, Orissa, vol. VI, Issue 1 Jan –June 2006.
- Presented a paper entitled 'Knowledge Creation through Research in Educational Institutes' at SMVD University, Jammu on 6-7 January 2007.
- Got the **best paper award** for the paper entitled 'Modus Operandi of Competency Profiling in a Manufacturing Concern' at the National Conference on India's Emergence as a Global Hub: The March Ahead organised by ITS, Ghaziabad at India Habitat Centre, New Delhi on 16-17 March 2007.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Attended the following
  - National Conference on "Human Values in Technical Education" organised by IIT, Roorkee
  - Short Term Course on "Human Values and Professional Ethics" organised by IIT, Roorkee
  - Short Term Course on "Structural Steel Design" organised by IIT, Roorkee
  - National Conference of Indian Geotechnical Society – 2003 organised by IIT, Roorkee

DATE **SIGNATURE**

Electronic/Scannable CV

- Electronic CV is a CV sent through e-mail attached as part of an online application. An e-CV is stored in a computer database. An e-CV can be accessed by a large number of employers based on the requirement of the job positions. In an e-CV it is important to put key words in proper context, weaving them throughout the CV. Key words help employers to pair CVs with available positions and scan CVs for words that the employer wants to see, e.g. marketing, willing to travel, analytic, written and oral communication, knowledge of Hindi & French, Flash MX . Use nouns instead of verbs as key words because users rarely search for verbs. Use acronyms specific to your industry. Remember that key words which are misspelt are not found in the key word search so be doubly sure that you have used the correct spelling. An e-CV should not have more than 65 characters per line.
- A scannable CV refers to a CV which can be easily scanned. It is scanned as a graphic image and then converted into text. The important thing in a scannable CV is the formatting which needs to be kept simple. Do not use italics or underlining in your scannable CV. Don't use bullets, instead use dashes or asterisks. Save the file in ASCII or rich-text format.

Exhibit 6.10

SAMPLE SCANNABLE CV
SUDHIR S. MALIK
12/1, East Patel Nagar,
NEW DELHI-110008
Tel.: +11.257814428
maliksudhir@gmail.com

OBJECTIVE
A position in marketing that will lead to work as a marketing head for an e-business.

EDUCATION
Bachelor of Business Administration Specialisation: Marketing
School of Management Studies,
University of Delhi, Delhi.

Related Coursework:
Strategic Marketing
Marketing Research
Marketing Communications & Promotion
Global Marketing
Interpersonal Communication
Statistical Analysis
Consumer & Buyer Behaviour
Social Psychology

Research Projects: 'Cultural Influence on Purchasing', 'Customer Brand Preference', and 'Motivating Subordinates with Effective Performance Appraisals'.

EXPERIENCE

Marketing Manager, Enterprise E-Ware, New Delhi; 2005—present

Group Head-Marketing, Web Crafts, New Delhi; 2004-2005

Marketing Executive, Busy-E-Ness Data Systems Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi; 2002-2004.

PERSONAL QUALITIES

Interests: Tennis, Swimming, Music and Theatre

Memberships*:* Institute of Marketing Professionals; Heritage Club

REFERENCES

Personal and professional references will be gladly furnished on request.

NOTE

An attractive and fully formatted hard copy version of this resume is available on request.

WRITING THE COVER LETTER

It is very important to include a well made cover letter when sending your resume/ CV. Such a letter introduces you and explains your purpose. It introduces the major points in your resume. It makes it easier for the employer to take action. Since it is your introduction to the employer it is important that the covering letter be impressive .A cover letter should be customised to suit the particular position you are applying for.

Cover letter also referred to as application letter is of two types:

- Solicited application letter
- Unsolicited application letter

A solicited application letter is written when you are sending your CV in response to an advertised vacancy, i.e. applications have been called for by the organisation.

An unsolicited application is written when you are sending your CV for an unadvertised job position in an organisation.

Purpose of the Cover Letter

A cover letter is essential for the following reasons:

(i) A cover letter gives a personal touch to the CV.

(ii) A cover letter helps the reader focus on your strengths, experience and qualification.

(iii) A cover letter reflects basic professional courtesy and thus, creates a positive impact of you as a professional.

(iv) Sometimes you may be sending a CV in response to a telephonic or face to face conversation you had with the concerned person. In such a case, the cover letter acts as a reminder of the conversation. It is also possible that the envelope containing your CV is opened by someone other then the person you have spoken to. In such a case, a cover letter ensures that the CV reaches the right person.

Format of the Cover Letter

The length of a cover letter has to be limited to a single page. The most commonly used format for a cover letter is the "Full Block" format. There are four main components of a cover letter:

- Address and salutation
- An opening to catch the attention
- The main body
- A closing that induces action

Address and Salutation

In case of solicited applications, the application letter is addressed to the person mentioned in the advertisement. In case of a blind advertisement, i.e. when only a Box No address is mentioned and the name of the organisation is not disclosed, you have to address the letter to the newspaper/magazine and use a generic salutation like "Dear Director."

However, in case of unsolicited applications, address your letter to an individual and not to the organisation. Try and find out the name of the individual rather than addressing an individual by his designation. Use the correct spelling of the name and the correct designation. In the salutation use Dear Ms/Mr/Dr followed by the person's last name. Do not address a person by his first name. If you are a fresher or are entering the organisation at a comparatively junior position, you may use the salutation "Dear Sir".

Opening

The opening has to catch the attention of the reader. For a solicited application, use a 'direct approach' in which mention the position for which you are applying and give the reference of the advertisement. For unsolicited applications, you may begin by mentioning why you are applying for the position. In case there is a reference involved, mention that.

Body

The body consists of one or two paragraphs. It gives information about your current job and summarises in a couple of lines your qualification and experience. It mentions your strengths and your suitability to the position you are applying for.

Closing

Close the letter with a request for an interview. Mention that you are enclosing the CV. It is a good practice to mention your contact phone number and address including email address in the last paragraph or below your name in the closing. Use standard complimentary close such as, 'Sincerely'. Do not forget to sign your name using a black or blue pen. Also, mention the enclosed documents (CV and other documents if any).

Email Cover Letter

It is becoming increasingly common to send the CV through email. While applying for a position through email copy and paste your cover letter in the email message. Like print cover letters an email cover letter should have a formal salutation and closing. It serves the same purpose as the print cover letter only the mode of sending it is different. Therefore, it needs to possess all the characteristics of print cover letter. However, in case of email cover letter, one needs to clearly mention the subject line which should include the job position you are applying for.

Send your CV as an MS Word attachment. Do not forget to attach your CV. This is a very common mistake. Some employers do not accept attachments. They ask you to paste the CV on to your email message. In such a case, keep the formatting of the CV very simple so as to make it readable.

Use the spell check to check the grammar and capitalisation. There is a tendency to be informal when communicating through email. Ensure that you maintain a formal tone.

Guidelines for Writing a Cover Letter

The following are some of the guidelines to be followed while writing a cover letter.

(i) Address it to the relevant person in the organisation. It is desirable to personalise the letter by addressing it to the individual by name rather than to the department or organisation in general. Ensure the correct spelling of the name, title and address.

(io) Specify clearly that your aims, qualifications and experience meet the requirements of the post.

(iii) Specify the position advertised as well as the date and publication name. If someone has referred you, name that person.

(iv) Emphasise and elaborate your strong points specially, those relevant to the job.

(v) Maintain a formal tone in the cover letter.

(vi) Be concise, clear and polite.
(vii) Keep your letter neat, well-spaced and in short paragraphs.
(viii) Check the spelling and grammar of the letter.
(ix) Confine your letter to a one-page A4 white colour paper.
(x) Give your full name in the covering letter and remember to sign the letter.
(xi) Keep a copy of the covering letter for your future reference.

Exhibit 6.11

SAMPLE FORMAT FOR COVER LETTER (Full Block Format)

(Date)
(Name, postal address of the person who will receive your letter)
Dear (Mr/Ms/ Dr. followed by surname)

Application for the Post of (Title of the Post) (Ref. no., if any)
(1st paragraph: Introduction
To state how you found out about the vacancy and the reason for applying)

(2nd paragraph: Body
To give a brief of your qualifications and working experience which are relevant to the post)

(3rd paragraph: Body
To market your strong points and achievements which are beneficial to the post)

(4th paragraph: Closing
To request the employer for an interview)

Yours sincerely

(Your signature)

(Your name)
(Your Address including phone number and e-mail address)
Enclosures

DO'S AND DON'TS OF CV WRITING

- Give your name, address, phone numbers (along with the STD/ISD codes), your cell number and your e-mail address
- Give references only if specifically asked for
- Remember to inform your references about the job
- Do not mention the salary you expect
- Do not use an uncommon font
- Do not use coloured paper
- Don't use an uncommon CV format , or a fancy font

- Don't send a hand written resume, unless specifically asked for
- Don't send without an accompanying covering letter
- Try to make it on one page if possible and don't exceed two pages

Always ensure that your cover letter uses a courteous tone. It should not project an arrogant attitude and should always be extra polite.

SUMMARY

This chapter focused on how to make effective curriculum vitae. It discussed the purpose and types of CV, viz. Chronological, Functional, Combination and Electronic CVs. It also highlighted the features of all of them along with sample CVs. Further, the chapter delved upon the importance of a good cover letter, its format and the guidelines to writing a covering letter.

QUESTIONS

1. What is a CV?
2. Briefly explain the types of CVs.
3. What functions and objectives do CVs fulfill?
4. Discuss in detail the different types of CVs.
5. What are the characteristics of a functional CV?
6. What are the guidelines to be kept in mind while writing a covering letter?
7. Give five useful points to be borne in mind while writing a CV.

GROUP DISCUSSIONS

chapter 7

THIS CHAPTER WILL HELP YOU IN:

- Understanding group discussion as an important group activity
- Identifying successful group discussion techniques
- Conducting effective group discussions
- Understanding different types of group discussions and their applicability in various situations
- Discussing the importance of body language in group discussions.

The chapter introduces group discussion as an important aspect of group communication. It describes the characteristics, purpose and advantages of group discussions. It further explains the pedagogy to conduct a group discussion in which it includes conducting of the group discussion, types of group discussions, ingredients for success in group discussion, body language, the skills evaluated during the discussion activity, successful group discussion techniques and the qualities of a successful participant.

"The aim of an argument or discussion should not be victory, but progress."

Joseph Joubert (1754-1824)
French Philosopher

GROUP DISCUSSIONS

One of the very important skills that a manager learns is how to take part effectively in group discussions. It is used from the time of selection for admission to a management institute to the time the manager joins an organisation. Its use of course doesn't end there. Managers today, use this vital technique to arrive at solutions to major and minor issues in everyday organisational functioning.

Group discussion comprises of the two words "group" and "discussion". Before understanding group discussion as an important group activity, it is important to understand the term group and discussion independently. A group in the context of organisational communication is defined as a collection of individuals who interact with each other, accept expectations and obligations as members of the group and share a common identity. Group activities have certain advantages and disadvantages. A Group is equipped with more complete information as there are multiple members. This also results in a group having the advantage of a diversity of views. A group could have many approaches and alternatives to consider. Decision making in groups shows that there is no one, single, straight solution to anything. It encourages lateral thinking that throws up new, creative ideas and solutions to problems. In other words, groups can always find out ways away from the traditional ones. Group decision increase the acceptability of a solution. When the parties affected by/concerned with a decision are themselves involved in its making through their representatives as members, they are more likely to accept it. In this way the decision gets more support and the group is satisfied. Also, group decision making is democratic in its character. It, therefore, increases the legitimacy of the decision. A decision taken by an individual without consultation with other members will be looked upon as autocratic or arbitrary. It may not, therefore be acceptable to many. By its very nature, a group especially a large one, is heterogeneous and heterogeneity has its own advantages. Many members in a group have expert knowledge of some area that the organisation may be concerned with. Group decision has, therefore, the advantage of expert opinion given by some well informed members. By the same logic, group decision making draws out the latent talent of the employees of an organisation. In the absence of a chance given to them through a committee meeting, many of the employees would remain indifferent. It ensures the safeguarding of the employees' interest due to which employee relations become cordial. Bound by decisions in which they are themselves involved, the employees remain loyal to the organisation which automatically leads to the strengthening of the organisation.

It is observed that group decisions tend to be time consuming. It takes time to contact and assemble a group. Once the members of the group are in place, they take their own time in arriving at a decision. There are different opinions and approaches of all so naturally finding the best way out or solution to a problem takes time. In group decision making, it is difficult to fix responsibility. Simply because group members share responsibility, it is not at all easy to find out who is accountable for the final outcome. Group decision also, quite often, tends to be dominated by a handful of members. It leads to the creation of groups within a group and if a dominant group comprises low or medium ability members, the over all effectiveness of the group suffers. In groups, often unhappy compromises have to be made because there are social pressures and clashing demands. Blurred focus and irrelevant discussions very often defeat the purpose of a group.

Discussion is understood as an activity of sitting and talking about a specific subject. The word "discuss" has been derived from the Latin root "discutere" that means "to shake "or strike. Thus, "discussion" refers to thoroughly shaking up the subject, i.e. examining it thoroughly to reach a conclusion.

Group discussion is a very important aspect of group communication. Group discussions are creative and dynamic activities which stimulate reflective thinking of the members. Group discussion may be defined as an activity in which a small number of persons meet face to face and exchange and share ideas freely or attempt to reach a decision on a common issue. Group discussions are unstructured and less formal compared to meetings or conference wherein specific roles are assigned to the participants. In a group discussion an individual's thought process is influenced by the views and opinions of the other members . It also depends on where and in which direction the mood of the discussion moves. In a group discussion each participant is free to speak his views. A successful discussion involves both listening and speaking.

Characteristics of Group Discussions

There are also certain salient features common to all group discussions that are as follows:

(i) Interaction: A basic feature of group discussion is interaction among the various members of the group. They see, hear and communicate with each other orally by paying attention to each other.

(ii) Leader and Members: Group discussion is effective only when there is a group of members and a leader. The leader has to summarise facts and information, integrate, stimulate thinking and agree to a unified solution of the problem. The members of the group become actively related to each other in their respective roles.

(iii) Participation: The effectiveness and efficiency of a group discussion depends upon the active participation of the members to a large extent.

(iv) Interpersonal Attraction: Another characteristic feature of a group discussion is interpersonal attraction. As long as interaction continues, likes, dislikes, behaviour, and temperament of members are known to each other. Among them, empathy develops as they share each other's problems.

(v) Pressure to conform: In a group discussion there is always an element of pressure to conform to norms. The predefined and established standards are always enforced and followed.

(vi) Conflict: A conflict is a difference, disagreement among the members of the group which often arise during deliberations and discussions. A conflict is inevitable and usually develops when alternative solutions are present. It can stimulate the members to find new solutions to the problem. Thus, conflict is not necessarily bad. But, if it arises due to political behaviour of the members, it will have dysfunctional consequences.

Purpose of Group Discussions

Group discussions may serve various purposes, like to reach at a solution on an issue of concern, to generate new ideas or approaches to solving a problem etc. They are often used for selecting candidates after the written test for employment or for admission to educational institutes. They also provide us with an avenue to train ourselves in various interpersonal skills.

Advantages of Group Discussions

(i) It provides a deeper understanding of the subject

(ii) It improves the ability to think critically

(iii) It provides different approaches to solving a problem
(iv) It helps the group in taking a decision
(v) It gives an opportunity to hear other person's opinion
(vi) It enables a participant to put across his view point
(vii) It enhances confidence in speaking
(viii) It can change your opinion and show you things from a different perspective

Conducting an Effective Group Discussion

The ideal group usually consists of 8-10 participants. If the number of participants is more than that, there is a tendency for some of the members to be passive listeners and avoid participation. Similarly, if the number of participants is less than six, the discussion suffers from lack of diversity of opinions. The time allotted for the discussion is normally 20-30 minutes. Generally, no one is nominated as the leader to conduct the discussion but as the discussion progresses one of the participants emerges as a leader. This is true, when the discussion is to test the knowledge and oration of the members. The person conducting the group discussion announces the topic and then merely acts as an observer, evaluating the proceedings without actively participating in the discussion.

However, in certain cases like when the aim of the group discussion is teaching and learning or when the subject of the group discussion is uncommon or tough, the group discussion may be held under the guidance of a group leader or a facilitator. The group facilitator announces the topic and gives a brief introduction. He may give initial arguments to initiate the discussion. A certain degree of expertise is expected from the group leader. He is generally responsible for concluding and summarising the discussion.

There are two ways of organising a group discussion. In one case, the topic is given to the candidates well in advance and the participants are expected to come prepared for the discussion. In the other case, the topic is disclosed to the participants after they have assembled and they are given about 10 minutes to think about it. There are no formal rules for the discussion process. The participants are free to express their views. There may be an observer who evaluates the contribution and behaviour of the different group members. The seating arrangement should be in the form of a circle or a semi circle. This facilitates interaction of all members. Needless to say, it is important that the room be well ventilated and sufficiently lit. There are different types of group discussions that can be classified on the basis of method of conduct and nature of topic.

Types of Group Discussions

Based on the method of conduct, group discussions can be classified into four types.

(i) Structured group discussion

In this type of group discussion the topic is given to the participants by the selectors and a time-frame is allotted to complete the discussion. This is the most commonly followed technique for a group discussion.

(ii) Unstructured group discussion

Unlike structured group discussion, in unstructured group discussion the candidates themselves decide the topic with mutual consent. This method of group discussion is rarely used.

(iii) Role play

In this type of group discussion the candidates are given specific roles to play in the backdrop of a given situation. Within the framework of their role the participants have to solve the problem inherent in the situation given to them.

(iv) Group discussion with a nominated leader

Generally, no one is nominated as the leader in a group discussion and all participants are treated as equal. But, in this type of a group discussion, a person is nominated as a facilitator or a leader of the group. He may summarise the discussion or solutions discussed at the end of the group discussion. Sometimes the leader is nominated by the group members themselves.

Group discussion can also be categorised based on the topic allotted for the discussion to the participants. There are three kinds of topics, viz. controversial topics, abstract topics and case study topics.

(i) Controversial topics group discussion

There are topics which are controversial and which have the potential to generate an argument. Such topics generally make the discussion lively as arguments and counter arguments are presented. This gives the evaluators more opportunities to evaluate the candidates.

Examples of such topics include “Should the examination system be scrapped” or “Cloning – How ethical?”

(ii) Abstract topic group discussion

There is a growing trend of assigning abstract topics, i.e. topics which are vague or unclear. These topics enable the evaluators to evaluate the creative ability of the candidates. Every candidate can have his own interpretation of the topic. Examples of such topics are "Zero", "One and one make eleven" etc.

(iii) Case study topic group discussion

Here, a situation is provided to the participants that may depict a problem faced by the organisation or the managers. Participants need to analyse the situation and think of various alternatives to solve the problem. This kind of a group discussion tests the ability of the candidate to think of solutions, keeping the situational factors and constraints in mind.

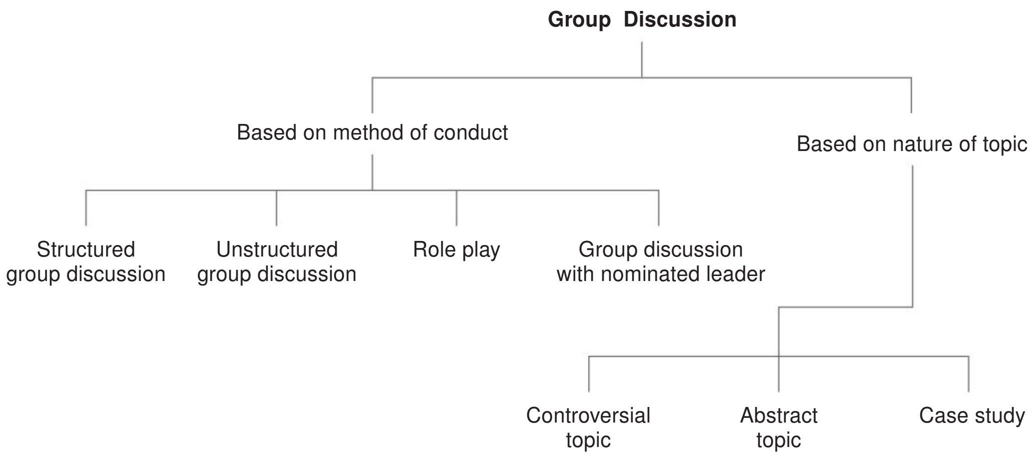


Figure 7.1 Classification of Group Discussion

Important Ingredients for Success in Group Discussion

There are certain important traits which are essential for being a successful participant in a group discussion. These include:

(i) Positive personality

Group discussion is an effective tool for assessing the overall personality of the candidate. Personality includes not only your external appearance, but also the traits you possess. Thus, during group discussions dressing style, speaking style, attitude towards others, presentation style, etc. are evaluated. During the time period of 25-30 minutes, you need to create a favourable impression on the evaluators. A pleasing personality makes a favourable impression giving you an edge over others.

(ii) Communication skills

Key to an effective group discussion lies in the ability to communicate effectively both through your verbal and non-verbal skills. One needs to express the ideas and opinions logically and with clarity. Brilliant ideas and sound knowledge are of little use unless they are expressed properly. One needs to possess good oratory skills with a sound vocabulary. Besides being a good speaker, one needs to be a good listener because in group discussions one needs to speak, keeping in mind what has been or is being said by others.

(iii) Sound knowledge and awareness level

The participant's knowledge and general awareness is another major ingredient of a successful group discussion. The participant needs to have originality of ideas, i.e. he should hold his own view point and considerable depth of knowledge. Lack of knowledge and ideas may lead to repetition of expression and monotony in expression. This is not desirable and may go against one's success.

(iv) Ability to coordinate

The participant's ability to coordinate the team and work in harmony with others is another ingredient for success in group discussions. Cooperation and positive contribution towards the discussion are vital. One must display the ability to take control of the discussion without appearing to be dominating.

Body Language in Group Discussions

As in the case of other techniques of communication, body language is of importance in group discussion also. It is not only essential for you to present the topic analytically and logically, but also to exhibit an aptitude of leading the team, being a part of it. Your body language and voice should also support your positive attitude and willingness to cooperate and be a part of the team. Some of the points to be kept in mind in respect of the body language for effective participation in group discussions are as follows:

(i) Your attire should be formal and professional. Do not wear flashy and bright colours, too much of jewellery or heavy make-up.
(ii) Be natural. Do not put on an accent or try to pose what you are not.
(iii) While sitting on the chair do not slouch. Maintain a straight and comfortable position.
(iv) Avoid crossing your arms as well as your legs while seated.
(v) Avoid distracting habits like biting nails, clicking pens, etc.
(vi) Avoid aggressive and dominating gestures like pointing fingers at fellow participants, raising the voice, etc.
(vii) Do not stare at anybody. Maintain soft eye contact with as many people as you can. Do not look down or up while speaking.

(viii) Do not be conscious of the evaluators, if any. Forget that you are being evaluated, otherwise this will make you conscious of your actions and will adversely affect your behaviour.

(ix) Understand the difference between assertive and aggressive behaviour.

Skills Evaluated during Group Discussion

During interviews, primarily, group discussion is an activity to evaluate the candidate's ability to work in groups. In addition to this, other skills like communication; leadership qualities, persuasive skills, etc. are also assessed during the group discussion. Listed below are some of the skills that are evaluated during the course of the group discussion.

(i) Interpersonal skills

(a) Ability to remain cool when someone provokes you
(b) Ability to be people-centric rather than self-centric
(c) Ability to empathise
(d) Ability to remain objective
(e) Ability to be a team player rather than an isolated worker
(f) Willingness to accommodate others' point of view
(g) Emotional maturity

(ii) Communication skills

(a) Listening receptively
(b) Ability to convey thoughts with clarity
(c) Positive body language and other non-verbal communication

(iii) Problem Solving Ability

(a) Ability to come up with divergent and innovative solutions
(b) Creativity

(iv) Leadership Skills

(a) Ability to lead
(b) Ability to inspire
(c) Ability to carry the team along

(v) Persuasive skills

(a) Ability to persuade others without hurting them

Successful Group Discussion Techniques

Organise your thoughts. Plan what you are going to say. Speak. It is important for the evaluator to hear you speak. Don't try to be someone you are not. Be as natural as possible. If you have any doubts regarding the subject seek clarifications. In case the group discussion is conducted for selections to jobs or educational institutes, make sure that you are dressed in formal attire. Be assertive without being authoritative or aggressive. Keep your language formal. Simple spoken English without too much of jargon is most desirable. Maintain a formal posture that reflects enthusiasm. Try and maintain eye contact with as many people as possible. Also, try to make friends by speaking to those who have been ignored by the rest of the group. Watch your body language. Your gestures and mannerisms add to or subtract from what you are trying to say. Do not use too many gestures. They can be intimidating to the other participants. Be clear and fluent in what you are saying and refrain from a display of extreme emotions. Maintain your cool. Do not take personal offence to anything that is being said. Always be polite. Avoid using strong phrases like "I strongly object…"

Listen receptively. Do not listen with a desire to contradict or refute, rather listen to positively analyse what is being said. It may be useful for a participant to summarise the points made till that particular time and then present his views. Do not interrupt when someone else is speaking. Do not try to stand out by showing the other person down. Do not ridicule the idea or statement of another participant by referring to it as stupid. Do not impose your ideas on anybody. Respect others opinion. Stick to the discussion topic, do not speak irrelevant things and remember that the discussion is not an argument. Be polite even if you disagree. Do not shout. Use a moderate tone and a medium pitch. And don't loose objectivity and make personal attacks. Do not attempt to be a leader by trying to conclude when the group has not reached any conclusion.

Qualities of a Successful Participant

As discussed in the earlier sections, group discussions are vital tools for selection of candidates suitable for job positions or admission to professional academic courses. Listed below are some qualities which an individual should possess to be a successful participant in a group discussion:

- Clarity of expression and logical organisation of thoughts
- Good subject knowledge
- Creative and original thinking

- Presence of mind and spontaneous thoughts
- Confident and bold
- Thinking before speaking
- Calm and cool temperament
- Natural leader with an ability to bring the discussion back on track when it tends to steer to irrelevant topics
- Positive thinker and well aware of his strengths
- Persuasive and influential abilities
- Cooperative and keeps the team united
- Good orator
- Good listener
- Ready to learn
- Ability to leave a positive impression on others
- Ability to handle pressure
- Ability to take criticism and disagreements positively
- Coherence between verbal and non-verbal language
- Pleasing, trustworthy and natural behaviour

SUMMARY

The chapter focused on group discussion as a group activity. It explained the advantages and disadvantages of groups in the process of communication. It discussed the characteristics, purpose and advantages of group discussions. The chapter further elaborated on the pedagogy to conduct a group discussion that includes conducting group discussions, types of group discussions, ingredients for success in group discussions, importance of body language in group discussions, the skills evaluated during the discussion activity, successful group discussion techniques and the qualities of a successful participant.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the purpose of group discussions?
2. What are the disadvantages of groups in the decision-making process?
3. List out the various skills that are evaluated during group discussion.
4. What is group discussion? Explain its characteristics.

5. Explain in detail the process of conducting a group discussion.
6. Describe the various techniques for successful group discussions.
7. List any five phrases you would use to join in the group discussion.
8. Make a group of 8 participants and conduct a group discussion on any one of the following topics:
    - KPOs
    - Knowledge Management
    - Human Potential Management
    - Surrogate Marketing

    Have four observers evaluate the group discussion based on the following parameters; knowledge level of participants, ability to take initiative, listening skills, ability to cooperate, and organising ideas, body language.

MEETINGS

chapter **8**

THIS CHAPTER WILL HELP YOU IN:

- Introducing meetings as an important management tool
- Understanding important steps in conducting a meeting
- Listing out the advantages of an agenda and the steps involved in drawing an agenda
- Understanding the considerations to be kept in mind while drafting minutes of a meeting

- Writing effective agenda and minutes of a meeting
- Familiarising the reader with different layouts of a meeting hall

The chapter introduces meetings as an important management tool. It discusses the characteristics of effective meetings and the types of meetings based on their objectives. It further explains the various steps to conducting meetings effectively viz. planning the meeting, drawing the agenda, running the meeting and writing the minutes of the meeting. It discusses the role of chairman, secretary and members in making the meeting effective. Finally it gives certain guidelines for improving the effectiveness of meetings. Meetings are vital for management and communication. Planning and running effective meetings for business, corporate, sales, strategic planning and team-building etc. is crucial to the functioning of organisations. Properly planned and conducted meetings help save time, increase motivation, productivity, and solve problems and create new ideas. There is no substitute for a physical face-to-face meeting.

MEETINGS

Meeting is a term to describe the process of people getting together to talk and share their knowledge, opinions, experiences, views and suggestions. Meetings may be of many kinds and may serve many purposes but they have some characteristics in common.

Characteristics of a Meeting

(i) All meetings have a definite purpose.
(ii) Interaction has to take place between members attending the meeting.
(iii) Certain rules are observed during the meeting.
(iv) Generally, a chairperson is in control of the proceedings of the meeting.

Objectives of a Meeting

Meetings need to have a definite purpose to be held. Meetings without a purpose are a waste of time and resources. Only if absolutely necessary should a meeting be held. Meetings may be held to obtain or provide information, to solve a problem or to persuade or sell an idea. Meetings may also be held to serve a combination of the above purposes.

To obtain information

The aim of such a meeting is to obtain facts, figures, opinions, viewpoint etc. from those attending the meeting. This information is important to take decisions, to plan or to complete tasks. Meetings to discuss how to improve sales or to assess the progress of a newly launched product are examples of such a meeting. The chairperson needs to motivate members to readily voice their opinions. He should be a good listener and encourage members to speak. He should also create an atmosphere wherein the participants willingly cooperate and contribute information and do not do so out of fear or coercion.

To provide information

Here the aim is to convey facts, figures and viewpoints to the members attending the meeting. The purpose is to disseminate information. A meeting held to brief the members of a new policy or procedure is an example of such a meeting. The chairperson has an important role to play as a speaker. He needs to provide participants with clarifications in case they need any. The participants in this case primarily need to listen but they have to be active listeners voicing their doubts and seeking clarifications if need be.

To solve a problem

This type of meeting is held to arrive at a solution to a problem being faced by the organisation, department, section etc. A meeting held to find measures to boost up declining sales of a product is an example of such a meeting. The chairperson has to ensure that a viable solution is arrived at by the active contribution of all the members attending the meeting. A chairperson with considerable experience and expertise in related area will be suitable for conducting such a meeting.

To persuade or sell an idea

This kind of meeting is held to convince the participants that a particular idea or course of action should be accepted. The aim is to make the participants believe in the suitability of the idea/decision. A meeting held by the sales department with select customers, to launch and advertise a new product is an example of such a meeting. Here the chairperson should have the ability to sell. He should have well developed persuasive ability and should sound convincing.

Conducting Meetings

A badly held meeting is a waste of time, money and resources and is worse than having no meetings at all. When you run a meeting you are making demands on people's time and attention. The need to run effective meetings is more intense than ever in modern times, given the ever-increasing pressures on people's time. New technology provides several alternatives to the conventional face-to-face meeting around a table, such as telephone conferencing and video conferencing. What ever the reasons for the meeting, you have a responsibility to conduct and manage the meeting well so that it is a positive and helpful experience for all who attend.

Planning a meeting

Planning is the key to effective meetings. One needs to plan various aspects of the meeting so as to derive maximum benefits from the meeting. Plan a meeting considering, purpose, size, timing, location, layout and visual aids required.

Purpose of the meeting All meetings need to have a purpose. The various objectives for which meetings can be held have already been discussed above. The objective of the meeting should be clearly expressed and be known to all the members attending the meeting. It should be kept in mind during the course of the meeting. At the end of the meeting one needs to capture the extent to which the planned purpose of the meeting has been achieved.

Size of the meeting The effectiveness of a meeting is to a large extent dependent on the size of the meeting. The number of members should not be too many or too few. A meeting of about 10-12 members allows for considerable opportunity for the members to interact with each other. Also, each member gets more or less an equal opportunity to talk about and contribute to the deliberations. In a meeting with more number of members, the chairperson does most of the talking and the other participants generally listen. Occasionally, some of the participants may voice their opinion, provide feedback or seek clarification. A meeting with large number of participants is suitable when the purpose is to disseminate information. To have an optimal size of the meeting, it is essential to ensure that only those members are asked to attend who can contribute effectively to the meeting. The participants can be decided on the basis of their relevant experience/knowledge and awareness. Sometimes, participants are decided by virtue of the position they hold.

Timing of the meeting There are three aspects related to the timing of the meeting. The first is the choice of the date and the time of the day when the meeting will be held, the second is the duration of the meeting and the third is the time allocated to the individual items.

(i) Date and time of the day The date on which the meeting is to be scheduled is in most of the cases decided based on the convenience of those attending the meeting or the urgency of the issue to be discussed. In case of routine meetings, the date of the meeting may be fixed, e.g. a meeting to evaluate the sales progress may be held on the 5th of every month. As regards the time slot for the meeting, if one has a choice to select a time slot for the meeting, it is worth considering selecting a time slot when people are energetic, receptive and fresh to deal with dynamic issues that need decision. However, most of the time meetings have to be scheduled at a time which is convenient to all the members depending on their availability. As far as possible one must try to avoid slotting meetings immediately after lunch when one is generally dull and sluggish. Similarly, it is better to avoid end of the day meetings when participants may be impatient because of a hurry to reach home.

(ii) Duration of the meeting The duration of the meeting is dependent upon the number of issues to be discussed, the complexity of the issues and the competency of the members to deal with the issues. If for any reason the duration of the meeting has already been fixed, then one can limit the number of items on the agenda of the meeting or reduce the time allowed for discussion of each issue.

(iii) Timing of the items It is important to decide in advance the amount that will be allotted to each item. This ensures timely completion of the meeting. The sequence in which various issues will be covered is also important. Some points that need to be considered while drawing the sequence of items to be discussed and the time allotted to them are:

- Take up urgent items first followed by the less urgent items because if need be the less urgent matters can be postponed to another meeting.
- Challenging issues that require active contribution from members should be dealt with first when the members are fresh.
- Items which are likely to create more discussions and about which opinion of members is divided, should be dealt with, before the items that are likely to have consensus. This is psychologically beneficial, as the meeting will be concluded on a unanimous tone rather than with differences.

Location and layout of the meeting Deciding where the meeting is to be held is of prime consideration. Most of the organisations have conference rooms of adequate size to cater to internal meetings of the organisation.

Choice of location

Some of the issues that influence the choice of the location include:

(i) Size of the room should be appropriate for the number of people attending the meeting. It should not be too large or too small.

(ii) Location should be convenient for majority of members to attend.

(iii) The room should have appropriate physical arrangements viz.

- Lighting should be adequate. If visual aids like OHP projector are to be used lighting should be controllable.
- Room should be neat and clean.
- Plug sockets and facilities for visual aids should be available.
- Room should be well ventilated with comfortable temperature.
- Seating should be comfortable.
- Room should have minimal disturbance from outside.

❖ Arrangements for water should be there. In case meeting is likely to carry on for a long duration there should be provision for tea and refreshments.

Layout of location The layout of the room i.e. the seating arrangement is another issue that requires consideration. Some of the possible layouts have been discussed below:

(i) Classroom layout This type of layout is appropriate when the purpose of the meeting is giving information and the chairman does most of the talking. This inhibits proper interaction amongst members and is not appropriate when the meeting calls for considerable interaction.

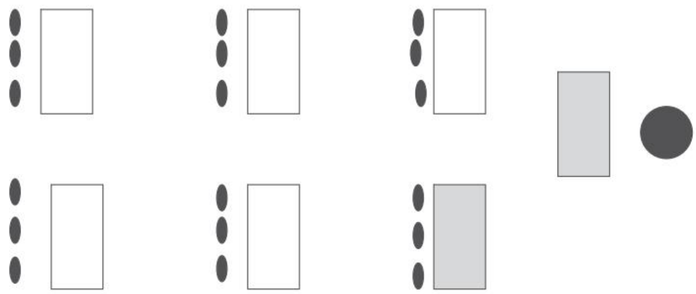


Figure 8.1 Classroom layout

(ii) U-shaped layout The basic advantage of this type of layout is that everyone is visible to everyone else and this facilitates interaction amongst members and exchange of views. In this kind of layout, the chairman can come to the centre of the 'U' to lay stress on a particular point or to increase his interaction with the other members and decrease the formality of the meeting.

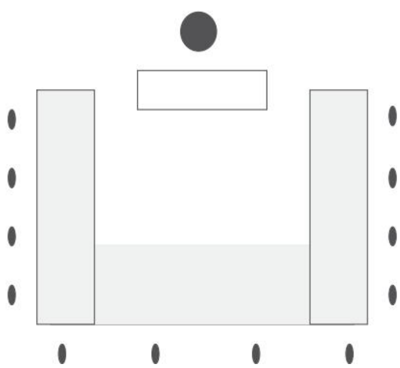


Figure 8.2 U-shaped layout

(iii) Committee layout This is the traditional type of layout with the chairperson sitting at the head of the table. It reflects formality. The secretary or the minute taker sits on the left or right side of the chairperson.

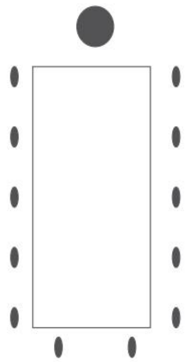


Figure 8.3 Committee layout

(iv) Round table layout This is similar to committee layout with the difference being that it suggests less formality. Being seated around a round table indicates that the chairperson is very much an equal part of the meeting and is not above the other members.

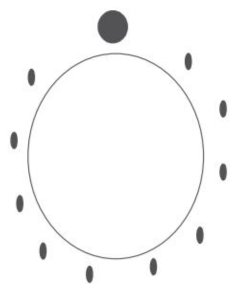


Figure 8.4 Round table layout

Visual aids Many meetings require to be supported with visual aids to serve the purpose for which they are intended, like a meeting called to give some information. This kind of meeting may need you to give certain facts and figures for which visual aids are best suited. Some of the visual aids that can be used to assist meetings and make them more effective have been discussed below:

(i) Handouts Handouts may contain information in the form of reports, summaries, tables, graphs, and proposals etc. that need to be referred to by the participants of the meeting. The handouts should be brief and clear and should be of relevance to what is being discussed. Care should be taken to ensure that the handouts are free from typographical errors and mistakes. There are two ways in which the handouts can be distributed to the members. Hand outs can either be given at the time of the meeting or they could be distributed along with the agenda. When the handouts are dispatched with the agenda in advance, the participants get a chance to go through them at leisure and frame their own points.

(ii) White board/Chalkboard These also are useful during a meeting, especially if something needs to be explained with the help of a sketch or a diagram. Sometimes when points need to be compiled, whiteboards are useful. They are easily available and do not need any special facility like electricity, projector or screen. However, their use is limited, especially when large amount of graphical data or data in the form of complicated figures needs to be displayed.

(iii) Flip charts These can be prepared before hand or they can be used to note down salient points/suggestions during the meeting. Flip charts are easily transportable and are not dependent on power supply or other equipment. However, they are not of much use if the number of members in the meeting is large.

(iv) Overhead projector (OHP) Overhead projector is used to project overhead transparencies. These are inexpensive, can be produced quickly. These are very commonly used and can be prepared in advance or during the course of the meeting.

(v) Power point presentation They are one of the most popular forms of visual aids. A screen and an LCD projector connected to a computer are required. Slides prepared on the computer are very versatile as it is possible to add colour, sound effects and animation to the slides.

Drawing the Agenda

Agenda is a list of items that are to be dealt with during the meeting. Agenda provides a framework for the meeting and ensures that no item is left out. Agenda can be thought of as a planning and control device for the meeting. An agenda for a meeting communicates important information such as the topics for discussion, the presenter or discussion leader for each topic, sequence in which the various items will be dealt and the time allocated to each topic.

Agenda information An agenda contains the following information:

- Exact place and date
- Time for starting the meeting
- Names of expected attendees
- Objective of the meeting
- Issues to be discussed

- Approximate indication of time for each item
- Any preparation required by the members is specifically mentioned
- Documents containing information which needs to be provided to the members may be attached with the agenda

Advantages of a good agenda

(i) It ensures that all issues are covered and no issue is left out.

(ii) It ensures that a proper sequence is followed.

(iii) It informs the members what will be dealt with.

(iv) Since members are made aware of what will be discussed in the meeting, they can prepare accordingly and this leads to greater effectiveness of the meeting and also saves time.

(v) It provides guidelines for the time allocated to each item and hence minimises wastage of time.

Steps for creating a good agenda

- Send an e-mail stating there will be a meeting, the goal of the meeting as well as the administrative details such as when and where it will be.
- Ask those invited to accept or decline the meeting. Make it clear that once they have accepted the meeting, they are expected to attend.
- Ask participants requesting for an agenda item, to contact you no less than two days before the meeting with their request and the amount of time they would require to present it.
- Once all of the agenda requests have been submitted to you, summarize them in a table format with the headings—agenda item, presenter and time. It's your responsibility to ensure that each agenda item is directly related to the goals of this particular meeting.
- Send the agenda to all the meeting participants the day before the meeting with a reminder of the meeting goals, location, time and duration. At this time, ask the presenters if they are happy with the order in which they will be speaking and the amount of time they have been allocated.
- The most important part of creating an effective agenda is to follow it during the meeting.

Agenda guidelines

(i) Agenda should not be vague. Each item should be explained clearly with no scope for ambiguity.

(ii) Clearly specify who is expected to contribute to which item.

(iii) It may be helpful to circulate some additional information with the agenda.

(iv) Put an approximate indication of the time for each item.

(v) Ensure the items are in a logical sequence.

(vi) 'Any Other Business' at the end of the meeting can be avoided if a draft of the agenda is circulated in advance of the meeting. Ask for any other items for consideration. Otherwise this creates at times a free-for-all session that wastes time.

(vii) Attach labels if possible such as 'For information', 'For decision', 'For action' to each of the agenda items.

(viii) Review the items to make sure that not too many items have been scheduled in too short a time.

Running the Meeting

After planning the various aspects and drawing the agenda, the next stage is actually conducting the meeting. This includes opening the meeting, starting the discussion, developing the discussion and concluding the meeting. The chairperson starts the meeting with apologies for absence followed by approval of previous meeting's minutes. He should restate the purpose of the meeting. If the agenda has not been circulated before, he should circulate it and give members time to go through it. He should take up the items on the agenda one by one. Breaking the ice and setting the ball rolling is the responsibility of the chairperson. There are several ways of getting the discussion started. The chairman can start by addressing the meeting and giving views on the items of the agenda. He can give reference to some source like a policy document, report etc. The chairperson can call upon the person responsible for the particular agenda item to give his points. The other members joining in with their contribution towards the issue being discussed, follow this. The chairperson needs to steer the discussion back on course in case it goes on to irrelevant issues. The chairperson from time to time and at the end of the discussion on each item needs to summarise the discussion.

It is essential to conclude the meeting on a positive note. Ensure that there are no more ideas that are forthcoming and an acceptable solution has been reached by viewing the issue from all relevant angles. Follow-up is essential to ensure that the decisions taken during the meeting are implemented. The minutes of the meeting take care of this aspect. Minutes mention the specific responsibilities assigned by name, making the task of accountability and follow-up easier.

Basic structure of meetings

- Use the agenda as a planning tool.
- Circulate the meeting agenda well in advance.

- To run the meeting, keep control, agree on outcomes, actions and responsibilities, and take notes.
- Write and circulate all notes in the form of minutes, especially those related to actions and accountabilities.
- Follow up on the agreed actions and responsibilities.

Role of the chairperson The chairperson is the key person responsible for successful running of a meeting. Inefficiency on his part may lead to waste of time and resources, with the meeting reaching no fruitful conclusion. The chairperson should take care that he does not monopolise the meeting except when the purpose of the meeting is to give information. Some personal characteristics of an effective chairperson include the ability to think objectively and clearly, good listening skills, friendly disposition and ability to maintain calm even when the situation gets heated up. The duties of the chairperson include:

(i) Planning the meeting, drawing the agenda and overseeing the arrangements for the meeting.
(ii) Keeping the meeting within time limit, maintaining order and preventing drifting from the topic.
(iii) Ensuring that meeting's business proceeds in the sequence of the agenda.
(iv) Studying in detail the various aspects to be discussed, which includes facts relating to the topic and the needs of the meeting.
(v) Making everyone aware of the objectives.
(vi) Setting a positive tone for the meeting by creating an atmosphere that encourages healthy participation by the members.
(vii) Facilitating the proceedings to ultimately attain already decided objectives, by questioning, clarifying misunderstandings, providing information and summarizing.

Role of the secretary The secretary too plays an important role in organising and running the meeting. He should be well aware of the meeting objective, rules, procedures etc. The duties of the secretary include:

(i) Assisting the chairman in fixing date/time/location/agenda of the meeting.
(ii) Taking notes during the meeting.
(iii) Preparing a draft of the minutes of the meeting for the approval by the chairperson.
(iv) Despatching meeting notifications agenda minutes etc.
(v) Making administrative arrangements for the meeting.

Role of the members The members are the prime players in a meeting and their cooperation and contribution is essential to the effectiveness of the meeting. The members of the meeting are not mere participants but they too have certain duties. These include:

(i) Contributing ideas, opinions, views and suggestions based on their knowledge and experience;
(ii) Keeping oneself well informed about the meeting by studying in detail the agenda, additional reports or other related matter;
(iii) Respecting and following the rules laid down by the chairperson;
(iv) Listening actively and attentively;
(v) Cooperating and giving support to fellow members;
(vi) Arriving at the meeting punctually.

Ensuring effective participation and results Further, participation is an important dimension of communication between different stakeholders who perform various activities and behaviours. It is the extent to which users involve themselves in the communication act. As meetings are an indispensable part of any manager's work, enhanced participation and leadership roles can ensure success in conducting productive meetings. There are different techniques that can be followed to increase participation during meetings.

Opening the meeting: At the start of the meeting, ensuring the following will increase the participation considerably:

- ***Set the appropriate tone*** – Start the meeting on time. Introduce the people present, to give them importance. Then get them enthusiastic and involved by giving a short introduction and involve them early.
- ***Explain the agenda*** – Ensure that members understand why they are meeting. This is the job of the leader/person who's called the meeting. Make sure people understand not only the purpose of the meeting but also its impetus, and decision-making techniques.
- ***Ensure people agree on ground rules to be followed*** – Effective meetings ensure people know and follow ground rules right from the start. If there is no clarification at the start, then there is often a problem if some one errs and has to be reminded time and again. Some good ground rules that would ensure smooth conduct and everyone's participation are: (i) You will start and end on time. (ii) No one will interrupt. (iii) Participants will stick to the agenda. (iv) All information would be kept confidential.
- ***Get people involved early*** – Get people involved early on during the meeting, so they feel they can contribute significantly. Specially pay attention to people who are passive and need to be motivated to participate.

During the meeting: To increase participation during the meeting, following should be ensured:

- ***Don't ask closed questions*** i.e. questions that can be answered in 'yes' or 'no'. Always ask open ended questions i.e. questions that require the speaker to give some sort of an explanation.
- ***Paraphrase responses*** – To ensure that people feel important, adequately heard and to confirm that you have heard them properly, it is a good idea to paraphrase responses. Paraphrasing means that you repeat part or whole response in your own words.
- ***Record responses*** – Recording responses can be done on a black board or chart in full public view. Ensure *accuracy, inclusiveness* and *readability* of points discussed.
- ***Carefully handle differences*** – Avoid using the negative words 'cannot' 'I disagree' too early on in the meeting. It acts as a barrier to healthy participation.
- ***Avoid dominance of the meeting by one person or a group*** – This is the critical part of a successful meeting. Ensure that no one person of a particular sub group dominates the meeting. It is a good idea to talk to disruptive or very high status people privately, prior to the meeting.
- A meeting should be just a meeting, don't turn it into a presentation. Avoid dominating the meeting your self, just because you have called the meeting. To encourage participation talk less.

Making decisions based on meetings: Demonstrate good leadership and decision making abilities during meetings. There is a lot you can gain from meetings, that may not be evident overtly. Apart from the fact that you take decisions that are arrived at through a process of deliberation and consensus, if you are alert and observant to people's non-verbal communication along with what they are saying, you come to know a lot about them. It is a good idea to inform participants that you are going to take certain decisions at the end of the meeting, using certain decision-making plans. These are primarily divided into three types as discussed below:

- ***By one person*** – especially good when speed in decisions is required and the decision is not too important. The problem with this approach is that the leader is perceived as autocratic and therefore it may be difficult to implement such decisions.
- ***Majority vote*** – This is also used when decisions that are not too important and need to be taken quickly. The disadvantage with this method is that some people may feel left out or ignored, who may at a later date not take part in the implementation of the decisions.

- ***Consensus*** – It involves patient hearing of divergent view points and incorporating these into the solutions proposed. It is a time consuming process as it is reached by discussion and not by votes. It means reaching a situation which is not every body's first choice but people agree to the solution and are willing to implement it.

Action Plan for implementing decisions: After ensuring active participation from participants with decisions been taken, ensure you also decide on how these decisions are going to be implemented. That would require you to prepare an action plan that includes:

- What actions are to be taken
- Who is responsible for implementation of each action
- The time frame for each action
- How the action will be reported back to the group

After the meeting is adjourned its 'minutes' consisting of issues discussed, alternatives considered, decisions reached, and the action plan should reach the participants.

Leading a meeting with maximum impact: Strive for a balance in terms of participation. Some people tend to dominate the meetings, while others do not contribute at all. Leading a meeting has one primary goal, i.e., to accomplish the objectives in the agenda. As meetings involve a lot of employee time and resources, they should be well conducted to maximise organisational output.

As an effective meeting leader use the following techniques for maximum impact:

- Communicate clearly during the meeting
- Use appropriate language during the meeting
- Understand and use assertive communication techniques whenever needed
- Enhance your relationship with participants through communication
- Understand how listening and questioning work during meetings
- Recognise the barriers to communication
- Improve your listening skills
- Learn to interpret non verbal signals correctly
- Improve the ability to communicate non verbally

Minutes of the Meeting

The proceedings of the meeting are noted in detail in the form of minutes of the meeting. Generally it is the responsibility of the secretary to take down notes for preparing the minutes. But in the absence of one, you may like to take down notes yourself or any other member may be requested to take down the notes for the minutes. The minutes are finalised within a day or two of the completion of the meeting and are circulated to the members for information and action. Minutes are of two types:

Narrative minutes Narrative minutes record, who said what and when.

Decision minutes Decision minutes record the decisions taken, the names of the people responsible for implementing them and the deadline for taking action. Most of the time decision minutes are written, as they provide the members with clear guidelines regarding who is to do what, and by when.

Standard parts of the minute's document

- Location, date and time of the meeting.
- Apologies of absence, which includes names of people who were expected to attend but could not attend.
- Names of people who attended the meeting.
- Decisions taken along with names of people who have been assigned responsibility for related action.
- Names and signature of person writing minutes.
- Sometimes all attendees and chairperson sign the minutes.

SAMPLE MINUTES OF MEETING

Heading (Title of the meeting):

Date and Time:

Venue:

Attended by:

Apologies of absence: (names of persons who could not attend but were expected to attend)

The following were the issues discussed during the meeting

1. Approval of previous meeting minutes
2. Items discussed as per agenda along with the action to be taken, assignment of responsibility and deadline for completion
3. Any other business (issues not covered under agenda items)
4. Date of next meeting
5. Time the meeting finished (normally for formal meetings only)
6. Minutes recorded by ……… (Name and signature of person who has written the minutes)
7. Signature of attendees (Optional)

Guidelines for Effective Meetings

For meetings to run smoothly and efficiently and to derive maximum benefit from them certain guidelines can prove useful. These include:

(i) Always have a clear purpose, otherwise don't have a meeting.

(ii) Decide the issues for inclusion in the meeting and their relative priority, importance and urgency. They are quite different and need treating in different ways.

(iii) Consider the time required for the various items rather than arbitrarily deciding the length of the meeting. Allocate a realistic time slot for each item. Keep the timings realistic. Usually things take longer than you think.

(iv) Decide the date of the meeting well in advance.

(v) The key to success is keeping control. You do this by sticking to the agenda, managing the relationships and personalities, and concentrating on outcomes.

(vi) As a chairman politely suppress the over-zealous, and encourage the nervous.

(vii) Take notes as you go, recording the salient points and the agreed actions, with names, measurable outcomes and deadlines.

(viii) Don't be late for the meeting.

(ix) Don't interrupt others, when they talk.

(x) Follow the instructions and requests of the chairperson.

(xi) Take care of your body language. Good body language includes

- Sit straight
- Face the speaker
- Look attentive
- Make adequate eye contact with the speaker
- Nod at appropriate junctures
- Take notes

Bad body language is reflected through negative actions such as

- Sitting outside the group
- Avoiding eye contact
- Folding or crossing your arms
- Clicking pens
- Shaking legs
- Holding your head in your hands

SUMMARY

The chapter introduced meetings as an important management tool. It discussed the characteristics of effective meetings and the types of meetings, based on their objectives. These included meetings with an objective to obtain information, to give information, to solve a problem or to sell an idea. It further explained the various steps to conduct meetings effectively viz. planning the meeting, drawing the agenda, running the meeting and writing the minutes of the meeting. The steps involved in creating a good agenda, advantages of an agenda and certain guidelines to be followed while framing the agenda were also dealt with. It discussed the role of a chairman, secretary and the members in making a meeting effective. Finally it gave certain guidelines for improving the effectiveness of meetings.

QUESTIONS

1. Why do we need meetings? What are the characteristics of meetings?
2. What are the various objectives for which meetings can be held?
3. What are the steps involved in writing an agenda for a meeting?
4. Write a short note on minutes/notes of a meeting.
5. Discuss in detail the various components you need to plan for, to conduct a meeting.
6. Prepare a checklist for ensuring effective meetings.
7. What information is contained in the agenda of a meeting?
8. Explain the role of a chairperson in a meeting.
9. What are the benefits of a good agenda?
10. Mr. Sharma has recently joined an FMCG organisation. He is going for his first meeting and is very apprehensive. He is not sure whether he should actively participate in the meeting or just sit back and listen to what's going on. What strategy do you think Mr. Sharma should adopt?
11. Role play a meeting in which you discuss the new HR policy implemented by your organisation regarding 'flexi timing' for employees. Draw up an agenda and a notice for the meeting. Appoint a chairperson and a secretary. Write the minutes. Appointed observers should take their own notes during the meeting and provide feedback by discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the role-play.

NEGOTIATIONS

chapter 9

THIS CHAPTER WILL HELP YOU IN:

- Understanding negotiation as an important communication skill
- Knowing the characteristics of negotiation process
- Listing out the factors influencing negotiation
- Discussing the various approaches to negotiation
- Familiarising the reader with the stages of the negotiation process

- Discussing the various techniques/guidelines for successful negotiations
- Understanding the non-verbal aspect of negotiation
- Getting an insight into various techniques to handle breakdown in negotiation

"In business, you don't get what you deserve, you get what you negotiate."

CHESTER L. KARRASS

"The most important trip you may take in life is meeting people half way."

HENRY BOYLE

The chapter introduces negotiation as an important skill needed in almost every sphere of our life. It goes on to give the characteristics of negotiation and factors affecting the negotiation process. It describes the four approaches to negotiation. It describes in details the various stages of the negotiation process. It further lists out some guidelines for successful negotiations and the non-verbal skills involved in negotiations. Very often negotiations come to a standstill. This chapter discusses the various techniques to handle breakdown in negotiation including third party intervention techniques like mediation and arbitration and the need to create a right atmosphere for negotiation.

NEGOTIATION

In our daily life we come across numerous instances of negotiations. A prospective employee may negotiate with his employer over his salary; a customer may negotiate the price of the product with the salesman; and the management may negotiate with workers union over work related issues. It is through negotiations that parties decide what each of them will finally get and give in to their relationships. Before delving into different aspects of negotiation, it is important for us to understand conflict as conflict and negotiation go hand in hand. Conflict means "a serious disagreement or argument about something important" or "a state of mind in which one finds it difficult to make a decision or a choice". Conflicts are an inherent part of all business organisations. Essential ingredients of conflict include disagreement, argument, clash of goals, interests, perceptions, etc., difficulty in making a decision, inadequate or poor communication and incompatible personalities. Resolving conflicts is important and there are various approaches to it. But the best approach to conflict resolution is negotiation. Thus, negotiation can be defined as "a process by which two parties interact to resolve a conflict". Negotiation is a process in which two or more individuals or groups having both common and conflicting goals state and discuss proposals for specific terms of a possible agreement. J.L. Graham has defined negotiation as "a face to face decision-making process between parties concerning a specific product". A negotiation is an interactive communication process that may take place whenever we want something from someone else or another person wants something from us.

Characteristics of the Negotiation Process

There are certain characteristics of the negotiation process. These are:

(i) There are a minimum of two parties present in any negotiation.
(ii) Both the parties have pre-determined goals which they wish to achieve.
(iii) There is a clash of pre-determined goals, i.e. some of the pre-determined goals are not shared by both the parties.
(iv) There is an expectation of outcome by both the parties.
(v) Both the parties believe the outcome of the negotiation to be satisfactory.
(vi) Both parties are willing to compromise i.e., modify their position.
(vii) The incompatibility of goals may make modification of positions difficult.
(viii) The parties understand the purpose of negotiation.

Factors Influencing Negotiations

The actual negotiation process depends on the following factors:

(i) The goals and interests of the parties.
(ii) The extent to which the negotiating parties are interdependent.
(iii) The past relations that exist between the two negotiating parties.
(iv) The nature, temperament and personalities of the parties.
(v) The persuasive ability of each party.

In addition to the above, there are other factors such as place, time and personal relationships also affect the outcome of negotiation:

Fear

Often our bargaining power is conditioned by our fear of authority, power, higher connections and the capacity to harm, enjoyed by the other party.

Mutual obligation

The memories of good done in the past by one party also act as negative influence on the other party.

Future considerations

When personal relationships are at stake, we may not wish to win the argument in the negotiations at the cost of the good relations between the two parties.

Practical wisdom

Fear of losing good future chances is a strong factor in our bargaining/negotiation position and power.

> *"The aim of an argument or discussion should not be victory, but progress."*
>
> JOSEPH JOUBERT (1754–1824)
> French Philosopher

Approaches to Negotiation

There are four different approaches to a negotiation and the outcome of the negotiation depends on the approach.

Distributive negotiation or Win-Lose approach

It is also called competitive, zero sum, or claiming value approach. This approach is based on the premise that one person can win only at the expense of the other. It has the following characteristics:

(i) One side "wins" and the other side "loses."

(ii) There are fixed resources to be divided so that the more one gets, the less the other gets.

(iii) One person's interests oppose the others.

(iv) The dominant concern in this type of bargaining is usually maximising one's own interests.

(v) Dominant strategies in this mode include manipulation, forcing, and withholding information.

Strategy to be used

In this mode, one seeks to gain advantage through concealing information, misleading, or using manipulative actions. Of course, these methods have serious potential for negative consequences. Yet, even in this type of negotiation, both sides must feel that at the end the outcome was the best that they could achieve and that it is worth accepting and supporting.

The basic techniques open to the negotiator in this kind of approach are:

- Influence the other person's belief in what is possible.
- Learn as much as possible about the other person's position especially, with regard to resistance points.
- Try to convince the other to change his/her mind about their ability to achieve their own goals.
- Promote your own objective as desirable, necessary, ethical, or even inevitable.

Lose-Lose approach

This approach is adopted when one negotiating partner feels his own interests are threatened and he does all he can to ensure that the outcome of the negotiation is not suitable to the interests of the other party also. In the bargain both the parties end up being the loser. This type of situation arises when the negotiating partners ignore one another's need and the need to hurt each other outweighs the need to find some kind of an acceptable solution. This is the most undesirable type of outcome and hence, this approach is best avoided.

Compromise approach

This approach provides an outcome which is some improvement over the 'lose- lose' strategy outcome. To avoid a 'lose-lose' situation both parties give up a part of what they had originally sought and settle for something less than that. A compromise is the best way out when it is impossible for both parties to convince each other or when the disputed resources are limited.

Integrative negotiation or Win-Win approach

It is also called as collaborative or creating value approach. This approach is superior to all negotiation approaches. It results in both the parties feeling that they are gaining what they wanted. It results in satisfaction to both the parties. It has the following characteristics:

(i) There are sufficient amount of resources to be divided and both sides can "win."

(ii) Dominant concern here is to maximise joint outcomes.

(iii) Dominant strategies include cooperation, sharing information, and mutual problem solving. This type is also called "creating value" since the goal here is to have both sides leave the negotiation feeling they now have greater value than before.

Since integrative approach is most desirable some of the guidelines to integrative bargaining are listed below:

- Orient yourself towards a win-win approach: your attitude while going into negotiation plays a huge role in the outcome.
- Plan and have a concrete strategy...be clear on what is important to you and why it is important.
- Know your BATNA (Best Alternative to a Negotiated Alternative).
- Separate people from the problem.
- Focus on interests, not positions; consider the other party's situation.
- Create options for mutual gain.
- Generate a variety of possibilities before deciding what to do.
- Aim for an outcome based on some objective standard.
- Pay a lot of attention to the flow of negotiation.
- Take the intangibles into account; communicate carefully.
- Use active listening skills; rephrase, ask questions and then ask some more.

> *"Did you ever notice how difficult it is to argue with someone who is not obsessed with being right?"*
>
> Wayne W. Dyer

Agenda for Negotiations

Preparation carried out at the pre-negotiation stage goes a long way in contributing towards a desirable outcome of the negotiation process. Apart from agreeing on the participants, i.e. who is going to be invited to the talks and what role each one of them has to play, and familiarising the participants with the issues, the framing of the agenda is an important activity which needs considerable time and effort. It will not be wrong to say that a good negotiation process starts with a good agenda.

An agenda provides an organised list of various issues that need to be covered during the negotiation. It provides a road map for the negotiation process and helps keep the negotiators focused on the issues to be dealt with.

Importance of an agenda

An agenda is an important tool to control and regulate the direction of the negotiation. Some of the reasons why an agenda is important are:

- It establishes the issues that will be discussed.
- It defines the order in which the issues will be discussed.
- It can assign time limits to various items thereby, indicating the importance of different items.
- It can be used to steer the negotiation process back on the right track in case it goes off the track.
- It helps low-power or disadvantaged groups to get their issues heard and addressed.

Contents of a negotiation agenda

A negotiation agenda should include the following items:

- Issues to be discussed during the negotiation process.
- Order in which the issues will be taken up.
- Tentative time devoted to each of the issues thus, minimising wastage of time.
- Location of the negotiation session.
- Names and designation of the negotiators from the parties along with the other members attending the negotiation session.

Preparing the agenda

There are two approaches for drawing up an agenda for a negotiation session

- Unilaterally
- With due consultation

Unilateral approach Under this approach the negotiator unilaterally draws up a list of issues before the initial negotiation meeting. The unilateral list of issues constitutes a preliminary agenda for negotiation. It is what the negotiator wants to discuss and the order or priority in which he wants to discuss the issues. Similarly, the other party may draw up their own agenda based on issues relevant to them. The basic advantage of this approach is that it forces negotiators to think through their positions and decide on the objectives. Negotiators entering a negotiation for which a unilaterally decided agenda has been set should consider letting the other party know ahead of time that the agenda is open to discussion or change, i.e. discussing the agenda should be a part of the agenda.

However, this approach has some disadvantages associated with it. If the list/agenda of one party differs from the preset agenda of the other side, the parties may bring to the table issues which the other party is unprepared to discuss. Negotiators are not open to surprises which may cause embarrassment when the other side raises an issue they are completely unprepared to discuss. Under such circumstances, they may ask for time to get information and prepare themselves on the new issue leading to delays.

Also, having unilaterally independent agenda drawn up by the negotiating parties may cause delay in starting the actual negotiation process as considerable time is spent on preparing a common agenda which will be actually taken up during the negotiation process.

With due consultation approach A better approach to preparing an agenda is to exchange and negotiate the draft of the agenda before finalising it. A draft agenda is prepared and circulated to the parties. The party members can give suggestions to modify the agenda. A final agenda is prepared which is acceptable to both the parties. This method has the advantage that it gives the parties an opportunity to discuss modify or challenge the agenda before the actual negotiation begins. Also, it saves time that would otherwise have been spent in discussing the agenda during the actual negotiation process.

Presenting the agenda

Some negotiators prefer to wait until the start of the negotiation to present the agenda. In specific cases this may prove appropriate but, many times it may result in delay of the actual negotiation process while the agenda is being addressed. It is best to finalise the agenda before the start of the actual negotiation process and circulate a final copy to the members attending the negotiation process. Circulating the agenda well in advance will have the following advantages:

- Save time as otherwise if the agenda is presented during the negotiation process the parties may start a discussion on what should be included and what should be excluded from the agenda.
- Apart from providing guidelines about what will be discussed during the negotiation, an agenda also provides critical information like location, time, participants, etc.
- Since the participants know about the issues that will be taken up during the negotiation process, they can prepare the issues in advance.

BATNA

Before going into any negotiation, it is important to be very clear on your BATNA (Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement), also called reservation price or walk away price, or the course of action you would take if you do not reach an agreement. If you are negotiating over salary, your alternatives might include a specific job elsewhere, a longer job search, or remaining at your current job. This is important because the negotiation needs to aim to match or do better than your BATNA. The BATNA establishes a threshold for the settlement.

Determining your BATNA or walk away is not always easy. You have to establish a concrete value for various alternatives. For example, what is the value of keeping a current job or taking a new one at a salary that involves a move?

In simple negotiations, there may be just one issue but often negotiations involve multiple issues making the determination of BATNA even more difficult.

In the planning process it is also important (and difficult) to estimate the other side's BATNA. A goal of negotiation is to come as close to the other person's BATNA as you can and you need to estimate the BATNA to do this. Skilled negotiators also often try to influence the other person's BATNA. This happens when you convince the other person that his alternatives are not as good as the others perceive them to be.

Stages of Negotiation Process

Negotiation process can essentially be understood as a four-stage process. The four stages of the negotiation process are preparation, opening, bargaining and closure.

Stage I: Preparation

Preparation is instrumental to the success of the negotiation process. Being well prepared generates confidence and puts the negotiator on edge. Preparation involves gathering information, leverage evaluation, understand people involved, build rapport, know your objectives and anticipate the type of negotiation. These are elaborated below:

(i) Gather information One needs to learn as much as one can about the problem and ascertain what information is needed from the other side. Understanding clearly the issues involved is also needed.

(ii) Leverage evaluation Evaluation of ones leverage and the other party's leverage at the outset is important because there may be a number of things one can do to improve one's leverage or diminish the leverage of the other side.

(iii) Understand the people involved It is important to know the people with whom the negotiation is to take place. An understanding of their objectives, roles, and likely issues to be raised by them will help better handling of the situation during the negotiation process.

(iv) Rapport Establishment of a rapport with the opponent during the early stages, i.e. before the bargaining process begins, is helpful. This will be useful in determining early on how cooperative the opponent is going to be.

(v) Know your objectives Clarity of objectives is absolutely essential. It needs to be decided in advance how much you are willing to concede to the opponent and what your priorities are. All arguments and justifications should be ready.

(vi) Anticipate the type of negotiation expected Whether the negotiation will be highly competitive, cooperative, or something unusual? Will the negotiation be face to face, by fax, through a mediator, or in some other manner?

(vii) Plan Decide on the negotiation approach and plan.

Stage II: Opening Phase

Here the two sides come face to face. Each gets the first opportunity to make an impression on the other side and influence their thinking. Psychologically this phase is important because to a large extent it sets the tone for the negotiation. It involves both negotiating parties presenting their case to each other.

Stage III: Bargaining Phase

Bargaining phase involves coming closer to the objective that you intended to achieve when you started the negotiation. In this phase, the basic strategy is to convince the other side of the appropriateness of your demands and then persuading the other party to concede to those demands. For this, you need to be logical in your approach and arguments using a clearly thought out planned argument.

Stage IV: Closure Phase

The closing phase of a negotiation represents the opportunity to capitalise on all of the work done in the earlier phases. The research that has been done in the preparation phase, combined with all of the information that has been gained is useful in the closing phase. It also involves sealing the agreement in which both parties formalise the agreement in a written contract or letter of intent. Reviewing the negotiation is as important as the negotiation process itself. It teaches lessons on how to achieve a better outcome. Therefore, one should take time to review each element and find out as to what went well and what could be improved upon.

Principle of Exchange

Negotiation is by and large about exchange of information. It involves the principle of give and take. Efficacy of the negotiation process depends upon how much more you are able to extract from the negotiation process. According to the principle of exchange, doing something for someone creates an obligation on the receiver to do something in return for the giver.

Negotiators base their negotiation tactics on this principle. Companies and shops give out free samples which in turn creates an obligation on the part of the customers to buy the complete product. Conceding something to the opposition which is of value to him creates a pressure on him to concede something in return. What may be valuable to one individual may not be as valuable to another individual. Thus, it is the perceived value which is significant when it comes to exchange. Exchanges need not necessarily be financial or physical in nature. Non–materialistic exchanges like earning goodwill, building credibility, etc. are also used very often and they carry a great deal of value too.

Trust is based on the concept of delayed exchange. Suppose exchange is one sided, i.e. a party/individual gives something without asking for something in return, it is trust which ensures that the exchange process will be completed by the repayment of the favour sometime in the future.

In the absence of trust exchange remains confined to an immediate exchange. To overcome this constraint a trusted third party intervention is sought. The third party serves as a go-between the two parties who may not trust one another. Third party help in building trust and ensuring credibility of actions decided upon. Violation of exchange principle in groups may lead to social pressure on the individual and threat of being boycotted by other members. Exchange has been compared to a bank account wherein sometimes something is invested and sometimes during our hour of need something is withdrawn. Exchange thus, strikes a social balance. Exchange rules are based on long term relationships and over a period the balance of exchange evens out by equalising the give and take.

Barriers to Successful Negotiation

Let us now look at certain barriers that obstruct successful negotiations.

(i) Negative outlook towards negotiation process

The attitude that you take towards the negotiation, i.e. whether it is hostile or cooperative decides the tone for the negotiation. Negotiation need not be confrontational. In fact, effective negotiation is characterised by the parties working together to find a solution rather than each party trying to defeat the other.

(ii) 'Try to win at all costs' attitude

One of the barriers to successful 'win-win' negotiation is adopting a 'try to win at all costs attitude'. The best perspective in negotiation is to try to find a solution where both parties 'win'. Try not to view negotiation as a contest that must be won.

(iii) Over exhibition of emotions

Strong emotions make us blind towards reason during negotiation. Though it is normal to become emotional during negotiation, but as we get more emotional, we are less able to channel our negotiating behaviour in constructive ways. Therefore, it is important to maintain control.

(iv) Lack of empathy

Since we are trying to find a solution acceptable to both parties, we need to understand the other person's needs and wants with respect to the issue. If we don't know what the person needs or wants, we won't be able to negotiate properly. Often, when we take the time to find out about the other person, we discover that there is no significant disagreement.

(v) Wrong focus

Negotiators have a tendency to focus on the individuals rather than the issues involved. This is particularly true with people we dislike. There is a tendency to get off the track by focusing on how difficult the person is and once this happens, effective negotiation is impossible. It is important to stick to the issues and put aside our degree of liking or disliking for the individual.

(vi) Blame game

Playing the blame game makes the negotiation situation difficult. In any conflict or negotiation, each party contributes for the better or worse situation created. If you blame the other person for the difficulty, you will create an adverse situation. If you take responsibility for the problem, you will create a spirit of cooperation.

"Nothing lowers the level of conversation more than raising the voice."

STANLEY HOROWITZ

Negotiation Techniques and Skills

Good listening, interpersonal and good communication skills lie at the heart of all successful negotiations. Success of the negotiation process is also dependent on the right attitude of the negotiators. There are many more factors that contribute to the success of negotiations. What follows is a list of guidelines that can be followed for successful negotiations.

Guidelines for successful negotiations

(i) Be sensitive towards the other party's requirements and concerns. Use appropriate questions to find them out.

(ii) State clearly what you need and the reason why you need it. This is important to make sure that the other party is aware of your needs.

(iii) Prepare a list of alternative options to be used in case the solution suggested by you is not acceptable to the other party.

(iv) Be gentle and assertive without sounding dominant in stating your point if you disagree. Avoid arguments, as these are wastage of time.

(v) Timing is very important. Choosing a bad timing may come in the way of the success of the negotiation process.

(vi) Aim high. If you start too low it may be difficult to trade up during a later stage.

(vii) Remain flexible. Sometimes, the negotiation may proceed along the lines you planned; sometimes, it may not. Adapt and fine tune according to the requirement for optimal results.

(viii) Don't try and be manipulative because it creates bitterness.

(ix) Open the negotiation on a positive and neutral note. Try to build a rapport with the other party.

(x) Keep your emotions in control.

(xi) Keep your eyes and ears open. Along with listening attentively, observe the non-verbal cues also.

(xii) Show respect for the other person's views.

(xiii) Be patient. Think before you speak.

(xiv) Maintaining silence at the right time is as important as talking.

(xv) Consider the impact of the outcome of the present negotiation on the future ones.

Non-verbal Negotiation Skills

Almost 90% communication between two people in face to face communication that includes negotiation is non-verbal. This means that only 10% of verbal skills have an impact on the outcome of negotiations. This emphasises the importance of non-verbal skills in negotiation. Understanding non-verbal language of negotiation involves not only studying our own gestures and the meaning we are conveying through them, but also being aware of what our counterpart is trying to convey. It will not be right to interpret what someone is thinking by singling out a single gesture. The meaning becomes clearer only when the gestures are viewed in clusters. Details of non-verbal gestures are discussed in the chapter on non-verbal communication. A person who is interested and in agreement will usually lean towards you, he may also nod his head in agreement.

Behaviour indicated	Non-verbal messages
Dominance, Power	Feet on desk, Piercing eye contact, Hands behind head or on hips, Palm down handshake, "Steepling" of the fingers
Submission, Nervousness	Fidgeting, Avoiding eye contact, Touching face, chin etc., Throat clearing
Disagreement, Anger	Finger pointing, Squinting eyes, Frowning, Turning away, Crossing arms or legs
Boredom, Lack of interest	Playing with objects on desk, Staring blankly, Drumming on table, Glancing around the room
Evaluation	Nodding, Tilting head slightly, Stroking chin, Putting index finger to lips
Confidence, Cooperation, Honesty	Leaning forward, Opening arms and palms, Maintaining eye contact, Smiling

Breakdown of Negotiations

Negotiations may breakdown or may come to a standstill or a stalemate situation for many reasons. It may be because the parties get entrenched in their positions, the parties may lose their coolness and perceptions may become distorted for any other reason due to which parties stop communicating effectively. Impasse is a condition or a state of conflict in which there is no apparent quick or easy resolution. Impasse does not have to be permanent. A negotiation can move out of an impasse if some effort is made on the part of the negotiating parties.

Failures and distortions in perception, cognition and communication have paramount contribution to the breakdown of negotiations. Some other factors include the characteristics of the parties, their commitment to their position, the issues involved, the personality of the negotiators and the use of power and power tactics.

Handling an impasse or breakdown

It is important to ensure that negotiations proceed smoothly and breakdown in communication does not take place. However, if breakdown of negotiation does occur, then steps need to be taken to restore the lines of communication. There are a number of techniques which may be applied to handle breakdown depending on the situation and the severity of the breakdown. Following are some techniques which may prove beneficial in avoiding a breakdown in communication or resolving a situation of impasse

(1) Recommitment on the part of parties – The parties need to make efforts to re-establish and re-commit themselves to the rules and procedures keeping in view the fact that negotiations need to be resumed after a breakdown has occurred. The new rules should facilitate resumption of negotiation proceedings and these may include the following:

(a) Changing the venue of the negotiation by shifting to a neutral location.

(b) Re-looking the agenda and re-framing it with the consent of both the parties on each agenda item.

(c) Changing the key negotiators and some other members who attended the meeting may help in looking at issues from a different perspective. It helps to have persons of good memory, patience and skillful oration to initiate dialogues. Sense of subtle humour has been considered a great virtue of negotiators.

(d) Work on the details of procedural rules such as who may speak, how long each may speak, etc., and also record all the points which come up for discussion at the table.

(e) Establish certain do's and don'ts such as under no circumstances should parties use phrases and languages which are harsh, derogatory and insensitive to the sensibilities of the opposition.

(2) De-escalating tension – More often than not, emotions run high during negotiations. Many times emotions tend to overrule reason and logic thus, affecting the productivity of the negotiation session. Following are some of the ways in which volatile emotions can be defused:

(a) The negotiation meeting can be stopped temporarily for a few minutes or hours to several days or weeks depending on the situation. This gives the parties time to cool down and re-assess and reflect on their positions and return to the table with a renewed perspective.

(b) Good negotiators have the ability to defuse tension. They may pass a witty remark that causes laughter and releases tension. Sometimes allowing the other party to release pent up anger and frustration without retaliation can prove beneficial in releasing tension.

(c) Active listening is another skill which can de-escalate tensions. During a situation of breakdown, parties stop listening assuming that they know what the other party is going to say. Sometimes a party may just need to be heard and challenging or interrupting the speaker may just put him or her on guard. Hearing the other party out does not mean that you are agreeing and committing yourself to what is being said.

(3) Restrict the number of issues – The more the number of issues to be discussed, the more complex the negotiation process is likely to be and the greater is the probability of the negotiation process breaking down. The non-resolution of one issue tends to have an impact on the other issues, consequently hampering the smooth flow of negotiation. Thus, one of the strategies to reduce the probability of a breakdown is to keep the number of issues to be discussed at a minimum. Also, in case of an impasse or breakdown, both the parties try to bring in other

parties like lawyers, experts, etc. to the table to gain strength. This further increases the complexity of the negotiation process as the more the number of parties, the more are the perspectives and the more are the opportunities for disagreement. Thus, restricting the number of negotiators may reduce the chances of a breakdown and increase the chances of reaching a settlement.

Fractionating is an important concept to be understood in this regard. Fractionating a negotiation involves dividing a large conflict into smaller parts. Fractionating can involve several actions like

- Reducing the number of parties on each side
- Controlling the number of issues being discussed
- Depersonalising issues, separating them from parties advocating them

(4) Focusing on similarities rather than differences – During a breakdown there is a tendency on the part of the negotiating parties to magnify the perceived differences and minimise the perceived similarities. Focusing on common objectives can help in reducing conflict. There may be some super-ordinate goals which are shared by the negotiating parties and cooperation between these parties is required to achieve these goals. Focusing on these goals may divert the attention from conflict at hand and help smoothen the situation. Sometimes the desire to battle a common enemy by pooling in resources may serve as a new source of motivation to resolve a conflict.

Third party intervention

When the above-mentioned techniques of avoiding or handling breakdown do not prove successful, third party intervention may be resorted to. In addition to handling breakdown, third party intervention may also be sought as a legal requirement or as a part of a contractual agreement between two parties. Help is generally sought from third parties when negotiators have tried all other options and are still not making progress and when mistrust and suspicion are high or when parties cannot take actions towards defusing conflict without those actions being misinterpreted and mistrusted by others.

Third party intervention may be resorted to with the consent of both the parties or it may be imposed from outside by law or regulation or informally a third party (a manager or a concerned friend) may intervene. For effective third party intervention it is important that there is a sanction of both the parties. Third parties intervening owing to their expertise, friendship or authority but not bearing the sanction of the negotiating parties may face hostility from one or both the parties resulting in ineffectiveness of the intervention. However, it is up to the third party to handle such a situation with expertise and resolve the deadlock faced. Third parties also may use any of the techniques discussed previously.

Benefits of third party intervention Third party interventions help in creating the much needed breathing space during a negotiation process. They can, in fact, help re-establish communication and re-focus on critical issues being negotiated. Third party interventions are also helpful in restoring and repairing strained relationships that may have developed between the negotiating parties. Recommitment by parties to the time limits and deadlines and enhancing the levels of negotiator satisfaction and commitment to the conflict resolution process and its outcomes are some of the other positive outcomes of involving a third party in the negotiation process.

Arbitration—Role of an arbitrator

In arbitration a disagreement is resolved by having a neutral third party who imposes a decision. Arbitration is a popular third party intervention approach used in settling labour management related issues. The arbitrator is presented with the positions of both the parties. He listens to both sides and then decides the outcome of the negotiation. When negotiating parties go in for arbitration it means the parties have agreed to accept the arbitrator's decision as final. In extremely rare cases, the decision of the arbitrator maybe modified or not accepted. Arbitration may be sought on a *single issue* or on *multiple issues*. There may be different forms of arbitration based on the flexibility of the arbitrator. The arbitrator may have the freedom to reach *any decision* he deems appropriate or he may have to *choose without amendment one of the positions* presented by the disputing parties. There is also the concept of tripartite arbitration which provides for appointment of an arbitrator by each party and the appointment of a third arbitrator by the two parties—appointed arbitrator. The idea behind this concept is that parties can appoint non-neutral party appointed arbitrators who ensure that the interests of their party are given due consideration.

Some of the guidelines to be followed by an arbitrator include the following:

(i) An arbitrator should make sure that the negotiating parties should understand the arbitration process, the arbitrator's role in that process and the relationship of the parties to the arbitrator.

(ii) An arbitrator should be adequately prepared for the arbitration by thoroughly reviewing the documents and statements submitted by the parties.

(iii) An arbitrator should maintain confidentiality appropriate to the negotiation process.

(iv) An arbitrator should be neutral and impartial both in words and action.

(v) An arbitrator should be courteous to the parties and give them a patient hearing before arriving at a decision.

Advantages of arbitration

(i) It provides a clear cut resolution to the problem under negotiation.

(ii) It saves time and hence, costs of prolonged unresolved disputes.

Limitations of arbitration Arbitration has been increasingly criticized as a dispute resolution mechanism due to having some negative consequences. Some of them are:

(i) The parties avoid making compromises they would otherwise be willing to make because they fear that the arbitrator will split the difference between their stated positions. They feel it is in their interest to take a hard line stand as the arbitrator will split the difference. This is called *chilling effect*.

(ii) Negotiations involve time and effort and at the end there is no guarantee that a settlement will be reached. Negotiators may resort to an easier course by accepting the guarantee of an imposed settlement at the end of the negotiation. This results in passivity and loss of initiative on the part of the negotiators. This is called *narcotic effect*.

(iii) Another negative consequence of the arbitration process is the *half life effect*. As the number of cases being referred to for arbitration increases, the probability that there will be a growing dissatisfaction with the process increases. This may consequently result in parties resorting to other means to resolve the dispute.

(iv) In arbitration there is less commitment to the settlement than other forms of dispute resolution. This is called *decision acceptance effect.*

Mediation—Role of mediator

To understand the role of a mediator it is essential to understand the mediation process. Mediation can be thought of as "assisted negotiation". A third party which is neutral assists in the negotiation between two or more parties. Mediation may thus, be defined as a process in which a mediator who is neutral is selected by the mutual consent of the parties and the issues and differences of the two parties are resolved with the assistance of this neutral mediator. The final outcome is entirely dependent on the parties. In contrast to arbitration, mediation is more popular and often resorted to as it produces greater disputant satisfaction. Unlike arbitration where the third party takes a decision on behalf of the two parties, in mediation a mediator merely assists the parties to develop a solution for themselves. The negotiating parties themselves develop and endorse the agreement.

Though mediation is a preferred course of action it has some limitations. These include:

- The parties have no impetus to reach a settlement or abide by the settlement reached at by the mediator.
- It is likely that the dispute may continue indefinitely with no solution that is acceptable to both the sides in sight.
- Since the decision of the mediator is not binding the situation can worsen and there is a possibility that the conflict may escalate to higher levels.

Mediation generally begins with an agenda being set up with mutual consent of both the parties. In the agenda setting meeting, both the parties and mediator remain present. Ground rules and procedures are set up in this meeting. This meeting is followed by separate caucus between the mediator and each individual party. Each party can explain his position in confidence to the mediator. The mediator after listening to both the parties is equipped to facilitate the negotiation process and reach a settlement. Some of the guidelines to be followed by the mediator are:

(i) The primary role of the mediator is to show absolute impartiality in the mediation. The mediator should have no vested interests in the outcome of the dispute.

(ii) Mediator needs to establish ground rules for the mediation process preferably, with the consent of the disputing parties. The expected behaviour needs to be identified and specified to the parties.

(iii) Mediators need to practice listening and facilitate the parties to identify the cause of the conflict and how they would like to resolve or manage it.

(iv) Mediators need to maintain the confidentiality of the conflicting parties.

(v) Mediator does not take the decision. He merely tries to facilitate a decision. The decision-making power lies entirely with the negotiating parties. The work of a mediator is to act as a facilitator who tries to get the two parties together by ironing out their communication differences and guiding the process to avoid confrontation.

Creating the right atmosphere

Given below are some tips to create a congenial and conducive atmosphere thus, setting the right tone for the negotiation process. These tips may be related to pre-negotiation or the negotiation process:

- Tone down rhetoric, loose talk, press meets before negotiations.
- Do your home-work properly. Try to understand the problem and envisage alternative solutions to overcome the bottlenecks.
- Prepare agenda for the negotiations. Do this preferably with the mutual consent of the parties.
- Brain storm on each and every issue of the likely questions. Prepare likely answers which may not be harmful to party's interest but should be agreeable to opposition.
- Identity the opposition hard nuts who do not budge. Read their mindset and work out a plan of action to deal with them.
- Arrange for well lit up halls, clean ambience and good refreshment and drinking water.

- Agenda points should be placed in folders on the right side of the seat.
- Once every one is seated, the head of the host negotiation team should welcome the guests.
- Keep your cool.
- Address every one by full name with Mr/Sh/Dr/Mrs/Ms, etc.
- Let there be only one speaker, i.e. the head of the team. The others can offer comments just raising from chairs and politely talking into ear of the head negotiator. Walk back to your seat without noise.
- There should be a break in every two hours.
- There should be provision for water and light refreshments. If the negotiation is going to take a long time, there should be provision for lunch.
- At each corner of the table at right side of the chief negotiator, chairs should be kept reserved for the secretaries to record agenda points.
- If somehow the negotiation contact has broken, identify the intermediaries who can establish the links with the parties.
- Before you go to negotiate the conflict, arm yourself with the genesis of the problems, the reasons for the conflict and the areas where there are points of commonality, and try to know the point of view of the opposition as much as possible.
- Be open, straightforward and circumspect during the discussions. Build confidence and trust in the discussions.
- References to the individuals who have been instrumental in generating the conflict and personal egos have to be avoided at all costs.

SUMMARY

The chapter focused on negotiation as an important communication skill. It discussed its characteristics and the factors that influence the negotiation process. It also briefly described the four approaches to negotiation, *viz.* distributive, lose-lose, bargaining and win–win approach. It further explained the negotiation process along with the barriers that may hinder the success of a negotiation process. Finally, it gave some guidelines for carrying out effective negotiations and the non-verbal skills involved in the process. It also covers a section on handling breakdown in negotiation and ways of dealing with it including third party intervention like mediation and arbitration.

QUESTIONS

1. What is negotiation? What are its characteristics?
2. Write a short note on non-verbal negotiation skills?
3. List out any five techniques you can use for effective negotiations.
4. Discuss the various stages of the negotiation process.
5. Explain the barriers that can hinder the success of a negotiation.
6. Describe the various approaches to negotiation.
7. List out the various activities involved in the preparation phase of the negotiation process.
8. 'The first step to a successful negotiation is creating a congenial environment', discuss.
9. Differentiate between mediation and arbitration as 'third party intervention' techniques for handling breakdown in negotiations.

EFFECTIVE PRESENTATIONS

chapter 10

THIS CHAPTER WILL HELP YOU IN:

- Understanding business presentations as an important communication skill
- Learning principles that serve as guidelines while making and delivering presentations
- Discussing various stages of preparing a business presentation

- Familiarising the reader with the importance of visual aids to support presentations
- Understanding the personal aspects of business communication

The chapter introduces us to business presentations. It concentrates on oral presentations. It goes on to enumerate the principles that serve as guidelines while making and delivering presentations. It describes in detail the various stages of preparing a business presentation. The importance of visual aids and features of various visual aids is also covered. The contribution of aspects such as pitch, rate, volume, pronunciation and quality of voice along with, posture, gestures, facial expressions, movement, appearance and attire in making a presentation more effective is also touched upon.

BUSINESS PRESENTATIONS

Delivering an impact-creating business presentation is a competency that managers require to have in an organisation. Often managers are not comfortable making presentations to bosses or clients as presentations, like public speaking require adequate rehearsals. A presentation is mainly about the presenter. Presentations take place in organisations all the time. Effective presentation skills are about the presenter's confidence, logical thinking, level of knowledge, ability to get ideas across to the audience and, most importantly, his ability to "connect" with the audience. The synonym for communication is, in fact, connection. This perhaps is most evident during presentations. Good business presentations should ideally follow the KISS formula, i.e. keep it short and simple. Managers need to concentrate more on their delivery in terms of both verbal and non-verbal aspects.

Presentation may be defined as a technique of formal communication that involves speaking in front of a group of people or presenting a topic in public. Whenever you are asked to appear in front of one or more persons for the purpose of explaining, educating, convincing, or otherwise conveying information to them, you have a presentation. Preparing an oral presentation is similar to writing a formal report but, with a few differences. Oral presentations involve more interaction with the audience. These can be supported with non-verbal cues to increase meaning and enhance understanding. Oral presentations also give you an opportunity to adjust your technique, i.e. the content and delivery of the message can be modified as you go along to create better impact on the audience. Since oral presentations involve listening and humans have a limited time span of attention, therefore there is a need to use techniques that prevent the audience from losing interest.

Presentations can be made in classrooms, seminars, meetings, conferences, etc. on some scheduled topic. Presentation is emerging as a popular means of interactive communication with an objective of presenting relevant information to the interested target audience.

Audience Analysis

Audience analysis is considered to be an act of acquainting yourself with the audience before presenting them with the message. Whatever be the mode of communication (oral, written, verbal, non-verbal), analysing the audience is important to make it effective. The audience may comprise of a single individual (person to person communication), a small group or a large diverse group (mass communication). The acronym AUDIENCE best describes audience analysis.

Expanded form of Audience*

Analysis – Who is the audience?

Understanding – What is the audience's knowledge of the subject?

Demographic – What is the age, sex, educational background, etc. of the audience?

Interest – Why are they reading your document (or listening to your speech—as the case may be)?

Environment – Where will this document be sent/viewed?

Needs – What are the audiences needs associated with your document topic?

Customisation – What specific needs/interests should the writer address relating to the specific audience?

Expectations – What does the audience expect to learn from your document? The audience should walk away having their initial questions answered and explained.

Though knowing about your audience is central to communicating, it is not possible to know everything about the audience. To begin with, one can aim at getting that information about the listener which will have maximum impact on the structure and contents of the speech. After this, depending on the time and resources available, one can fine tune the speech based on audience related factors.

Demographic aspects

While studying the demographic aspects of the audience, specific factual information is obtained about the audience which may be related to age, educational level, socio-economic status, occupation, sex, group membership, religious preferences, etc.

People of different age groups have different interests, attitudes and this influences their behaviour as members of the audience. It is thus, important to consider the age of

* *Source:* www.wikipedia.com

the audience while preparing the speech or presentation. If the audience comprises a wide age range then the subject can be dealt with in more general terms with examples that appeal to the majority of the members rather than selected few.

The content of your speech, vocabulary and sentence structure will be greatly influenced by the educational level of the audience. Though it is not absolutely necessary that there is a direct correlation between the educational level and the comprehension level of the subject, but mostly it is the case. It would be beneficial that in addition to knowing educational level of audience, one should try to obtain an assessment on the amount of information the listeners have on the subject. This will help you to focus on what the listeners do not know rather than repeating what they already know. If you speak below the educational or knowledge level of the audience, they will get bored. Also, if the level of your speech is much above the knowledge level of the audience, they are again most likely to switch off as they will be unable to understand it. Throwing difficult technical jargon and vocabulary at the audience with an aim to impress them should not be the idea while delivering the speech. Instead, one requires to communicate in a language and style which appropriately fits with the listeners' level.

The social status of the listener and their economic background also influence the attitudes and values of the listener and, therefore, this aspect needs to be taken into consideration while planning and drafting the presentations. Information about the occupation/profession of the listener gives a general idea to the speaker about the education and knowledge level. Knowing the interests and hobbies of the audience can also help in targeting and communicating with the audience more effectively.

Psychological aspects

Psychological aspects include beliefs and values of the individuals and it is beneficial to pay close attention to these elements while analysing the audience. Many of the individual's beliefs and values are acquired early in childhood and though new experience and learning may alter those a little, these mostly remain the basis of the individual's thoughts and actions. Familiarising one with the political or religious character of the audience may provide a fair idea about the listener's basic beliefs and common values. An effective way of persuading the audience to accept your point of view is to appeal to an audience value structure.

Attitude of audience

Another aspect of audience analysis is getting information about the attitude of the audience towards the speaker and the subject.

Attitude towards the speaker Very often the attitude of the audience towards the speaker determines the success or failure in communicating the desired message. The speaker may know his subject very well but, if the initial attitude of the audience is adverse towards the speaker, then the speaker will have a task ahead of him to make communication effective. He has to overcome the initial barrier by changing the attitude of the listener. The level of speaker credibility or ethos in the eyes of the listener makes it easier or difficult as the case may be to make the message acceptable to the listener and consequently elicit the desired effect. A listeners past experience with the speaker or an hearsay of the reputation of the speaker or physical appearance of the speaker, etc. are some of the factors which influence a listener's attitude towards the speaker.

Attitude towards the subject The more open the listener is towards the subject of the speech, the easier is the task of the speaker. If the listener is eager and has a positive attitude towards the speaker, all one needs to do is to deliver the speech and reinforce the ideas in the speech. There may be the case when the audience is neutral towards the subject, i.e. they have no opinions about the particular topic. They have an equal probability of framing a favourable or unfavourable opinion. It is up to the audience to ensure that the audience gets inclined towards the subject and form a favourable opinion. For this, the speaker needs to make the speech interesting so as to catch the attention of the listeners and also needs to present sound evidence and examples to support his point of view. Relating to the topics of interests to the audience may facilitate the audience to favourable opinion.

On the other hand, the audience may be negatively disposed towards the subject. It is important to avoid taking extreme positions and maintain calm under such situations. One should aim at identifying the exact cause of the listeners' hostility. State their arguments fairly and sincerely while also demonstrating the merits of your position and build arguments that lead towards your conclusions.

Types of Audience

H. L. Hollingworth developed a classification system that described audiences on the basis of their organisation and orientation towards the situation in which the speech is given. The speaker needs to adopt a speaking style keeping in mind the characteristics of various categories of audience. As categorised by Hollingworth, the audience may be of the following types:

(i) Casual audiences

These are non-homogeneous audience and can hardly be called audience. They are just small groups of people who have gathered for a short time at the same place. Pedestrians gathered on the street to watch a street entertainer performing or speaking is an example of this category of audience.

(ii) Passive audience

The second type of audience is passive audience. This category includes persons who have no choice but to listen to the speaker. In this case, the speaker needs to gain the interest of the listeners and arouse their interest in the topic, failing which the audience will merely be passive listeners without really paying attention to what is being said.

(iii) Selected audience

This category includes audience who have gathered for a specific purpose and they generally have an interest on the subject. While addressing such an audience, there is no need for the speaker to focus on catching the attention of the audience, rather the speaker needs to retain the attention by creating a good and lasting impression on the audience.

(iv) Concerted audience

Audience which has an active purpose, share mutual interests but, have no set separation of labour or strict organisation of authority are categorised as concerted audience. They have a high degree of orientation towards the speaker and the subject. Since the audience is already oriented towards the speaker the speaker just needs to reinforce the audience's conviction and motivate them to take action in the desired direction.

(v) Organised audience

In this audience, the listeners are totally directed towards the speaker and all labour and authority lines are strictly designated. Organised audiences need to be given specific instructions on the action plans by the speaker.

Principles of Presentation

A good presentation requires a good mix of communication skills, confidence, subject knowledge and interpersonal skills on the part of the presenter. Not only the verbal aspect of communication, but also the non-verbal aspect has to be considered. There are certain points to be borne in mind while making and delivering presentations. These have been listed out below:

1. Related to making of the presentation

(i) Prepare yourself for a presentation
(ii) Know your audience and adapt the contents of your presentation to suit them
(iii) Begin with an attention getter
(iv) Limit your presentation to 2-3 main points

(v) Be at the venue in advance and familiarise yourself with the lighting, seating, control switches, etc.

(vi) Anticipate questions and be ready to respond to them.

(vii) Tell them what you are going to tell them, then tell them and finally tell them what you have told them.

(viii) In longer presentations include summaries of main points as you go along.

(ix) Use appropriate visual aids

- For small informal groups use flipcharts, boards or transparencies
- For larger groups use slides or films

(x) Limit each visual aid to three or four lines or five or six points. Use short phrases. Use large readable type.

(xi) Make sure that you know how to use the electronic gadgets and that they work.

(xii) Keep alternative arrangement ready in case the visual aid does not work.

(xiii) While preparing the presentation take care of the six cardinal questions

What? – What do I wish to communicate?

Why? – Why should the audience listen to me?

When? – Timing

How? – How can I best convey my message?

Where? – Location

Who? – Who is my audience?

2. Related to delivery of the presentation

(i) Be clear and organised

(ii) Establish rapport with your audience early

(iii) Establish eye contact

(iv) Do not go too fast

(v) Make sure everyone can hear

(vi) Be natural. Do not put on an accent. Avoid excessive mannerisms.

(vii) Maintain a straight posture

(viii) Stick to the time

(ix) Keep your presentation flexible to skip or expand certain parts depending on the circumstances

(x) Focus on the audience and the topic

(xi) Control your feelings even if you are criticised

(xii) Don't end abruptly. Last impression is as important as the first one.

(xiii) Encourage questions
- Allow questions during the presentation if the group is small
- Tackle the questions at the end if the group is large and/or hostile

(xiv) Do not get sidetracked by questions, i.e. stick to the theme of the presentation

Steps for Preparing Effective Presentations

Good preparation is the key to a good presentation. Whatever be the kind of presentation, it essentially involves three stages:

(i) Pre-preparatory stage

(ii) Advance analysis
- Know the objective
- Know and analyse your audience

(iii) Preparatory stage
- Select the main ideas
- Obtain the information
- Select information, organise material and write the draft
- Support with visual aids
- Rehearse the presentation

Pre-preparatory stage

Before beginning with the actual preparation of the presentation it is important to check the exact topic of the presentation, the date and time of the presentation, location and equipment available and the time allotted for the presentation. Always check whether the presentation will have a question answer session and if you need to give written handouts.

Advance analysis

The second stage is the advance analysis stage which involves knowing in advance the objective of the presentation and obtaining information about the audience so as to prepare the presentation accordingly. Broadly speaking, the objective that presentations can meet is to provide information or instructions, to motivate, to persuade to entertain or a combination of the above. Whatever be the objective, it is essential that you know what you want to achieve by the end of your presentation. This will help in planning the presentation. For example, if the objective is to try and motivate or entertain the audience, the presenter will do most of the talking. On the other hand, the level of interaction may be much more if the purpose is to persuade the audience for something. It is important to know as much as possible about the audience whom you are going to address because what you will speak must be adapted according to the requirement of the audience. You will need to have information about the size of the group, the age range, who the audience are, interests and goals of the audience, their knowledge level and other similar information. The style and content of the presentation can be geared based on the above information. For example, if the group is small you can interact more with the audience as compared to when the group is larger. If the members of the group are from the same technical background, you can use scientific terms and jargon familiar to them in your presentation. The more information you have about your audience, the better rapport you will be able to build with them.

Preparatory stage

The third stage is the Preparation stage which is the key to an effective presentation. Preparation involves the following:

Select the main ideas You can begin by focusing on the core ideas, i.e. what are the main ideas that you want to convey to the audience. After this you can collect additional information to support these core ideas.

Obtain information The next step is to obtain all the information you can about the core ideas listed out earlier. Many times, based on your research, you may have to modify your core ideas. Sources of information can include printed information in books, magazines, journals, newspapers catalogues, reports, office files, etc. verbal information from people who know about the subject, graphical information and electronic information from internet, library database, etc.

Select information, organise material and write the draft Many times, you may not need to keep all the information you have collected. Check the information for obsolescence, accuracy, relevance, completeness and legal acceptability. Based on the above criteria, you can select the suitable information and discard the rest of it. Material can be sorted on the basis of 'Need to know' or 'Nice to know'. Need to know are the key points that are very important and cannot be left out. Nice to know are interesting tidbits that can be used depending on availability of time. The next step is to orderly arrange the selected information. One can start by forming an initial outline followed by writing the first draft. This draft can then be modified and polished to obtain the final presentation. A good presentation has three parts introduction, main content/ body and conclusion or summary. "Tell them what you are going to tell them" in the introduction; "tell them" in the body of the presentation; and "tell them what you have told them" in the conclusion and summary.

Introduction You need to have an important opening line to catch your audience's attention. You can also begin by introducing yourself if that has not been done before. The introduction should state your purpose, i.e. why you are making the presentation followed by your agenda that gives the audience an idea of the major points you will cover.

Main Content/Body This is the heart of your presentation. In the body of the presentation explain the Who, What, When, Where, Why and How of your presentation. However, one has to keep in mind the time limitation. Generally, most presentations are limited to two or three main points. Include supporting evidence for the main points of the presentation. To maintain the audience's attention include only useful, relevant and interesting supporting evidence. Use clear simple language that the audience can understand.

Conclusion and summary Summarise the points at the end of the presentation to reorient the audience towards the central theme. Many times certain conclusions or inferences drawn from the data presented may also have to be included.

The closing is as important as the beginning. Remember, it is the last impression that the audience carry with them.

Support with visual aids Visual aids are used to supplement oral presentations. They serve a twin purpose. Firstly, they serve as a tool for the presenter to help him remember all the points of the presentation, especially in case of lengthy presentations. Secondly, they help the audience to better comprehend and assimilate what is being said. Research shows that an audience remembers only 10 percent of a purely oral presentation and this percentage increases to 50 percent when the presentation is supported with visual aids. In addition to the above, visuals also break the monotony of only listening to the speaker's voice. If properly designed and used, they can greatly enhance a presentation.

Choosing a visual aid to suit the presentation is extremely important. Some visual aids have been discussed below:

(i) Flip charts These are inexpensive quick visual aids that are suitable for small groups. A flip chart can be prepared during the presentation or before the presentation. It is a useful method to compile audience comments or questions. However, they may not be suitable for large audience and they also require considerable use of graphical talent. Some of the points to be kept in mind while using flip charts are:

- Restrict an idea or a sketch to one page
- Words you write should be large enough to be seen by people
- Write in block letters
- Use colour to differentiate or emphasise sections
- Do not write more than 6-7 lines on a page

(ii) Overhead transparencies These are inexpensive, can be produced quickly and are suitable for audience ranging from 20-50 persons. An overhead projector is required to project these transparencies on the screen. Some points to be kept in mind while developing overhead transparencies are:

- Do not put too much of information on the transparency
- Use bold letters when typing
- Set the OHP on a table lower than the surrounding tables or platform so as not to obstruct the view
- Use laser printers to prepare good quality transparencies

(iii) Posters These are pre-prepared visual aids. They are available on a variety of topics and contain photographs, diagrams, graphs, etc. They are suitable for small audience. Transporting posters can be difficult. Many times they contain too much of information which is difficult for a large audience to see.

(iv) Power point presentations It is the most popular form of visual aids. An LCD projector is required for projection of power point slides on the screen.

Power Point Presentations

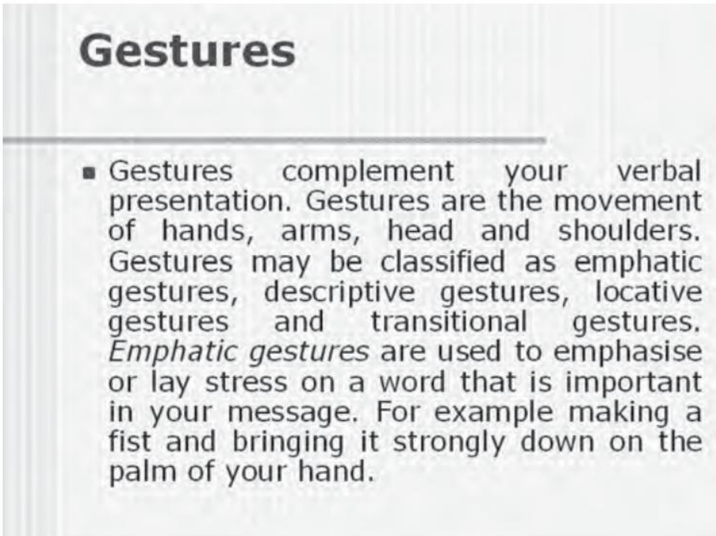
Most business presentations are power point presentations. You do not want to make a power point that has no power and little point! It is, therefore, important to keep a few things in mind.

Points to Remember

- Image worth projecting if visible to everybody
- Each slide - one thought/concept/idea
- Avoid sentences
- Do away with most punctuations
- Short bulleted phrases
- No clutter, avoid dense slides
- Make proper use of the 'white space'
- Font size 38-44 for heading
- Not less than 28 for text
- Contrast template and font colour
- For formal presentations - remember to keep it simple
- Convert all tabular information to graphs/diagrams
- Use back up for all presentation
- Keep hard copy of presentation
- Use hyperlinks
- Use animation and other special effects with caution
- Rehearse your presentation
- If travelling, use the 'pack and go' command to be able to run your presentation on a system that does not have MS Power Point software installed

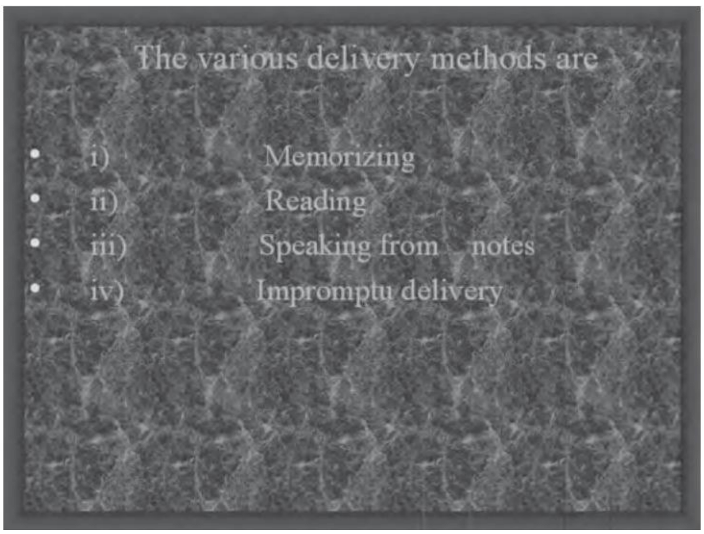
Following are some sample slides—Can you see what's wrong with them?

Exhibit 10.1



- The slide has 11 lines in it that make it dense.
- Sentences along with punctuations are used in it. Neither is needed.
- There is more than a single concept put on the slide.

Exhibit 10.2



- There is very little contrast between the background/template and the font colour, thereby resulting in poor readability
- Notice the alignment that has been done badly
- The title can be made more effective by removing three words from it. Can you guess them?
- Both bullets and numbering are used. Use only one
- Spacing could be improved to enhance the use of 'white space'

Rehearse the Presentation

At least three rehearsals are recommended of the presentation before the actual delivery. Rehearsals serve a two-fold objective—first, you become comfortable with your material, and second you can identify the areas requiring revision and modify your presentation accordingly. While rehearsing, imagine the audience in front of you. Stand and deliver your talk aloud. Stop at the allotted time. Then edit and revise the presentation accordingly until you can deliver it within the allotted time. Remember to take into consideration the question answer session while timing your presentation.

Handling Questions

The presenter at the end of the presentation generally takes up questions from the audience. However, there may be occasions when presenter prefers the audience to ask questions as he moves through his presentation. Whatever be the case, the key to handling questions effectively is preparation. One needs to spend time trying to anticipate the questions that might arise and preparing the answers accordingly. Use the TRACT formula for handling questions.

T – Thank the person for asking the question. "Thank you for asking the question, it is a good point………"

R – Repeat the question for three reasons

- To make sure everyone has heard the question.
- To make sure you have understood what the question means.
- To give yourself time to answer the question.

A – Answer the question, if you can. Do not bluff. If you do not know the answer, admit it.

C – Check that you have provided a satisfactory answer.

T – Thank them again for the question. "Thank you for raising that point. It was most helpful…".

Some more points that need to be kept in mind while answering questions are:

(i) Keep your answers short.

(ii) Do not allow one or two people to monopolise the question answer period. Try and give a chance to maximum people to ask their questions.

(iii) Do not focus only on the questioner while answering the question. If you do so, the rest of the audience may lose interest.

(iv) Do not humiliate or put down the person who's asked the question.

(v) Break long complicated questions into parts that you can answer simply.

Remember, your presentation ends only when the Question-Answer session ends!

Delivery of Presentation

There are a number of delivery methods to choose from. It is important to decide upon the delivery method best suited depending on the objectives, content and audience. The various delivery methods are memorising, reading, speaking from notes and impromptu delivery.

Memorising

This method is best avoided unless you are a trained orator. It is a difficult method, especially if the presentation is a long one. One is likely to forget points. Memorising a presentation has the risk of the speaker forgetting the precise words and then groping for words in front of the audience. This decreases the credibility of the speaker. Moreover, a memorised speech is likely to sound monotonous and stiff.

Reading

This method is suitable for a technical or complex presentation. Presentation of the financial budget in the parliament is one such example. A business presentation should not be read as maintaining eye contact with the audience becomes very difficult.

Speaking from notes

This is the best way to deliver a presentation. It is easy and effective. This involves making a presentation with the help of outline notes cards and visual aids. Reference to notes cards and visual aids ensures that one does not forget anything. It is flexible and can be altered to suit the audience. It allows for eye contact and interaction with the audience. Most importantly, it acts as a self-help guide to enhance the quality of the presentation. For example, you can include in your notes when you need to look at the audience or when you need to smile at them.

Impromptu delivery

One must avoid speaking unprepared unless one is a seasoned orator or has spoken many times on the same topic. Sometimes impromptu speeches are unavoidable. In such circumstances give yourself a couple of minutes to structure your presentation and what you are going to say to make the best of it. Jotting down a few points can be useful too.

Personal Aspects

Personal aspects of presenter can be classified into voice, posture, movement, gestures facial expressions and attire. Along with the verbal communications these personal aspects have a bearing on the communication process between the presenter and the audience. A lot is conveyed through personal cues and they can be used to enhance the quality of the presentation.

Use of voice

One of your important personal aspects is your voice. It is a part that adds a human element to your words. Varying pitch, rate and volume make your presentation more interesting and add life to it.

Pitch Pitch is the highness or the lowness of your voice**.** In speaking, pitch should be varied. Lack of pitch variation may result in monotone. A monotonous voice may bore the audience and they may gradually lose interest.

Rate Rate of speech is the number of words you speak per minute. Rate of speech varies from individual to individual. Research indicates that it lies between 80 and 160 per minute for public speakers and between 80 and 250 in casual conversations. Variation in rate is better than speaking at the same speed. Pause is an important element of rate of speech. A pause can be used to put emphasis on certain parts of the delivery. Pause also helps you to collect your thoughts. A very slow delivery rate with lots of pauses would result in a dull and boring presentation. On the other hand, if the speaker is speaking very fast it may result in loss of clarity and understanding.

Volume Volume, i.e. the intensity of your voice is another characteristic of your voice that leaves a considerable impact on the audience. You must adapt your voice level to the size of the audience and the room. In case amplification is being used, care should be taken not to speak too loudly into the mike. Another technique used by presenters is emphasising on certain words by using a louder or softer volume.

Vocal quality It is something about your voice that distinguishes it from others. For example some people have a husky voice, some have a vibrant voice, some have a masculine voice and so on. Your physiological make-up, i.e. your vocal chords, tongue, mouth, lips, teeth, sinuses, palate, etc. affect the voice quality. Sometimes if the quality of voice is not good, it may be helpful to consult a speech therapist.

Pronunciation Be sure you have the correct pronunciation of words. Regional influences may be there in pronunciations, but it is important to minimise them.

Appearance and bodily movements

Another important personal aspect which has a bearing on the effectiveness of the presentation, is the body language and the appearance of the presenter. Posture, gestures, facial expressions, movement and the appearance/attire of the presenter can add or take away a great deal from the presentation. *Remember 'You are the Presentation'. The power point is only a tool that you have.*

Posture It refers to how you stand or sit. Your posture gives non-verbal cues about you as a communicator. A straight posture reflects confidence and complete control. Avoid adopting a casual posture. It reflects an attitude of carelessness. Most business presentations are formal and your posture needs to reflect that.

Gestures Gestures complement your verbal presentation. Gestures are the movement of hands, arms, head and shoulders. Gestures may be classified as emphatic gestures, descriptive gestures, locative gestures and transitional gestures.

- *Emphatic gestures* are used to emphasise or lay stress on a word that is important in your message. For example, making a fist and bringing it strongly down on the palm of your hand.
- *Descriptive gestures* are used to provide a visualisation effect for your verbal message. For example, if you are talking of something big, you open your arms wide.
- *Locative gestures* indicate the direction that is being referred to in the oral presentation. For example, pointing a finger towards something.
- *Transitional gestures* may be used to list out or enumerate things. For example counting on your fingers to enumerate the three types of negotiation approaches.

Be natural in your gestures. Do not overdo or over use gestures as an overdose can be annoying or distracting. Gestures should be in consonance with what is being said. Avoid using the same gestures repetitively. Use a variety of gestures. Avoid putting your hands in the pockets, or crossing them across your chest or back. Try and practice your presentation with gestures that you would be using. Remember having absolutely no gestures while you speak is also not a good idea!

Facial expressions Facial expressions include the movement of your face, eyes and facial muscles. An expressive face is more appealing to the audience than a non-expressive one. It is important to have a pleasant look on your face. Your facial expressions should reflect your interest and enthusiasm in the presentation. Eye contact with the audience is an important element of your non-verbal language. Do not speak to the wall behind the audience or to your own notes. Maintain eye contact with maximum people in the audience. Eyes convey your sincerity. They are the mirror to your thoughts and emotions. Maintaining eye contact makes the audience feel involved.

Movement Movement is essential for breaking the psychological barrier between you and the audience. It also adds some life to the presentation. Avoid standing at one spot for too long. On the other hand too much of movement can also have a negative impact. Avoid pacing from one side to another too much during the presentation. The audience may get distracted.

It may be useful to move a few steps towards the audience when you want to emphasise on certain points. Another suggested technique is to walk down the stage and go into the audience. This has a considerable impact on the audience. It helps the audience connect with you and also increase their interest in the presentation. Researchers have identified three positions between which a presenter can shuffle during a presentation. These are the *home position* where the presenter spends most of his time, the *visual position* that the presenter occupies to review the visuals and the *high impact position* that is used sparingly to emphasise certain points in the presentation.

Attire and Appearance The first thing people notice about you is your appearance and attire. The first impression about you is already formed the moment your audience see you. Thus, your appearance and what you are wearing gains importance. Your appearance should reflect professionalism so be smartly dressed. Professionalism in dressing certainly creates a positive impact on your audience. It is better to be formally dressed than informally dressed so choose formal business attire either Indian or Western. Your clothes should be clean and neatly ironed. Ill-fitting clothes should be avoided. Footwear should match your clothes and be well polished. Your hair should be ideally kept off the face. Keep jewellery and makeup to the minimum for formal presentations.

The following exhibit can be used to help you judge the quality of your presentation.

Exhibit 10.3 Self Assessment of Presentations

PLEASE GRADE 1 = Never, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Most of the time, 4 = Almost always, and 5 = Always						
1	I was reading my presentation from the screen	1	2	3	4	5
2	I stood with my hands in my pockets/with them at the back or crossed across the chest	1	2	3	4	5
3	I made eye contact with my audience	1	2	3	4	5
4	My presentation was readable as the font size and colour/contrast was good	1	2	3	4	5
5	My presentation was structured properly (Intro + Body + Conclusion)	1	2	3	4	5
6	My presentation used too many visuals and/or sound effects	1	2	3	4	5
7	My presentation finished on time	1	2	3	4	5
8	I was confident and not nervous about my presentation	1	2	3	4	5
9	My audience was interested in my presentation and were listening intently	1	2	3	4	5
10	I encouraged questions at the end of my presentation	1	2	3	4	5
11	My presentation contained bulleted points instead of sentences	1	2	3	4	5

SUMMARY

This chapter focused on oral presentations. It gave the characteristics of business presentations and the guidelines for making and delivering presentations. It also described in detail the various stages of preparing a business presentation. The importance of visual aids and features of various visual aids have also been covered. The contribution of personal aspects which include pitch, rate, volume, pronunciation and quality of voice along with, posture, gestures, facial expressions, movement, appearance and attire in making a presentation more effective was also covered.

QUESTIONS

1. What are business presentations?
2. Write a short note on importance of non-verbal aspects in enhancing the importance of presentations.
3. List out any five techniques you can use for making effective presentations.
4. 'The first few minutes of a speaker on stage win the audience or lose the audience' comment.
5. What are the various ways of delivering a presentation?
6. List out five points which should be considered while handling questions from the audience.
7. Give five points to be kept in mind regarding the attire and appearance of the presenter.
8. Discuss the various stages in the process of making presentations.
9. 'An effective presentation centres on the audience', discuss.
10. List out the guidelines/principles to be kept in mind while making a presentation.
11. While discussing the importance of using visual aids in presentations, list out the different kinds of visual aids.
12. What role does proper planning and organising of the subject matter have in an effective presentation?
13. Describe the various elements related to voice and their importance in relation to business presentations.
14. You have been asked to give a presentation on 'identification of training needs' for your organisation. List the key points that you would include in the introduction in order to get the presentation off to a successful start.

15. List the advantages and disadvantages of using clip art and animation effects in a formal presentation.
16. Convert the data given in the table below into charts or graphs and prepare a slide for the same.

Product	Sales Figures for the Year 2008 (Rs)				
	1st quarter	2nd quarter	3rd quarter	4th quarter	Total
Text books	2,40,000	4,50,000	2,30,000	3,18,000	12,38,000
Reference books	3,12,000	3,18,000	2,90,000	1,20,000	10,40,000
Fiction books	3,15,000	6,70,000	2,55,000	3,45,000	15,85,000
Magazines	1,90,000	3,45,000	2,10,000	2,46,000	9,91,000

17. Prepare a presentation based on the following book review:

ETHICS IN PUBLIC RELATIONS: RESPONSIBLE ADVOCACY*

The public relations department is the heart of an organisation. Internal and external public relations communications control the flow of the good and bad news to the staff and community. Ethics theories range from Utilitarianism—'the greatest good for the greatest number' to Deontology—'Do what is right though the world should perish'. In organisations, ethics permeates throughout the company mindset. A stranger off the street can sniff it out. Nothing is hidden, especially bad news which gushes out in an instant. It is a two way street; not only do public relation professionals represent the organisation to the public, but they also present the public back to the organisations. They are the conscience of a company.

A collection of ten thoughtful essays in the book edited by **K. Fitzpatrick and C. Bronstein** recognised the ethical obligations of public relations professionals to balance a primary loyalty to clients and employees with a concomitant duty to multiple stakeholders. Society demands and expects greater accountability from business organisations and business schools. The book serves the need of business educational programs, consultants, researchers and practitioners of public relations. The relatively exhaustive and integrated conceptual treatment by different authors as well as the practical orientation suggests strategies on ethical issues which will greatly enhance ethical accountability.

In Chapter I, Kathy Fitzpatrick addresses responsible advocacy in public relations from a legal perspective, analysing core concepts of the 'market places of ideas' as defined in free speech and proposes four legal principles – access, process, truth and disclosure that could serve as base lives for responsible advocacy in public relations. Further, the chapter explores the convergence of legal and ethical standards in public relations.

*First published as a book review in, ***Vision: A Journal of Business Perspective,*** 2007. Reproduced with permission.

The second chapter examines the concepts of responsibility and accountability from a moral perspective. Thomas Bivins distinguishes well the functional and moral responsibility, examining such variables as role and function, degree of autonomy, organisational structure and client – professional obligations, stressing on the fact that responsible advocacy will require public relation professionals to be individually responsible and accountable for their decisions and actions.

In Chapter III Larissa Grunig and Elizabeth Toth examine the need for collaborative advocacy when communicating with difference. The authors discuss feminist and organisational values, and the relationship between diversity and public relations. The chapter successfully explores how valuing diversity within or internally contributes to organisational effectiveness in communicating ethically with diverse publics.

The next chapter, Chapter IV by Linda Hon, talks about how relationships between organisations and activist group can be managed ethically. The chapter outlines a theoretical framework to explain why responsible advocacy with activist group is necessary and discusses various communication strategies that allow organisations to negotiate conflict, built quality relationships and achieve mutually beneficial goals. Hon proposes, as noted by Kathy and Carolyn, proactive relationships, maintenance strategies based on open communication and empowerment of key publics.

Analysing ethical challenges faced by public relations professionals working for non-profit organisations is what Carolyn Bronstein explores in Chapter V. She notes a lack of public role models for responsible advocacy among non-profit organisations.

In Chapter VI, Karla Gower examines the negative impact of corporate scandals such as Enron, World Com, among others on businesses.

In Chapter VII, Kirk Hallahan deals with the very serious issue of ethics related to on-line communication, dwelling upon the limited efforts that have been made to establish guidelines for public relations practitioners operating in cyber space.

Michael Palenchar and Robert Heath in the following chapter, Chapter VIII, offer a rhetorical rationale for ethics in risk communication proposing guidelines for ethical risk communication practices.

The next chapter, Chapter IX explores the area of public diplomacy an area that has become significant in wake of the terrorist attack of Sept. 11, 2001. Philip Seib here discusses the difference between propaganda and public diplomacy. Last but not the least, in Chapter X, Donald Wright discusses the importance of pan cultural considerations in global ethics, examining international public relations standards and guidelines. The book is highly readable given the collection covers all important ethical dimensions of public relations.

18. Deliver the above presentation and have four evaluators evaluate your presentation based on the parameters given below:

Presentation Evaluation Sheet Please rate the quality of presentation based on the following parameters by putting a tick mark in the appropriate box.					
Parameters	**Excellent (5)**	**Very Good (4)**	**Average (3)**	**Poor (2)**	**Very Poor (1)**
Presentation					
1 Organisation of topic					
2 Introduction					
3 Information provided					
4 Conclusion					
5 Appropriateness of topic					
Visual Aids					
1 Clarity/font was					
2 Colour/organisation was					
3 Use of animation/colour/highlighting was					
Speaker					
1 Speaker's preparedness/knowledge					
2 Speaker's gestures/posture/mannerisms					
3 Speaker's voice level					
4 Speaker's ability to engage audience					
5 Speaker's organisation					
6 Speaker's response to questions					
7 Speaker's overall presentation style					
Any other comment not given in the following evaluation sheet.					

ETIQUETTE

chapter 11

THIS CHAPTER WILL HELP YOU IN:

- Understanding business etiquette and its importance
- Learning the importance of dressing up to create a good impression
- Familiarising the reader with etiquette related to
  - Networking
  - Dining
  - Electronic Etiquette

- Telephoning
- Telemarketing
- Use of elevators

The chapter introduces managers to business etiquette. It particularly covers etiquette related to dressing, handshakes and exchange of business cards. It also discusses dining etiquette both for the host and the guest. Use of technology for communication is on the increase. This chapter also deals with electronic etiquette, which includes etiquette to be followed while using the Internet, using phones and other devices like the photocopier and fax machine. It also discusses elevator etiquette.

BUSINESS ETIQUETTE

You get only one chance to make a good first impression. One rarely gets a second chance to make a good first impression. The impression we make is dependent on our appearance (colour of our clothes, wardrobe, grooming), behaviour (etiquette, attitude) and communication**.** People also judge your economic level, education level, level of sophistication and level of success within 30 seconds of meeting you. It, therefore, becomes imperative in these circumstances to present yourself in such a way that you are taken seriously in the business environment. Managers today have not only to be good communicators but also savvy in terms of networking and etiquette while dealing with colleagues and clients. Often in organisations it is observed that employees lack in the display of common courtesies and manners which projects them in very poor light. It is important to remember that people form opinions about us based not only on our oral and written communication but also on the way we conduct ourselves. It is, therefore, never too late to learn and practice business and social etiquette in our personal and professional life. Observing etiquette helps us to create a positive impression about ourselves in the eyes of people we meet and interact with!

"Etiquette means behaving yourself a little better than is absolutely essential."

Will Cuppy

"The world was my oyster but I used the wrong fork"

OSCAR WILDE

Etiquette refers to norms which dictate behaviour. When the behaviour is with reference to appropriate professional conduct in a business setting, it is specifically referred to as business etiquette. Etiquette help in differentiating what behaviour is appropriate in what circumstances and what is not. Culture of an organisation also influences etiquette. Each organisation has its own set of unwritten rules about various aspects like dress, the way of addressing superiors, importance associated with time, etc. Though each business setting has its own business protocols, there are some general rules of business etiquette. These general rules of business etiquette are considered appropriate and acceptable in most workplaces. Etiquette related to dressing up, handshakes, networking and exchange of business cards, as well as dining etiquette, electronic etiquette and elevator etiquette have been discussed in this chapter.

Dressing Up

Clothes are one of the first things that others notice about you. In business, the choice of clothes, their colour, design, style, stitching and appropriate accessories are needed to reflect a professional look. Your choice of clothes while attending an interview or meeting, giving a presentation, etc. need careful consideration as clothes contribute towards creating an impact. Your dressing style and sense is an important index of your personality. It speaks volumes about you and probably also about what kind of a person you are. Your appearance and what you wear for an occasion can make or mar the impression you intend to create. Some organisations have a specified dress code, but in most organisations the dress code is communicated indirectly through the organisation culture. Moreover, different occasions call for different ways of dressing up. Also, the country in which the organisation is located, influences the dress code.

While choosing the appropriate dress one needs to understand the dressing differentials. What may be appropriate in a metropolitan city like Delhi may not probably be appropriate in a small conservative city like Bareilly or Vellore. The clientele one interacts with, the occasion, the culture of the organisation, etc. influence the choice and style of dressing. Also, the dress that is appropriate for a sales executive may not be the same for a teacher. It is important for us to understand these differences. The dressing style needs to be optimised based on the above factors. However, there are four C's which form the basis of dressing up irrespective of the above factors. These are: clean, cut to size, correct for the occasion and comfortable.

The following are some important considerations to be followed while dressing up for office.

- Wear appropriate clothes (read conservative and formal) to the office.
- If there is an office party that you have to attend remember that it should also be treated as a work event. It is not the time to wear flashy or revealing clothes.
- Accessories include ornaments, tattoos, purses, and even perfumes. At the workplace they have to be kept to a bare minimum.
- Accessories should not distract. Don't wear dangling earrings or bangles/ bracelets that make noise.
- Perfumes should be mild and should not linger after you leave.
- Keep hair neat and clean. Do not try complicated hairstyles. Nails should be clean and well manicured.
- Choosing the right accessories is as important as the dress as they contribute significantly to the appearance. The shoes and purse could match the dress you are wearing.
- Avoid wearing half sleeved shirt under a suit. The cuff of the shirt should be visible.
- Take care that the cuffs of the shirt you are wearing are particularly clean as the cuff is visible even when you are wearing a coat/suit/blazer.
- For women – Avoid wearing bright colours or clothes with too many colours. Saris are considered appropriate on most organisations in our country. A silk or a well starched cotton sari, depending on the season is most suitable. Of late there has been a change in the trend of how women dress for office. Saris are being replaced by trousers and a formal conservative blouse in appropriate colour combination with overcoat or a jacket. Salwar suits are another choice which women have but when the occasion is very formal they are best avoided. Make sure that the accessories match the outfit you have chosen.
- For men – The following table gives a few colour combinations for men's clothes.

Shirt	Trouser	Socks	Shoes with lace	Belt
White	Black, Dark trousers of blue, grey and brown shades	Black, dark blue, grey, brown to match the trousers	Black with black, blue and grey trousers, brown with brown trousers	Black, black with black, blue and grey trousers, brown with brown trousers
Light/Pale blue	Indigo	Indigo/blue base	Black	Black
Light green	Black, grey	Black, grey	Black	Black
Light yellow	Brown	Brown	Brown	Brown
Tan	Brown	Brown	Brown	Brown

Networking

Social events are a good opportunity to network with people. Networking involves starting a conversation with unknown people. It is extremely important for managers today, like everyone else, to increase their circle of acquaintances in a business environment. Follow the following guidelines:

- Utilise social events to network with people. Don't just hang out with your friends.
- Pay more attention to networking and talking to people rather than eating.
- Practice your 'break away lines' so that you won't get stuck at one place and would be able to circulate.
- Follow up with people you have met—this is the most important part of networking.
- It is generally considered a bad etiquette to talk about religion and politics.
- Sports, books, movies, theatre, art, travel are considered "safe" topics.

Exhibit 11.1

KEEP IN TOUCH!

Networking is a powerful way of building personal and professional relationships. It is a process of actively fostering contacts and creating ways to disseminate information. It is a give and take process. Yet, how many of us take this seriously, especially in the formidable years of our career. We just don't seem to have the time or the inclination as it seems to require too much of an effort.

Further, cultural differences set the tone of how we should network. Networking, in the Indian context, during earlier times might have had a negative connotation, not any more though. In fact, not networking in today's scenario might perhaps be detrimental to career development. On the other hand, Americans view the person networking as being extremely focused. Being perpetually short on time, networking happens at a brisk pace at business and social gatherings.

At the workplace, networking is indeed a big deal. Many successful job seekers claim that networking has made all the difference for them. One of the objectives in networking is to obtain referrals. Ideally, you would like names to be volunteered as part of the conversation. However, if they are not, you must request them in order to continue your search. Try and request names of other contacts that might be willing to provide further advice and information.

There are many ways to identify networking contacts—your college alumni association or career office networking lists, your own extended family, your friends' parents and other family members, your professors, advisors, tutors, your former bosses and family members' bosses, members of clubs, religious groups and other organisations to which you belong and of course your friends.

At social events resist the temptation to just hang around with friends. Capitalise on the opportunity by introducing yourself and begin establishing rapport with as many people as possible—be more interested than interesting. Memorise a few conversation openers if you think you are likely to get tongue tied or have clammy hands. All the effort and time is well spent! A little care can go a long way in improving your comfort level with networking. Thank the contact and make plans to meet again. This process of nurturing contacts is perhaps as important, as the benefits from networking may not always be immediate and apparent, but then, remember, it's a small world !

Source: Anjanee Sethi (2007), 'Keep in Touch!', for the column 'People Dynamics' in *Gurgaon Explorer*, a weekly Lifestyle Newspaper, July 1, 2007. Reproduced with permission.

Exchanging Business Cards

One aspect of meeting people that is important is presenting and receiving business cards. It is customary to exchange cards in business gatherings. Presenting a business card is an internationally recognised means of presenting yourself. Following are the points related to exchange of business cards

- These are generally exchanged at the beginning or end of meetings.
- Business etiquette demands that you present the card face upwards.
- It is also recommended that the card is studied for some time while commenting on it and asking for clarification, if any, before putting it away.
- During a meeting, place the business cards on the table in front of you in the order people are seated.
- Cards should be professional looking.
- Have a ready supply of cards.
- Give and receive a card with both hands, like a gift.
- Be selective while distributing cards.
- While travelling abroad have one side of the card printed in the language of the country you are going to, especially if you are a frequent traveller.

Shaking Hands

Another aspect of meeting people is shaking hands. Some of the etiquette related to handshakes have been discussed:

- Introduce yourself immediately when you meet people. Don't stand waiting for someone else to introduce you.
- Use a physical greeting that goes with your verbal one.
- The handshake communicates a lot about you, so extreme care needs to be exercised while shaking hands.
- A good handshake is a firm handshake accompanied by a confident smile and eye contact.
- A limp handshake is an absolute no as it indicates lack of confidence.

Wheelchair handshake etiquette

- Never get down on your knees or bend forward too much to introduce yourself to someone sitting in a wheelchair.

- Offer a helping hand only when specifically asked.
- Treat them no different than other business colleagues.

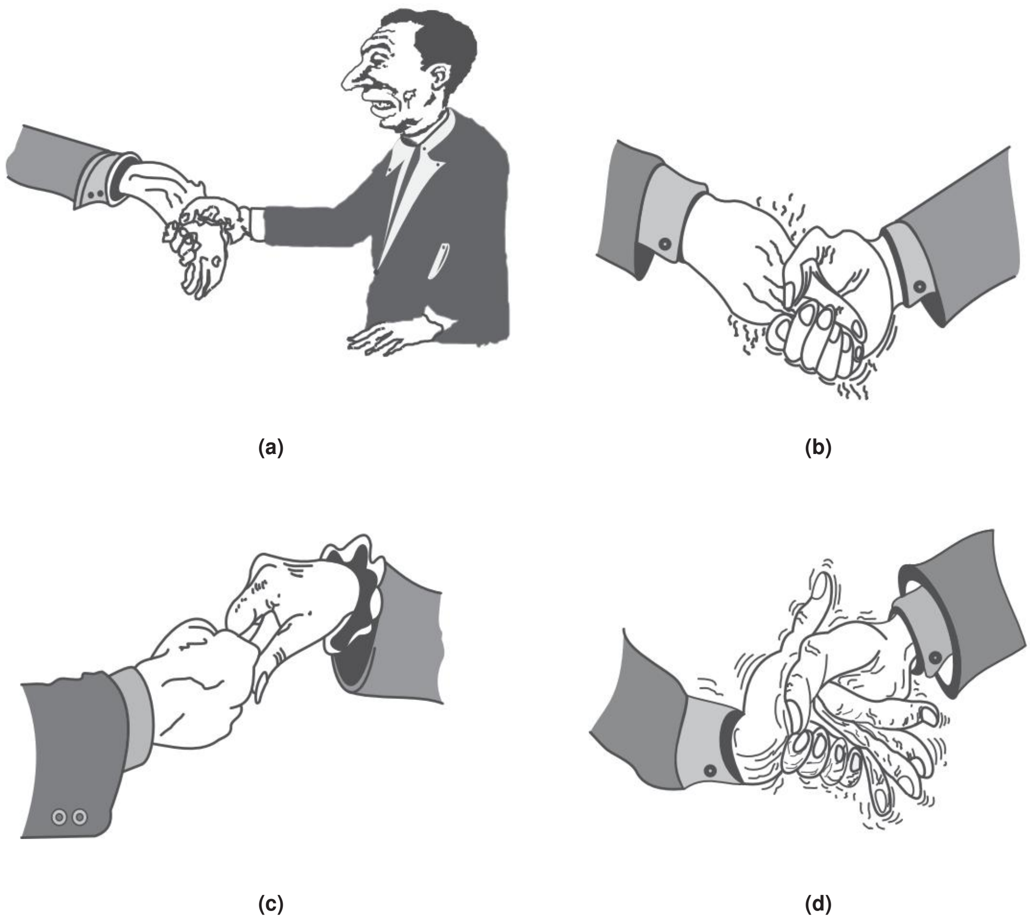


Figure 11.1(a)-(d) How not to shake hands

Dining Etiquette

Business lunch and dinner are popular occasions which provide an element of informality to business discussions. A lot is reflected from the way a person conducts himself during such an occasion. Given below are some dining etiquette guidelines one needs to be aware of. For convenience, these have been categorised into: etiquette for the host, etiquette for the guest and etiquette for both the guest and the host.

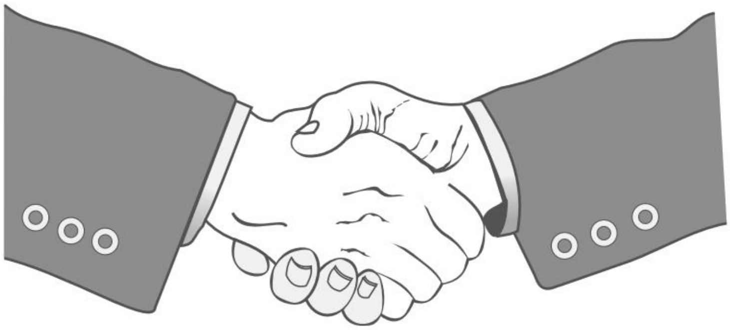


Figure 11.1(e) How to shake hands

Etiquette for the host

(i) When deciding on the venue for the lunch or dinner, decide on a restaurant which has been previously tried out by you and which has a reputation for serving quality food. Take into consideration the space and the extent of privacy provided by the venue.

(ii) Since it is a business lunch/dinner, there is a high probability that business matters will be discussed during the course of the meal. So, as far as possible book a table in a quiet corner. This provides privacy and is free from noisy disturbances.

(iii) Do not be late. Ensure that you reach the venue before your guest arrives.

(iv) Make sure that somebody is there to receive the guests and get them to the booked table. You can also leave instructions at the reception counter to receive the guests and escort them to the booked table.

(v) Stand up when your guests arrive and wait for them to be seated before you take your seat.

(vi) Start with the drinks/appetizer. For this, ask the guests their choice. Take a cue from what they order and order for yourself accordingly. For instance, if they have ordered for a non-alcoholic drink, it would be advisable if you too order the same for yourself.

(vii) Generally, it is the privilege of the guest to give his choice of the dishes to be ordered. You can help him by giving him suggestions.

(viii) While serving, the dishes are served from the left side of the person and are removed from the right side. Glasses are filled from the right side by the servers.

(ix) While filling glasses, take care not to overfill.
(x) The host is the last one to be served.
(xi) Do remember to switch off your cell phone.
(xii) Do not immediately start discussing business. Wait till you have placed the order. Meanwhile talk about something general.

Etiquette for the Guest

(i) Arrive on time. Do not keep the host waiting. Send a message to the host if late.
(ii) If you arrive before host, sit at a table. Do not eat or order anything but water until the host arrives.
(iii) Wait for the host to indicate the seat that has been decided for you.
(iv) If the host asks you to order, do not linger on the order. If you cannot make up your mind, you can ask others at the table for their suggestions.
(v) Try and order something which is easy to eat. The concentration should be on the business talk and not on the food.
(vi) Do not take notice of the cheque. As a guest, do not offer to leave a tip.
(vii) Never make a fuss over incorrect orders.
(viii) Thank your host.

Etiquette for both the Host and the Guest

(i) Do not start eating till everyone has been served.
(ii) Before you start eating or drinking, place the napkin on your lap.
(iii) Use the napkin to delicately dab your lips and not as a handkerchief to wipe your face or blow your nose.
(iv) Keep your elbows off the table. You can rest your arms though.
(v) Do not speak with food in the mouth.
(vi) Do not make a sound or chew with your mouth open.
(vii) It is a bad manner to pick your teeth at the table.
(viii) Start eating with the cutlery that is furthermost from the plate. Work from outside in.
(ix) Tilt soup bowl away from you. Sip soup from side of the spoon.
(x) If you need a dish that is not within your arms length do not try reaching for it over somebody's plate. Ask for the dish to be passed – "May I have the butter please?"

(xi) Pass food towards the right, i.e. in an anti-clockwise direction. While passing utensils with a handle, pass with the handle towards the other person. For utensils with spoons the spoon should point towards the other individual.

(xii) If you need to leave your table during the meal keep the napkin on the chair. It is not right to place a used napkin on the table while people are still eating.

(xiii) At the end of the meal place your cutlery items together in the centre of the plate a little towards the lower side. This is an indication to the server that the person has finished eating and the plate can be removed.

(xiv) After finishing your meal place the napkin on the left of the plate and if the plate has been removed place it in the centre of the place setting. You need not fold the napkin to its original folding.

(xv) While you are speaking during a meal, the cutlery, i.e. the fork/spoon and knife should rest on the plate in a crossed position with face down.

(xvi) When using a finger bowl, after finishing, place it on the upper left corner of the place setting as this clears the table for serving of dessert.

(xvii) Purses, briefcases, cell phones, keys, cigarette packs should be kept off the table while dining. What isn't part of the meal should not be on the table!

(xviii) Smoking during business lunches/dinner should be done only with prior permission of the dining partners even if you are sitting in the smoking section of the restaurant.

Positioning of a Place Setting for Dinner

While laying the table remember the following. The main plate is in the centre. The spoons and knives are on the right and the forks are on the left. Napkin goes on the centre of the plate or on the left. All liquids, i.e. beverages including water go to the right of the centre plate and all solids like the side plate containing the bread go to the left, as indicated in Figure 11.2.

Electronic Etiquette

The advancement in technology has affected the way we communicate not only in terms of speed of communication, but also the ease and quality of communication. With so many sophisticated gadgets facilitating the communication process, it has become imperative to establish some norms of their usage. In this section we will deal with the etiquette related to the use of the internet including emails, telephones including cell phones, photo copier and fax machines.

Internet Etiquette

The professional code of behaviour for electronic media specifically the internet is called netiquette i.e. it is a set of guidelines for behaving properly online. The internet

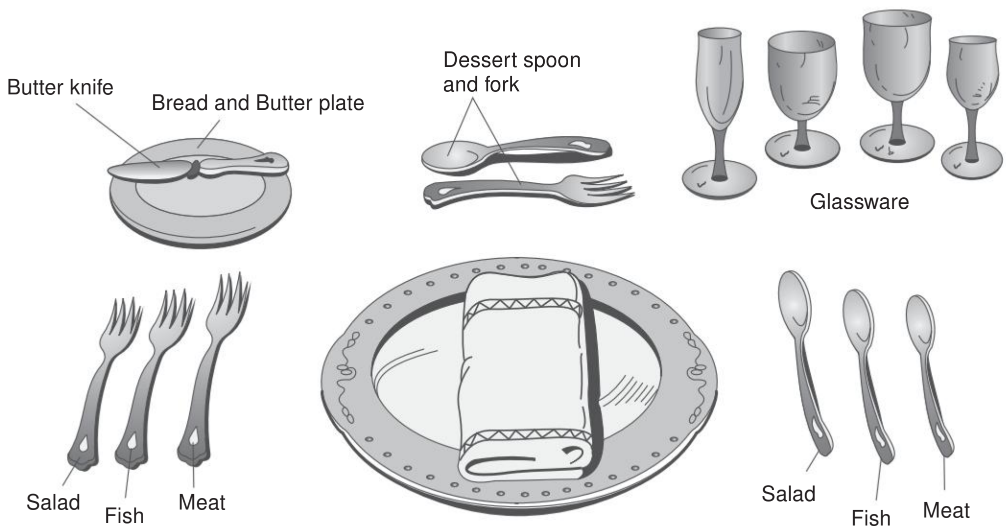


Figure 11.2 Place setting for dining

appears to be non-human but it should be remembered that human beings with emotions and feelings are behind everything online, especially as far as receiving and sending emails are concerned. Thus, as in case of other modes of communication like face to face or written communication, basic etiquette need to be adhered to. Email has undeniably come to be one of the most popular tools of communication not only amongst individuals in geographically distant locations, but also amongst individuals working in the same office.

Though the ease and convenience associated with emailing is making it increasingly popular it also enhances the chances of receiving offensive mails from unknown persons. Due to absence of non-verbal clues in an email message there is a likelihood that the message will get misinterpreted. Therefore, one needs to be very cautious to avoid this. Moreover, there is a tendency to be highly informal when sending email messages. This may have an adverse affect on the communication. The golden rule to apply while deciding on an appropriate email message is "Send only what you would want to receive". Familiarity with some basic email etiquette which need to be followed while framing and sending email messages is important. Some of the guidelines to be borne in mind have been discussed below:

(i) Reading on a computer screen is harder than reading printed matter. Also, when you are sending a message via email you are taking the other person's time and precious bandwidth of the network being used to transmit the message. Keep your emails brief and to the point. Writing unnecessarily long emails serves no purpose.

(ii) When the sender communicates to you via email in most of the cases he expects a prompt reply. Try and reply to the email promptly preferably within 24 hours. If the information you have to send is not immediately available it is courteous to send a brief mail indicating the date by which you will be able to send it.

(iii) Do not send very large and unnecessary attachments. If a paragraph is sufficient there is no need to send the complete document. If the attached file is too long, send it in compressed form.

(iv) Remember to check the attached file for virus before sending or downloading it. This is all the more important if you are using someone else's computer.

(v) There is a general tendency to treat emails as informal, as a result one is casual towards spellings, grammar and punctuation. Pay proper attention to these aspects as improper spelling and grammar can create a bad impression.

(vi) Keep the layout of the email such that it is convenient for the receiver to read. Try keeping the sentences and paragraphs short.

(vii) Mark your emails as high priority only if you actually mean it. Indiscriminate use of high priority option will result in loss of credibility associated with this function.

(viii) Avoid using email to send confidential information more so, if you are on intranet.

(ix) The following need to be avoided while using emails for communication.
- Shouting: Typing the message in all capital letters
- Dissing: Speaking ill of someone
- Flaming: Sending vicious insulting messages
- Spamming: Forwarding mails/chain mails to numerous people

(x) Respect other peoples privacy. Do not read other peoples emails and get permission before copying or forwarding someone's message to another party.

(xi) Ensure accuracy and relevance of anything you post on the net.

(xii) A very common slip which can be annoying for the receiver is receiving a message which mentions an attachment and does not contain the attachment. Therefore, before sending the mail, check and recheck if you have attached the relevant attachments.

(xiii) When you receive a mail which has an error, do not embarrass the sender publicly by pointing out the error and sending a 'cc' reply to all. It is advisable to point out the error by privately emailing to the concerned person.

(xiv) Mention the specific subject of your email message. This will ensure that your message does not get lost in an avalanche of messages. The subject line should be brief but descriptive.

(xv) Be careful in selecting the recipients of your message. Don't send a message to an entire mailing list if it applies to only one or two persons.

(xvi) Insert previous messages judiciously. Because of the speed and convenience of communicating through emails there is a tendency to be non-selective in sending messages. Though sometimes it may be beneficial for the receiver to have his entire previous message before him but mostly to save time, it is advisable to give only the relevant portion which you want to discuss in your message.

(xvii) Make sure that you add your name and designation (wherever required) while closing the email. Do not leave the receiver to guess the sender based on the email id. Many softwares possess auto signature facility, but still it is better to ensure that you add your name.

Telephone Etiquette

Telephone has been the most popular means of communication. However, there is one serious limitation associated with it. There is total absence of visual and non-verbal communication and one has to rely only on voice to effectively convey the message and the feelings associated with the message. Thus, telephone etiquette plays an important role in conveying the messages both effectively and courteously. Some of the etiquette while using the telephone along with guidelines to make the use of telephone more effective has been discussed below:

Etiquette for the caller

(i) Plan your call. It is not right to waste the receiver's time by conveying incomplete confusing messages. Be brief and specific. If needed, jot down the key points you need to discuss so that you do not forget.

(ii) Before placing the call, ask yourself if it is the right time to call. Try and restrict to making official calls during business hours only, unless—absolutely necessary. While making calls abroad, be all the more careful of the timings—keep in mind the time difference.

(iii) As far as possible place your own calls on waiting, specially while making a call to senior officials. It is rude to keep the other side waiting while your operator connects your line. Making your own calls adds a personal touch and creates goodwill.

(iv) When someone answers your phone, greet them and identify yourself first. Ask for the person you want to speak to.

(v) Apologise, if you get through to a wrong number. Do not sound irritated or be discourteous.

(vi) When you get through to the right person check, if it is the right time to speak to him more so if the matter you want to discuss is likely to take time.

(vii) Redial the number if the call gets cut off. Don't leave an incomplete conversation without proper closing even if you feel that the important matter has been discussed or message conveyed.

(viii) When the call is over, thank the person.

Etiquette while answering the phone

(i) Don't let the phone go unattended even during lunch hour. An unattended phone reflects gross inefficiency.

(ii) Greet and identify yourself and the company which you represent as soon as you pick up the phone. Do not let a phone call interrupt a meeting or something equally important.

(iii) If the call is important and contains details, figures, etc. take down notes rather than having to recall the caller to obtain information that you had missed.

(iv) While answering calls for others or if the person whom the caller wants to speak to, is not available offer to take down the message. While taking down a message for someone, ensure you take down who has called along with the organisation he represents, the time of the call, his contact number and the message.

(v) Do not make commitments on behalf of the person you have received the call for. It is advisable to use statements like "I will convey the message when Mr. X returns" rather than using statements like "Mr. X will call up when he returns".

General telephone etiquette

(i) Do not use the company phone lines for personal phones or for idle chit chat.

(ii) However unpleasant the conversation may have been, it is rude to slam the phone or cut off the line abruptly.

(iii) If you are leaving your office, especially during office hours or when you are expecting an important call, let your office know where you can be reached or leave a voice message for the caller.

(iv) Leave short messages on the answering machine. People do not like to talk to a machine.

(v) Check your answering machine for messages at least twice everyday.

(vi) It is courteous to return telephone calls within twentyfour hours. If you are late, apologise for the delay.

(vii) Know your equipment well so that you can effectively use facilities like call transfer or call divert without the caller getting disconnected.

(viii) If someone else can deal with the call better than you then transfer the call to the concerned person. Let the caller know that you are transferring the call and also let the person you have transferred the call to know whose call he is going to receive. It is irritating for a caller if without anything being said he is put on hold with music playing.

(ix) Maintain a pleasant expression while speaking. It has been rightly said that your smile can be heard over the phone!

Cell/Mobile Phone Etiquette

Undeniably cell phones have brought about a complete revolution to communication by facilitating accessibility. However, despite their popularity and usefulness in the fast paced lives we live in today, cell phones could well be a nuisance to others in the vicinity. It is, therefore, imperative that we use our mobile phones in a responsible manner, more so, in a business environment. Acknowledging the presence of others by showing due consideration to them is very much required. Some of the etiquette which should be followed while using cell phones has been discussed below:

(i) Avoid taking a personal call during meetings, interviews, etc. In fact, as far as possible avoid taking any calls during such occasions unless the calls are very urgent. Talk to the person/persons you are with. If you receive a call during a conversation, send the call to voice mail or your answering service (usually by pressing the hang up key).

(ii) Whenever possible go outdoors or to another room to make or receive a call if your call is likely to disturb others.

(iii) Use silent mode specially if there are people around you who may get disturbed by the ringing of your phone. The ring of a mobile phone at inappropriate times annoys people the most.

(iv) There are some places where people should never talk on a cell phone and where ringing of a cell phone is considered highly inappropriate and unacceptable like during lectures, while you are in a presentation (either as a presenter or as an audience), in a funeral etc. Switch off your cell phones and remember to doubly check that it is off before you enter the venue. You can always check your missed calls, voice mail, and messages later.

(v) Keep your voice mail message short. The caller does not want to hear a lengthy greeting from the machine before he can leave his message.

(vi) As far as possible keep your conversation private. Be aware of where you are and who you are with and what others are doing before deciding to make or accept a call. In some situations it might be better to send a text message.

(vii) Speak softly, mobile phones have a very sensitive microphone that can pick even the softest voice, so there is no need to shout.

(viii) Do not use loud and annoying ring tones. Ring tones should not distract and annoy others.

(ix) Do not send inappropriate messages.

(x) Respect others privacy when using phone cameras.

Telemarketing Etiquette

What is telemarketing? Increasingly, companies market their services and products using a wide variety of media like telephone, direct mail, fax, television, door to door salesperson, advertisements in print media, internet, posters and billboards, etc. With the advancement in technology, telecommunications has became the best way to reach out to prospective customers. Selling or promoting a product or service over the telephone is called telemarketing.

There is a common myth that "no one likes to receive a telesales call". People may not be ecstatic about telesales calls, but if the product or service being offered is in some way relevant to their need, they do not mind receiving the calls. But, to really make the call effective and acceptable, make certain that the person making the calls possesses excellent telecommunication skills. The call needs to reflect professionalism. The basic reason behind the poor image of telemarketing is the inability of callers to be effective due to lack of proper training and communication skills.

The basic difference between telemarketing and face to face marketing is that the telecaller relies on the tone of voice to create an impression whereas, the field marketer can supplement his communication with body language, demo of the product, etc. Because of this basic difference the success rate is lower in telecalls as compared to face to face calls. But this disadvantage is offset by the fact that the time taken and overhead costs are far less while using the telephone. This apart, the other advantage of telemarketing is that the call reaches the target audience immediately and a result is achieved either positive or negative, the result is clear, obvious and immediate.

The telemarketing call process The following are the steps to be ideally followed while making telemarketing calls:

(i) Greet the prospective customer.

(ii) Introduce yourself with the name of your organisation and department.

(iii) Ask for the person you wish to speak to.

(iv) Once the identity of the speaker is confirmed as the prospective customer you are trying to reach, confirm if it's the right time to speak and if the customer can spare a few minutes.

(v) State the purpose of your call clearly.

(vi) Hold the attention of the customer so that he does not drop the call. Start by asking open-ended questions and try to identify the need.

(vii) Explain how your product/service can fulfil the needs of the customer.

(viii) Answer the customer's questions. For this, you need to be well equipped with complete information regarding your product or service.

(ix) Summarise briefly and clearly, specify the next action to be taken like "……. our sales team will see you tomorrow at 11 o'clock with the product for a demo session", etc.

Some of the problems which a caller is likely to face while telemarketing along with ways in which these can be overcome, are:

- The person you have called is not ready to listen to you. It may be possible that the person you have called is in the middle of something important. In that case, apologise and say that you will call later.
- The person you have called up shows irritation. Many times the person you have called may answer rudely. Do not lose your cool. It is important for you to be polite. Sometimes just being an empathic listener helps.

Guidelines for successful telemarketing Excellence in handling the telephone can reap incredible rewards. Some of the important guidelines, which can be followed to improve the success rate of your telephone calls, have been compiled below:

- Try and engage the other persons' attention and get them involved right from the beginning. Fill in your conversation with interesting details about your product or service.
- It is important for you to provide the complete information to the customer but it is equally important for you to listen to what he has to say. You will need to make a mental note and gauge the reactions of the person you have called by pauses, tone of response and other nuances of the voice.
- Make your details concrete and specific. Avoid being vague and do not leave the person at the other end to make assumptions.
- Scripts sometimes prove to be a good method of providing your customer with all the key points. But, if you are using a script be very careful to ensure that it doesn't sound as if you are reading from a script. Reading from the script may sound rude.
- Be careful not to insult the customer. Your objective is to give the customer the information without undue exhibition of authority.
- Make the customer feel as though he is talking to a friend. Project your image as easy to talk to, understanding and trustworthy. Your objective is to develop the customers trust in your company.

- Do not expect the first call to result in sales. It is impractical to attempt to sell over the phone. Concentrate on getting an appointment.
- It has been said many times that when we speak, we communicate our attitude, confidence and competence across the telephone line. Keep the following in mind while speaking:
  - Be expressive.
  - Be yourself.
  - Mix the right amount of professionalism and personal touch.
  - Clarity of speech is important. Avoid slurring of syllables or dropping your voice towards the end.
  - Use appropriate volume. Do not shout into the receiver. Speak as if you are talking to a person at a distance of about two to three feet.
  - Do not speak too fast or too slow. The ideal rate is 150-160 words per minute.
  - Use positive language. The words and phrases you use will shape in others an image and opinion about you. Instead of saying" I don't know," say, "Let me check and call you right back." Then do it.

Photocopier and Fax Etiquette

Facsimile is also an often used tool for communication in business organisations. Though its use is comparatively on the decline, but its importance cannot be wholly ignored. Photocopier machine is another commonly used machine in offices. This facility is generally available centrally to the employees. Though there may be an operator operating the machines, many times you have to do your own photocopy work. Some etiquette related to the use of facsimile machine and sending faxes and use of the photocopier have been discussed briefly. These include:

(i) When faxing a document either include a cover sheet specifying the name of the person for whom the document is meant or write the name of the person for whom it is meant clearly on the document itself – Kind Attention: Mr. R M. Gupta.

(ii) To ensure that a clear legible fax reaches the receiver, try and type the message whenever possible. If typing is not possible and you have to send a hand-written message make sure that you write clearly.

(iii) Do not send out unnecessary messages. Also, avoid sending unduly long messages by fax. In case you have to send a long message you can call up the receiver and make sure that the fax machine is free during that time or find out from the receiver a convenient time when the long message can be sent.

(iv) Do not use the fax machine to send personal and confidential messages. Because in an office the fax machine is generally accessible to a number of people. In case the message is of confidential nature, it would be appropriate to inform the concerned person that you are sending the message, i.e. let him know when you are sending the message so that he can personally retrieve it.

(v) If the document has corrections done on it using a correction fluid first photocopy the document and then fax it to ensure clarity, otherwise the corrections appear as dark blotches on the paper.

(vi) If the computer screen is going to be used to receive the fax make sure that you send the document right side up otherwise it will become necessary for the receiver to take a print out of the message before he can actually read it.

(vii) In case you need to photocopy many documents and there is someone in the queue behind you with just one or two documents, let him use the machine.

(viii) Try not to leave the paper tray empty after using the papers for photocopying. Refill the tray.

(ix) Reset the settings of the photocopier to default settings. Cancel all pending operations before switching off the machine.

Elevator Etiquette

One is increasingly finding oneself in offices, located in multi-storied buildings where one has to use elevators. There are some basic tips to be followed while using elevators. These have been discussed below:

(i) The person who goes in first moves to the back of the elevator to make room for other people entering. Do not stand near the door and block the passage into the elevator.

(ii) In case you are accompanied by a senior colleague or client allow him to enter before you.

(iii) Before you enter the elevator wait for the passengers who are disembarking to get off first.

(iv) Press the buttons (up or down) depending on the direction in which you want to go only once. Do not stand in front of the button panel.

(v) While waiting for the elevator stand on one side and not in front of the door.

(vi) It is best to keep conversation to a minimum while in an elevator. Restrict elevator conversation to simple greetings. Do not discuss business with your colleagues while in an elevator. Under no circumstances discuss controversial topics such as religion or politics.

(vii) Maintain a low tone of voice while speaking.

(viii) Avoid staring at fellow passengers. Maintain a pleasant but neutral gaze.
(ix) Do not enter the personal space of co-passengers. Maintain appropriate distance.
(x) On reaching your floor, quickly exit from the elevator. Do not linger on inside to finish a conversation with other passengers.
(xi) Do not try rushing back into a half opened door of an elevator in case you realise you have got down on the wrong floor.

SUMMARY

Etiquette refers to norms which dictate behaviour. This chapter introduced the reader to business etiquette that are extremely important in a business setting. These include dressing up, shaking hands and exchange of business cards, dining etiquette both for the host and the guest, electronic etiquette i.e., etiquette to be followed while using the net, using phones and other devices like the photocopier and fax machine. Increasingly, companies are marketing their products using telephone. This chapter also focuses on telemarketing etiquette needed to reflect professionalism. It also covered elevator etiquette.

QUESTIONS

1. What do you understand by business etiquette?
2. What do you mean by netiquette?
3. How should business cards be exchanged?
4. List five etiquette to be kept in mind while using the telephone.
5. List ways in which you can approach new people during social get-togethers.
6. If you are a guest, what dining etiquette should you follow?
7. Discuss in details the various aspects of professional attire?
8. How can you network effectively?
9. Why is it important for managers to understand the importance of networking?
10. If you have hosted a dinner what are the etiquette you are expected to follow as a host?
11. List out the etiquette to be followed while using the cell phone.
12. Write a short note on elevator etiquette.
13. What is telemarketing and how should one use it effectively so as to reflect professionalism?

ANALYSIS OF CASES

chapter 12

THIS CHAPTER WILL HELP YOU IN:

- Introducing the reader to case analysis method
- Understanding the steps involved in a case analysis
- Discussing and analysing different types of cases
- Knowing requirements for a case analysis
- Discussing the formats for writing a case analysis

The chapter introduces the concept of case analysis methodology and explains it in detail. It also describes objectives of case analysis. In addition, it explains the various steps involved in the process of case analysis. It also discusses different types of cases. It further explains the case analysis approach and discusses the formats used for writing a case analysis.

CASE ANALYSIS METHOD

The case method of teaching is very popular and extensively used in the teaching of management/business courses as it helps would-be managers understand real life business situations in the classroom. Cases help students understand, analyse and solve different business problems. It is also assumed that you learn and retain theories and concepts better through the case method than the traditional lecture method.

According to Wertheim "Cases center around an array of partially ordered, ambiguous, seemingly contradictory, and reasonably unstructured facts, opinions, inferences, and bits of information, data, and incidents out of which you must provide order by selectively choosing which bits to use and which to ignore". Case study method is an effective method of applying theoretical knowledge to real life situations. The following are the objectives of the case study method:

- It teaches students how to think and ask questions.
- It helps students to develop their analytic, diagnostic and problem solving skills.
- It brings into the classroom the real-life business situations/settings.
- It highlights the common pressures that the managers go through in business situations.
- It helps you to understand and retain concepts and theories better as it a more 'active' form of learning than the traditional lecture method. It in a way illustrates what you have learnt.
- It allows you to live to some extent in real situations, take decisions and face the consequences.
- It helps you to work with the 'as is' of reality/situation not the 'should be' of theories.

Types of Cases

There are at least three types of cases that one is likely to encounter in the class room.

1. The Formal Case

This type of case illustrates a specific problem experienced by one company or by the industry as a whole. Cases only state the problems. They do not identify them as good or bad. Cases are also likely to involve complex financial data and may cover 20-30 pages. A best solution may often not exist, and what one expects is that the theories learnt are used to arrive at different possibilities.

2. The Case Story

This is very different from the formal case. It is in fact, a chronological history of a decision made by management. The outcome and analysis of the decision is presented and additional information is also given. This type of case is about 4-5 pages long and generally focuses on issues such as marketing process, sales methods, company events, etc.

3. The Critical Incident

The third type of case has more to do with immediate/critical issues that might arise. In this type of a case, the impact is much more on interpersonal relationships than on the organisational strategies.

Case analysis, though used extensively as pedagogy in business schools, presents a new style of study. This involves extensive preparation outside the classroom prior to the case analysis. Class discussions are part of the process of case analysis. The class should be considered as a team of colleagues who have been asked to work together. A good amount of team work is required during class discussions, and one has to be open to new ideas and points that didn't strike you earlier.

Steps in Case Analysis

A thorough understanding of the case is essential for effectively analysing a case. The following are the steps involved in analysis of a case: Preview the case by looking at the basic outline of the case, skim through the text to identify key issues, read and reread the case and make notes and read the case again prior to a class discussion.

Writing of a Case Analysis

Understanding, analysing and then writing the analysis of the case is the basic objective underlying the case study method. The steps involved in this process include the following:

(i) Comprehend the case
(ii) Comprehend and define the problem
(iii) Identify the causes
(iv) Generate alternative solutions
(v) Decision
(vi) Take action

(i) Comprehend the case

Read the case twice to comprehend the situation. Collect data and identify the relevant facts. Try to answer some standard questions: Who is the decision maker in the case? What are the key issues being addressed? What is the environment in which they are operating? What is the possible solution or the ideal outcome? What is the information available and what is lacking?

(ii) Comprehend and define the problem

This is the most crucial part of the case analysis and perhaps, the hardest thing to do. The most common problem in case analysis is that you fail to identify the real problem, confusing the symptom with the problem.

(iii) Identify the causes

Try now to identify the causes. The challenge is to go beyond the obvious and explore many ways to fit the data together. Also, avoid the tendency to judge or evaluate the behaviour as good or bad, but rather analyse why it occurred and its consequences.

(iv) Generate alternative solutions

What are the available resources (time, money, organisational traditions etc.)

(v) Decision

Keeping all the alternatives in mind, you would possibly choose an alternative, depending on the probability of its success, risks and the cost involved. Also, remember that there is no one solution.

(vi) Take action

Be prepared to live with the consequences of whichever alternative you have chosen. You should also have thought of how you will address the ramifications of your action.

Requirements for a Case Analysis

The following are some of the requirements for effective analysis of a case:

(i) Possessing a thorough knowledge of the subject.

(ii) Ability to be analytical—This is the ability to be able to break things into constituent parts.

(iii) Critical thinking—Critical ability involves the ability to go beyond the obvious and look for truth underlying the statements.

(iv) Ability to infer—This is the ability to view the whole problem from a certain perspective.

Case Analysis Approaches

After reading the case at least twice , one can start with the case analysis. There are generally four approaches to case analysis:

1. The Systems Approach

In this approach, the organisation works as a system that converts inputs into output. This kind of approach is suited for cases related to marketing, production, and finance. For example a case related to manufacturing as a process makes more sense from the systems view.

2. The Behavioural Approach

As the name suggests this approach lays stress on the behaviour of people within an organisation. This approach would typically examine leadership qualities, individual traits, behavioural styles, values and acts committed by people within the organisation. This approach also deals with corporate culture, change and HRM practices.

3. The Decision Approach

This approach uses one or more of the decision-making models or tools like profitability ratios, activity ratios, etc. that help identify and evaluate alternatives. Answering the question – what are relevant costs? How will the balance sheet look like, if we follow a particular alternative?

4. The Strategy Approach

The objective here is to analyse strategically the goals and objectives of the organisation and the resources required to carry out the strategy. This approach asks questions about the organisation's present and future by doing a SWOT analysis, i.e. examining the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Formats for Writing a Case Analysis

Though there is no one correct way of preparing a written case report, there are generally three formats that can be used for writing cases.

The Suspense Format

The suspense or inductive format follows these three steps:

1. Identify the strategic issues and problems
2. Analyse and evaluate the possible solutions to these issues
3. Make recommendations

The News First Format

This is also called the deductive format. In this format you have the following steps:

1. The recommended solution is given first
2. Supporting evidence for the recommendation is then cited
3. List of all the other alternatives and why they were not selected

The Strategic-Issue Format

This format is generally used to write reports on strategy based cases.

1. Highlight the crucial strategic issues
2. The assumptions you made about those issues
3. The strategies one would recommend for dealing with the issues
4. Provide justification/reasons for your recommendations
5. Provide/outline a plan of action for implementation and the results you expect.

SUMMARY

The chapter focused on the objectives of case analysis. It also explained the concept of case analysis. It also dealt with the types of case analysis. Steps involved in writing of a case analysis were also discussed. It also examined the requirements for a case analysis. Lastly, it discussed four approaches to carry out the case analysis along with three formats generally used for the written analysis.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the purpose of using cases as a technique of study?
2. What are the different types of cases?
3. What are the steps involved in writing a case analysis?
4. Explain the four approaches to a case analysis.
5. Discuss the three formats used while writing a case.

6. (a) Read and analyse the following case and investigate what went wrong with the communication process.
   (b) What could the company have done differently to avoid breakdown in communication and negotiations?

CASE STUDY

Between the Cup and the Lip: Case of Evolve Creative Limited*

THE CASE

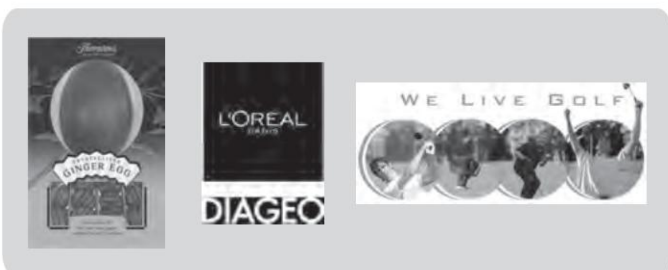
Sumedha pressed the cancel button on her mobile phone and stared into space. There was a feeling of emptiness in her stomach. She had really worked hard at building the relationship with SVT Limited for the last eight months. Surreal Vision Technology (SVT) Limited was a recognised name in the world of entertainment. What had seemed like a wonderful opportunity with myriad exciting possibilities was suddenly slipping away.

SVT's Marketing Manager, Gaurav Sahni had sounded so angry. His words rang in her ears, "No one is really missing Evolve at SVT. There is no value add at the moment. It is best if we just step back for a while and think about this sometime later".

STARTING OUT IN INDIA

Sumedha's first interaction with Evolve's CEO Babu Dutta began a year ago, in December 2006, when she was recruited as the Business Development Manager in India. Evolve Creative Limited, a UK based strategic design agency, specialised in brand identity, brand packaging and brand communication. Evolve interpreted marketing vision into highly effective visual communication. It achieved considerable success on the domestic scene, with an impressive worldwide FMCG client base, including Hamleys, L'Oréal, Thorntons and US golf retailer Nevada Bob's Golf. Evolve's USP was that it brought to any project, a combination of creative imagination controlled with excellent production knowledge resulting in solutions both practical and within realistic budgets.

Exhibit I Some of Evolve's Brands



*Shoma Mukherji and Anjanee Sethi, "Between the Cup & the lip: Case of Evolve Creative Limited", *Advances in Management*, 1.5, 2008. Reprinted with permission.

The founder and CEO of Evolve, Babu Dutta, though Indian by birth, had been living in the UK since childhood. He had worked with a number of reputed consumer product companies for over twenty years and then set up his own brand development and strategic design agency. As the UK market was getting crowded and new business opportunities had too many contenders, Evolve looked for new ways to expand the business and improve the company's visibility abroad. Babu thought it would be wise to look at emerging markets like India. He realised that there was immense potential for branding consultancies in the Indian market where conventionally, advertising agencies had also been responsible for creating corporate identity and branded packaging.

With this in mind, Babu approached United Kingdom Trade & Investment (UKTI) to commission an OMIS (Overseas Market Introduction Service) report to uncover potential clients. The company then joined a UKTI market visit to India. The main objectives were to combine his previously established international brand experience with an understanding of the Indian market culture and to follow up the leads obtained with the help of the British Embassy.

Evolve stepped into India in the beginning of 2006 when it began its association with the Emami group, an established Indian manufacturer of beauty and healthcare products. Emami wanted to rebrand one of its main products, Boroplus antiseptic cream.The new packaging design for Emami's Boro Plus produced by Evolve Creative created quite a stir. Emami's management was impressed, the relationship was progressing well and Evolve was appointed the strategic design partner in September 2006.

Exhibit II The Boro Plus packs

Babu had explained to Sumedha that "a strategic branding company focuses on the marketing environment for both short and long term goals while advertising agencies focus on instant sales. Branding is non transient, cannot be changed overnight and has long term financial implications. Advertising, however, reacts to general fashion and market trends, and focuses on short term success". Brand consultancies focused on establishing a long term relationship with the consumer.

Exhibit III The Fair & Handsome packs

Sumedha spent the first two months in her new job researching Indian companies and building a database. It was important to list the key decision makers and get their phone numbers and mail ids. Rahil at the UK office worked closely with Sumedha to develop the letter of introduction which would be sent to potential clients. The Emami business was managed by Babu himself and Sumedha had no role in the relationship. Her focus was on finding new clients.

She began sending the letters over email and then tried to speak to the person who would be the key decision maker, requesting an audience for presentation of credentials. Sumedha was also socially active and had a good personal network of friends and associates. She also drew on this network to find potential business opportunities.

Exhibit IV The Emami Cold Cream pack

OPPORTUNITY AT THE DOOR – SVT RESPONDS

Sumedha was excited when the call from Gaurav Sahni, Chief Marketing Officer, SVT Limited, came through. SVT was a pioneer in the multiplex development in India and had grown to become a market leader in the Entertainment business. Starting out in 1997, with one cinema hall, it now had a chain of 24 multiplexes all over India. By the introduction of multiplex concept, SVT altered the dimension of the cinema viewing experience with high class seating, state of the art screens and audio visual systems. SVT offered the consumer not only a great choice in films but also a selection of viewing environments, defining these as brands – each 'brand' had an alternative level of quality and value. It was also in the film producing and distribution business and was aiming to be an integrated retail entertainment company.

Sumedha had sent an introductory letter to the Managing Director in mid December 2006. He in turn had passed it on to his Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) for further exploration. At least 100 letters had been sent out by Sumedha and this was the first time someone had responded. Sumedha was excited and anxious about the forthcoming meeting. Two weeks went by before the meeting actually took place, in early January 2007. Sumedha's first impression of the CMO Gaurav was that he was a very sharp individual with very definite ideas about his organisational needs. He explained that SVT would be completing 10 years of its existence in three months and wanted to spruce up the logo and add a freshness or "zing". Gaurav had mentioned that their advertisement agencies Satchi & Satchi and Rediffusion could do it easily but he would be prepared to let Evolve "have a go" if they could really think out of the box and do something unique.

Evolve's design team was based in London. Babu visited India once a month. The business development team in India consisted of Sumedha and Amit. Babu found Gaurav's comment that he would let Evolve "have a go" a bit vague and lacking direction. He could not understand what Gaurav had actually meant by such a comment. Babu commented to Sumedha that it would be necessary to discuss "how to now progress this"?

He explained to Sumedha that Evolve's normal approach was

- To cost the project
- Have it accepted by the client
- Then proceed according to stages and timelines that have been put in place.

In the course of her daily telephonic discussions and periodic personal interactions with Babu, Sumedha had concluded that Babu's cultural orientation was essentially British. He believed in punctuality. When discussing business, he wanted matters such as deadlines and schedules to be specifically stated and agreed to.

BABU'S MEETING WITH GAURAV

The first meeting between Babu Dutta, CEO, Evolve Creative and Gaurav Sahni, CMO, SVT took place in early February, nearly a month after Sumedha's first meeting with Gaurav. In the Contact Report sent by Babu as a follow up to the meeting, he confirmed that his understanding of the project was first to refresh the SVT identity in order to reflect the 10-year heritage of SVT presence in the industry. The second part of the brief was to change the support line of the logo. Babu mentioned that Evolve had gone through a similar exercise for Hamleys, the world's finest toy shop chain.

Exhibit V Evolving the Hamleys logo

Exhibit VI Superquinn : Old & New

Evolve's method of working on a stage by stage basis with costs supplied for each section and approved prior to commencement was also clearly explained. The projected timeline was also specified.

Exhibit VII Projected Timeline

1	Design Concepts	2 weeks from approval.
2	Design development	1 week (dependent on development requirement).
3	Artwork	1 week.

APPROVAL PROCESS

Two months went by before the brief and costs could be finalised. A slew of emails flew back and forth among Gaurav, Sumedha and Babu. Around mid April, Gaurav told Sumedha that SVT would like Evolve to work on refreshing the logo and also create a story board and execute the animation for a moving logo. The project had suddenly become much bigger and Babu and Sumedha were quite pleased with the new challenge. Apparently a Mumbai-based company had submitted the animation which the Managing Director rejected. This new brief, however, was overturned a week later when Gaurav told Sumedha that there was no need to work on the animation.

Evolve was now expected to do three things:

(a) Logo Rejig

(b) 10 year stamp

(c) Realignment of other logos with the mother logo

It was now four months since Sumedha had first met Gaurav. Babu was showing his frustration. He thought Gaurav did not know what he really wanted as the brief kept changing every week. The fee which SVT agreed to pay was also way below Evolve's standards. Sumedha thought that it would be prudent to agree to their demands as it meant getting a foot in the door. "SVT is a known name. Maybe we will not make a profit. Our reworked logo will be seen by lots of people and will be good advertising for us", was her argument. Babu agreed to execute the initial project at 30% of Evolve's normal fees.

Exhibit VIII Text of Babu's Contact Report

Following the initial proposal which recommended creating a clear synergy within the portfolio of brands which clearly communicated the SVT offer to the consumer audience, Evolve were requested to reconsider a short and long-term objective in partnering SVT to define and create a 'brand journey' in a total rebranding and implementation exercise.

The first initial stage within which the immediate requirement is to create storyboard concepts for an animated identity followed closely by the proposed concepts to refresh the current identity were to be treated as priority. A number of potential stages were outlined and discussed for which costing has been requested for the entire exercise for which could be considered on a retainer basis paid monthly over 6/10 months.

In the first week of May, there was a mail from Navin Singh, Sales Manager, SVT. This gentleman reported to Gaurav and had been present in one of the earlier meetings. He had listed out 7 other product logos and wanted Evolve to work on them also while the mother logo was being refreshed. After several rounds of animated discussions over phone and email, Evolve and SVT finally agreed that in the first phase, for the sum agreed, the three jobs would be to a) refresh the mother logo, b) create a 10-year marquee and c) realign two other logos with the mother logo.

On 11th May 2007, the Evolve team represented by Babu, Sumedha and Amit presented a range of visual solutions to Gaurav and Navin of SVT. As per Gaurav's brief, the refreshed logo was to reflect the aspects of "Young, Global, Exciting as well as A Serious Corporate". A clear evolutionary path was demonstrated in the options which had also considered alternative consumer proposition support lines. Babu explained that the current identity was clearly in need of progression, being dated, static and unoriginal and not reflecting the aspects mentioned in the brief. The evolutionary change needed to reflect more than just 'a refresh'. It also communicated the new attitude. SVT was building a number of new multiplexes and entering new regions where the name was still not recognised. Evolve felt the timing for implementing a new identity was perfect. The implementation of a new identity on a large scale business can never be immediate and takes careful financial planning over a designated time period. It is extremely rare any large corporate can afford to take on this type of change overnight. The key consideration at this stage should not be cost or time as these are never ideal, but whether making these changes, would be correct and benefit the organisation in the long run.

It was evident that Gaurav liked the six designs presented by Evolve. He however commented that at this stage of the presentation he had expected to be shown a gradual path. Instead Evolve had come out with the final concepts. It was now necessary to take a call on the final choice. After some deliberations, Gaurav said that he would like to present the designs to his Chairman and MD, Suhail Bajaj. He went to check whether the Chairman had time to spare.

Team Evolve was smiling. They knew that the design team had done a good job but they had not thought that Gaurav would agree to set up a meeting with the Chairman so soon. Gaurav, an alumnus of the premier management institute, IIM-Kolkata, had worked with an advertising agency earlier. Babu and Amit both felt that he had a bias against branding agencies and liked to sermonise.

Babu's meeting with the Chairman turned out to be very productive. Two of the six designs met the Chairman's approval and Gaurav was asked to set up a presentation for the other senior members of the SVT team. The Evolve team went through the presentation for the third time that day. The group from SVT now included a number of departmental heads – Vinit Kalra (Design), Anil Sen (Logistics), Mohan Awasthi (Finance) and Rohan Bajaj (Director and brother of the Chairman). All of these gentlemen had been with the organisation since inception. In comparison, Gaurav was a relatively new face, having joined the group just two years ago in April 2005.

Babu opened the presentation by outlining the role of creative design in the strategic development of a brand, how it communicates, successfully or otherwise, with its target audience. "Starting with an analysis of the information that a marketing department needs to share with the designer, the market information, audience research, its interpretation, information of competitors – all of this had to be integrated in the different stages of the creative process. It is often difficult for clients not to resist having subjective views on aesthetics or when the brief calls for 'Something new' and the design recommendation is 'Don't change dramatically'. It is essential, therefore, those designers have an understanding of the market and the culture relating to consumer attitudes in order to take this view. Once agreed, the design concept must be successfully implemented, not only to meet production requirements, but to ensure that the concept, and, therefore, the brand, can maintain its integrity in all areas of visible communication with its audience. Here the designer still has a major role as the 'Guardian' of the brand, sometimes by producing a brand design guideline or implementation manual or by having an overview of the implementation and development".

Sumedha had been quietly observing the senior mangers who had been requested to go through Evolve's presentation. She felt that they were not very receptive and their response was somewhat tentative. She wondered if they were feeling threatened by this design company which wanted to bring in sudden changes. Vinit Kalra, SVT's Head of Design, wanted to know how Babu planned to remain the Guardian when he was based in London and not available for day to day consultations. Mohan Awasthi enquired, how Babu could know the Indian ethos having always lived in the UK. Babu explained that he had family in India and often visited them. He had a good understanding of the Indian cultural nuances. He also explained that physical presence was not always necessary in this age of technology when one had access to email and video conferencing. Vinit Kalra also commented that he was not very sure how easily the design concepts given by Evolve could be executed as signages. He had a number of reservations about the lettering style and colours. It was finally agreed that within a week the final decision would be conveyed to Evolve.

MOVING AHEAD

On 16th May 2007, there was a long discussion with Gaurav over phone and the following day a long email was received from Navin. It said that SVT would remain the mother brand with one baseline. Beyond corporate initiatives, this brand would not have other businesses to support. There would be one key business, namely "Exhibition" which would have a number of smaller sub brands.

All of the above sub-brands could also have their own baselines given their USPs.

Evolve's deliverables would be as follows:

- Shine on the mother brand logo "SVT" with the new baseline.

- The solid "V" logo to be adapted for SVT Signature Series Cinema with its new baseline.
- The SVT design team felt a lot of problem would be faced with the letters 'S' and 'T' as their curves are disjointed from the main letter. Hence the type-face had to be changed or modified.
- For the Signature Series Cinema with the new logo, there would be requirement for a design palate that would render itself into:
  - F&B trays
  - Pepsi glasses & Popcorn bags
  - Cinema signages (direction, security signages etc.)

Navin mentioned that SVT would appreciate if Evolve could also provide the following:

- Ideas on how to use the solid "V" as a design element, like for door handles, on the staff uniforms etc.
- Alternative options for the word "Prime" and "Signature".
- Suggestion for baselines Prime, Heritage and Gold Class.

Exhibit IX The "V"

Another mail was sent by Navin the following day. It mentioned that the entire SVT team had discussed the new logos and identity. A new school of thought had emerged which felt that it would be best to add a bit of shine to the existing logo and make the real differentiation in design through the way the 'descriptor' word e.g. Signature, Gold, Heritage, Prime were rendered. Case in point being the Kingfisher

"First". Evolve was to consider both these routes and show which one worked better for the brand.

Babu gave careful consideration to Navin's mails and decided to respond directly to Gaurav.

"Thank you for your mail outlining the company's proposed structure. Our initial response is of some concern. Our view to the structure is that this has been created with great consideration to the corporate stance that SVT should communicate. However in this process one has overlooked the consumer offer – the result is one of over complication and confusion!

The initial structure of the SVT parent company and the generic support line communicates well and has strong synergy as the umbrella across the 3 divisions:

Exhibition (Cinemas),

Production & Distribution,

Food Union

However from here entering into Exhibition division, then fragments into a further 5 sub-brands – the synergy is lost and confusion sets in.

The division of the sub-brands lacks the clarity of what SVT delivers to the consumer, e.g Heritage is an expression of the surrounding/building—should this be given importance? What is the value that this offers to the brand? Is this not contradicting the SVT vision – young, exciting etc? Heritage currently represents 2 locations in Delhi only? SVT 'Talkies' - outdated expression used in Britain over 40 years ago – again why is it relevant to the brand?

The points being made express our concern at the over complication that is being created for the consumer which will also demand costs in the creating and promoting 5 separate sub-brands, which in our view should be 2 maximum 3 with clear positioning.

Regarding the core identity, parent company should not be different to that being used for the divisional versions. The SVT 'visual' statement should always remain consistent. Two alternative identities of the SVT should not exist. Clearly the current identity needs to be progressed to reflect the company's 'progressive vision', the differentiation therefore needs to be made by the treatment of the sub-brand proposal/ support within the division.

I hope the above is clear and not too harsh a response. I have attached structural illustrations and will call you tomorrow to discuss.

Sumedha had been the interface through this entire process.She tried to remain in touch with Gaurav and Navin as much as possible. She also kept on reasoning with Babu and urged him to remain calm. He felt SVT were too fickle. The brief seemed to be changing on a daily basis and the scope of the project was still beyond comprehension.

Discussions now entered the fifth month. In the last week of May, Gaurav had a long discussion with Babu and then sent him a detailed email explaining that Babu's note had helped SVT relook at strategy of sub-brands and arrive at a clearly defined value proposition for each.

- **Svt Prime:** These form a major chunk of our properties. The company will continue to invest in these properties as these are the ones that fall in the middle rung between Signature and Gold.
- **Svt Signature:** As the name suggests, these will be a class above the 'Prime' properties and our plans are to launch one 'Signature' property in each of the 6 metros. These in a manner of speaking would attempt to again redefine the movie experience. These properties would have premium pricing.
- **Svt Gold:** New concept/form factor that, Gold aims to amalgate cinemas with lounges. These are going to be few in number and would also open in both Delhi and Mumbai.
- **Svt Heritage:** Though, only a couple of cinemas in Delhi. Going forward we do plan to sign a few more in Rajasthan. These provide for a great USP and a PR story.
- **Svt Talkies:** This product was conceptualised keeping in mind consumers in tier 2 towns, i.e. towns with 3 lac plus population and at a very aggressive ticket pricing of Rs. 60. The core idea was to redefine the cinema (talkies) as they have known, with the Sheen of SVT. We have very aggressive plans for talkies.

Gaurav mentioned that though they were not quite ready to change the brand logo completely, with the launch of a new sub-brand " SVT SIGNATURE" they could possibly add VITALITY and SHEEN to the overall brand SVT. The new logo for SVT SIGNATURE could well sow the seeds of change towards which the entire brand would need to gravitate, in times to come.

The brief changed once again and Evolve was now asked to proceed on the project as follows:

1. Work on a Signature logo keeping the old SVT intact e.g. Kingfisher First.
2. Work on a fresh new look for SVT SIGNATURE logo, where they could modify the existing SVT logo.

Evolve was also requested to adhere to the observations made by Vinit Kalra (Design head) about the concerns with the typeface where the curves of the alphabets 'S' and 'T' being disjointed from the main body.

On 11th June 2007, Babu presented a revised set of designs to the SVT senior management where the MD, Joint director, Gaurav, Vinit and Anil were present The objective was to progress the SVT Cinemas identity in-line with the second stage brief. The identity for the SVT parent company with support line was taken through a evolutionary but more sensitive path than the previous stage in order to build in fresher, more contemporary values that was felt to be lacking. Additionally concepts to demonstrate the SVT 'Signature' brand were also presented, it was agreed the term 'Signature' did not successfully communicate the value offer and alternatives should be considered. It was decided the proposition for the cinema offer should be reconsidered with a maximum 3-tier hierarchy - Premium (signature), a mid-range (Prime/mass market) and a basic/value proposition – Talkies was to be the basis of the cinema brand architecture. The Heritage and Gold Class could be reconsidered as sub-brands within this structure with the possibility of Heritage deleted altogether.

Finally, it was agreed by all present that of the various designs presented, SVT parent identity routes 4 & 5.1 to be developed, progressing vertical highlight on background panel giving an impression of depth . Also, SVT signature options to be represented increasing SVT relationship reflecting the 'top of the range' value that needed to be communicated. Additional input was requested from marketing to help speed up the process. In the first week of July 2007, Gaurav once again got in touch with Babu and advised that there were certain reservations about the bright blue color suggested by Evolve. Apparently, The SVT logo had the same color earlier and it had been changed. The management was not keen to go back to the previous colour. He asked for development of SVT Gold logo before progressing further.

Seven months had gone by and still the end was nowhere in sight. The Evolve team had now begun to feel quite harassed. The brief at the first meeting had been to refresh the SVT logo. By the time Evolve was ready with the first proposal, the scope had expanded to include a 10-year old-marquee and also development for three other sub-brands. The number of sub-brands went up to 7 at one point of time. Then Evolve was asked to look at development of promotional material like food trays, drinks glasses etc at the cinemas. The brief also changed to include developing the "V" as a corporate emblem. In the latest brief Evolve was asked to concentrate on the sub-brand SVT Gold before attempting to touch the mother brand. There were also questions regarding the typeface, the shade of blue and so on.

The designs for the brand SVT Gold were sent through to Gaurav in the second week of July. A number of options had been given using background color of red, blue, white. Gaurav responded by asking why Evolve had felt the need to move away from the colour coding of Red which was the designated color of the brand. The cinema scope design for the mother brand which had been liked by the MD was also facing criticism now. Gaurav felt the concept was dated and was being used by another rival company. He admitted that too many restrictions were being placed and asked Babu to try again.

ROAD TO NOWHERE

July was drawing to a close. Evolve had presented three rounds of designs at a price which should have given SVT only two options for a logo refresh. No decisions had been finalized and there was constant prevarification.

Babu kept telling Sumedha that he did not understand why no progress was being made when the MD himself had been so pleased. Babu felt Gaurav was not strong enough to adhere to decisions taken and see the process reach a fruitlful end. He received a call from Gaurav and the conversation ended in Gaurav saying that things were taking too long and time schedules were not being met.

Babu decided to take it up with the MD directly and try to resolve the issues once and for all. The following letter was sent by Babu to the MD.

Dear Suhail,

Following a conversation with Gaurav earlier, I understand that you feel that we are not progressing with the work we have been doing with you which I am concerned about as it indicates there is clearly something that is fundamentally wrong in what has been briefed to the expectation. I think it is important I can have the opportunity to have discussion with you and clarify your thinking and get to a resolve. I am coming to India on the 30th and will be able to stop to meet at any point as per your convenience.

Best Wishes

Babu

Sumedha received a call from Gaurav the day after this letter was sent to Mr Bajaj by Babu. She had not seen the letter and naturally could not understand why Gaurav sounded so angry. She forced herself to remain calm and was able to figure out that Babu had sent a letter to the MD who had then asked Gaurav to explain what was really going on. Gaurav told Sumedha that SVT worked with several leading advertising agencies in India and Evolve's work was in no way superior. He regretted that he had been carried away by the initial presentation and arranged a meeting with the MD. He also commented that he had mentioned at the very beginning that the designs shown by Evolve showed the final stage instead of being a gradual path.

Sumedha kept going over Gaurav's final words "It is best if we just step back for a while and think about this sometime later". What could she do to get Evolve out of this mess?

Note: In accordance with Evolve's preference to maintain client confidentiality, the name of their client has been altered.

The McGraw·Hill Companies

ENGLISH FOR BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

chapter 13

THIS CHAPTER WILL HELP YOU IN:

- Introducing the basics of grammar
- Familiarising the reader with the correct use of punctuation
- Identifying common errors in writing and rectifying them

Grammar refers to the rules for combining words into sentences. The chapter introduces the reader to some of the basics of grammar and its usage. It discusses what a sentence is and how it differs from a clause and a phrase. Types of sentences and basic units of a sentence are also discussed. Use of punctuation which forms a vital part of business writing, has also been discussed at length. Some of the frequent grammar problems leading to erroneous writing have been discussed. These relate to sentence construction, making comparisons, use of nouns, pronouns, adverbs, prepositions, articles and modifiers.

"What is written without effort is in general read without pleasure."

Samuel Johnson

Despite significant strides in our understanding of human language in recent years, not enough is known to provide a complete understanding of language. In fact, language is so complex and multi-faceted that any attempt to define it in a few words is doomed. Broadly speaking, language is a grammatical system that has work to perform – a system that speakers exploit purposefully. Language is used to do things, not merely to report them or talk about them. Humans have possessed the ability to speak for thousands of years. It arose as a part of the intellectual developments during evolution and as a response to the need to communicate. In contrast, writing was invented only recently, a mere five to six thousand years ago. Even today, many people go through life without ever learning to read and write.

English has truly emerged as a world language. With the internet spreading English more rapidly than ever before, over three hundred million Indians speak the language. An important motivating factor seen recently for learning English is the job opportunities available to the youth of today. For instance, the mushrooming of call centres all over the country has brought English into focus. There is an unprecedented number of training institutes offering quick fix solutions to second language learners of English, eager to join the bandwagon. On the positive side of course, it has brought into limelight, the English language per se. Areas that have also received attention with the advent of information technology are natural language processing, speech analysis and generation, and the area of machine translation and information retrieval. Today the empirical and scientific study of language has taken on additional importance in an age where communication is immensely important to social, intellectual, political and economic growth as never before. In India, English seems to have become essential for social and career advancement. It is therefore natural that managers need to start early.

Over the years, it has become evident that Indians speak English as a second language very well, in fact, much better than people from East Asia and often even better than Europeans. Indians generally lack the "foreign" accent that others have. Many Indians pronounce a large number of English words differently from British or American English. Indian English, in fact, is a recognised dialect of English, just like 'British Received Pronunciation' (RP, or BBC English) or 'Australian English', or 'Standard American English'. The ability to speak well and express ideas properly puts a person in the limelight. Many people wrongly believe that fluency refers to the ability to speak the language rapidly. It essentially means the ability to speak easily and correctly without hesitation and having to grope for the right words.

Word stress is the most important feature of spoken English. If you stress the wrong syllable, it spoils the shape of the word and it is an area where many Indian speakers err. When they pronounce the word 'STUdent' as 'stuDENT' or the word 'hoTEL' as 'HOtel', they are stressing the wrong syllable in each case. Then there is the area of grammatical misappropriations, such as: 'She is knowing the answer', 'He performed many charities', 'She loves to pull your legs'. There are errors in prepositions, such as: 'pay attention on, discuss about, convey him my greetings'. The word order of questions is often unique in Indian English. Sentences such as 'Who you have come for?' 'They're late always.' 'My all friends are waiting.' 'What you would like to eat?' and 'Who you will come with?' show the absence of subject-verb agreement. Examples such as these; 'film' as '*filim*', 'skill' as '*iskill*', 'special' as '*ispecial*' and 'station', as '*istation*', illustrate the influence of Hindi as a mother tongue on English.

Further more, an area which has a distinct tone of 'Indian English' is the area of question tags used in plenty in conversational English. An affirmative statement is followed by a negative question tag and a negative statement is followed by an affirmative question tag. The secondary verb is repeated in the question tag like … I am late, *aren't I*? or I am not late, *am I* ? The italicized phrases in these sentences are called question tags. Indian English tends to use the question tags … 'isn't it?' across the board in sentences like … 'Indians are winning isn't it?' this is incorrect. One of the most indicative signs of Indian English grammar is the use of the progressive aspect with habitual actions, completed actions, and stative verbs. This produces sentences such as 'I am doing it often' rather than 'I do it often'; 'Where are you coming from?' instead of 'Where have you come from?' and 'She was having many sarees' rather than 'She had many sarees'.

Moreover, it is heartening to know that teaching practices in various schools have indeed taken to the 'phonetic' way for introducing the language. As the untidy relationship between sound and spelling is not limited to English alone and is found in other languages, whose orthographic systems are centuries old but whose spoken languages continuously renew themselves in the every day usage of speakers. It therefore becomes imperative to distinguish between sounds of a language and the way those sounds are customarily represented in orthography. Knowing a language is not simply a matter of knowing how to encode and decode messages. If it were so, then every sentence would have a fixed interpretation of its context of use. Since it is not the case, there is a need for developing communicative competence rather than just the grammatical competence at all levels.

Finally, a familiarity with a wide range of proverbs/comparisons and ability to use them appropriately are the distinguishing marks of a command over the language. An important contribution to a message is also made by all those things that one does not actually say. The way you stand, your gestures and facial expressions are some of them. Attitude towards language and language forms are themselves mediated by social stereotyping. The wide spread belief that languages can and should be logical and pure, as well as grammatical and that languages gradually degenerate, however perfectly they began, needs to be put to rest. The view of linguists on the other hand is that change is natural in language and that language in use is inherently variable.

"Hard writing makes easy reading."

WALLACE STEGNER

QUALITY ASPECT OF COMMUNICATION

Communication in any language needs to follow a set pattern of rules, for it to be effective. This is more so in the case of written communication. To ensure that the communication creates the desired impact on the audience it is important that one looks into the quality aspect of communication. Grammar is a set of rules or principles that describe how words are combined into sentences to create meaning. Problems of language, broadly speaking can be studied at the following levels—level of sounds (phonetics), words (morphology), sentences (syntax) and discourse (pragmatics). Some of the guidelines which will contribute towards enhancing the quality of communication have been discussed below:

- English is a SVO (Subject, Verb, Object) language, i.e., it prefers a sequence of subject, verb, object as can be seen in simple declarative sentences like 'John ate an apple' and 'Bill killed the snake'.
- Business writing should be short and simple and to the point.
- Use familiar words. Refrain from using words that you think the reader may have difficulty understanding.
- Don't use too many long sentences together. Use both long and short sentences.

- Try to use the active tense rather than the passive one.
- Try and avoid using acronyms (BBC) unless you are sure the reader will understand them.
- Don't use slangs, idioms and flowery language.
- Avoid SMS abbreviations, especially in business e-mails.
- Structure your business documents to enhance clarity.
- In business writing, always write in a positive tone.
- Avoid using negative statements, or statements with negative connotations.
- Use proper paragraphs – put one thought process in one paragraph.
- Use connectors or hooks (e.g., however, moreover, finally etc.) to connect different paragraphs.
- Avoid sexist language – use of the masculine gender.
- Avoid shifting of tense from one paragraph to another.
- Be aware that spell check will not catch all errors.

FUNDAMENTALS OF GRAMMAR AND USAGE

To write correctly and effectively, one need not be a specialist in English grammar. However, there are some basics with which the writer needs to be familiar, so as to avoid a writing of substandard and poor quality. This section goes on to discuss some of the fundamentals of English grammar.

What is a Sentence?

A sentence expresses a complete thought that includes a subject, person(s) or object (s) causing or receiving action. A subject is generally the first noun, pronoun or modifier in the sentence. A predicate indicates the action taken or received by the subject. It is, or contains the verb. *It generally follows the subject and may contain an object (noun)*. A phrase and a clause are also groups of words but they differ from sentences and from each other in the following ways:

Phrase: A group of words that lack either a subject or a predicate or both: "While at home"-no subject or predicate, "Sunlight in my study room"- no predicate.

Clause: A group of words that has a subject and a predicate is called a clause. They are of two types – dependent or independent.

Dependent clause: A group of words which contains a subject and a verb but which cannot stand alone: "Although I am very honest".

Independent clause: A group of words which has a subject and a verb and which can stand alone.: "I am going to office next month".

Types of Sentences

We have three types of sentences:

(i) Simple Sentences

A simple sentence consists of an independent clause, e.g. "The home was empty".

(ii) Compound Sentences

Two or more independent clauses joined together with a conjunction (and, but, or, for, yet) or a semicolon comprise a compound sentence e.g. "I am going home next weekend, but this weekend I have to work" or "I am going home next weekend; this weekend I have to work". It's generally used when both ideas of the sentence are of equal importance.

(iii) Complex Sentences

In this type of a sentence, at least one dependent clause is combined with at least one independent clause by subordination, e.g. "Although I am very homesick, I will not be going home this weekend". As the name signifies, it is generally used when information in one part of the sentence is perceived to be subordinate to or less important than the other, e.g. "Because I have to work, I can't go home this weekend". In this sentence 'not going home' is perceived as more important than 'having to work'. These clauses are generally joined by 'that', 'which', 'who'.

Basic Units of a Sentence

The following are the basic units of a sentence.

Nouns: Things and Concepts – *Mother, Rita, courage, train* etc.

Verbs: Doing words – *to go, to drink, to walk, to believe* etc.

Adverbs: Qualities i.e., provides more information about the way you did something/verb – She walks *fas*t, how did you eat *all* that?

Adjectives: Qualify the noun, i.e., provide more information about the noun. You are a *big* fool.

Interjections: Express emotion – *Wow! Oops! Ouch*! etc.

Pronouns : Words which replace/come in the place of nouns – *I, you, this, me, whom, yourself*, *anybody* etc.

Prepositions: Words that are pre positioned with respect to the noun. Introducing words – *on, at, under, from, about etc.*

Conjunctions: Joining words – *and, but, either* etc.

Punctuation

This section discusses the various punctuation marks and their usage. Lets begin with the common ones:

(i) Full stop (.)

It is also called a 'period'. It is used to mark the end of a statement or to mark an abbreviation.

Ellipsis marks – Ellipsis marks refer to three full stops indicating an omission. When they occur at the end of a sentence they are followed by a full stop.

(ii) Question mark (?)

The question mark is used to mark the end of a question sentence. Example – Will you be able to submit the report by next Friday?

It is not used at the end of an indirect question. Example – I asked the executive if he would be able to submit the report by next Friday.

(iii) Exclamation mark (!)

The exclamation mark is used to mark the end of an exclamation, interjection or a sharp command. Example – Oh no! You cannot shut down the factory.

(iv) Comma (,)

Commas are used to break up the elements of a sentence to make it easier to read. The presence or absence of a comma can change the meaning of a sentence. For example the following two sentences are worded identically but their meanings are different.

(i) The questions of Section A, which are compulsory, must be answered in more than 100 words. (All questions of Section A are compulsory).

(ii) The questions of Section A which are compulsory must be answered in more than 100 words (Some of the questions of Section A are compulsory).

A comma is also needed in the following cases; between two or more adjacent adjectives that modify the same noun, e.g. 'The manager is hardworking, diligent and committed'. It is also used to separate words in a series or list, e.g. 'Please supply 10 quintals each of rice, sugar, wheat and gram', as well as to separate clauses used in series, e.g. 'The official reached the metro station, waited for a few minutes, got on the first train and reached his destination in 10 minutes'. It is used to separate clauses, and also clauses joined by a conjunctive adverb like accordingly, anyway, besides, otherwise, still, then, therefore, consequently, furthermore, however, indeed, moreover etc. Generally, a comma is not used before *and* but sometimes it may be used to make a sentence structure clearer or to improve the rhythm of the sentence, e.g. 'The journey begins by train, continues by bus, and concludes by a ferry ride'. It is also used to mark off words in a parenthesis, e.g. 'The boss, I know is right, but I just cannot get myself to do it'. And lastly it can be used to mark off the beginning of direct speech or a quotation, e.g. the chairman said, 'We have called this meeting to discuss cost cutting measures that need to be introduced.'

(v) Semicolon (;)

The semicolon is used in two ways:

To separate items in a list when the list themselves contain commas, e.g. "Our guest list included Mr. R. Chidambaram, Managing Director, Sun Industries; Mr. Rohtash Garg, Deputy Chairman, Sun Industries; and Ms. Geeta Joshi, Vice President, Global Enterprise". They are also used to separate clauses, the sense of which would be weakened if they were split off into separate sentences, e.g. "Puzzled by the absence of clues, the police was looking for a new lead; they suspected that one might be overlooked in the confusion.

(vi) Colon (:)

The colon is used to introduce an explanatory material. Expressions commonly used to introduce explanatory material are *the following, as follows, this and these.* Make sure the clause preceding the explanatory material can stand alone as a complete sentence. Do not place a colon after a verb or a preposition that introduces a listing.

Correct: I have scheduled the selection interviews on the following three days the next week: Monday, Wednesday and Thursday.

Incorrect: While I was in USA, I took a liking to: eating pizzas, going jogging and watching movies.

Correct: While I was in USA, I took a liking to, eating pizzas, going jogging and watching movies. They may also be used to introduce a quotation or lengthy items of direct speech. Example - Keats wrote: 'A thing of beauty is a joy forever'. Further, Colons are used to mark a dramatic break between two main clauses. Example- Man proposes: God disposes.

They may also be used to introduce a clause that explains or expands on a statement made in the earlier clause. Example the profits have been declining: the cost of raw material has increased two fold.

(vii) Apostrophe (')

An apostrophe is used to show possession or that letters have been omitted. Use an apostrophe in the following conditions:

(a) To form the possessive of a singular noun add an apostrophe plus *'s'*. Example – my book's cost, Mr Sharma's salary, my subordinate's promotion.

(b) To form the possessive of a plural noun that ends in 's' add an apostrophe.

Example:

Both companies' stocks were grossly undervalued.

The ladies' clothing section is on the second floor.

In two years' time we will double our turnover.

(c) To form the possessive of a plural noun that does not end in *s*, add an apostrophe plus *s*.

Example:

Use the men's entrance on the other side of the building.

(d) When two or more proper nouns show possession, the one nearer to the noun is marked with an apostrophe.

Example: In the group discussion Mr. Kumar and Mr. Reddy's oratory skills were not up to the mark.

(e) To mark the omission of a letter or letters an apostrophe is used.

Example:

Please don't touch the machinery (do not).

Please be here at five o'clock (of the clock).

(f) To form the possessive of an indefinite pronoun, e.g. anybody's, everyone's, no one's, nobody's and somebody's.

NOTE: However, do not use an apostrophe to form the possessive of a personal pronoun (yours, theirs, its, hers, his, ours). Example: Everybody's photograph will be taken during the lunch hour. The company reviewed its financial figures, Note: Do not confuse the possessive pronoun 'its' with its contraction which is "it's".

(viii) Inverted commas (" ") or (' ')

Inverted marks are also called speech marks or quotation marks. Use quotation marks in the following conditions;

(a) In direct speech i.e., around the exact words of a person. Do not use quotation marks in reported speech. Example-

Direct speech: The chairperson said, "We will break for lunch and meet again at two o 'clock". Reported speech: The chairperson said that they would break for lunch and meet again at two o' clock.

(b) Around the title of a newspaper or magazine, article, chapter in a book, conference etc.

Example –

The news of the takeover was reported in "The Indian Express".

(c) Around a particular term to clarify its meaning or to show that it is being used in a special way. Example –

The article "an" is used before vowels with certain exceptions.

(ix) Hyphen (-)

The presence or absence of a hyphen can change the meaning of a word. For example the meaning of the word 'recover' changes by using a hyphen i.e., it becomes re-cover. A hyphen is used in the following cases: To join up individual words in a compound word. Example – self-contained, thirty-five. They may also be used to indicate that an unfinished word at the end of a line is being completed at the beginning of the next line.

Grammar Problems: Some Common Grammatical Errors

Problems of grammar can generally be attributed to the level of words and sentences. Therefore, choosing the right word and arranging them properly to give clear sentences is also the basis for good written communication which is essential, as we all like to read things that are clear. Further, clear communication often minimizes the chances of miscommunication. There are two ways of looking at rules of grammar:

(i) Prescriptively i.e. grammar rules prescribe our usage and

(ii) Descriptively i.e. grammar rules are not actually rules but descriptions of the way we use language. Therefore, grammar is not seen as something fixed or sacred but something that changes over time.

Some rules of grammar which should not be broken include the following:

- Don't use double negatives (She had hardly no choice)
- Don't use non standard verbs (She knowed he was ill)
- Don't use double comparatives (This girl is more prettier)
- Don't use pronouns incorrectly (Her and me are good friends)
- Don't ignore subject verb agreement (We was walking for a long time)

On the other hand there are some rules which are not so sacred and can be broken . These are now gaining acceptance and are being increasingly used. These include:

- Don't begin a sentence with 'and' or 'but'.
- Use 'that' not 'which' for restrictive clauses.
- Do not end a sentence with a preposition.
- Do not split the infinitives.

Rules to be Followed to Avoid Common Grammatical Errors

Sentence construction

There are certain rules which govern sentence construction and these need to be kept in mind by the writer to make his writing free from errors and more effective:

Rule 1 – Rule of proximity Words and phrases which modify the meaning of any word or phrase should be placed near to it. For example:

(i) Incorrect: Wanted a governess for a child of above forty years of age.
    Correct: Wanted a governess of above forty years of age for a child.

(ii) Incorrect: Wanted a table for a man with carved legs.
    Correct: Wanted a table with carved legs for a man.

Rule 2 – Sentences should be logical The meaning of any word or phrase used in a sentence should not make it contradictory. For example:

(i) Incorrect: Towns and districts in the desert are uninhabited.
    Correct: Regions in the desert are uninhabited.

(ii) Incorrect: Stretch this barbed wire between each pole.
    Correct: Stretch this barbed wire between two poles.

Rule 3 – Ambiguous sentences are unacceptable To ensure clarity in business writing, ambiguity in sentences has to be avoided. There can be two sources of ambiguity:

(i) Equivocation – When a word in a sentence has double meaning; e.g.
    Incorrect: Fine for parking
    Correct: Fine will be imposed for parking

(ii) Wrong punctuation; e.g. Could you please tell me how old Mrs. Smith is?

The above sentence can be punctuated in two different ways having two different meanings.

(i) 'Could you please tell me how, old Mrs. Smith is?' and (ii) 'Could you please tell me how old, Mrs. Smith is?'.

Rule 4 – Incomplete construction Sometimes some words in a sentence are omitted because their meanings are supposed to be implied in the earlier part. This results in a grammatical mistake. For Example –

Incorrect: The walls have been painted and the floor cemented.

Correct: The walls have been painted and the floor has been cemented.

Incorrect: The present manager has been fired and new executives hired. Correct: The present manager has been fired and new executives have been hired.

Rule 5 – Overstatements Sometimes overstatements make the sentences illogical and hence should be avoided. For Example –

Weak sentence: Like all Indians, he is a hero worshipper.

Improved sentence: Like most Indians, he is a hero worshipper.

Rule 6 – Remote antecedent Sometimes a large number of words may be put as antecedent i.e., between a noun and a pronoun, verb and an adverb. This leads to confusion and should be avoided:

Vague sentence – The definitions given by the scholars have been memorised by the students. Only they know their significance.

In the above sentence 'they' may refer to students or to the scholars.

Improved sentence – The definitions given by the scholars have been memorised by the students. Only the students know their significance.

Rule 7 – Tag questions While writing sentences which include tag questions keep the following in mind for the tag question;

(i) Use the pronoun given in the statement.

(ii) Also use the verb used in the statement.

(iii) The Tag should be negative if the statement is affirmative, and affirmative if the statement is negative. For Example –

Incorrect: He did not get the gold medal. Isn't it?

Correct: He did not get the gold medal. Did he?

Incorrect: He has come to office. Has he?

Correct: He has come to office. Hasn't he?

Rule 8 – Redundancies Words and expressions which do not contribute to the total meaning of the sentence are called redundant words. They can be eliminated from a sentence as they make the sentence bulky and absurd. For Example – Correct: I saw the whole episode. Incorrect: I saw the whole episode with my own eyes. Some examples of redundant phrases we use and which can be avoided are, repeat again, equally as, consensus of opinion, different kinds, period of time, refer back to, return back, widow woman.

Rule 9 – Faulty parallelism Parallel ideas should have parallel structures.

Example:

Incorrect: I like to swimming, to eat, reading, and sleeping.

Correct: I like to swim, to eat, to read and to sleep.

Rule 10 – Use of Double Negatives Avoid using two negatives in one sentence , as you will end up saying just the opposite of what you mean. For Example –

Incorrect: Barely no one noticed that I had a bad cold. Correct: Barely anyone noticed that I had a bad cold.

Rule 11 – Fragments They are incomplete sentences that are punctuated to appear like sentences. They lack key elements often a subject or a verb. For Example –

Incorrect: She saw her coming. And looked away.

Correct: She saw her coming and looked away.

Rule 12 – Run-ons These jam together two or more sentences, failing to separate them with appropriate punctuation. The solution is to edit the sentences into several short sentences. For Example –

Incorrect: I do not recall what kind of a document it was all I remember is that I left it in the bus.

Correct: I do not recall what kind of a document it was. All I remember is that I left it in the bus.

Making Comparisons

There are three degrees of comparison

(i) Positive
(ii) Comparative and
(iii) Superlative

(i) Positive Degree When we talk about one person or thing, we use the positive degree.

For example –

She is an elegant lady.

He is an intelligent boy.

(ii) Comparative Degree When we compare two persons or things we use comparative degree.

For example:

He is more intelligent than his friend.

She is cleverer than her colleague.

(iii) Superlative Degree When we compare one with more than one we use superlative degree.

For example –

Mr. Sharma is the strongest in the group.

Novelty store is the best departmental store in the city.

Rules for avoiding mistakes in making comparisons

Rule 1 – Use of comparative degree for two: Use of superlative degree for comparing two persons or things is grammatically incorrect. Comparative degree should be used in such a situation. For example:

Incorrect: This is the cleanest hospital of the two hospitals in the city.

Correct: This is the cleaner of the two hospitals in the city.

Incorrect: She is the prettiest of the two sisters.

Correct: She is the prettier of the two sisters.

Rule 2 – Absolute adjectives There are certain adjectives which cannot be changed into comparative and superlative degree because they have the force of the superlative degree. Some examples are perfect, ideal, parallel, unique, absolute, universal, square etc. For Example:

Incorrect: This is the most perfect piece of art.

Correct: This is a perfect piece of art.

Incorrect: These two lines are more parallel than the others.

Correct: These two lines are parallel and others are not.

Rule 3 – Select correct items for comparison. For example:

Incorrect: I have a bigger car than my neighbour.

Correct: I have a bigger car than that of my neighbour.

Rule 4 – Use of 'few' and 'less': 'Few' is used for numbers and 'Less' is used for quantity.

Incorrect: No less than fifty men were present in the club.

Correct: No fewer than fifty men were present in the club.

Rule 5 – Double comparatives Use of double comparative and superlative should be avoided. For example:

Incorrect: She is more taller than her brother.

Correct: She is taller than her brother.

Incorrect: This cloth is of the most best quality.

Correct: This cloth is of the best quality.

Rule 6 – Use of 'to' and 'than' Some comparative adjectives are followed by 'to' instead of 'than', such as senior, junior, inferior, superior, prior etc. For example:

Incorrect: He is senior than me in service

Correct: He is senior to me in service.

Use of Nouns

Discussed below are some rules to be followed related to the use of nouns:

Rule 1 There are certain nouns which are in plural form but are always considered as singular. For example innings, mathematics, politics, news, gallows, physics etc.

Example –

This is a shocking news.

The Indian team defeated the Pakistani team by an innings.

Rule 2 Some nouns are always used as singular. For example furniture, information, hair, advice, luggage, machinery, poetry, advice, mischief etc.

Example –

Please bring all the luggage to the waiting room.

The furniture of this room has been imported from England.

Rule 3 Some nouns like people, poultry, jury, police, gentry, folk etc. have the appearance of singulars but they are always used as plurals.

Example –

Cattle are grazing in the meadows.

Only the very elite gentry have been invited to the party.

The police are investigating the issue.

Rule 4 Generally the compound words formed with one or two nouns are treated as singular. e.g. 'a hundred metre race', 'a five hundred rupee note', 'a ten month old baby'.

Rule 5 Some nouns are used in the same form whether singular or plural. For example sheep, deer, pair, dozen etc., 'Yesterday I bought five dozen handkerchiefs', 'I need a new pair of shoes' and 'The sheep are grazing in the meadow'.

Use of Pronouns

Discussed below are some rules to be followed related to the use of pronouns.

Rule 1 Pronouns such as; each, every, everyone, anybody, nobody, either, neither, none are followed by verbs, pronouns and adjectives in the singular, i.e. 'Each person who attends the meeting will be given his own stationary', 'Nobody will be allowed to keep his pet in the guest room', 'None of the five accused was found guilty'.

Rule 2 When two or more singular nouns are joined by 'or', 'either …..or', 'neither …….. nor', the pronoun used is singular and the verb agrees with the second noun or pronoun. For example –

Incorrect: Either Mr Sharma or Mr Mohan are expected to attend the conference.

Correct: Either Mr Sharma or Mr Mohan is expected to attend the conference.

Incorrect: Kamal or Vimal must lend their book.

Correct: Kamal or Vimal must lend his book.

Rule 3 'Either' and 'Neither' are distributive pronouns and are not used for more than two objects. When there are more than two objects 'anyone' or 'none' should be used. For example –

Incorrect: 'He did not invite either of the four brothers'.

Correct: 'He did not invite any of the four brothers'.

Incorrect: 'Neither of the three managers was given the task'.

Correct: 'None of the three managers was given the task'.

Rule 4 Interrogative pronouns are 'which', 'what', 'who', while 'which' is used in selective sense, 'what' is used in general sense. 'What' is also used in exclamatory sentences. For example –

What book is that? (General sense)

Which book do you want to buy? (Selective sense)

What a beautiful picture! (Exclamatory)

Rule 5 Avoid use of pronoun when it is not required. For example –

Incorrect: The employee being ill, he was permitted to go home.

Correct: The employee being ill was permitted to go home.

Incorrect: Those who do this work they will be considered for promotion.

Correct: Those who do this work will be considered for promotion.

Rule 6 A pronoun must agree with its antecedent in person number and gender. For example –

Incorrect: I am not one of those who betray my friends.

Correct: I am not one of those who betray their friends.

Incorrect: One must do his duty.

Correct: One must do one's duty.

Rule 7 The case of a pronoun following 'than' and 'as' is determined by imagining the verb. For example –

Incorrect: He is wiser than me.

Correct: He is wiser than I (am).

Incorrect: He knows as well as me.

Correct: He knows as well as I (do).

Incorrect: I despise him as much as her.

Correct: I despise him as much as she (does).

Use of Adverbs

An adverb is a word that tells us more about the verb. Discussed below are some rules to be followed related to the use of adverbs:

Rule 1 Adverbs of time like, sometimes, seldom, always, often, never, merely, frequently, rarely etc. are placed before the verb they qualify. For example –

Incorrect: He smokes seldom.

Correct: He seldom smokes.

Rule 2 The adverbs, only, chiefly, solely should be placed before the word they qualify *otherwise* the meaning of the sentence may change. For example –

Only I spoke to him (meaning nobody else but me), I only spoke to him (meaning did nobody else). 'I spoke to only him' (meaning no one else but him).

Rule 3 Use of 'perhaps' and 'probably' – 'Perhaps' means possibly and 'probably' means most likely. For example –

Incorrect: Do you know about the new movie? Perhaps you do not know.

Correct: 'Do you know about the new movie? Probably you do not know'.

Rule 4 Use of 'scarcely' and 'hardly' – 'Scarcely' and 'hardly' are followed by 'when'. For example –

Incorrect: Scarcely had I reached the house I saw him.

Correct: Scarcely had I reached the house when I saw him.

Use of Prepositions

Following are some guidelines to be followed in the use of prepositions:

(i) Use of 'after' and 'in' 'After' refers to a period of time in the past and 'in' to a period of time in the future. For example –

King Ram returned from exile after fourteen years.

He will come back from his foreign tour in a month.

(ii) Use of 'in' and 'within' 'In' means at the expiry of a future period and 'within' means before the expiry of a future period. For example –

I am going to Nagpur and will return in a month (at the end of one month).

I want you to return this book within a month (before one month is over).

(iii) Use of 'in' and 'into' 'In' shows position of rest or motion inside and 'into' indicates motion from outside to inside. For example –

The boys are swimming in the river.

The boy dived into the river.

(iv) Use of 'on and 'upon' 'On' is used for things at rest and 'upon' is used for things in motion. For example –

The books are lying on the table.

Don't jump upon the sofa.

(v) Use of 'between' and 'among' Between is used when we speak of two persons or things, and 'among' is used for more than two persons or things. For example –

Divide these sweets between the two of you.

Distribute these sweets among the poor.

(vi) Use of 'by' and 'with' 'By' is used for the one who does i.e. the doer and 'with' is used for the instrument that does something. For example –

The terrorist was killed by the soldier.

The soldier killed the terrorist with a single shot of the gun.

(vii) Use of 'till' and 'to' 'Till' refers to time and 'to' refers to place. For example –

Today I will study till two in the night.

I want you to come with me to the conference.

(viii) Use of 'beside' and 'besides' 'Beside' means 'close to' and 'besides' means 'moreover' or 'in addition to'. For example –

I kept the medicine beside his bed.

Besides being a very well read person she is also a good orator.

(ix) Use of 'for' and 'since' 'For' shows period of time and 'since and from' indicate point of time. For example –

The meeting lasted for two hours.

He has been speaking since 45 minutes.

I have been waiting in your office since 10 am.

He has been living here since 1970.

(x) Use of 'at' and 'in' When used with reference to a place 'in' is used before the names of countries and big cities and 'at' is used before the names of small villages and localities. For example –

There is a very famous temple located at Kamptee.

He was born at Hissar in Haryana.

Use of Articles

Definite article 'the' The definite article 'the' is used in the following situations

(i) When we particularise a person or thing already referred to, e.g. 'The manager who was fired came to me yesterday'.

(ii) 'The' when placed before a proper noun converts it into a common noun, e.g. 'Kashmir is the Switzerland of India'.

(iii) 'The' is placed before proper nouns, that are the names of oceans, seas, rivers, gulfs, groups of islands, mountain ranges, ships, newspapers, sacred books, historical building, trains etc., e.g. 'The Arabian sea', 'The Gita', 'The Indian Express', 'The Himalayas'.

(iv) 'The' is used before certain objects which are unique, e.g., 'the sun', 'the earth' etc.

(v) 'The' is also placed before superlatives, e.g. 'Ahmedabad has the largest textile industry'.

(vi) 'The' when preceding a common noun makes it an abstract noun, e.g. 'I can see the entrepreneur in you'.

(vii) The name of a 'nationality' or a 'race' is also preceded by 'the'. Example: 'the Africans', 'the Hindus'etc.

(viii) Omission of 'the': The article 'the' is omitted in the following cases:

(a) It is not placed before an abstract noun when it is used in a general sense. For example –

Incorrect: The truth is not liked by many.

Correct: 'Truth is not liked by many'.

(b) 'The' is not used before nouns of languages, months, days, seasons, colours, games, diseases, arts etc. For example –

Incorrect: The uniform in our organisation is of the blue colour.

Correct: The uniform in our organisation is of blue colour.

(c) 'The' is not used before uncountable nouns. For example –

Incorrect: The front office of the new office building is made of the glass.

Correct: The front office of the new office building is made of glass.

(d) When we mean the language and not the people we do not use 'the'. For example –

Incorrect: French speak the French.

Correct: 'The French speak French'.

(e) We do not use 'the' before places when they are visited for their usual purpose. But when these are visited for any other purpose 'the' is added. For Example –

I left for office at 9 am. (for work).

I went to the telephone exchange to meet a friend who was working there (not for the usual purpose).

Indefinite article 'a' and 'an' 'A' and 'an' are indefinite articles. They are used with singular noun only. The sound with which a word begins determines the indefinite article to be placed before it.

(i) 'A' is used when a word begins with a consonant sound or with a vowel having the sound of 'Y' or 'W' such as, 'a book', 'a poem', 'a story', 'a year', 'a European', 'a university', 'a one eyed monster'etc.

(ii) On the other hand 'an' precedes a word beginning with a vowel sound such as, 'an umbrella', 'an ox', 'an elephant', 'an ink pot' etc.

(iii) It is also used before a word with an unaccented 'h' such as, 'an honest person', 'an honourable man', 'an honorary job', 'an hour' etc.

(iv) The indefinite article too when placed before a proper noun converts it into a common noun, e.g., 'It takes a Narayan Murthy to get India on to the global scene'.

(v) When two adjectives connected by 'and', qualify the same noun, the article is used before the first adjective only, e.g. 'Only a hardworking and loyal manager will be able to set things in order'.

Use of Modifiers

Modifiers are words or groups of words which describe or limit the meaning of a sentence. For example in the sentence, 'Only she spoke to the audience' the word only is the modifier because it limits the action to 'she'.

Following are the types of mistakes committed in the use of modifiers

(i) Abrupt modifier When a modifier is placed immediately after the subject at the beginning of the sentence it is abrupt. For example –

Incorrect: We decided because our family and friends advised us not to buy a big car, to buy a small car.

Correct: As our family and friends advised us to buy a small car we decided not to buy a big car.

In the above sentence the modifier is abrupt and separates the subject from the other part, to which it should be linked up.

(ii) Misplaced modifier Sometimes the words or phrases are not placed near the words or phrases they modify. For example:

Incorrect: The man says that he means to leave the house in the second paragraph.

Correct: The man says in the second paragraph that he means to leave the house.

In the above sentence the phrase in the second paragraph is wrongly placed.

(iii) Dangling modifiers A modifier that is not clearly or logically related to a specific word in a sentence is said to dangle. For example –

Incorrect: On entering the hall the number of people surprised me.

Correct: On entering the hall I was surprised by the number of people.

(iv) Squinting modifiers A modifier which may refer to the preceding as well as the following word is said to be a squinting modifier. Such modifiers impart ambiguity to the sentence. For example:

Incorrect: I agreed on the following day to assist him.

Correct: On the following day I agreed to assist him.

In the preceding sentence 'On the following day' may refer to 'agree' or 'assist'. So it is not clear whether the 'consent' was given on the next day or the 'assistance' was to be given on the next day.

(v) Arranging modifiers

(a) In case many modifiers are used in a sentence, to improve sentence structure. It is desirable to arrange them according to their length. For example –

Sentence: It was a battered, worn and broken car.

Improved sentence: It was a worn, broken and battered car.

(b) Modifiers should always be arranged in a logical sequence. For Example–

Sentence: The grass became flaky, withered and dry.

Improved: The grass became dry, withered and flaky (The first stage is getting dry, then it becomes withered and then flaky).

SUMMARY

Communication in any language follows a set pattern of rules, for it to be effective. This is more so in the case of written communication. To ensure that managers, while communicating, create the desired impact on the audience, it is important that one looks into the quality aspect of communication as well. For this a thorough understanding of the principles of grammar underlying the language is essential. This chapter introduced the reader to the basics of grammar and its usage. It also covered the use of *punctuations, which are an essential part of business writing*. Finally, it talked about common errors found in business writing and familiarised the reader with rules for their rectification.

QUESTIONS

1. Discuss some common grammar errors.
2. What things should you keep in mind to enhance the quality aspect of communication?
3. Why is it important for managers to write grammatically correct language?
4. Explain with examples, how incorrect language use, impacts impression management in organisations.

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