

Review Article

Workplace Communication: Categories, Obstacles, and Approaches for Enhancement

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A B S T R A C T

Communication is an integral part of human life. Communication can be cited as a process through which an individual can share their ideas, thoughts, feelings, suggestions, and ideas with others. Communication could be effective only when everyone involved in that discussion can express themselves and understand every idea from that conversation clearly. The foundation of every organized and structured action in any organization is the business communication process and communication strategy. Effective corporate communication at work is essential to forming and preserving working relationships in organizations. Communication at the workplace is mainly formal, but people get involved in informal communication too, which sometimes leads to inefficiency of actions. Even the use of non-verbal communication is as impactful as verbal communication because it helps in building trust among colleagues as well as management and staff. Even the usage of non-verbal communication is as impactful as verbal communication as it helps to build trust among colleagues as well as management and staff, although people face difficulties in the same. The efficiency of conversation at work can also be enhanced if people develop soft skills in them. This article will provide a review of the communication process, hurdles to communication, and guidelines for administrators on how to improve communication efficacy.

Keywords: Communication, Effective Corporate Communication, Workplace, Guidelines

Introduction

Communication can be defined as the process of transmitting information and common understanding from one person to another.¹ Communication is defined as sharing information, thoughts, ideas, and feelings by one individual to another individual or a group by different modes like writing, speaking, or some other medium. Effective communication means when the message of conversation passes clearly and concisely to everyone who is involved in the conversation. Humans are social animals, and communication is what lets them be glued together

and hence helps them to maintain healthy relationships. For improved job production and outcomes, effective communication is a skill that needs to be exercised in the workplace. Numerous studies show that improving organizational success and worker productivity at work requires efficient communication. "The purpose of effective workplace communication is to convey information in a way that allows one to be understood by others".² Nowadays, workplaces are more diversified as people from different cultures and religions work together, due to which if they are unable to explain themselves clearly at the workplace, it may lead to misunderstandings as well as reduce efficiency

of work. Communication is essential to the basic operation of every organization. The purpose of communication is to tell the audience the goals and objectives of the organization, its policies and procedures, its roles and responsibilities, and its numerous internal operations.

Process of Communication

The sender and the recipient are two components that are present in every communication interaction. The definition and key components of the communication process are depicted in Figure 1.

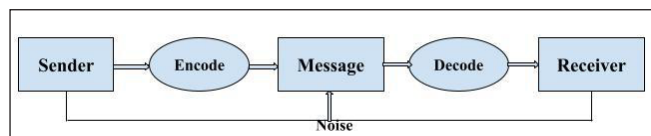


Figure 1. Process of Communication

For effective communication, it needs to be two-way, which means it requires a sender and at least one receiver; otherwise, communication will fail, which ultimately leads to miscommunication. The two-way communication begins with a sender who encodes a message and sends it through a communication channel, and while communication, there are chances that there might be some distractions in communication, which are also referred to as noise. After that, there will be a receiver who encodes the message and reads the message sent by the sender. Communication relies on how effectively the sender is able to explain their message so that the receiver understands it completely.³

Categories of Workplace Communication

To improve productivity and outcomes at work, effective communication is a skill that has to be developed. Numerous studies show that improving organizational success and worker productivity at work requires efficient communication. It is a basic requirement for all administrative tasks. Any communication that occurs at work and is focused on work is considered workplace communication. This could include assigning work, providing employees with feedback, communicating project updates, and more.⁴

The four major categories of workplace communication—verbal, nonverbal, visual, and written communication—serve as the pillars supporting the foundation of effective professional interaction.

Verbal Communication: Orchestrating Harmony in Discourse

Verbal communication involves the use of spoken words to convey messages, instructions, and information. In the workplace, verbal communication occurs through face-to-face discussions, meetings, presentations, and even virtual platforms. The tone, pitch, and clarity of verbal

communication significantly impact how messages are received. Efficient verbal communication is crucial for tasks such as assigning work, providing feedback, and fostering collaboration among team members. The ability to articulate ideas clearly contributes to a harmonious and productive work atmosphere.

- **Clarity and Articulation:** At the heart of effective verbal communication lies the ability to express ideas with clarity and precision. Adept communicators not only choose their words thoughtfully but also ensure that their message is easily comprehensible to diverse audiences. Articulation becomes a skill akin to playing the right notes in a melody, where the nuances of pronunciation, tone, and pitch are carefully considered to convey the intended meaning.
- **Facilitating Collaboration:** Verbal communication is the linchpin of collaboration, enabling team members to share insights, brainstorm ideas, and collectively solve problems. In team meetings and discussions, the art of verbal expression becomes a collaborative endeavour, where individuals contribute their unique perspectives to create a harmonious blend of voices working towards a common goal.
- **Feedback and Constructive Criticism:** Providing feedback and constructive criticism is an essential facet of effective leadership. Verbal communication in this context requires a delicate balance—a leader must convey feedback in a manner that motivates and inspires improvement without demoralizing the recipient. It is akin to conducting a performance review, where the nuances of language can shape the individual's professional development.
- **Crisis Management and Decision-Making:** In times of crisis or decision-making, verbal communication transforms into a decisive force. Leaders must articulate decisions clearly, manage expectations, and inspire confidence among team members. The tone and delivery of messages during critical moments can influence how well a team weathers challenges, emphasizing the performative nature of verbal communication in leadership roles.
- **Virtual Communication Proficiency:** In the era of remote work and global collaborations, proficiency in virtual communication is indispensable. Verbal communication in virtual settings requires adaptability to different communication platforms, awareness of potential technological barriers, and the skill to maintain engagement without the physical presence that traditional communication settings offer.

Non-Verbal Communication: Mastering the Symphony of Unspoken Influence

- Non-verbal communication comprises gestures, body language, facial expressions, and other cues

that convey information without the use of words. In the workplace, non-verbal communication can influence perceptions, attitudes, and the overall atmosphere. Team members often rely on non-verbal cues to gauge sincerity, engagement, and emotional states during interactions. Managers and leaders who master non-verbal communication can establish trust, foster positive relationships, and navigate complex professional dynamics effectively.

- **Gestures:** Non-verbal communication through gestures involves the use of hand movements, signals, and other physical actions to convey messages. A well-timed gesture can emphasize a point, express agreement or disagreement, and add layers of meaning to verbal communication. However, misinterpretation of gestures can lead to misunderstandings, making it crucial for individuals to be aware of cultural nuances and context.
- **Body Language:** The language spoken by the body is a powerful tool in the workplace. Posture, facial expressions, and overall body movements convey emotions, confidence, and engagement. Leaders who exhibit open body language, such as maintaining eye contact, adopting a confident posture, and mirroring positive expressions, can foster trust and create a positive work environment.⁵
- **Facial Expressions:** Facial expressions are a rich source of non-verbal cues, revealing emotions and sentiments. A smile, a furrowed brow, or raised eyebrows can convey joy, concern, or surprise, influencing the interpretation of verbal messages. Awareness of one's own facial expressions and the ability to read the expressions of others contribute to effective communication and interpersonal understanding.
- **Silence and Pauses:** Silence is a powerful element of non-verbal communication. Pauses in speech, intentional silences, or even the absence of response can convey a range of meanings, from contemplation to discomfort. Recognizing the subtleties of silence allows individuals to gauge the emotional undertones of a conversation and respond appropriately.

Visual Communication: Painting Pathways to Clarity

- Visual communication involves the use of visual elements such as graphs, charts, diagrams, and images to convey information. It is a powerful tool for simplifying complex data and enhancing understanding. In the workplace, visual communication aids in presenting project updates, illustrating concepts, and delivering impactful presentations. Well-designed visuals can enhance engagement, facilitate learning, and ensure that information is easily digestible, making it an essential aspect of effective workplace communication.

- **Graphs and Charts:** In the intricate landscape of data-driven decision-making, graphs and charts emerge as eloquent storytellers. Visual representations of numerical information not only simplify complexity but also enhance understanding. Line graphs, pie charts, and bar graphs transform raw data into digestible visual narratives, enabling stakeholders to grasp trends, patterns, and insights swiftly and intuitively.
- **Diagrams and Flowcharts:** Visualizing workflows and processes becomes seamless with the use of diagrams and flowcharts. These visual tools provide a roadmap for understanding intricate systems, helping team members conceptualize procedures and identify areas for improvement. From project management workflows to organizational structures, diagrams serve as blueprints that guide effective decision-making and collaboration.
- **Presentations and Slides:** In the context of presentations, visual communication takes centre stage. Well-crafted slides, enriched with impactful visuals, not only complement verbal communication but also elevate the overall engagement and retention of information. Thoughtful design, strategic use of imagery, and a cohesive visual theme contribute to creating presentations that leave a lasting impression on the audience.
- **Visual Storytelling:** The art of visual storytelling transcends traditional modes of communication. By weaving narratives through visuals, organizations can convey their mission, values, and achievements in a compelling manner. Visual storytelling resonates emotionally with audiences, making it a potent tool for brand communication, internal messaging, and fostering a shared sense of purpose among team members.
- **Interactive Visuals:** As technology continues to evolve, interactive visuals gain prominence in the workplace. Dashboards, interactive maps, and simulations provide immersive experiences, allowing stakeholders to engage with data on a deeper level. Interactive visual communication not only enhances understanding but also invites collaboration, as team members can explore and analyse information in real-time.

Written Communication: Crafting Chronicles of Organizational Wisdom

Written communication involves conveying information through written words, encompassing emails, reports, memos, and documentation. Clarity, conciseness, and proper formatting are key elements of effective written communication. Written communication is vital for providing detailed instructions, documenting processes, and maintaining a record of organizational activities. It serves as a lasting reference point and ensures that information

is accessible to all stakeholders. Clear and well-structured written communication minimizes misunderstandings and supports effective decision-making.

- **Clarity and Precision:** At the core of effective written communication lies the commitment to clarity and precision. Well-crafted messages, whether in emails, reports, or documentation, articulate ideas in a concise and unambiguous manner. Clarity in written communication minimizes the risk of misinterpretation, setting the stage for accurate understanding and actionable outcomes.
- **Documentation of Processes:** Written communication is instrumental in documenting organizational processes, procedures, and workflows. Comprehensive documentation serves as a reference guide for team members, ensuring consistency in operations and providing a roadmap for onboarding new staff. It becomes a repository of institutional knowledge that transcends personnel changes and organizational evolution.
- **Email Communication:** In the fast-paced world of business, email communication is a linchpin for daily interactions. The art of crafting effective emails involves balancing brevity with completeness, ensuring that messages are not only read but also understood. Emails convey tasks, updates, and announcements, and mastering written communication in this form is essential for maintaining organizational coherence.
- **Reports and Analysis:** Reports are vehicles for presenting complex information, analyses, and insights. Written communication in this context demands a structured and organized approach, guiding readers through a logical progression of ideas. Well-articulated reports distill data into actionable intelligence, supporting informed decision-making at various levels within the organization.
- **Memoranda and Announcements:** Memoranda and announcements are tools for broadcasting important information within an organization. The language used in these written communications sets the tone for how information is received. Whether conveying policy changes, recognizing achievements, or disseminating critical updates, effective written communication ensures that the intended message is conveyed clearly and respectfully.
- **Knowledge Sharing:** Written communication acts as a conduit for knowledge sharing within a workplace. This includes the creation of manuals, guidelines, and best practices that encapsulate the collective wisdom of the organization. Knowledge-sharing documents not only serve as instructional resources but also foster a culture of continuous learning and improvement.⁷
- **Accessibility and Inclusivity:** An often-overlooked aspect of written communication is its accessibility

to diverse audiences. Ensuring that written materials are clear and comprehensible to individuals with varying levels of expertise or linguistic backgrounds promotes inclusivity. This consideration is crucial in creating a workplace environment where information is accessible to everyone.⁸

Obstacle to Effective Organisational Communication

Barriers to effective communication within the workplace can hinder the seamless exchange of information, ideas, and feedback among employees. These hindrances can emanate from diverse origins, leading to misunderstandings, diminished productivity, and an overall less efficient work environment.⁹The following outlines prevalent obstacles to communication in the workplace:

- **Semantic Barriers:** Precise and effective communication requires a shared understanding of language and terminology. Semantic barriers arise when there is ambiguity, misinterpretation, or confusion regarding the meaning of words, phrases, or technical terms.¹⁰
- **Cultural and cross-cultural barriers:** in an increasingly globalized workplace, cultural differences can become significant barriers to communication. Varying communication norms, non-verbal cues, and expectations can lead to misunderstandings.¹¹
- **Perceptual Barriers:** Individual perceptions are subjective and shaped by personal experiences and biases. Perceptual barriers occur when individuals interpret information.¹²
- **Psychological Barriers:** Psychological factors such as stress, anxiety, or a fear of judgment can impede effective communication.¹³
- **Structural Barriers:** The organizational structure can either facilitate or hinder communication. Hierarchical structures may create barriers, making it challenging for lower-level employees to communicate with higher-ups.¹⁴
- **Technological Barriers:** While technology enhances communication, it can also pose challenges. Technical issues, reliance on impersonal communication tools, and the potential for misinterpretation in digital communication may create technological barriers.¹⁵
- **Selective Perception:** Individuals may selectively perceive information based on their preconceived notions or personal biases. Selective perception can lead to the filtering out of relevant information and contribute to miscommunication.¹⁶
- **Channel Barriers:** Effective communication relies on choosing the appropriate communication channels. Inadequate or misused channels can result in information distortion.¹⁷
- **Inadequate Feedback Mechanisms:** The absence of constructive feedback loops can hinder communication

improvement. Organizations must establish robust feedback mechanisms that encourage employees to share their thoughts, concerns, and suggestions.¹⁸

- **Competing Priorities and Time Constraints:** Busy work environments with competing priorities and tight deadlines may limit the time available for thoughtful communication.¹⁹

Approaches to Improve Effective Organizational Communication

In the dynamic landscape of the workplace, effective communication serves as the bedrock for collaboration, productivity, and a positive organizational culture.²⁰ However, various barriers can impede the seamless flow of information and understanding among team members. Overcoming communication barriers in the workplace is crucial for promoting a collaborative and productive environment.²¹ To address these challenges and cultivate a communication-friendly environment, a set of strategic approaches can be employed, which are as follows:

- **Promote Open Communication:** Encourage a culture of openness where team members feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and ideas. Create platforms for open dialogue, such as regular team meetings or brainstorming sessions.²²
- **Provide clear guidelines and expectations:** Clearly communicate expectations regarding tasks, deadlines, and project goals. Ambiguity can lead to misunderstandings, so ensure that instructions are explicit and readily understood by all team members.²³
- **Active Listening Training:** Conduct training sessions on active listening skills. Equip employees with techniques to fully understand and respond to their colleagues, reducing the chances of misinterpretation and fostering better collaboration.
- **Diversity and inclusion initiatives:** embrace diversity and inclusion initiatives. Provide training on cultural sensitivity to increase awareness of different communication styles and perspectives, minimizing cross-cultural misunderstandings.²⁴
- **Technology Integration:** leverage technology to enhance communication. Implement collaboration tools, project management software, and messaging platforms to streamline communication processes and ensure information accessibility.
- **Regular Feedback Mechanisms:** Establish regular feedback mechanisms to solicit input from team members. Constructive feedback helps identify areas for improvement, allowing the organization to address communication issues promptly.²⁵
- **Clarification Protocols:** Encourage a proactive approach to seeking clarification. Establish protocols for team members to ask questions when they encounter

uncertainties, ensuring that everyone is on the same page.²⁶

- **Crisis Communication Plans:** Develop crisis communication plans to address unexpected challenges. Clearly outline protocols for disseminating crucial information during crises, preventing misinformation and confusion.
- **Leadership Communication Training:** Provide leadership with communication training. Leaders should serve as effective communicators and set an example for the rest of the organization, emphasizing transparency and clarity.²⁷
- **Cross-Functional Collaboration:** Encourage cross-functional collaboration to break down silos. Cross-functional teams enhance understanding and communication between different parts of the organization, reducing the risk of information gaps.²⁸
- **Visual Communication Tools:** Incorporate visual communication tools, such as charts, graphs, and presentations, to supplement verbal and written communication. Visual aids can enhance understanding, especially when dealing with complex information.
- **Conflict Resolution Training:** Provide training in conflict resolution skills. Equip employees with the ability to navigate and resolve conflicts constructively, preventing communication breakdowns from escalating into larger issues.²⁹
- **Empowerment of Employees:** Empower employees to share their ideas and concerns. Foster an environment where everyone feels valued, contributing to a more inclusive and communicative workplace.³⁰
- **Continuous Improvement Mindset:** Instill a continuous improvement mindset within the organization. Encourage employees to reflect on communication challenges and contribute ideas for improvement, fostering an environment of ongoing enhancement.

Responsibilities of Sender's in Effective Workplace Communication

The responsibilities of the sender in the realm of effective workplace communication demand a nuanced and sophisticated approach, transcending mere transmission of information. The sender, as the architect of the message, is entrusted with a set of intricate tasks aimed at ensuring that communication not only transpires but resonates meaningfully with the audience. Here, we expound upon the elevated facets of the sender's responsibilities in fostering effective workplace communication:

- **Active listening:** Responsibly engage in active listening, focusing on understanding the nuances, emotions, and intentions behind the message.
- **Clarification Seeking:** Proactively seek clarification when faced with ambiguity or uncertainty, avoiding

assumptions and ensuring a clear understanding.

- **Understanding the Sender's Perspective:** cultivate empathy to comprehend the sender's perspective, considering context, motivations, and emotions influencing the message.
- **Feedback Provision:** Provide constructive feedback to the sender, contributing to a comprehensive dialogue and facilitating continuous improvement in communication dynamics.²¹
- **Selection of Appropriate Communication Channels:** Determine the most fitting communication channel based on the nature of the message, optimizing clarity and effectiveness.
- **Cultural Competence:** Demonstrate cultural competence by recognizing and understanding cultural nuances that may impact communication styles.
- **Responsiveness and Timely Action:** Respond promptly to messages, acknowledging receipt and taking timely action when required to ensure smooth communication flows.
- **Distillation of Key Information:** Distil essential information from the message, prioritizing key details and discerning the primary objectives to facilitate decision-making.
- **Non-Verbal Communication Awareness:** Be attuned to non-verbal cues such as body language and tone of voice, enhancing understanding of the sender's emotions and intentions.
- **Adaptability to Communication Styles:** Adapt to diverse communication styles within the workplace, fostering harmonious communication across teams.
- **Verification of Understanding:** Verify understanding through paraphrasing or seeking confirmation, mitigating misunderstandings, and ensuring a shared interpretation.
- **Reflection and Integration:** Engage in reflection and integration of communicated information into existing knowledge, contributing to continuous learning and improvement.

Responsibilities of Receivers in Effective Workplace Communication

The responsibilities of recipients in facilitating effective workplace communication are crucial for promoting comprehension and cultivating a positive communication atmosphere. Here are the primary duties for recipients:

- **Practice Active Listening:** Listen actively by giving your full attention to the speaker, avoiding interruptions, and confirming your understanding with feedback. Active listening helps you understand others better and demonstrates respect.
- **Ask for Clarification:** If something is unclear or uncertain, take the initiative to ask questions and seek

clarification. This ensures a thorough understanding and prevents misunderstandings caused by assumptions.

- **Understand Others's Perspectives:** Make an effort to understand where the other person is coming from. Consider their context, motivations, and emotions. This empathetic understanding not only improves communication but also nurtures positive relationships.
- **Provide Helpful Feedback:** Share constructive feedback with the speaker, acknowledging their points, asking for clarification if needed, and adding your insights. Offering feedback ensures everyone is on the same page and contributes to ongoing improvement.
- **Choose the Right Communication Channels:** Select the most appropriate communication channels for different messages. Understanding when to use email, face-to-face communication, or other methods ensures effective and efficient information exchange.
- **Develop Cultural Awareness:** Enhance your cultural competence to appreciate and respect diverse communication styles. Being aware of cultural nuances helps interpret messages accurately and promotes inclusive communication practices.

Conclusion

Establishing and maintaining high-quality working relationships in organizations hinges on effective workplace communication—a process that involves transmitting information and shared understanding. This significance arises from the fact that every administrative function, whether direct or indirect, necessitates communication. To enhance communication effectiveness, administrators must develop an awareness of the responsibilities of both senders and receivers, emphasizing the practice of active listening. The cultivation of effective communication skills in the workplace extends beyond functionality; it is integral to an administrator's role as a strong leader. Administrators should actively foster an environment where discussions about work-related matters are handled professionally and proficiently, encouraging positive and effective communication. This commitment not only enhances organizational dynamics but also contributes significantly to an administrator's leadership capabilities, fostering a collaborative and innovative workplace culture.

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