

Chapter 10: Communication

Overview

This chapter introduces communication as a human resource function. Many of the concepts presented have also been covered in other IAAP review materials, but this reinforces their importance to the success of any organization. Be sure students understand the role communication plays in their entire life.

Lecture Notes

A. Understanding Communication

Communication is the process of sharing information and meaning knowingly and unknowingly. The importance of effective communication cannot be overstated. However, problems can arise in the process.

1. **Communication as a Process** includes different parts. The person wishing to send a message is the sender; he or she encodes the message. The receiver decodes the message and responds with feedback. Anything that interferes is called noise.
 - a. Encoding is the process of translating communication into an understandable message. Bypassing occurs if the receiver does not understand the meaning of the words used.
 - b. The message is the result of the encoding process; it can be sent verbally, nonverbally, or in combination.
 - c. The channel is the connecting device between the sender and the receiver; many different channels are available.
 - d. The receiver is the person or object to which the message is directed; however, unintended receivers may also get the message.
 - e. Decoding is the process by which the receiver interprets the message. Mistakes can occur if the receiver doesn't recognize the parts of the message.
 - f. Feedback is the receiver's response to the message; it is valuable when it indicates how the message was received or interpreted.
 - g. Noise is any occurrence that inhibits effective communication; it can occur at any point in the process.
2. **Selecting the Appropriate Communication Channel** must take different factors into consideration.
 - a. Channel richness is the amount of information that can be shared during a communication episode. It is important to use a channel that provides enough information and meaning to satisfy most of the basic communication requirements.
 - Clarity refers to the degree in which messages and meanings are sent in a clear, precise, and understandable format with a record of what is being transmitted.
 - Feedback is the immediate response of the receiver.

- b. Determining factors, including the need for clarity and feedback, are balanced for the situation.
- 3. **Communication** is vital to any organization's success.
 - a. It influences task performance; messages must be transmitted and shared whether the process involves open or implicit receipt and sharing.
 - b. Serves as a link between plans and actions; no one can act effectively if he or she does not understand the expectations. If the mission and plans are not shared and understood by everyone, chaos may result.
 - c. It is the integrative device for accomplishing all managerial functions or activities: planning, organizing, staffing, leading, and controlling.

B. Forms, Directions, and Types of Communication

- 1. **Formal Communication** occurs within official organizational channels and is officially sanctioned by the organization. It flows within the chain of command or organizational chart.
 - a. It impacts organizational effectiveness by covering an ever-widening distance as organizations grow. It fosters the concept of respecting the chain of command within an organization.
 - b. The organizational chart represents the official chain of command; formal communication follows the solid lines. Informal communication that bypasses the chain of command may be represented by dashes on the organizational chart.
 - c. The gangplank principle says that people at the same or different hierarchical levels often need to communicate without having to go up and down the chain of command. The principle represents communication channels within departments and those going between them that do not appear on the organizational chart.
- 2. **Informal Communication** occurs outside the formal structure and bypasses the hierarchy; it is also known as the "grapevine." It continues to serve the information needs of informal groups.
 - a. The purpose of the grapevine is to fill in the gap left when information is not explained through formal communication.
 - b. It usually focuses on organizational issues, and it is generally accurate.
- 3. **Management by Walking/Wandering Around** is a practice of talking to employees and learning about what is occurring through walking around and talking to others in an informal way.

C. Methods of Interpersonal Communication

- 1. **Written** communication is common; examples include memos, reports, manuals, forms, and letters.
- 2. **Verbal** (oral) communication is the most common.
 - a. It occurs everywhere, and it is both formal and informal.

- b. Face-to-face communication allows the sender and receiver to use symbols and nonverbal messages too; however, telephone must rely on voice messages alone.
 - c. Indirect use of nonverbal communication can alter the impact and meaning of the words.
3. **Nonverbal** communication is a process of sharing information without the use of words; the message is transmitted by behaviors and actions.
- a. Nonverbal communication plays a large role in what is communicated. If words and body movements are in conflict, the nonverbal message gets much more attention than the verbal. Consistency is especially important when the speaker is trying to make an impression.
 - b. Forms of nonverbal communication include (*review the specific examples in the text*).
 - Body language such as gestures, eye contact, facial expressions, and posture
 - Proxemics or the amount of personal space
 - Object language such as physical items
 - Paralanguage like tone, pitch, pace, loudness, and accents

D. Barriers to Effective Communication

While barriers to effective communication are very common, people are often unaware of the types of interference and their causes.

1. **Types of Communication Barriers** can be divided into the following categories:
 - a. Organizational barriers relate to the complexity of the organization and the environment; they might include the hierarchy, managerial authority, specialization, distance, time, or information overload.
 - b. Interpersonal barriers relate to the interactions between individuals like stereotyping, status, noise, listening, language/culture, semantics, and choice of communication channel.
 - c. Personal barriers relate to the psychosocial and perceptual differences between individuals.

E. Presentation Techniques

1. **Being Prepared** is the most important thing any speaker can do to ensure a good presentation. Be sure to outline what is to be said and do your research; be sure all information is accurate. The information should be put into a logical and meaningful format. Practice the presentation before it is actually given. Be sure to answer these questions as you prepare.
 - a. Who will be in the audience? What is the level of knowledge in the subject?
 - b. When will the presentation take place? How long will it be?
 - c. What needs to be covered? What else?
 - d. Why is the presentation being delivered?
 - e. Where will it take place? What does the space include?

2. **Using Visual Aids** in a presentation increases the attention and retention of the audience—a picture is worth a thousand words.
 - a. Computer-generated images (like a PowerPoint slide show) should be kept simple and focus on the topic. Be sure it is presented so everyone can see it; dim the lights.
 - b. Overhead transparencies can be created using software, a copy machine, or pens. Whatever the method, they should be clear and easy to read. Since they are in single sheets, be sure to keep them in the order they will be used. Transparencies are not used as much as they were before the computerized options were available.
 - c. Video should be previewed for appropriateness. Review it to be sure it coincides with the topic, and summarize the key points when it is over.
 - d. Handouts should be kept simple and easy to read. To make them more meaningful to the audience, include title and date. Presenters may consider putting their name on it to take credit for their work.
3. **Make the Presentation** so that you hold the audience's attention and make key points.
 - a. Face the audience, not notes or visuals. This helps build rapport with the audience for credibility.
 - b. Avoid distractions to the presentation.
 - External distractions can include noise, phones, and people moving.
 - Speaker's distractions can include speech patterns, pacing, clicking a pen or twirling a pointer.
 - c. Speak clearly and distinctly; be sure to use familiar language and speak at a comfortable pace.

F. Professional Protocol

1. **Business Etiquette** is a code of behavior required in work situations. It relies on two basic ideas: business etiquette is genderless and the guiding principle is to always treat people with respect.
 - a. Work behavior includes all aspects of performing work, including completing it on time, being punctual, being a good listener and a team player, and following through.
 - b. Clothing should be very conservative at a first meeting; be aware of cultural differences related to dress.
 - c. Introduce the lower-ranking person to the higher-ranking; however, if they hold equal positions, introduce older one first. Include some information besides the name is a good idea. Both parties should extend their right hand for shaking in an introduction.
 - d. Women should not be treated differently when approaching a door or riding in an elevator. Avoid touching others of the opposite sex (besides a handshake).

- e. Electronic etiquette is critical for e-mail, faxes, conference calls, cell phones, and other devices. Common courtesy, respect, and good grammar (and spelling) are key in these areas.
 - f. Dining etiquette is important for good impressions, and cultural differences should be valued in situations where they might apply. *Review the areas to consider in the text; students may be surprised at the detail. It might be helpful to simulate a business meal to practice proper etiquette.*
 - g. Business correspondence should be error-free and well-formatted.
2. **Cultural Differences** are many in today's workforce. Culture is a shared system of symbols, beliefs, attitudes, values, expectations, and norms for behavior.
- a. Subcultures exist within each culture, even in the U.S.
 - b. Recognize intercultural differences like contextual (pattern of physical cues), legal and ethical, social, and nonverbal expression to improve communication. It is wise to read about cultures that you may encounter in business and personal encounters.
 - c. Improve communication across cultures by overcoming ethnocentrism, studying other cultures, and overcoming language barriers.

G. Legal Issues

1. **Confidentiality** has become very important to companies, so important that employees are often asked to sign agreements related to specific areas:
 - a. Confidential information like trade secrets and proprietary information
 - b. Non-disclosure of information while employed or that might benefit others
 - c. Property of the company like drawings and reports
 - d. Noncompete clauses, which restrict employment at similar companies for a specified period of time
2. **E-mail** use for personal business is one companies are trying to control, including a privacy act and access to deleted messages.
 - a. The Electronic Communications Privacy Act provides a clear description of how e-mail monitoring is to be performed. Even though some companies are violating the act, the information does then belong to the company.
 - b. Deleted messages, are not necessarily deleted; they can be restored by the network administrator. While this isn't ethical, it is done.
3. **Employee Privacy Rights** exist as well; companies should respect those rights.
 - a. Proper notification should be given before monitoring employee activities.
 - b. Non-discriminatory monitoring is necessary; no one should be singled out.
 - c. Protection of personal information gained by monitoring should be respected.
 - d. Training regarding what is appropriate should be provided.
 - e. A designated monitor should be responsible for all monitoring.

- f. Software is available for monitoring employees based on key words; employees should be aware of its use.

Additional Resources for Students

Recommended readings (no texts should be more than two years old)

- Boone, Louis E. and David L. Kurtz. *Contemporary Business Communication*. Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Bovee, Courtland L. and John V. Thill. *Business Communication Today*. McGraw-Hill, Inc.
- Guffey, Mary Ellen. *Business and Administrations Communication*. South-Western Publishing Co.
- Himstreet, William C. and Wayne M. Baty. *Business Communication*. Kent Publishing Co.
- Lesikar, Raymond V. *Basic Business Communication*.
- Ober, Scott. *Contemporary Business Communication*.
- Wolf, P. and S. Kuiper. *Effective Communication in Business*.

Current issues of periodicals or business publications are also an excellent resource. Some of the following periodicals have an accompanying Web site.

| <i>Current Periodical</i> | <i>Web Address</i> |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <i>Gregg Reference Manual</i> | |
| <i>IAAP Complete Office Handbook</i> | http://www.iaap-hq.org/products/handbook.htm |
| <i>Modern Office Technology</i> | |
| <i>OfficePro</i> | http://www.iaap-hq.org/officepro/toc.htm |
| <i>The Office</i> | |