Business communication

Business Communication is goal oriented. The rules, regulations and policies of a company have to be communicated to people within and outside the organization. Business Communication is regulated by certain rules and norms. In early times, business communication was limited to paper-work, telephone calls etc. But now with advent of technology, we have cell phones, video conferencing, emails, satellite communication to support business communication. Effective business communication helps in building goodwill of an organization.

 Business communication skills are critical to the success of any organization despite its size, geographical location, and its mission. Business communication is interlinked with internal culture and external image of any organization. So it is the determining factor to communication inside the organization. Good Business communication practices assist the organization in achieving its goal of informing, persuading, favorable relationship, and organizational goodwill. Organizations can only survive if they accept the rapidly changing global challenges and the communication processes are structured and delivered. The present workforce is dynamic in nature so communication is a challenge when executed against the backdrop of culture, technology and competition. The success of any business to a large extent depends on efficient and effective communication. It takes place among business entities, in market and market places, within organizations and between various groups of employees, owners and employees, buyers and sellers, service providers and customers, sales persons and prospects and also between people within the organization and the press persons. All such communication impacts business. Done with care, such communication can promote business interests. Otherwise, it will portray the organization in poor light and may adversely affect the business interest.

Communication is the life blood of any organization and its main purpose is to effect change to influence action. In any organization the main problem is of maintaining effective communication process. The management problem generally results in poor communication. Serious mistakes are made because orders are misunderstood. The basic problem in communication is that the meaning which is actually understood may not be what the other intended to send. It must be realised that the speaker and the listener are two separate individuals having their own limitations and number of things may happen to distort the message that pass between them. When people within the organization communicate with each other, it is internal communication. They do so to work as a team and realise the common goals. It could be official or unofficial. Modes of internal communication include face-to-face and written communication. Memos, reports, office order, circular, fax, video conferencing, meeting etc. are the examples of internal communication. When people in the organization communicate with anyone outside the organization it is called external communication. These people may be clients or customers, dealers or distributors, media, government, general public etc. are the examples of external communication.

Technology has changed business in many ways, but its effect on communication is arguably the most significant. The use of technology in daily business operations is constantly evolving, and one such example is the use of technology in business communication. Being in touch is very important to businesses, that is why it is no wonder why a lot of resources is spent in improving the communication procedures of various businesses. The revolution of the Internet has allowed businesses to have more options as far as business communication was concerned. It made the technologies of software, hardware, and network converge into one cohesive and solid system, which made the optimization of various business procedures faster. Indeed, the employees and the organizations as a whole greatly benefit from the use of technology in business. With a feasible business plan, organizations can save a lot of money and raise the level of productivity of the staff if the use of technology were well-planned and executed. Even medium-scale companies now have a chance to participate in the fierce competition among larger businesses. This is just one proof that technology in business communication is capable of increasing worker productivity. If you come to think about, the advantages do not need an employee to undergo a radical adjustment. On the contrary, tasks are made simpler and more convenient for the user.

Communication Is Faster- Whether you need to speak with an employee who is traveling in another state or country or you need to communicate with your supplier half way around the world, technology allows you to do so instantaneously. In fact, thanks to email and text messages, you can now send messages to people in other time zones before you forget without worrying that you will wake them up. In fact, the Internet has allowed business people to communicate easily regardless of time zone and language issues.

 Expanded Communication Opportunities- Technology allows individuals to communicate and carry on a business relationship without ever meeting face to face, so people in all parts of the world now have the chance to interact with a company in a rural part of India. For example, technology allowed for the emergence of the virtual assistant, a worker who completes tasks for her client online without having ever met him, in the 20th century.

Cost-Cutting Procedures- In addition to migrating to a digital means of communicating, a business can save a lot with technological advances in business communication. Business software products that combine voice and data no longer have the need for multiple lines that can add a bulky amount to communication expenses. In addition, minimal technical support is needed since most of the installation, operations, and maintenance procedures can be done with little or no supervision at all.

Network Convenience -The use of modern technology in business communication eradicates the complexity that is involved in monitoring network traffic. This is because all the communication data travels at the same stream. Therefore, there is only one network that needs to be monitored, and this lessens the work of network administrators, giving them more time to work on other tasks. The benefits of technology in business communication are almost immeasurable, since its advantages are long term and ell-

encompassing. Businesses can use this to their advantage to increase productivity, to raise revenues, to build better relationships with customers, and to survive longer in the business arena.

Key Areas of Communication in Management

• Relationship Building Relationship building is a key discipline to master. It helps you establish trust and friendship with your employees. They will come to you with problems, and when the time comes that you must give negative feedback they will actually be able to hear you out. On the flip side of that coin, when it comes time to give positive feedback, your employees will take it to heart and it will motivate them to do better work. In any work environment, as a manager is important to build these relationships early on.

• Employee Engagement One aspect of the manager-employee relationship has to do with including employees in on project management and development - allowing them to give their input. This doesn't necessarily mean that you have to accept every idea that comes across your desk, but the fact that you are sincerely listening to concerns positions you as a respected and trusted leader within the company. In short, if employees truly feel like they are a part of the process, they will connect to projects in a more meaningful way, and do high-quality work.

• Employee Recognition Every manager should learn how to properly recognize employees in the workplace. However, it's not enough to simply recognize and praise an employee in your office, you must make every effort to make recognition a very public event. Recognizing an employee for their hard work shows that you value their contributions to the organization. Again, this is another communication strategy that will motivate employees to do better.

• Employee Coaching Finally, there is the discipline of employee coaching. Unfortunately, not every employee candidate is going to walk into the office with a flawless performance record. They may fall down and make a mess a few times before really grasping the tools needed to succeed in the workplace. You, as a manager, are an instrumental part of that success. Successful managers should be having in-depth conversations with employees about performance about once every quarter at least. It's important that you keep these conversations as informal as possible, so you can actually connect with the employee you're trying to coach.

• Communication is Motivating Communication is a life force. If employees know where they stand in the work place, and they feel comfortable in that environment, they will be motivated to do good work. Solid communication skills are not just good for the life of the company, but they help you understand how everything is going within the company. It gives you some real-world "data," so to speak.

Barriers in Business Communication

For any kind of communication to be successful, it is essential that the receiver attributes the same meaning to the message as intended by the sender of the message. But all acts of

communication are not perfect or successful. At times, some meaning is lost as the message encounters various barriers along its passage between the sender and the receiver. Such barriers may arise at any of the stages through which a message passes during the process of communication. This is also called miscommunication.

Some of the common problems that lead to the failure of communication are: noise, cultural differences, complexity of subject matter, personal biases, semantic problems, socio-psychological barriers, filtering, information overload, poor retention, poor listening, goal conflicts, slanting, inferring, etc.

Types of barriers Barriers to communication can be classified into the following broad categories:

1) Physical or environmental barriers

Physical barriers are those barriers which are caused due to some technical defects in the media used for communication and/or due to certain disturbances in the surrounding environment. Often, the term 'noise' is used as a blanket term to refer to the physical barriers in general. But noise, in its literal sense, is also one of the factors that give rise to the physical barriers during the process of communication. Noise is the first major barrier to communication. Communication is distorted by noise that crops up at the transmission level. The meaning attributed to the word 'noise' in the field of Communication is derived from the realm of Physics. In Physics, noise refers to "a disturbance, especially a random and persistent disturbance, which obscures or reduces the clarity of a signal". The modern-day connotation of the word 'noise' is "irrelevant or meaningless data" as is apparent from its usage in the field of Computer Science. For example, the noise of the traffic around a school obstructs the smooth flow of information between the teacher and the students. It makes oral communication difficult. Similarly, poor signal or static while talking over the cell phone or while using the public address system or while watching TV also distorts the sound signals and disrupts communication. Bad weather conditions may also sometimes interfere with the transmission of signals and may lead to breakdown of the communication channels.

Time and distance may also obstruct the smooth flow of information. Time differences between people living in two different countries may affect communication between them. Even people working in different shifts in the same organization may also face problems in communicating effectively.

Adverse weather conditions affect not only the means of communication, but also have an impact on the sender and the receiver of the message. When two people have to communicate with each other under extreme weather conditions, whether too hot or too cold, their surroundings does have a direct repercussion on the effectiveness of the exchange that takes place between them. Thus, environmental factors determine people's mood and also influence their mental agility and thereby their capacity to communicate effectively

2) Physiological or biological barriers

Physiological barriers are related to a person's health and fitness. These may arise due to disabilities that may affect the physical capability of the sender or the receiver. For example, poor eyesight, deafness, uncontrolled body movements, etc.

3) Semantic or language barriers

Semantics is the systematic study of the meaning of words. Thus, the semantic barriers are barriers related to language. Such barriers are problems that arise during the process of encoding and/or decoding the message into words and ideas respectively.

The most common semantic barriers are listed as under:

a. Misinterpretation of Words- Semantic problems often arise because of the gap between the meaning as intended by the sender and that as understood by the receiver. This happens when the receiver does not assign the same meaning to the word/symbol as the transmitter had intended.

b. Use of Technical Language- Technical or specialized language which is used by people or professionals who work in the same field is known as jargon. Such technical language can be a barrier to communication if the receiver of the message is not familiar with it.

c. Ambiguity- Ambiguity arises when the sender and the receiver of the message attribute different meanings to the same words or use different words to convey the same meaning.

4) Personal barriers

Communication is interpersonal in nature. Thus, there are certain barriers that are directly linked to the persons involved in the communication process, i.e. the sender and the receiver, which influence the accurate transfer of the message. These are called personal barriers. Personal barriers have to do with the age, education, interests and needs or intentions that differ from person to person.

5) Emotional or perceptional barriers

Emotional or perceptional barriers are closely associated with personal barriers. Personal barriers arise from motives and attitudes whereas emotional or perceptional barriers have an added dimension that includes sentiments and emotions as well. If the receiver does not evaluate the information with an open mind, i.e. objectively, his judgment/evaluation would be colored with his biases and/or his emotions, thus inducing him to read too much into a message. This would interfere with the exact transfer of information and cause misinterpretation.

6) Cultural barriers

Cultural differences give rise to a great deal of complexity in the encoding and the decoding of messages not only because of the difference in languages, but also because of plenty of culture-specific assumptions at work in the mind of the sender as well as the receiver.People belonging to different cultures may attach different meanings to words, symbols, gestures,

and behaviour or they may perceive each others' social values, body language, attitude to space distancing and time, social behaviour and manners, etc., i.e. the entire culture in general, very differently depending upon their own standards, attitudes, customs, prejudices, opinions, behavioral norms, etc., i.e. their own distinct culture.

7) Organizational barriers

Organizational structure greatly influences the flow of information within an organization. Some major organizational barriers are as follows:

a. Goal Conflicts There may be goal conflicts within the organization between the superiors and the subordinates, among people working in the different departments, among the colleagues, etc.

b. Organizational Policies These are also to a great extent responsible for determining the kind of rapport that people working in the same organization share with each other. If the organizational policy is such that it restricts the free flow of information in all directions then communication would not be successful

c. Organizational Hierarchy The hierarchical structure of the organization may also impede the flow of information and this can cause delay in taking decisions. When the message passes along the chain of command in an organization, there are chances of filtering and distortion of the message at almost every level before it reaches the intended receiver. Thus, the hierarchical structure of the organization is also one of the important factors that may create a barrier to effective communication.