



The important of effective communication

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ABSTRACT

Its article date about t the basic process of communication and cover some of the most difficult communication issues managers face-providing constructive and effective feedback and performance appraisal.

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The communication Process:

Although all of us have been communicating with others since our infancy, the process of transmitting information from an individual (or group) to another is a very complex process with many sources of potential error.

Consider the simple example:

- Sarah “I won’t make it to work again tomorrow;” this pregnancy keeps me nauseous and my doctor says I should probably be reduced to part time.
- Boss: Sarah, this is third day you’ve missed and your appointments keep backing up; we have to cover for you and this is messing all of us up.
- Message to be sent
- Decoded (some error likely)
- Encoded by receiver (some error likely)
- Message received.

In many communication at least some the “ meaning” lost in simple transmission of a message from the sender to the receiver. In many situations a lot of the true message is lost and the message that is heard is often far different than the one intended. The is most obvious in cross-cultural situations where language is an issue. But it is also common among people of the same culture.

Look at the example. Sarah has what appears to be a simple message to convey she won’t make it to work today because of nausea. But she had to work today because of nausea. But she had to translate the thoughts into words and this is the first potential source of error. Was she just trying to convey anything else. It turns out she was. She was upset because she perceived that her co-workers weren’t as sympathetic to her situation as they should be. Her co-workers, however were really being pressured by Sarah’s continued absence, and her late call. They wished she4 would just take a leave of absence, but Terry refuses because she would have to take it without pay.

Thus what appears to be a simple communication is, in reality, quite complex. Sarah is communicating far more than that she would miss work, she is conveying a number of complex emotions, complicated by her own complex feelings about pregnancy, work, and her future.

She sent a message but the message is more than the words; it includes the tone, the timing of the call, and the way she expressed herself.

Similarly, the boss goes through a complex communication process in “hearing” the message.

In this case, the boss heard far more than a simple message that Sarah won’t be at work today. The boss “heard” hostility from Sarah. Indifference, lack of consideration, among other emotions. Sarah may not have meant this, but this is what the boss heard.[1.36]

Communication is so difficult because at each step in the process there major potential for error. By the time a message gets from a sender to a receiver there are four basic places where transmission errors can take place and at each place, there are a multitude of potential sources of error. Thus it is no surprise that social psychologists estimate that there is usually a 40-60% loss of meaning in the transmission of messages from sender to receiver.

It is critical to understand this process, understand and be aware of the potential sources of errors and constantly counteract these tendencies by making a conscientious effort to make sure there is a minimal loss of meaning in your conversation.

It is also very important to understand that a majoring of communication is non-verbal. This means that when we attribute meaning to what someone else is saying, the verbal part of the message actually means less than the non-verbal part. The non-verbal part includes such thing as body language and tone.

Barriers to effective communication:

There are a wide number of sources of noise or interference that can enter into the communication process. This can occur when people now each other very well and should understand the sources of error. In a work setting, it is even more common since interactions involve people who not only don’t have years of experience with each other, but communication is complicated by the complex and often conflictual relationships that exist at work. In a work setting, the following suggests a number of sources of noise.

- Language: The choice of words or language in which a sender encodes a message will influence the quality of communication. Because language is a symbolic representation of a phenomenon, room for interpretation and distortion of the meaning exist. In the above example, the boss uses language (this is the third day you’ve missed) that is likely to conveys indifference to her medical problems. Note that the same words and many factors affect how an individual will attribute meaning to particular words.
- It is important to note that no two people will attribute the exact same meaning to the same words.
- Defensiveness, distorted perceptions, guilt, project, transference, distortions from the past
- Misreading of body language, tone and other non-verbal forms of communication (see section below)
- Noisy transmission (unreliable messages, inconsistency)
- Receiver distortion: selective hearing, ignoring non-verbal cues
- Power struggles
- Self- fulfilling assumptions
- Language different levels of meaning
- Managers hesitation to be candid
- Assumptions, assuming others see situation same as you, has same fillings as you
- Distrusted source, erroneous translation, value judgment, state of mind of two people

People attend to stimuli in the environment in very different ways. We each have shortcuts introduce some biases into communication. Some of these shortcuts include stereotyping, projection, and self-fulfilling prophecies. Stereotyping is one of the most common. This is when we assume that the other person has certain characteristics based on the group to which they belong without validating that they in fact have these characteristics.

International Relationships: How we perceive communication is affected by the past experience with individual. Perception is also affected by the organizational relationship two people have. For example, communication from a superior may be perceived differently than that from a subordinate or peer.

Cultural Differences: effective communication requires deciphering the basic values, motives, aspirations, and assumptions that operate across geographical lines. Given some dramatic differences across cultures in approaches to such areas as time, space, and privacy, the opportunities for privacy, the opportunities for miscommunication while we are in cross-cultural situations are plentiful.[1.57,58]

Reading Nonverbal Communication Cues

A large percentage of the meaning we derive from communication; we derive from the non-verbal cues that the other person gives. Often a person says one thing but communicates something totally different through vocal intonation and body language. These mixed signals force the receiver chooses the nonverbal aspects. Because the receiver senses that the communicator is hiding something or is being less than candid.

Nonverbal communication is made up of the following parts:

1. Visual
2. Tactile
3. Vocal
4. Use of time, space, and image

Visual: this often called body language and includes facial expression, eye movement, posture, and gestures. The face is the biggest part of this. All of us

“read” people’s faces for ways to interpret what they say and feel. This fact becomes very apparent when we deal with someone with dark sunglasses. Of course we can easily misread these cues especially when communicating across cultures where gestures can mean something very different in another culture.

For example, in an American culture agreement might be indicated by the head going up and down whereas in India, a side-to-side head movement might mean the same thing.

We also look to posture to provide cues about the communicator; posture can indicate self-confidence, aggressiveness, fear, guilt, or anxiety.

Similarly, we look at gestures such as how we hold our hand, or a handshake. Many gestures are culture bound and susceptible to misinterpretation.

Tactile: this involves the use of touch to impart meaning as in as handshake, a pat on the back, an arm around the shoulder, a kiss, or a hug.

Vocal: The meaning of words can be altered significantly by changing the intonation of one’s voice. Think of how many ways you can say “no” anger among other emotions. Vocal meanings vary across cultures. Intonation in one culture can mean support; another anger.

Use of Time as nonverbal communication: Use of time can communicate how we view our own status and power in relation to others. Think about how a subordinate and his/her boss would view arriving at a place for an agreed upon meeting.

Physical space: For most of us, someone standing very close to us makes us uncomfortable. We feel our “space” has been invaded. People seek to extend their territory in many ways to attain power and intimacy. We tend to mark our territory either with permanent walls, or in a classroom with our coat, pen, paper, etc.

At the risk of stereotyping, we will generalize and state that Americans and Northern Europeans typify the noncontact group with small amounts of touching and relatively large space between them during transactions. Arabs and Latins normally stand closer together and do a lot of touching during communication.

Similarly, we use “thing” to communicate. This can involve expensive things, neat or messy things, photographs, plants, etc.

Image: We use clothing and other dimensions of physical appearance to communicate our values and expectations Nonverbal communication:

The use of gestures, movements, material things, time and space can clarify or confuse the meaning of verbal communication. In the above example, factors such as Sarah’s tone, the time of Sarah’s call, will probably play a greater role in how the message is interpreted than the actual words themselves. Similarly,

the tone of the boss will probably have a greater impact on how his message is interpreted than the actual words.

A “majority” of the meaning we attribute to words comes not from the words themselves, but from nonverbal factors such as gestures, facial expressions, tone, body language, etc. Nonverbal cues can play five roles.

1. Repetition: They can repeat the message the person is making verbally
2. Contradiction: They can contradict a message the individual is trying to convey
3. Substitution: They can substitute for a verbal message. For example, a person’s eyes can often convey a far more vivid message than words and often do
4. Complementing: They may add to or complement a verbal message. A boss who pats a person on the back in addition to giving praise can increase the impact of the message.
5. Accenting: non-verbal communication may accept or underline a verbal message. Pounding the table, for example, can underline a message.

Skillful communicators understand the importance of nonverbal communication and use it to increase their effectiveness, as well as use it to understand more clearly what someone else is really saying.

A word of warning: Nonverbal cues can offer dramatically from culture to culture. An American hand gesture meaning “A- Ok” would be viewed as obscene in some South American countries. [4,68,69]

Developing communication Skills: Listening Skills

There are a number of situation when you need to solicit good information from others; these situations include interviewing candidates, solving work problems, seeking to help an employee on work performance, and finding out reasons for performance discrepancies.

Skill in communication involves a number of specific strengths. The first we will discuss involves listening skills. The following lists some suggests for effective listening when confronted with a problem at work.

- Listen openly and with empathy to the other person
- Judge the content, not the messenger or delivery; comprehend before you judge
- Use multiple techniques to fully comprehend (ask, repeat, rephrase, etc.)
- Active body state; fight distractions
- Ask the other person for as much detail as he/she can provide; paraphrase what the other is saying to make sure you understand it and check for understanding
- Respond in an interested way that shows you understand the problem and the employee’s concern
- Attend to non-verbal cues, body language, not just words; listen between the lines
- Ask the other for his views or suggestions
- State your position openly; be specific, not global
- Communicate your feelings but don’t act them out (ex, tell a person that his behavior really upsets you; don’t get angry)
- Be validating, not invalidating (‘you wouldn’t understand’); acknowledge other’s uniqueness, importance
- Be conjunctive, not disjunctive (not “I want to discuss this regardless of what you want to discuss”);
- Don’t totally control conversation; acknowledge what was said
- Own up: use “I”, not “they”, not “I’ve heard you are no cooperative”
- Don’t react to emotional words, but interpret their purpose
- Practice supportive listening, not one- way listening
- Decide on specific follow-up actions and specific follow up dates

A major source of problem in communication is defensiveness. Effective communicators are aware that defensiveness is a typical response in a work situation especially when negative information or criticism is involved. Be aware that defensiveness is common, particularly with subordinates when you are dealing with a problem. Try to make adjustments to compensate for the likely defensiveness. Realize that when people

feel threatened they will try to protect themselves; this is natural. This defensiveness can take the form of aggression, anger, competitiveness, avoidance, among other responses. A skillful listener is aware of the potential for defensiveness and makes needed adjustment. He or she is aware that self-protection is necessary and avoids making the other person spend energy defending the self.

In addition, a supportive and effective listener does the following:

- Stop talking: Asks other person for as much detail as he/she can provide; asks for other's views and suggestions
- Looks at the person, listens openly and with empathy to the employee; is clear about his position; be patient
- Listen and Respond in an interested way that shows you understand the problem and the other's concern
- Is validating, not invalidating; ('you wouldn't understand'); acknowledge other's uniqueness, importance
- Checks for understanding; paraphrases; asks questions for clarifications[4,73,74]

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