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Business Communication

FOR VTU

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ALWAYS LEARNING

PEARSON

Business Communication

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PEARSON
Chennai • Delhi • Chandigarh

To the ever-loving memory of

Mrs Pramilla Chaturvedi

Dr Tapesh Chaturvedi

and

Mr Atul Chaturvedi

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Preface

What is communication? Communication is what it does—bringing people together. How does it do that? By establishing a commonness among people. The message (the verbally/non-verbally developed idea), the medium (the carrier of the message), and the environment (the surroundings in which communication takes place) bring about this commonness, a situational relationship for a (common) purpose. This is how we would like to explain *communis*, the Latin origin of the word "communication".

If communication is a social need for an individual, it is the lifeblood of an organization. If we, as individuals, communicate 70 per cent of our waking time, an organization communicates 90 per cent of its working time. If individuals communicate for their personal purpose, communication in an organization is for business purposes. Thus, communication plays a crucial role in an organization, bringing all aspects of the business together—employees, customers, suppliers, intermediaries, the public, and so on.

Working people communicate at three levels: personal, social, and professional. We could also call these the three spheres of communication. We have a natural ability to adapt to the communication requirements of each of these spheres. However, with time, some of us become more and more fixed in our style of communication and tend to use the same style across the three spheres. What does our tendency to be flexible or rigid across the three spheres of communication depend on? Does it depend on how conscious we are at a particular level, and for how long? For example, if someone communicates more consciously for most of the time at the workplace, would they not become more formal in their style for the rest of the day and spheres as well?

Flexibility in our communication helps us adapt to the situational requirements faster, which results in efficient communication, and efficient communication translates into less time and effort in getting ready to communicate appropriately at a particular level. So, consciousness gives control, which, in turn, helps develop flexibility and makes our communication effective and efficient.

Our contention is that 90 per cent of us are not conscious of our communication 90 per cent of the time. And those of us who are conscious about our communication, are more conscious of *what* we communicate than *how* we communicate. *Business Communication* prepares students for effective communication at the workplace by focusing on how to communicate in business situations—how to recognize the techniques that help in communicating a message accurately, how to handle intercultural situations that require thoughtful communication, how to use appropriate words and an effective tone for writing effectively, and so on. We hope that the numerous exhibits, Communication Snapshots, cases, samples, and questions included in this edition of *Business Communication* will help students master the art of communication by learning to be more conscious of their communication and developing a flexible and efficient communication style.

We shall be happy to receive feedback from readers at mukesh.chaturvedi@bimtech.ac.in and mchats@hotmail.com.

ORGANIZATION

This edition of *Business Communication* is a result of our experience in teaching, training, and consulting with the help of the first edition over the last six years. This includes areas such as language skills, report writing, technical writing, communication skills, presentation skills, negotiation skills, personality development, and marketing communication. Most of the concepts, cases, and applications presented in this edition are thoroughly examined and tested with groups of students, executives, and academics.

The book is divided into four parts. **Part I**, **Theory of Business Communication**, introduces the profile of an effective communicator and goes on to discuss the nature and process of communication (Chapter 1), organizational communication (Chapter 2), and intercultural communication skills (Chapter 3).

Part II, **Forms of Business Communication**, deals with the oral, non-verbal and written modes of communication. In addition to the chapters on oral communication (Chapter 4), conversation skills (Chapter 5), non-verbal communication (Chapter 7), and written business communication (Chapter 8), listening (Chapter 6) is also discussed in this part.

Part III, **Types of Written Business Communication**, deals with a crucial aspect of communication in most business situations. This part provides a detailed discussion on how to write business letters, memos, and e-mails (Chapter 9), and also has an exclusive chapter on report writing (Chapter 10).

Part IV, **Applications of Business Communication**, brings together most of the relevant areas of application in business communication—presentation skills (Chapter 11); negotiation skills (Chapter 12); business etiquette (Chapter 13); CVs, personal interrviews, and group discussion (Chapter 14); and written analysis of cases (Chapter 15).

THE TEACHING AND LEARNING PACKAGE

A full range or resources that support teaching and learning are available on the companion Web site of this book, www.pearsoned.co.in/PDChaturvedi. These include:

- PowerPoint lecture slides that provide an overview of the key concepts, figures, and guidelines in each chapter.
- An instructors' manual that provides teaching notes and helps instructors approach difficult concepts in each chapter.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We express our sincere gratitude to our students, colleagues, and the executive participants of numerous management development programmes, who have helped us clarify our concepts of business communication. We are also thankful to the distinguished scholars and authors whose works we have used over the years in our teaching, research, and training. Their works have become an unconscious part of the ideas and thoughts discussed in this book. We appreciate the assistance of those, without whose help, this book could never have seen the light of day—Manisha Chaturvedi and the editorial team at Pearson—Shabnam Dohutia, Malini Kochhar, Sukanya Chakrabarti, Praveen Tiwari, and Abhinav Chaturvedi.

We thank our prospective readers in advance, for they would be a source of improvement and further development of this book.

Finally, we would fail in our duty if we did not acknowledge the most loving care and support enjoyed by us, all through the work on this book, from our dear family—Roli Chaturvedi, Akbar, Ritushree, and Milky.

P. D. Chaturvedi
Mukesh Chaturvedi

About the Authors

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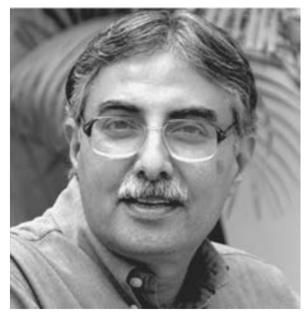
A specialist in modern literary criticism, Dr Chaturvedi has been researching the nature and process of communication as an expression of personality for a long time. His books—*University Essays* (1949), *Principles of Applied Grammar* (1954), and *Language Through Reading* (1989)—and his numerous other contributions to national and international journals are known for their lucidity of thought and expression.

Dr Chaturvedi's name appears as Piyush Dhar Chaturvedi (1928), an academic, in *Marquis Who's Who in the World* (5th edition, 1980, and 6th edition, 1981).



Dr Mukesh Chaturvedi, Professor, Birla Institute of Management Technology (BIMTECH), Greater Noida, has also taught in MDI Gurgaon, XLRI Jamshedpur, and BITS, Pilani. He has been Founder Director of the Amity Centre for CRM, Amity Business School, Noida; Director, Asia-Pacific Institute of Management, Delhi; and Acting Director, IMT Ghaziabad. Dr Chaturvedi has also been a visiting faculty at Rouen Business School, France, and IIM Ahmedabad.

Dr Chaturvedi received his MMS degree and Ph.D. from BITS, Pilani. He is also an alumnus of the prestigious International Visitor Program of USIA, Washington, D.C.

Dr Chaturvedi's areas of interest include business communication, case writing and teaching, integrated marketing communications, customer relationship, direct marketing, corporate reputation, sales management, presentation skills, and negotiation skills. He has rendered training and consulting services to a large number of MNCs and private- and public-sector companies.

Dr Chaturvedi received MDI's coveted *Award for Excellence in Teaching* in 2005. His publications include *Managing Innovation and New Product Development*, *Business Communication Today*, *Managing Global Business: A Strategic Perspective*, *Buying Research*, *New Product Development*, and *Welcome Back! Coca-Cola*. He has contributed more than 70 papers, articles, and cases to leading journals, periodicals and newspapers, and has presented papers at several international/national seminars and conferences.

Case Study

The Profile of an Effective Communicator

It's not what you say; it's how you say it—because personality always wins the day.

*–**Arthur Miller***

[Sunday, 11:40 a.m. The showroom of Devox Sports Shoes & Sportswear in a posh market of a metro. Mr and Mrs Oberoi walk towards the showroom from the parking lot holding a box of Devox shoes. Mr Oberoi is an HR executive with a multinational company. He is dressed in a red t-shirt, a pair of long khaki shorts, and sandals. Mrs Oberoi is wearing a plain, light blue salwar kameez. She is holding a shopping bag and a small purse. Mr Oberoi enters the shop first as Mrs Oberoi decides to linger outside to look at the display windows. On entering the shop, he is greeted by Rahul, a young sales executive trainee who is on a visit to the showroom from the company's headquarters.]

Rahul: Good morning, sir! May I help you?

Mr Oberoi: Oh, yes. Well, I bought this pair of shoes from this shop last Sunday. I have just worn them twice. I have a feeling that they are from a seconds lot. (*Tries to hand over the box, but Rahul has his hands behind his back.*)

Rahul: Sir, we don't stock seconds in this showroom.

Mr Oberoi: (*Opening the box of shoes*) It did strike me while I was buying the shoes but I was more keen on the colour; maybe that's why I overlooked it. (*He points to the toes of the shoes.*) There is a difference between the two shoes here. The stripes are not aligned the same way. It seems to be a manufacturing defect.

Rahul: (*Looking at the shoes but with his hands still behind his back*) Sir, this is the way they are designed. It is not a manufacturing defect.

Mr Oberoi: (*Getting closer to Rahul and trying to hand over the shoes so he could take a look*) This can't be the design. It is an alignment defect and it looks like a seconds pair.

Rahul: (*Still not taking the shoes*) Sir, I can show you other pairs. They are all made the same way. (*He asks one of the shop assistants to get a couple of pairs of the same shoes, and moves on to attend to other customers. When he returns after about six minutes, he finds Mr Oberoi trying on a different pair.*) See, I said that they were all made the same way. It is the design, not a manufacturing defect.

Mr Oberoi: Then I have a feeling that this showroom is selling defective pieces. They are not from fresh stock.

Rahul: Sir, as I have informed you, we do not keep any seconds in this showroom as a policy. In fact, we don't have much seconds stock because our production line is most modern.

Mr Oberoi: (*Picking up his pair of shoes*) Anyway, I want to return them. I don't want to wear a defective pair.

Rahul: I am sorry, sir. We can't take these back. Our policy is not to take back goods that have been sold.

Mr Oberoi: What! (*Raising his voice*) First you do not accept that this is a defective pair. And then you tell me that I can't return it. What kind of shop is this?

Rahul: (*Looking grim but speaking steadily*) Sir, they are not defective. Secondly, you have already used them. How can I take them back?

[At this moment, Mr Sharma, the manager of the showroom, comes out from his office, notices them, and walks up to Mr Oberoi.]

Mr Sharma: May I help you, sir?

Rahul: This is Mr… (*trying to introduce Mr Oberoi*)

Mr Oberoi: (*Interrupting Rahul*) I'm Sunil Oberoi. I bought this pair of shoes (*showing him the shoes*) last week from your showroom. I find that there is something wrong with the design (*points to the toes*). In fact, a couple of my friends pointed it out.

Mr Sharma: Did you notice this when you made the purchase?

Mr Oberoi: I noticed it but didn't bother about it then.

Mr Sharma: May I know why?

Mr Oberoi: Perhaps because I was concentrating on the colour.

Mr Sharma: Well, Mr Oberoi, this is no design or manufacturing defect. On the contrary, this is the way these shoes are made to look. You can see that all of them (*pointing at the pairs lying on the floor*) have the same pattern.

Mr Oberoi: But they look old. And I don't want to wear something that looks like seconds.

Mr Sharma: Mr Oberoi, the company doesn't have a policy of…

Mr Oberoi: (*Interrupting him*) Then I am leaving them here (*drops the pair on the floor*). Please do whatever you want to do with them.

Mr Sharma: (*Looking down at the shoes for a while*) Do you have a receipt?

Mr Oberoi: (*Searches for a while in his wallet and checks the box of shoes*) Let me check with my wife. (*He turns to look for her; she is coming towards them.*) Do you have the receipt for these shoes?

Mrs Oberoi: No, I don't think you gave it to me. (*She checks her purse.*) No, I don't have it.

Mr Oberoi: I don't know. I may have left it at home.

Mr Sharma: Please give us a moment. (*He asks Rahul to accompany him to his office.*)

Mrs Oberoi: What did they say?

Mr Oberoi: They don't have a policy of taking back sold goods.

Mrs Oberoi: I told you; they won't take them back.

Mr Oberoi: Is that so? They will have to take them back; you wait and see.

[In the meanwhile, Rahul emerges from Mr Sharma's office and approaches Mr Oberoi.]

Rahul: Sir, we will have to refer the matter to our head office. You can check back with us after two days.

Mr Oberoi: I can't come back on a weekday.

Rahul: Next Sunday, then?

Mr Oberoi: But I have other things to do on Sunday.

Rahul: Then you can find out over the phone. (*Rahul gets him a card with the showroom's phone number.*)

Mr Oberoi: (*Instead of taking the card, he takes out his own business card from his wallet and gives it to Rahul.*) Why don't you call and inform me?

Rahul: (*Taking the card*) Sure, we will do that. But in case we are not able to get through to you, you could also try calling us.

Mr Oberoi: (*Reluctantly*) Okay (*takes the card and turns to exit*).

Rahul: (*Picking up the pair from the floor*) You may keep the shoes with you in the meanwhile.

Mr Oberoi: (*Moving back towards him*) What will I do with them?

Rahul: Sir, until I have heard from our head office, I can't keep them here. Secondly, in the absence of a receipt, they might get misplaced.

Mr Oberoi: (*Looking hard at Rahul and thinking for a while*) Okay.

But do let me know soon.

Rahul: (*Packing the shoes back in the box and handing it over to him*) Sure.

[On the advice of Mr Sharma, the next day Rahul speaks to Mr Khare, the general manager of sales at the company headquarters. Mr Khare asks him to fax the details. Rahul sends him the following communication:]

Dear Mr Khare, 12 June 2009

A customer, Mr Sunil Oberoi, wants to return a pair of shoes he bought from this showroom a week ago. He claims that there is a manufacturing defect in the design. In fact, he is accusing us of selling seconds from this shop. Mr Sharma and I tried to convince him about our policies, but all in vain. Finally, to prevent him from creating a scene, we promised that we would let him know our decision after consulting the head office. I have also been successful in convincing him to take the shoes back with him. But he will certainly want an answer from us within a couple of days.

Please advise us as to what course of action we should take.
Regards,
Rahul

[The following day (Tuesday), Rahul leaves town on an official tour. On Wednesday morning, Mr Sharma finds the following message from Mr Khare on the fax machine]:

"If he is a Rs 4,500 customer, don't ask any questions, take the shoes back, give him a new pair, and salute him. But if he is a Rs 1,250 customer, then tell him clearly that it is not possible. Please remember that the customer is king, but kings are also big and small and rich and poor."

AN ANALYSIS OF THE CASE

Who is the most effective communicator in this situation, and why? This question was taken up and answered by over 1,500 participants in various communication workshops. Seventy per cent of participants considered Rahul to be the most effective communicator. Why?

Rahul is convincing, polite, calm, flexible, and clever. He uses proper gestures, gives options, and behaves as a professional salesperson—his communication is audience-conscious. He knows what, when, and how much to say.

An important dimension of business communication is the *you-attitude* of the speaker. The interest of the listener/receiver must be the informing principle of the message. Rahul observes this principle by eventually convincing the reluctant Mr Oberoi to keep the shoes till they hear from the head office.

Mr Oberoi would not have appreciated Rahul's first reason for not taking back the shoes—"We can't take these back. Our policy is not to take back goods that have been sold". But the other reason given by Rahul concerns Mr Oberoi's interest and hence motivates him effectively—"In the absence of a receipt, they might just get misplaced". If they did get misplaced, it would be Mr Oberoi's own fault for not producing the receipt. Rahul is successful in manipulating the whole situation effectively through his ability to communicate not just from his own point of view but from his listener's point of view too.

Rahul's *audience-directed communication* is also seen in his assurance that he would get back to Mr Oberoi over the phone. He also insists, "in case we are not able to get through to you, you could also try calling us". The phrase, "not able to get through to you" conveys that not being able to contact Mr Oberoi would be an unintended circumstance.

Reluctantly, Mr Oberoi accepts Rahul's suggestion, as it is in his own interest. An important requirement for communication to be convincing is a tone *of sincerity.* The message must be perceived by the audience as a true and reliable statement of the speaker's intentions. We find this ring of reassuring sincerity in Rahul's final "Sure" to Mr Oberoi.

The other central player in this case is Mr Oberoi. Mr Oberoi is confident and persisting. He has the air of a well-dressed, relaxed executive, but he is not able to keep his cool while pressing his point. He flares up. He is impatient. Instead of being a persuasive communicator, he tries to force the issue in a way that is not in good taste.

To some extent, Mr Oberoi's attitude is reflected in his dress and choice of colours (brick red and khaki), and the style of shorts (long) and sandals (casual). He is casual in his argument, which is not well-planned. He jumps from one argument to another. First he brings up the manufacturing defect, then the seconds issue, and, finally, his own desire to not wear something that looks old. Mr Oberoi's argument that he had noticed the "defect" at the time of making the purchase, but did not "bother about it much" is not very convincing.

Mr Oberoi's approach and attitude are marked by his sense of being a customer, a buyer who always enjoys the upper hand in a deal. However, he lacks the most important dimensions of communication—*coherence, logic,* and *a tone of persuasive reasoning.* He is not persuasive enough; he assumes that as a customer he is always right. His conversation with Mrs Oberoi, who claims to have predicted that "they won't take them back", shows that he believes that things can be forced. First, he questions the validity of the real situation; then he challenges the predicted end: "Is that so? They will have to take them back; you will see". These are words that suggest claims instead of negotiations.

Throughout the conversation, Mr Oberoi exhibits a sense of arrogance, which acts to hide his helplessness in the given situation. He says, almost like a helpless child, "Anyway, I want to return them!". Similarly, when he fears failure, he raises his voice and exclaims "What!", questioning the absurdity of the whole situation. Mr Oberoi becomes emotional and betrays his weaknesses. In sheer disgust, he gives up the argument and his goal of exchanging the shoes, simply dropping them on the floor and saying, "Please do whatever you want to do with them".

> The purpose of communication is to inform, persuade, or motivate the listener towards a desired action.

At this point, Mr Oberoi has completely failed as an effective communicator. Communication is successful only when its goal is fulfilled; the purpose of communication is to inform, persuade, or motivate the listener towards a desired action. In each situation/case, there is a positive change intended to be brought about in the audience or the receiver of the communication—a change of attitude, perception, or belief. So, in the ultimate analysis, all business communication is purposive and goal-directed. Therefore, the measure of effectiveness depends on the extent to which the final goal is achieved.

Does Mr Oberoi succeed in his purpose? Is he able to spell out what exactly he wants? Does he want to return the shoes and get his money back? Or does he want to get the shoes replaced by a different pair of the same quality and price? He is not exactly precise in his communication. He allows the issue of "seconds" to develop into the main concern, without getting to his real point. From his talk with Mrs Oberoi, it is possible to conclude that his purpose was to see that "they (the shop) take them (the shoes) back". In other words, he intended to return the shoes, as suggested by his exclamation to Rahul, "And then you tell me that I can't return it (the shoes)".

> In the ultimate analysis, all business communication is purposive and goal-directed. Therefore, the measure of effectiveness depends on the extent to which the final goal is achieved.

Mr Oberoi is also not consistent in his reasoning. He first points at the possible manufacturing defect, "The stripes are not aligned identically". Later, he shifts to another line of reasoning: "They look old". Mr Oberoi's arguments are not focused and range from the shoes having a manufacturing defect to being seconds stock to being old. He is not convincing in his argument. To convince, one has to state facts. Facts are objective and certain. They are not based on the feelings or wishes of the speaker or listener. Unfortunately, from the very beginning, Mr Oberoi gives subjective reasons. His reasons are always preceded by a qualifying, subjective statement. "I have a feeling…" or "It seems to be…". Now, "feeling" is not "thinking", just as "seems" is not "reality". They lack the logical force of an argument based on objective facts that are verifiable and demonstrable. The use of such modifiers may help the speaker sound polite, but it certainly weakens the logic and factual strength of the statement.

In contrast to Mr Oberoi's expressions, we see that Rahul makes categorical statements that are assertive in nature. "Sir, we don't have 'seconds' stock in this showroom", "Sir, this is the way they are designed. It is not a manufacturing defect". Throughout the exchange, Rahul is categorical and brief. We can appreciate the difference in the force of these two kinds of statements by looking at the following conversation between Rahul and Mr Oberoi:

Mr Oberoi:	Then I have a feeling that this showroom is selling defective pieces. They are not from fresh stock.
Rahul:	Sir, as I have informed you, we do not keep any seconds in this showroom as a policy. In fact, we don't have much seconds stock because our production line is most modern.

The difference is obvious and it lies in the nature of the language used by the two speakers. Hence, one of the very basic dimensions of effective communication is the knowledge and use of proper language for a specific purpose. Just as communication is always purposive, language is also purposive. The purpose can be to inform, persuade, create, or argue. One can use language by also combining some of these purposes.

Later, we shall examine the role of appropriate language in communication. Here, we should note that Rahul's use of spoken and written English is characterized by a certain style, which is simple, brief, exact, and professional in tone. His purpose is to convince Mr Oberoi that the company showroom was not dealing in seconds and that he would check with their head office regarding the possibility of taking back Mr Oberoi's used shoes. When speaking with Mr Khare, his purpose is to inform him about the incident and seek advice on the matter.

Some 20 per cent of participants in various communication workshops thought that as a communicator, Mr Sharma is more successful than others. He is clear, both about his role and his purpose. He is polite, firm, and a good listener. Listening is also an essential aspect of communicating. Not communicating deliberately is, as in Mr Sharma's case, also purposive. He is strategic in his intervention, helping out rather than joining in the argument. He is the manager and is conscious of his role in helping resolve the problem. As a strategy, he does not directly contradict Mr Oberoi's complaint. He does not begin by telling Mr Oberoi that he (Mr Oberoi) was wrong and that there was no manufacturing defect in the shoes bought by him. Instead, in a soft manner, he asks Mr Oberoi, "Did you notice this when you made the purchase?". This question puts forth a "why?" but only after first giving Mr Oberoi a chance to make his point. This shows Mr Sharma's ability to communicate by asking intelligent questions.

> One of the very basic dimensions of effective communication is the knowledge and use of proper language for a specific purpose. Just as communication is always purposive, language is also purposive.

Generally, the interrogative tone tends to make the speaker sound rude or offensive. Had Mr Sharma directly asked, "Why had you not noticed this at the time of buying the shoes?", his tone would appear to be more accusing and confrontational, changing its very nature and tone. Instead, Mr Sharma uses an indirect approach and asks Mr Oberoi, "Did you notice this when you made the purchase?" This does not question Mr Oberoi's skill as an observant, careful buyer. Such an implication would have hurt Mr Oberoi, who thought there was something wrong with the design of the shoes, even though he only realized this when his friends pointed it out. Mr Sharma questions Mr Oberoi's concerns and not his powers of observation. He does not embarrass Mr Oberoi as a customer and allows him to explain his distraction over the choice of colour.

Here, it looks like Mr Sharma knows the strategies of effective communication. He does not contradict the customer. Nor does he go about convincing Mr Oberoi that there was no design or manufacturing defect. On the contrary, he points out that the shoes had a deliberate pattern and shape. As a result, Mr Oberoi gives in and shifts to his next argument (that the shoes looked old). It is essential in such a situation to understand the psychology of the customer, who possibly rejects the shoes because he does not want to wear something that can be passed off as seconds.

Again, Mr Sharma's communication strategy is to be noted. He does not directly tell Mr Oberoi that it was not a seconds pair. Instead, he responds impersonally. He does not say "we do not keep…" or "our policy…". Instead, he politely informs Mr Oberoi about the company's policy. This impersonal communication is best suited to negative situations.

Another strategy used by Mr Sharma is diverting the topic of discussion or contention at a crucial juncture. When Mr Oberoi dumps the shoes on the floor and says, "Please do whatever you want to do with them", he is obviously frustrated and feeling helpless in the given situation. Here, Mr Sharma moves from the shoes to the question of the receipt. This is a psychological move. It heartens Mr Oberoi as a possible condition for returning the shoes. But as Mr Oberoi does not have the receipt with him, Mr Sharma withdraws from the scene and takes Rahul to his office. By doing so, he gives Mr Oberoi the impression that he is going to further discuss a possible way of helping him.

By creating a break in the conversation, Mr Sharma enables Rahul to return to Mr Oberoi with the final resolution. Here, Rahul involves Mr Oberoi a participant whose interest is being considered by the communicator—"Sir, we will have to refer the matter to our head office. You may check back after two days". The use of "Sir" directly involves Mr Oberoi. It acknowledges him as an understanding participant who is being persuaded that, if it were up to Rahul, he would have taken the shoes back, but because of the company's policy, he is unable to do so. However, he is ready to help him by referring the matter to the head office.

What about the other characters in this case? Ten per cent of participants considered Mr Khare to be the most effective communicator. He is brief, has clarity, and is humourous, decisive, and firm. Above all, he is prompt and unimposing in his role as the final adviser in the case. He offers specific guidelines to be followed by Rahul. Mr Khare is also professional in his advice. He communicates as a senior communicating with a junior and uses assertive sentences. His response to Rahul appears to be an order rather than simple advice. He uses an idiom to justify his discrimination between rich and poor customers ("the customer is king" is a common saying in retail services). Mr Khare's shrewdness is communicated through his application of common sense to this policy.

Verbal communication is given its full force and meaning by the personality of the communicator, who also communicates non-verbally.

The final character in the case is Mrs Oberoi. She shares only a brief verbal communication with her husband, but we receive many details about her through her non-verbal communication. For example, Mrs Oberoi chooses to stay away from the scene of dialogue. Her silence is deliberate. It communicates her belief that the store would not take back the shoes (or that her husband's claim was not justified). "I told you; they won't take them back", she tells Mr Oberoi later in the negotiations. Her clothes and purse communicate her purpose in coming out with her husband—she had come with him to do her own shopping. Her decision to stay out initially appeared to be out of a desire to do some window-shopping. But in the context of the total situation, her staying away seems to be a deliberate decision to allow Mr Oberoi to speak for himself. It is significant that she joins Mr Oberoi only when he is left alone, and her opening words to her husband, "What are they saying?" show her inquisitive mind and cool understanding of the facts as they are. Perhaps she does not share Mr Oberoi's belief that "They will have to take them back; you will see".

Mrs Oberoi uses short, assertive sentences. Her words, "I told you" and "they won't take them back" have a tone of certainty. She is factual. She thinks and speaks more like Rahul than Mr Oberoi.

Rahul's ability to communicate in writing is seen in his fax to Mr Khare. In this fax, the details of the incident, which was entirely oral, are put into written form. The message gives an accurate account of the incident. It is brief and to the point. Its language is simple and conversational. Its short sentences allow for the smooth flow of ideas. The use of connectives, such as "in fact", "finally", and "but", gives his writing coherence and logic. Thus, Rahul's written communication is a factual reporting of the incident. In a single chronologically organized paragraph, Rahul is able to convey the entire situation accurately.

What is important in Rahul's language, both spoken and written, is his use of assertive sentences and the choice of words. These characteristics show him to be a rational and cool-headed person. His professional training as a salesperson informs his communication with Mr Oberoi and Mr Khare. He remains conscious of his relationship with his customer. This is why he uses a courteous "sir" when addressing Mr Oberoi. He is impressive as an effective communicator because he is able to project his personality through language and comes across as a well-organized, clear-headed, smart sales executive.

All the characters in this case communicate both verbally and non-verbally. There are spoken and written forms of communication used to exchange thoughts, inform, argue, convince, advise, and instruct. The verbal communication is given its full force and meaning by the personality of the communicator, who also communicates non-verbally. The speaker's dress, gestures, body language, tone, clarity of approach, silence, humour, assertiveness, and aggressiveness all combine to constitute his or her personality and establish his or her relationship with the audience, determining the overall message communicated.

Further, the effectiveness of communication depends upon the kind of personalities that are involved—whether they are "I" personalities or "you" personalities or "it" personalities. Accordingly, the communication will be, in the words of Walker Gibson, "tough", "sweet", or "stuffy".[1] Gibson believes that when a communicator chooses certain words over others and chooses a certain organization or pattern of words over others, he or she projects a personality "with a particular centre of concern and a particular relation to the person he or she is addressing". Such dramatizations in language are known as style. The speaker or writer chooses a style of verbal and non-verbal communication to establish a particular centre of interest and relationship with the audience. In other words, the entire act of communication is the index of his or her mind, thoughts, and concerns, and attitudes towards the audience, himself or herself, and the subject. That is, a speaker's entire personality is at work when he or she seeks to communicate effectively.

Questions

1. Describe the important characteristics of a successful communicator with examples.
2. How do language skills contribute to the effectiveness of communication? Discuss.
3. Based on your study of the case, discuss the strong points of Rahul and Mr Sharma as communicators.
4. Discuss the importance of tone in oral communication.
5. Briefly discuss the part you think personality plays in communication.
6. Discuss what you have perceived about the characters in the case through their non-verbal mode of communication.

Endnote

1. Walker Gibson, *Tough, Sweet and Stuffy: An Essay on Modern American Prose Style* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1966).

1

The Nature and Process of Communication

"For communication to be effective, there has to be both information and meaning. And meaning requires communication."

— Peter F. Drucker

Upon completion of this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Know the principal concepts of communication.
2. Understand the communication process and its elements.
3. Know why communication succeeds or fails.
4. Recognize the techniques that help in communicating a message accurately.
5. Understand the universal elements in communication.

COMMUNICATION AT WORK

Mr Dutta's supervisor assigned him the task of meeting two of the company's most important clients on a given day. One of the meetings was more urgent, so Mr Dutta decided to see that client first. However, the meeting took much longer than expected and, as a result, he was quite late for his meeting with the second client.

As soon as the meeting with the first client ended, Mr Dutta had tried to contact the second client, but was not able to speak with him or leave a message. In the meanwhile, Mr Dutta's supervisor had spoken with the second client and was informed that Mr Dutta had not reached there.

At the end of the day, when Mr Dutta reported back to the office, his supervisor was furious with him. He tried his best to explain why he had been delayed, but the supervisor refused to listen. Mr Dutta thus failed to convince him that it was not his fault at all. He felt frustrated by the close-mindedness of his supervisor. He realized that one of the most difficult aspects of communication is to explain and convince, especially if the other person is already conditioned by some negative or contradictory communication from another source.

THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION

The skills of effective communication do not come automatically to most people. As a result, human beings are often poor communicators. Many people rarely realize that failure to achieve one's objectives in relationships, negotiations, or decision-making processes, is, to quite a large extent, owing to a failure in communicating one's purpose and ideas accurately to others. This may be a failure to communicate the content of the message, the form of the message, or both. Instances of such failures in communication are common in personal and organizational communications. It is common to hear colleagues or friends say something like, "Sorry, I did not realize that you wanted me to…", "I would have changed the arrangement, but nobody told me...", or even, "Well, I did not know you were to leave so soon…" and "But what was the point of this discussion?" Each of these remarks indicates the regret and disappointment felt by the speaker for having failed to live up to what was expected of him or her. Such remarks indicate a failure in communication. And when communication fails, the intended result is adversely affected. For instance, consider a situation in which the vice-president of a company asks his secretary to call an urgent meeting of all the managers, but, to his surprise, learns that the meeting has been scheduled for the next morning instead of the same day as he had expected. The secretary thought the "urgent" meant "serious" and not "immediate". In this instance, the receiver missed the purpose of communication because the vice-president did not clearly and precisely specify the time of the meeting. The secretary must have regretted that the vice-president's intended purpose was not accomplished because of this miscommunication. Sometimes, the failure to communicate successfully can be very disappointing, as can be seen in Communication Snapshot 1.1.

Communication Snapshot 1.1

An Instance of Unclear Communication

Ritushree is a regional sales manager with Titan in Chennai. She reads about an upcoming B2B international trade conference in Mumbai. She is interested in attending it and immediately writes to the national sales manager, Sumit Chakraborti, at the head office in Bangalore, describing the conference and its relevance to their work. Her note is given in Exhibit 1.1.

Exhibit 1.1
Ritushree's Note

Sumit Chakraborti
National Sales Manager
Titan India Limited
Bangalore 560001

Dear Mr Chakraborti,

An international conference on B2B trade, which would be of great importance for us, is being held in Mumbai. The enclosed brochure shows that the business information to be shared at the conference would be of great value in expanding our corporate sales business. The registration fee is only Rs. 5,000, and the cost of travel and stay is about Rs. 8,000. Hence, Rs. 13,000 will be required per person. I am informing you about the conference now so that you can take a decision in time for me to make the necessary arrangements for train/flight bookings and hotel accommodations.

Ritushree

The national sales manager was thrilled to receive the memo and wrote back immediately to Ritushree. His response is given in Exhibit 1.2.

Exhibit 1.2
The Response to Ritushree's Note

Dear Ritushree,
Thanks for informing me about the B2B conference in Mumbai. I will certainly attend it. Please make all the necessary arrangements for me as suggested in your memo.

Sumit Chakraborti

This response left Ritushree feeling quite frustrated. She was perplexed about her supervisor's decision to exclude her and instead attend the conference himself. Unfortunately, she did not realize that her message to him was not precise and clear. It was ambiguously worded, using phrases such as "importance for us" and "expanding our business". She was looking for permission to attend the conference herself, but she had failed to clearly say so in her memo. She started her communication by praising the conference, but instead, she should have begun by directly asking for permission to attend the conference.

DEFINING COMMUNICATION

The word *communication* is derived from the Latin *communis*, meaning "common". It refers to a natural activity of all humans, which is to convey opinions, feelings, information, and ideas to others through words (written or spoken), body language, or signs.

The word *communication* is derived from the Latin *communis*, which means "common". It refers to a natural activity of all humans, which is to convey opinions, feelings, information, and ideas to others through words (written or spoken), body language, or signs. George Vardman defines effective communication as "purposive symbolic interchange resulting in workable understanding and agreement between the sender and the receiver". [1]This interchange of information, ideas, and thoughts may occur via different modes: words (oral and written), signs, and gestures.

Emphasizing the processes of telling, listening, and understanding involved in the act of communicating with other people, Keith Davis[2] says that communication is "the transfer of information and understanding from one person to another person. It is a way of reaching others with facts, ideas, thoughts and values. It is a bridge of meaning among people so that they can share what they feel and know. By using this bridge, a person can cross safely the river of misunderstanding that sometimes separates people."

CLASSIFICATION OF COMMUNICATION

1

Know the principal concepts of communication.

One way to classify communication is according to the number of persons who receive the message.

- *Intrapersonal communication* is talking to oneself in one's own mind. Examples are soliloquies or asides in dramatic works.
- *Interpersonal communication* is the exchange of messages between two people. Examples are conversations, dialogues, or interviews in which two persons interact (others may also be present as audience). An author communicates *interpersonally* with his or her reader, who is always present as a silent audience in the author's mind while writing. A letter is also an example of interpersonal communication between the writer and the person to whom it is addressed.
- *Group communication* can be among small or large groups, such as an organization, club, or classroom, in which all individuals retain their individual identities.
- *Mass communication* is when a message is sent to large groups of people, for example by newspaper, radio, or television. In this process, each receiver is a faceless individual with almost no opportunity for response or feedback.

Communication can also be classified on the basis of the medium employed.

Any communication that involves the use of words—whether it consists of speaking, listening, writing, reading, or thinking—can be classified as *verbal communication*.

- *Verbal communication* means communicating with words, written or spoken. Verbal communication consists of speaking, listening, writing, reading, and thinking.
- *Non-verbal communication* includes the use of pictures, signs, gestures, and facial expressions for exchanging information between persons. It is done through sign language, action language, or object language.

  Non-verbal communication accompanies the acts of speaking and writing. It is a wordless message conveyed through gestures (signs), movements (action language), and pictures/clothes (object language). Further, non-verbal communication is characterized by personal space (proxemics), body language (kinesics), touch (haptics), eyes (oculesics), sense of smell (olfactics), and time (chronemics).

  All these aspects of non-verbal communication need to be understood as they affect and, at times, contradict verbal communication. We shall discuss them in detail in Chapter 7.
- *Meta-communication* is when the speaker's choice of words unintentionally communicates something more than what the words themselves state. For example, the remark, "I've never seen you so smartly dressed" could be a compliment, but could also mean that the regular attire of the listener needs improvement.

Non-verbal communication includes the use of sign language, action language, or object language. It is present in all acts of speaking and writing.

THE PURPOSE OF COMMUNICATION

Broadly speaking, in business, we communicate to: (a) inform and (b) persuade. These two goals are usually present in the mind of the person initiating the communication, as is seen in sales letters and advertisements. However, he or she may at times seek only to inform—as scientific writings do. Conversely, the person initiating the communication may aim more to persuade the reader, as journalistic writings and opinion editorials do.

Communication to Inform

Communication to inform (expository communication) is directed by the desire to expose, develop, and explain the subject. Its focus is the subject of the communication. For example, consider these short, expository pieces of writing:

1. Farming provides most of the food we eat. Our chief food crops are cereals or grains. Cereals include maize, rice, and wheat. We also grow barley and gram.
2. Flies are our deadly enemies because they feed on dirt and rubbish. When they crawl over meat, sweetmeats, and cakes with their dirty legs, they leave all kinds of germs behind and, thus, poison our food.

Exhibit 1.3
The HDFC Advertisement

Clearly, in these two passages, the focus is on the subjects "our food" and "flies, our deadly enemy". The logical presentation of facts informs us about the topics being discussed, and the danger associated with flies in the second passage is clearly conveyed.

Communication to Persuade

A communicator may seek primarily to persuade the reader ore receiver of the message. In such a form of communication, the focus is on the receiver. Essentially, all communication is a deliberate and intentional act of persuasion. A persuasive communicator wants the reader to understand the message and to be influenced by it.

Consider HDFC's "Savings/Current Account" advertisement in Exhibit 1.3, which says: "Now opening a Savings/Current Account with HDFC Bank is extremely rewarding." This handbill is reader-centric. The purpose of the message is not just to inform readers about a new

Exhibit 1.4
A Persuasive Business Letter

Journal of Indian Literature
Established in 1954
Editorial Office: Centre for Language and Learning
University of Delhi
Delhi 110007

Uses style and typical format of formal letter: no date, no personal salutation (by name)

Dear JIL contributor:

Opens with a statement of the main point

Attached is a set of reprints of your contribution to the most recent issue of JIL.

Expresses gratitude and appreciation

Persuades for the next contribution

<u>We are grateful to you for your contribution</u> and <u>look forward to more such submissions from you.</u>

Urges to subscribe to JIL

Includes contact details for action

If you need additional reprints or information regarding the full issue in which your contribution appeared, or <u>subscription prices</u>, please contact Ms Agatha Luiz, Managing Editor, at the editorial office, whose address is given above.

Closes on a personal note of appreciation

Again, let me reiterate my thanks to you for your contribution.

Best wishes,

SChatterjee
Somnath Chatterjee
Editor

savings and current account, but to persuade them to open such an account with HDFC Bank. Note how different adverbs and adjectives are chosen to draw the reader's attention. The adverb "now" is placed at the head (beginning) of the advertisement. This is the most important position in the structure of the sentence or paragraph. In the subject position, the adverb "now" seeks to persuade readers that until now no bank offered the convenience, benefit, and satisfaction of HDFC Bank's savings/current account. Similarly, the phrase, "extremely rewarding" aims at impressing the reader with the extraordinary operational convenience, monetary benefit, and personal satisfaction HDFC Bank offered its savings and current account holders.

As one can gather from the HDFC advertisement, business communication often needs to be persuasive. Exhibit 1.4 analyses an example of a persuasive business letter.

Essentially, all communication is a deliberate and intentional act of persuasion. A persuasive communicator wants the reader or receiver to understand the message and to be influenced by it.

THE PROCESS OF COMMUNICATION

The process of communication begins with a person's desire to share or exchange an idea, thought, or feeling with another person or persons. It basically involves a sender, a message, a medium, and a receiver.

The Linear Concept of Communication

The earliest conceptualization of communication by Harold Lasswell involved the following five basic questions:

1. Who?
2. Says what?
3. To whom?
4. In which channel?
5. With what effect?

Early ideas of communication considered it a one-way (linear) process marked by the flow of information from a sender to a receiver (see Exhibit 1.5).

Communication was considered a one-way process marked by the flow of information from a sender to a receiver.

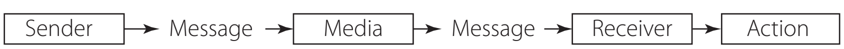


Exhibit 1.5
The Linear Model of Communication

According to this linear view, the receiver passively receives the message and acts as directed or desired by the sender. Communication is intended to control/manipulate the receiver. It is assumed that the message, while passing through the medium chosen by the sender, reaches the receiver without any distortion or change.

The Shannon–Weaver Model

C. E. Shannon and W. Weaver[3] were the first to point out that in actual practice, messages can be changed or blocked. Shannon's model of communication was first published in the *Bell System Technical Journal*. It was based on the mathematical or mechanistic view of the communication process, in which the basic problem is that the message received is not the same as the message sent. He attributed the loss to noise. The Shannon model, co-authored with Weaver, was brought out later in *The Mathematical Theory of Communication* in 1949. Weaver introduced the idea of feedback as a corrective counter to noise. However, in the Shannon–Weaver model, feedback was not considered to be an integral component because the model conceived the communication process as a linear act and feedback as a new act of communication. This is why in the Shannon–Weaver model shown in Exhibit 1.6, feedback is represented by dotted lines.

2

Understand the communication process and its elements.

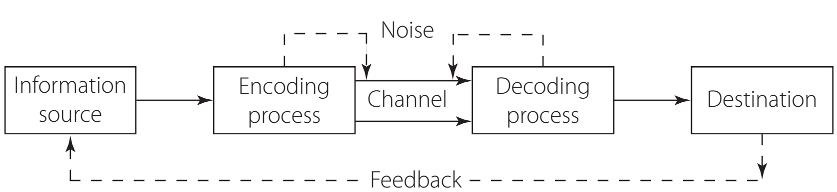


Exhibit 1.6
A Diagram Based on the Shannon–Weaver Model
Source: Based on C. Shannon and W. Weaver, *The Mathematical Theory of Communication* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1949), 5.

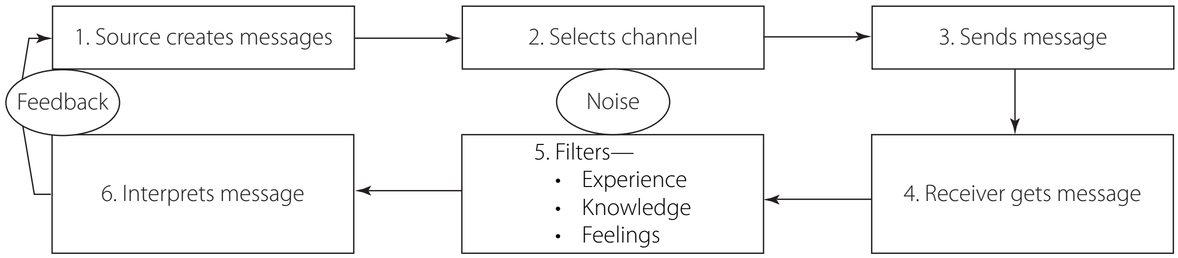


Exhibit 1.7
How Communication Takes Place

The model is based on the idea that communication occurs only when the message has been received and that it should be received unchanged, as far as possible. This is, of course, a theoretical concept of perfect communication. In real life, filters in the minds of both the sender and the receiver affect the content of the message. To an extent, feedback corrects the distortions and helps complete the cycle of communication (see Exhibit 1.7).

The Shannon–Weaver model comprises the following basic elements:

- *Information source (ideation):* The communication process begins with the information source. The sender has some raw information in the form of outside experience. His or her intent changes that information into a message to be communicated. The source of a message, therefore, is the information source of the communication process.
- *Encoding (transmitter):* After having thought about the message, the sender puts it into words (verbal symbols or any other symbolic form of expression). This process is called encoding.
- *Channel (transmission):* An appropriate medium—oral, written, or electronic, in code, or a signalling system—chosen to send the message is known as the channel.
- *Receiver (decoding):* The receiver gets the message through decoding—by receiving, understanding, and interpreting the message.
- *Acting:* The communication process ends with the receiver putting the interpreted message into action, as intended by the sender.

The communication process begins with the information source.

We see that communication completes a full circle, bringing together the sender and the receiver to become two aspects of a single purpose. It is this unifying process and role of communication that has made modern management organizations consider communication as an essential skill for successful managers. According to Davis[4], "The only way that management can be achieved in an organization is through the process of communication."

A group of people are involved in completing the cycle of communication, in which the receiver also acts as the sender of the feedback to the transmitter (sender).

- *Noise:* The process of communication is, however, open to "noise", which prevents or distorts communication. Noise may be described as any distortion or hindrance that prevents the transmission of the message from the (mind of) the sender to the (mind of) the receiver.

  For some communication theorists, noise basically refers to any external disturbance in the physical environment surrounding the act of communication, or noise in the machine used for communicating the message, such as telephone disturbances, poor print, or bad handwriting.

  Communication distortions caused by subjective factors, such as the mindset of the sender or the receiver, are attributed to filters.
- *Filters:* Filters are mental in nature. They include attitudes, beliefs, experiences, consciousness of personal status, and the ability to think clearly. Misunderstandings and different problems may arise as the message is transmitted through the filters of both parties, such as low interest or involvement in the message or distraction and fatigue causing loss of concentration.

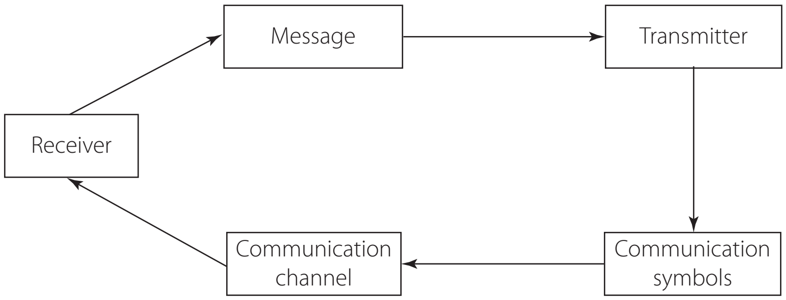


Exhibit 1.8
Two-way Flow of Communication

The Two-way Communication Process

More recent conceptualizations of the communication process look at communication as a two-way process. A group of people are involved in completing the cycle of communication, in which the receiver also acts as the sender of feedback to the original transmitter (sender). Thus, both the sender and receiver play reciprocal and reversible roles, as in telemarketing or call-centre communications. Consider the two-way flow of communication illustrated in Exhibit 1.8.

The two-way concept of communication is more contemporary. It considers communication essentially to be a reciprocal process and a mutual exchange of messages. It makes no sharp distinction between the roles of the sender (source) and the receiver, because the same person plays both roles, often simultaneously.

> The two-way concept of communication is more contemporary. It considers communication essentially to be a reciprocal process and a mutual exchange of messages.

The earlier linear view treated the sender as the determiner of the message and its meaning. The two-way concept involves the receiver as an active agent in constructing the meaning of the message. The meaning of the message is perceived in the context of the receiver's experiences, beliefs, and feelings. The intended and received meanings may result in common interpretations of situations, ideas, schemes, and events to the extent that people live and work together and develop common attitudes and viewpoints with regards to their organization or society. The two-way communication process is also known as *transactional communication,* which has been explained in Exhibit 1.9.

> The two-way communication process is also known as *transactional communication*.

Communication is purposive in nature. It achieves success by manipulating the target audience through information and persuasion to effect the intended action.

THE ELEMENTS OF COMMUNICATION

The various elements of communication are briefly described to explain the process of communication.

- *Message:* The message is the information, written or spoken, which is to be sent from one person to another. Here, the word *person* represents the two ends of a system and may represent an individual, a group of individuals, or even electronic machines.

> The most important characteristic of a message as an element of communication is that it is organized, structured, shaped, and selective—a product of the pre-writing or pre-speaking stage.

Communication source	An organization's news bulletin containing a policy to be circulated among all employees
Encoder	The editor/person who writes the policy
Message	The content (policy details) and the words/pictures used to convey the policy to employees
Channel	The medium—in this case the news bulletin
Decoder/receiver	The audience of the message—those for whom the policy is intended and who read the bulletin
Feedback	Impact/effectiveness of the communication in achieving its objectives

Exhibit 1.9
Transactional Communication

The written medium can be in the form of letters, memos, reports, manuals, notices, circulars, questionnaires, minutes of meetings, and so on.

The most important characteristic of a message as an element of communication is that it is organized, structured, shaped, and selective—a product of the pre-writing or pre-speaking stage. It exists in the mind of the sender (communicator).

- *Sender:* The person who transmits, spreads, or communicates a message or operates an electronic device is the one who conceives and initiates the message with the purpose of informing, persuading, influencing, or changing the attitude, opinion, or behaviour of the receiver (audience/listener). He or she decides the communication symbols, the channel, and the time for sending the message after carefully considering the total context in which communication takes place.
- *Encoding:* Encoding is the process of changing the message (from its mental form) into symbols, that is, patterns of words, gestures, or pictorial forms or signs. In short, it means putting ideas, facts, feelings, and opinions into symbols, which can be words, actions, signs, and pictures. The communication symbols are selected by the sender keeping in mind the receiver's ability to understand and interpret them correctly.

The channel (medium) can also be visual, such as hoardings, posters, slides, documentary films, television programmes, and advertisements.

- *Channel:* This is the vehicle or medium that facilitates the sending of the message to the receiver. The medium of communication can be written, oral, audio-visual, or live. Again, the written medium can be in the form of letters, memos, reports, manuals, notices, circulars, questionnaires, minutes of meetings, and so on. Similarly, the oral medium can be in the form of a dialogue, a face-to-face interview, a telephone conversation, a conference recording, and so on. The channel (medium) can also be visual, such as hoardings, posters, slides, documentary films, television programmes, and advertisements.
- *Receiver:* A receiver is the targeted audience of the message. The receiver understands, interprets, and tries to perceive the total meaning of the message as transmitted by the sender.
- *Decoding:* This is the act of translating symbols into their ordinary meanings. However, the total meaning lies in the meanings of the words (symbols) together with the tone and attitude of the sender as reflected by the structure of the message and the choice of words used by him or her (the sender).
- *Acting:* Communication manipulates the receiver to act in a desired manner. A receiver's response action shows that he or she has understood the message. Finally, the receiver completes the chain of communication by responding to the message.

In management, the decision-making process is greatly helped by receiving feedback from those who are directly concerned with the changes proposed in the communication.

- *Feedback:* This is the loop that connects the receiver with the sender, who, in turn, acts as a feedback receiver and, thus, learns that communication has been accomplished. Feedback plays an important role in communication. It helps the communicator know if there are any corrections or changes to be made in the proposed action. It also ensures that the receiver has received the message and understood it as intended by the sender.

In management, the decision-making process is greatly helped by receiving feedback from those who are directly concerned with the changes proposed in the communication. The process of feedback assures the initiator of the action of its correctness and impact.

THE MAJOR DIFFICULTIES IN COMMUNICATION

The following are the main difficulties usually experienced by communicators:

- Ensuring that the interpreted meaning affects behaviour in the desired way
- Achieving accuracy in communicating the message
- Ensuring that the message conveys the desired meaning

The purpose of two-way communication is to establish understanding and rapport between the sender (speaker) and receiver (audience). However, the communicators (sender/receiver) generally experience the following difficulties:

- *No perceived benefit to the audience:* The receiver (listener) finds the message of no relevance or interest and, therefore, remains unresponsive.

- *Noise, outside disturbance:* To receive the message correctly, the receiver needs to remain attentive without being disturbed by any kind of physical, environmental, or psychological disturbance.
- *Variations in listening skills:* The ability to listen with comprehension is not equally developed in all persons. Some individuals, therefore, respond to communication by missing parts of the complete message.
- *Cultural differences:* The word *culture* refers to the entire system of an individual's beliefs, social customs, and personal values. It includes the individual's educational background and family nurturing. The problem of proper understanding arises in situations of intercultural communication because of the differences in cultures across the world.
- *Complexity of subject matter/message:* A difficult and involved message acts as a barrier to a smooth understanding of the message.
- *Time restraints, real or perceived:* Both the sender and receiver lose organized exposition and reception of the message if they are pressured by a lack of time.
- *Personal biases or hostility:* Prejudice and resentment towards the speaker condition the understanding of the message.
- *Difficult questions:* Questions regarding personal behaviour and management policies and practices may not be easy to answer. They are to be responded to with carefully considered honesty and frankness if the questioner is to be satisfied with the answer.
- *Sensitive issues:* A situation or subject that involves the other person's feelings and problems needs to be dealt with sensitively and carefully, because the matter may upset people. However, it may sometimes be difficult to avoid such sensitive issues entirely.

BARRIERS TO COMMUNCATION

In communication, a psycho-semantic process, the word *barrier* implies, mainly, something non-physical that keeps people apart or prevents activity, movement, and so on; examples are social, ethnic, and language barriers or lack of confidence. These negative forces may affect the effectiveness of communication by acting upon any or all of the basic elements of the communication process and the sender/receiver/channel. The more commonly experienced communication barriers are lack of planning, incorrect assumptions, semantic difficulties, and cultural differences. Some other barriers of communication are:

In communication, a psycho-semantic process, the word *barrier* implies, mainly, something non-physical that keeps people apart or prevents activity, movement, and so on.

- Socio-psychological barriers
- Emotions
- Selective perception
- Information overload
- Loss by transmission
- Poor retention
- Goal conflicts
- Offensive style
- Abstracting
- Slanting
- Inferring

Broadly speaking, some of these barriers can be attributed to the sender and some to the receiver. Barriers attributable to the sender are:

- Lack of planning
- Vagueness about the purpose of communication and objectives to be achieved

A common barrier for the sender and the receiver can be created by the absence of a common frame of reference affecting the smooth interpretation of thoughts, feelings, and attitudes from the sender to the receiver in a specific social situation.

- Poor choice of words, resulting in a badly encoded message
- Unshared or incorrect assumptions
- Different perceptions of reality
- Wrong choice of channel

Barriers attributable to the receiver are:

- Poor listening skills
- Inattention
- Mistrust
- Lack of interest
- Premature evaluation
- Semantic difficulties
- Bias
- Different perceptions of reality
- Lack of trust
- Attitudinal clash with the sender
- Unfit physical state

A common barrier for the sender and the receiver can be created by the absence of a common frame of reference affecting the smooth interpretation of thoughts, feelings, and attitudes from the sender to the receiver in a specific social situation.

The most important aspect of human communication is the fact that it takes place in the world of reality that surrounds us.

Identification of a well-defined social context in which communication takes place helps both the sender and the receiver perceive the content of the communication in a similar way, with similar implications and meaning.

The physical noise and other faults in the surroundings and the instruments of transmission of the message relate mainly to the channel, but they may not necessarily distort the overall meaning of the total message.

Many of the barriers listed here are easy to understand. But a few of them may still need further explanation.

Incorrect Assumptions

All communications from one person to another are made under some assumptions, which are not necessarily communicated to the other party. They may turn out to be incorrect and thus result in communication failure. For instance, we often assume that others:

- see the situation as we do.
- should feel about the situation as we do.
- think about the matter as we do.
- understand the message as we understand it.

All such assumptions may be incorrect; therefore, one should try to verify them whenever possible. That would help the communication to be more effective.

Psychosocial Barriers

There can be many types of psychosocial barriers to communication. The key barriers are discussed here.

Consciousness of one's status affects the two-way flow of communication. It gives rise to personal barriers caused by the superior–subordinate relationship.

Status

Consciousness of one's status affects the two-way flow of communication. It gives rise to personal barriers caused by the superior–subordinate relationship. A two-way vertical channel is present in most organizations, yet few subordinates choose to communicate with their superiors.

Similarly, superiors may be unwilling to directly listen or write to their subordinates and seldom accept hearing that they are wrong. Though organizations are culturally changing and adopting flat structures, the psychological distance between superiors and subordinates persists.

3

Know why communication succeeds or fails.

Perception and Reality

The most important aspect of human communication is the fact that it takes place in the world of reality that surrounds us. This world acts as our sensory environment. While we are engaged in the process of communicating, our sense organs remain stimulated by the different sensations of smell, taste, sound, forms and colours around us. All these sense perceptions received by our brain through our senses recreate within each one of us the world that exists within our mind as its content. Thus, there are two aspects of the same reality—one that actually surrounds the communicator from outside and another that is its mental representation (in his or her mind) as he or she sees it.

The objects that excite our five sense organs/perceptions—eyes, ears, nose, tongue (taste), flesh (touch)—are called *signs*.

The objects that excite our five sense organs/perceptions—eyes, ears, nose, tongue (taste), flesh (touch)—are called *signs*. Our senses respond to these signs and we receive sensations that pass into the brain through a network of sensory nerves. Our perceptions—the mental images of the external world—are stored in our brains and form our viewpoints, experiences, knowledge, feelings, and emotions. They constitute what we really are, how we think of something, or how we feel or respond to something. These stored perceptions colour and modify whatever our brain receives from any signs, data, thoughts, or messages. That is why these conditioning perceptions existing in the brain are called *filters*. The mind filters the message received from the signs and gives it meaning, according to individual perception.

It is obvious that each individual's filter would be unique. No two individuals have the same or similar experiences, emotional make-up, knowledge, or ways of thinking. Because filters differ, different individuals respond to signs with different understandings. The sign may be a word, gesture, or any other object of nature; each individual will respond to it in his or her own way and assign the total meaning to that sign according to his or her filter.

The presence of a unique filter in each sender and receiver of a communication causes a communication gap (distortion) in the message.

In face-to-face communication, this gap can be more easily removed. In most cases, the speaker does realize that he or she has not been correctly understood through the listener's facial expressions, gestures, or other forms of body language. Alternatively, the listener might say, "Sorry, I didn't get you". Of course, much depends on how formally/informally the two are related to each other in the office, workplace, or life.

Our perceptions—the mental images of the external world—are stored in our brains and form our viewpoints, experiences, knowledge, feelings, and emotions.

But in situations in which the audience is invisible, as in written communications—letters, memos, notices, proposals, reports, and so on—the semantic gap between the intended meaning and the interpreted meaning remains unknown to the communicator and also to the unsuspecting receiver who misses the total meaning in terms of the tone, feelings, and seriousness of purpose of the sender. The feedback does help the sender, but it may be too late.

CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL COMMUNICATION

Essentially, to communicate is to share information in its widest sense with others, in an intelligible, participative form through the medium of words (spoken or written), gestures, or other signs.

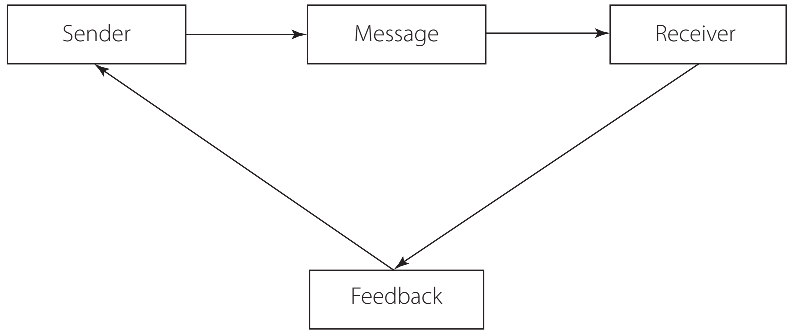
No two individuals have the same or similar experiences, emotional make-up, or ways of thinking.

Two basic things stand out here. One, the message is to be both "known" and "understood" by others. Two, communication is a symbolic act, whether it is verbal or non-verbal. These two aspects—the purpose and nature of communication—act as the two determining influences in the practice of communication in all contexts of speaking or writing.

Herein lies the crucial difference between effective and ineffective communication. If something is communicated and is not fully understood by the receiver, then communication has been ineffective, not fully serving the condition of being understood. If the message has been understood, the response of the receiver—the feedback—indicates this.

Keith Davis[5] lays down the *Rule of Five* to guide the receiver to be an effective element of the communication process. "In the communication process, the role of the receiver is,

Exhibit 1.10
Successful Communication



I believe, as important as that of the sender. There are five receiver steps in the process of communication—receive, understand, accept, use, and give feedback. Without these steps being followed by the receiver, no communication process would be complete and successful."

Thus, communication can be considered successful when:

- the message is properly understood.
- the purpose of the sender is fulfilled.
- the sender and the receiver of the message remain linked through feedback (see Exhibit 1.10).

4

Recognize the techniques that help in communicating a message accurately.

THE SEVEN C'S OF COMMUNICATION

Francis J. Bergin[6] advocates that there are seven C's to remember in verbal communication. These are also applicable to written communication. They are:

1. *Candidness:* In all business transactions, one's view of a matter should be honest and sincere and should reject prejudice or bias. The guiding principle should be fairness to self and to others involved in the situation. Phrases that qualify observations with the words "my honest opinion" or "frankly speaking" indicate an attempt to be candid, open-hearted, and sincere. Honesty implies consideration of the other person's (listener's) interest and his or her (the listener's) need to know objective facts. Thus, sharing of thoughts should be characterized by the "you" attitude.

   Candid talk also exhibits the speaker's self-confidence. In oral communication, confidence is a key element in creating an impact. When something is said without hesitation, it expresses a confident manner.

   In everyday life and in business, we may see persons in power doing things such as appointing relatives to important positions, neglecting merit in assigning jobs/functions, or becoming inappropriately close to an individual or a group of individuals. Such actions are bound to emotionally alienate others from that person. Out of consideration and concern for that person's long-term image and relationships in the organization, it is important to communicate one's view of such administrative unfairness in an unbiased manner.

2. *Clarity:* The principle of clarity is most important in all communications, especially in face-to-face interactions. It is not always easy to verbalize ideas accurately on the spot during conversations, presentations, or other oral forms of interaction.

   It is not always easy to verbalize ideas accurately on the spot during conversations, presentations, or other oral forms of interaction.

   Clarity requires the use of accurate and familiar words with proper intonation, stresses, and pauses. Spoken language should consist of simple words and short sentences. Thoughts should be clear and well-organized. The speaker should know what to say and why. It is a clear mind that can talk clearly and effectively.

   However, in case of doubt or uncertainty due to lack of clarity of thought or expression, the listener can, in a one-to-one oral communication, seek immediate clarification from the speaker.

Superfluous Statements	*Concise Statements*
At this point of time . . .	Now . . . , or at present . . .
As regards the fact that…	Considering . . .
Because of the fact that…	As . . ., or because . . .
Are in need of . . .	Need . . .
In due course of time . . .	Soon…
Not very far from here . . .	Nearby . . . , or close by . . .

Exhibit 1.11
Examples of Superfluous and Concise Statements

3. *Completeness:* Clarity is ensured also by completeness of message. In conversations or oral presentations, one can easily miss some parts of the communication. It is, therefore, essential that oral presentations, discussions, or dialogues should be, as far as possible, planned and structured. Therefore, when the speaker begins the presentation, dialogue, or address, he or she should ensure that all the necessary information that listeners need or expect has been provided.

   The principle of completeness requires that speakers communicate whatever is necessary, provide answers to all possible questions that could be raised, and add additional information, if necessary, as footnotes. For example, in an interview, if an interviewee fails to answer a question completely, it could imply that he or she is deliberately sidestepping a particular issue. It could also raise doubts in the audience that there is something to hide regarding that matter. In a situation where the interviewee has no information or answer or is unwilling to discuss a particular question, he or she should frankly express their inability to answer.
4. *Conciseness:* In business and professional communication, brevity is important. One should avoid being repetitive. It is a common but erroneous assumption that repeating whatever has been said in multiple ways adds emphasis to the message.

   The examples in Exhibit 1.11 are show that spoken language tends to become wordy. Fewer words should not mean less meaning. Rather, it is possible to achieve intensity and concentration without sacrificing essential meaning.
5. *Concreteness:* Concreteness means being specific and definite in describing events and things. Avoid using vague words that don't mean much. In oral communication, one cannot draw figures, tables, or diagrams to illustrate one's point. But one can choose precise words and speak with proper modulation and force to make sounds reflect the meaning. For example, in oral communication passive voice is avoided because active voice reflects force and action. It also sounds more natural and direct. For example, no one says, "you are requested by me to visit us". A more vivid way to express the same sentiment is, "I request you to visit us".
6. *Correctness:* In the spoken form of communication, grammatical errors are not uncommon. The speaker can forget the number and person of the subject of the verb if the sentence is too long. Sometimes even the sequence of tenses is incorrect. And most frequently, the use of the pronoun is incorrect, especially in indirect narration or reported speech (see Exhibit 1.12).
7. *Courtesy:* In conversational situations, meetings, and group discussions, an effective speaker maintains the proper decorum of speaking. One should say things assertively, but without being rude. Courtesy demands not using words that are insulting or hurtful to the listener.

In a situation where the interviewee has no information or answer or is unwilling to discuss a particular question, they should frankly express their inability to answer.

Courtesy demands not using words that are insulting or hurtful to the listener.

In business discussions, it is necessary to respect the other person by listening to him or her patiently and without interruption.

The speaker's tone should reflect respect for their listener or audience. The pitch and tone should be level and measured rather than aggressive; they should not suggest that the speaker is talking *at* the listener.

Exhibit 1.12
The Necessity of Grammatical Accuracy for Effective Communication

Incorrect Statement	*Correct Statement*
He said to me that I will surely go there.	He told me that he would surely go there.
Kindly explain to me this poem of Keats.	Kindly explain this poem of Keats to me.
I consider her as my sister.	I consider her my sister.
She shut the TV and then opened the taps for her bath.	She turned off the TV and then turned on the taps for her bath.
The stars walk as if the whole world belongs to them.	The stars walk as if the whole world belonged to them.
Shahzad has also claimed that a Bihar-based former junior minister and prominent Mumbai politician helped him evade arrest.	Shahzad has also claimed that a Bihar-based former junior minister and a prominent Mumbai politician helped him evade arrest.
The dealer agreed to either exchange the shirt or to refund the money.	The dealer agreed either to exchange the shirt or to refund the money.
How long has it been since you had your last promotion?	How long is it since you had your last promotion?
The crowd cheered him making double century.	The crowd cheered his making a double century.
Being an experienced manager, we are sure you can resolve the conflict.	As you are an experienced manager, we are sure you can resolve the conflict.
Sohan and her are equally brilliant.	Sohan and she are equally brilliant.
His wife is taller than him.	His wife is taller than he (is tall).
She is looking for who?	Whom is she looking for?

5

Understand the universal elements in communication.

UNIVERSAL ELEMENTS IN COMMUNICATION

There are some universal elements in all human communication:

- *The communication environment:* All communicators act within the sensory environment around them, from which their senses receive competing stimuli impinging upon the content of communication.
- *Use of symbols:* All communicators use verbal symbols and signs such as words, body movements, facial expressions, and so on, to encode (and to decode) messages.
- *The mental filter:* All communicators/receivers of a message have to register, organize, transmit, receive, and interpret through their uniquely structured minds that have varying "filters", which consist of their experiences, thoughts, and feelings.

  To understand communication better, we should know the following basic facts regarding its process:

- *Perfect communication is impossible:* Human communication is essentially imperfect. All our communication encoding and decoding acts are conditioned by the fact that a common mental filter is not possible. Meanings differ because filters differ. Therefore, no two persons involved in an interaction will perceive the exact same meaning from a message. What they tend to have is a "workable understanding", as Vardman puts it in his definition of communication discussed earlier.

  Besides the filters, the fact that the symbols used for communicating are imprecise in their associative meanings further contributes to the imperfection of communication. Choosing correct symbols to encode an idea, thought, or feeling is not an easy task. We tend to often pick up imprecise symbols for encoding. This tendency increases the chances of misinterpretation or miscommunication between the sender and the receiver (see Exhibit 1.13).

  Even the same symbols put in a different order or sequence may change the overall meaning of the message (see Communication Snapshot 1.2). Therefore, both parties, the sender and the receiver, should possess the same ability to interpret the meaning of symbols (words) and their structure (the order in which they are used).

Exhibit 1.13
An Example of Miscommunication

Mr Balakrishnan, a heart patient, was considering two medical procedures: bypass surgery and angioplasty. His surgeon had told him that the angioplasty would cost slightly more than the bypass surgery. The bypass cost Rs 2.5 lakh. Mr Balakrishnan did not mind spending slightly more for the angioplasty, so he opted for it. But he was shocked to later get a bill for Rs 6.5 lakh. He was left wondering what exactly his surgeon's "slightly more" meant.

Communication Snapshot 1.2

How Sentence Structure Affects Meaning

Consider the following sentences:

1. The letter has been dispatched by me.
2. I have dispatched the letter.
3. The police chased the crowd.
4. The crowd was chased by the police.
5. What are you doing here?
6. Here, what are you doing?
7. The dog wagging the tail.
8. The tail wagging the dog.
9. Only you have to be there.
10. You have only to be there.
11. You have to be only there.
12. Also, Abhinav is going to Paris.
13. Abhinav is going to Paris also.
14. Manisha too is tired.
15. Manisha is too tired.

The first sentence answers the question "Has the letter been dispatched?", whereas the second is an answer to "Who has dispatched the letter?". There is a change in the emphasis: the first sentences emphasizes the act (of dispatching), while the second emphasizes the doer of the act (the dispatcher). To understand this subtle shift in the overall meaning of the statement, equal levels of linguistic competence are required by both the questioner and the respondent.

Similarly, in the third sentence, we are talking about the police, whereas if we change the sequence of the symbols, as we have done in the fourth sentence, the crowd becomes the subject of communication.

This can further be understood by considering the fifth and the sixth sentences. Though these sentences sound alike, they convey different meanings. The fifth sentence communicates the speaker's surprise about a *person's* presence, whereas the sixth is about the place where the person is present.

The seventh sentence indicates that the person is quiet, docile, and easily controlled. As opposed to this, the eighth sentence says that an unimportant thing/person is wrongly controlling a situation.

The ninth, tenth, and eleventh sentences show how meaning changes by changing the position of the word *only*. In the ninth sentence, the speaker talks about the *person* (you) who alone is required—meaning nobody else is required. In the tenth sentence, the speaker says that the person (you) would "do nothing" but simply be present; and, finally, in the eleventh sentence, the speaker wants the person (you) to be "there" only and nowhere else. The shift in significance relates to *who*, *what*, and *where*. (It may be noted that *only* modifies the word that immediately follows it.)

Similarly, the word *also* modifies the word that follows it or is placed next to it. In sentence 12, *also* is used to indicate that in addition to some other persons going to Paris, Abhinav too will go to Paris. In sentence 13, the change in position of *also* changes the meaning of the sentence. Here, *also* is used to indicate that Abhinav is going to Paris in addition to other places. In sentence 12, it signifies "in addition to the other persons"; in sentence 13, it means "in addition to other places".

In sentences 14 and 15, the shift in the position of the word *too* changes the meaning completely. Sentence 14 implies that Manisha is tired, like other people. But, sentence 15 implies that Manisha is overtired, or that she is so tired that she cannot do any work now.

Try to imagine real-life situations in which you would communicate a feeling of surprise or delight on unexpectedly meeting a friend when you did not expect to see them.

The fact that the symbols used for communicating are imprecise in their associative meanings further contributes to the imperfection of communication.

- *Meaning is not out there:* By now, it must be obvious that the meaning of a sentence or paragraph is in the mind and not in the symbols. Symbols (except onomatopoeic words) are arbitrary. They have no intrinsic meaning. They stand for things, but are not the things themselves. Their meaning is conventional, commonly shared by the people belonging to a linguistic community. But the literal meaning is something that is printed in the pages of a dictionary.

  Communication is a living act, performed in specific contexts, in particular situations, and with a definite goal. Thus, an effective communicator creates new meanings of symbols (words) by structuring them in strings of images of his or her mind or mental landscape.

  Understanding this fundamental aspect of communication can help all receivers look for the meaning of the words (the message) that the sender thought of when choosing them. A receiver should not be satisfied with, "I think it means . . . ". Instead, he or she should search for what the words must have meant to the sender.

- *Personality communicates:* Walt Whitman[7], in his famous *Song of Myself*, poetically brings out the dimension of communication. Of his poetic process, which is an act of communication, he says,

  I celebrate myself,
  And what I assume you shall assume,
  For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

  In fact, communication in its final analysis can be seen as a projection of "myself"—how I think, feel, believe, perceive, and respond to reality. If communication is anything, it is indeed a mental representation of reality. The symbols of communication represent the perceptions of the communicator.

An effective communicator creates new meanings of symbols (words) by structuring them in strings of images of his or her mind or mental landscape.

  In this regard, the complexity of communication further arises from a truth so aptly projected by O. W. Holmes[8] in his collection of essays, *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table*:

  There are three Johns:
  1. The real John; known only to his Maker.
  2. John's ideal John; never the real one and often very unlike him.
  3. Thomas's ideal John; never the real John, nor John's John, but often very unlike either.

  The real problem in communication is caused by Thomas's ideal John.

  In fact, it is difficult for people to communicate effectively unless they have a correct knowledge of themselves. Understanding how we see ourselves is the first step in improving our ability to communicate; we can improve this understanding by closely examining our own self-concept.

  According to psychologists, there are three aspects of self-concept:

  1. The me that I know.
  2. The me that I wish I were.
  3. The me that I want others to see.

  Some people are so perfect in projecting images of themselves to others that the real person is never displayed. This art can be advantageous to a manager and his or her personal communication skills, but if practised to the extreme can prevent effective communication and understanding.

Some people are so perfect in projecting images of themselves to others that the real person is never displayed.

  To be effective as the audience (receiver), one should follow Whitman's wisdom and practise "what I assume you shall assume". This process is also known as "empathy"—the power or the state of imagining oneself to be another person and sharing his or her ideas and feelings. Empathy is needed for listening and is also a necessary state of mind while encoding. It allows the communicator to realize the audience's (receiver's) expectations, fears, emotions, needs, level of learning/knowledge, and, above all, state of mind. It is only through reciprocal empathy that people can communicate effectively in different contexts of life and business.

COMMUNICATION AND ELECTRONIC MEDIA

The electronic media have made communication instantaneous and immediate across the world. The use of telephones, voice mail, phone conferencing, video conferencing, cell phones, and e-mail as preferred modes (channels) of communication has greatly accelerated the decision-making process at all levels. Their use connects the sender and receiver in a timeless and spaceless web of communication. In a way, the online message and its immediate feedback give distant communication the force and advantages of face-to-face communication.

In business, all these electronic modes of communication are used according to the need and purpose of the communicators. E-mail, however, is the most commonly used global medium of interaction today. Even within the same organization, managers and executives prefer to communicate via e-mail instead of phone calls. These modes of communication will be discussed in detail in Chapter 9.

COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media, according to Dave Evans[9], "involves a natural, genuine conversation between people about something of mutual interest, a conversation built on the thoughts and experience of the participants. It is about sharing and arriving at a collective point, often for the purpose of making a better or informed choice." These emerging online social media, according to Susan Bratton, richly reward[10] "our innate desire to connect with each other at a human level."

Internet forums, weblogs, Twitter, message boards, Wikis, podcasts, picture-sharing sites, and other online media connect and share information in a collaborative manner. Examples of social media applications are Google (reference, social networking), Wikipedia (reference), MySpace (social networking), Facebook (social networking), Last.fm (music), YouTube (video sharing), Second Life (virtual reality), and Flickr (photo sharing).

As a social web participant, the channels one is likely to use today are SMS (texting), blogs and microblogs, video sharing, photo sharing, personal social networks, event services, e-mail, white label social networks, Wikis, podcasts (audio) and collaborative tools.

Social media are popular because they allow collaboration and creativity. The audience of social media can participate by adding comments or changing the stories themselves. The empowerment and freedom of the audience to add or create new content makes social media a process and not a static medium. Unlike direct mail or television advertising, social media are "a collaborative process through which information is created, shared, altered, and destroyed."[11] In business, politics, and personal life, social media act as a "feedback loop". As the audience, we listen to it, learn from it, and follow it. For example, in the purchase funnel of "awareness—consideration—purchase", social media influence the customer's consideration to quite an extent by offering the experiences of other customers of that product. Participants believe the social message because it is based on natural, genuine conversation informed by the experience and wisdom of the multitude.

SUMMARY

- This chapter deals with the key elements of the nature and process of communication.
- Human beings are poor communicators but our communicative competence can be improved by learning and practising effective communication skills.
- Communication has a symbolic nature and is an act of sharing one's ideas, emotions, attitudes, or perceptions with another person or group of persons through words (written or spoken), gestures, signals, signs, or other modes of transmitting images. The transmission of ideas always encounters barriers that reduce its effectiveness.
- The essential elements of the process of communication are the message, the sender, encoding, the channel, the receiver, decoding, acting on the message, the feedback, and the communication environment.

- Both the sender and the receiver play a role in making communication effective. The sender should encode the message accurately after considering the level, expectations, and needs of the target audience (receiver); the receiver should listen or read carefully to try to understand the intended meaning of the sender.
- The universal, common elements of communication are the communication environment, the use of symbols, and the presence of mental filters.
- Some basic facts about communication are that perfect communication is impossible; the meaning of a message is in the mind/perception of the receiver; and personality affects the effectiveness of communication.
- To communicate effectively, one should develop not only skills, but also a sense of empathy with others.

CASE: COMMUNICATION FAILURE

Mr and Mrs Basu went to Woodland's apparel section to buy a pullover. Mr Basu did not read the price tag on the piece he had selected. While making the payment, he asked for the price at the counter. The answer was "Rs 950".

Meanwhile, Mrs Basu, who was still shopping, came back and joined her husband. She was glad that he had selected a nice black pullover for himself. She pointed out that there was a 25 per cent discount on that item. The person at the billing counter nodded in agreement. Mr Basu was thrilled to hear that. "That means the price of this pullover is just Rs 645. That's fantastic," said Mr Basu. He decided to buy another pullover in green.

In no time, he returned with the second pullover and asked the salesperson to pack both. When he received the cash memo for payment, he was astonished to find that he had to pay Rs 1,900 and not Rs 1,290 as he had expected.

Mr Basu could hardly reconcile himself to the fact that the salesperson had first quoted the discounted price, that is Rs 950. But the original price printed on the price tag was Rs 1,225.

Questions to Answer

1. Identify the three sources of Mr Basu's information about the price of the pullover.
2. Discuss the main filter involved in this case.
3. What should Mr Basu have done to avoid the misunderstanding?
4. Who is to blame for this communication gap? Why?

REVIEW YOUR LEARNING

1. Why is communication important for good relationships and effective management?
2. Why do we communicate?
3. Discuss communication as a two-way process of exchange of information.
4. Indicate the critical difference between successful and ineffective communication.
5. Discuss the important barriers in the communication process.
6. What is empathy? How does it contribute to the effectiveness of communication?
7. What is noise? Elaborate the elements of noise encountered by the receiver. How can they be minimized?
8. Do you agree that, in its final form, communication is a manifestation of the personalities of both the sender and the receiver? Discuss.
9. How does group communication differ from mass communication? Does this difference between these two forms of communication demand greater care on the part of the communicator (sender)? Discuss.
10. Do you accept that perfect communication is just an assumption and not a practical possibility? Give reasons for your argument.

REFLECT ON YOUR LEARNING

1. Why have communication skills become an essential requirement for a successful career in any profession? Discuss with examples.
2. How does an interview/discussion conducted on television become an act of communication? Explain.
3. Show how feedback acts as an essential element in the communication process.
4. "The principle of completeness in communication requires that we answer all questions that may be put to us." Elaborate.
5. "All communication is manipulative in nature." Discuss.

APPLY YOUR LEARNING

Analyse the communication situation given here and compose a letter on behalf of the Ministry of Defence in such a way that the message causes no disappointment to the family of the late Prem Kumar.

Shopkeeper Gives Life to Save People, No Medal in Sight

22 September 2010, NewsLine

Prem Kumar—a shopkeeper in Gaffar Market—lost his life while trying to save the lives of fellow shopkeepers and shoppers who were trapped in a fire. Almost a year after the incident, he has been awarded the prestigious Shaurya Chakra. His family was informed about the award through a letter from the Ministry of Defence.

Prem Kumar's family, however, claims it has not received any further information about the award and all efforts to contact the government have proved futile. His aging mother recollects the family's sense of joy and pride when they received the letter. However, there was no more news following the letter, she laments. She adds that the family has been trying to contact the government at the phone numbers provided in the letter, but the call keeps getting transferred from one person to another all the time. In the end, they assumed that her son's name would be announced during the Republic Day parade. Much to their disappointment, they watched the entire programme on television, only to realize that Prem Kumar's name was not mentioned during the event. Prem Kumar's family is still holding on to the letter, wondering what their next step should be.

An official from the Defence Ministry later clarified that only Ashok Chakra awardees are called to the R-day parade. All recipients of the Shaurya Chakra will be intimated about the investiture ceremony to be held at Rashtrapati Bhawan. A medal and scroll will be handed over to the family, along with the compensation, if any, during that event.

SELF-CHECK YOUR LEARNING

From the given options please choose the most appropriate answer:*

1. In general, human beings are:
   (a) perfect communicators
   (b) poor communicators
   (c) indifferent communicators
   (d) good communicators
2. The word *communication* is derived from *communis*(Latin) which means:
   (a) common
   (b) community
   (c) message
   (d) oral speech
3. Meta-communication relates to the speaker's:
   (a) intentional choice of dress
   (b) intentional choice of words
   (c) unintentional choice of words
   (d) unintentional choice of both words and dress
4. Generally speaking, in business we communicate:
   (a) only to persuade
   (b) only to inform
   (c) only to entertain
   (d) to both persuade and inform
5. Effective communication is essentially a:
   (a) three-way process
   (b) one-way process
   (c) two-way process
   (d) both a one-way and a two-way process
6. Filters that affect the content of a message are in:
   (a) the medium of communication
   (b) the mind of the speaker
   (c) the mind of the listener
   (d) the minds of both the speaker and the listener
7. Speakers usually experience difficulty in ensuring that the message is:
   (a) conveyed precisely
   (b) understood correctly
   (c) acted upon promptly and as desired
   (d) all of the above
8. As a process of sharing thoughts and ideas, communication suffers mainly from:
   (a) physical barriers
   (b) non-physical barriers
   (c) gender differences
   (d) both physical and non-physical barriers

*For answers and self-evaluation, visit www.pearsoned.co.in/PDChaturvedi

9. ____ is not one of the 7 C's of communication:
   (a) conciseness
   (b) clarity
   (c) correctness
   (d) character

10. Human communication is essentially:
    (a) perfect
    (b) imperfect
    (c) short-lived
    (d) emotional

ENDNOTES

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3. C. Shannon and W. Weaver, *The Mathematical Theory of Communication* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1949), p. 5.
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5. Ibid., pp. 402–403.
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8. O. W. Holmes, "Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table", *The Atlantic Monthly* (1857).
9. Dave Evans, *Social Media Marketing* (New Delhi: Times Business Services, Wiley India, 2008), p. 31.
10. Susan Bratton, foreword to *Social Media Marketing*, by Dave Evans (New Delhi: Times Business Services, Wiley India, 2008), x, iii.
11. Ibid., p. 34.

2

Organizational Communication

"*The most important audience for a company's communications is not the customer, as is commonly believed, but the employee.*"

— *Pratt & Whitney*

Upon completion of this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Understand the functional relationship between communication and management.
2. Identify new trends in organizational communication due to technological changes and developments.
3. Know why managers need strong communication skills.
4. Understand the elements that form the structure of an organization's communication network.
5. Understand the formal and informal lines of organizational communication.
6. Know what and how much should be communicated to employees at the workplace.

Communication at Work

Apex Business Solutions had promised to deliver a report to one of its customers by a certain date, but was unable to meet this deadline. Since the customer was very important to the company, there was an internal meeting in the concerned department to resolve the issue.

During the discussion, Stephen, one of the youngest members of the department, came up with a suggestion to solve the problem. However, because Stephen was known for his non-serious, jokey comments and was relatively new in the department, nobody took him seriously. The meeting continued for two hours, and when no solution was found, it was dispersed.

Later, while reflecting on the proceedings, Mr Mahadevan, the head of the department, realized that what Stephen had suggested at the beginning was in fact the most sensible course of action, but because everyone was predisposed to take him lightly, they never considered his suggestion seriously. In fact, they had completely neglected his ideas during the discussion. Mr Mahadevan felt that if they had heard Stephen with an open mind, they would have reached a solution in the first fifteen minutes of the meeting.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION IN MANAGEMENT

Communication skills constitute an important aspect of effective management. Management is a complex process. In simple terms, it can be described as the organization of capital, labour, and material to achieve production and distribution of particular goods or services.

First, the management determines its objectives—what it must do and how it must do it. Then, there has to be a system through which the production and distribution processes can be guided, coordinated, and controlled to ensure that the management objectives are achieved. Communication is the system by which production and distribution operations are controlled and coordinated and the results correlated to the objectives.

Some Important Functions of Management

Exhibit 2.1 shows some important functions of management. The function of communication is to define and support the action involved in each of these functions.

- *Forecasting and planning:* Each function of management depends on effective communication for its success. For example, if the management fails to communicate its objectives, policies, programmes, procedures, and budgetary provisions to the concerned people at the proper time, an organization would fail to run in an organized and targeted manner.
- *Organizing:* Organizing, as a management function, determines the formal and informal relationships within the organization and outside it. These relationships are developed and maintained through interpersonal communication.

Exhibit 2.1
Functions of Management

Forecasting	Determines organizational objectives and policies
Planning	Prepares programmes, procedures, and budgets
Organizing	Sets the organizational structure
Instructing	Provides the bedrock of organizational performance
Coordinating	Ensures all efforts are directed towards the organization's goals
Controlling	Checks the results and receives feedback

1

Understand the functional relationship between communication and management.

- *Instructing:* The function of instructing depends entirely upon effective exchange of information regarding products, processes, and targets.
- *Coordinating:* Coordinating is perhaps the most demanding of all management functions. It requires excellent communication skills to ensure that all efforts are directed towards the achievement of a single organizational goal. To ensure that diverse activities are complementary, a manager should be able to relate with all the people involved, both formally and informally.
- *Controlling:* Finally, in order to control processes, a manager should be able to receive and interpret information and respond quickly.

Communication is the system by which production and distribution operations are controlled and coordinated and the results correlated to the objectives.

How Communication Is Used by Managers

Management is a unified, organized, and cooperative system committed to the achievement of common goals. Unity of purpose and commitment to a single organizational goal can be developed only through the persuasive power of communication. To do this, a manager needs to have excellent communication skills, including the ability to structure information according to its negative/affirmative nature and use words and tones according to the purpose of the communication. A manager should be able to create the desired relationship with the audience or employees to produce the needed response. Thus, diverse strategies, verbal and non-verbal, of effective communication form an important part of management as a discipline.

Unity of purpose and commitment to a single organizational goal can be developed only through the persuasive power of communication.

From a small business to a multinational enterprise, every organization today needs an effective communication system to enable it to function and flourish. Communication is a means of:

- Increasing employees' job performance and effectiveness by updating their knowledge
- Promoting employees' sense of belonging and commitment
- Effecting changes smoothly
- Motivating employees and creating a sense of identification with the organization's goals
- Informing and convincing employees about decisions and the reasons behind them
- Helping employees develop a clear understanding of their roles and growth opportunities within the organization
- Empowering employees with information on development and activities

Hence, an active communication system is vital for the good health of an organization. If there is continual sharing of ideas and interactive meetings between the management and employees, an overall atmosphere of understanding and goodwill would prevail in the workplace. When decision-making is transparent, employees understand the reasons behind decisions and accept and implement them, even if those decisions affect them adversely. Thus, communication can help in management in the following ways:

When decision-making is transparent, employees understand the reasons behind decisions and accept and implement them, even if those decisions affect them adversely.

- *Creating a sense of belonging:* An understanding of their roles and career paths in the organization makes employees feel a part of the whole setup.
- *Resolving disputes:* All disputes in organizations, which lead to huge losses of time, money, and good human relations, are caused by communication failures.
- *Providing a holistic view of the situation:* A great value of effective communication lies in making people not only know, but also perceive and understand the meaning of things

happening around them. Through clear communication, employees not only "see" the realities of the business, but also develop a "feel" for it.

2

Identify new trends in organizational communication due to technological changes and developments.

In the changing business environment of multinational competition and globalization, communication has become an important component of an organization. Like the functional areas of production, marketing, and finance, communication too is evolving into a distinct discipline in the form of corporate communication.

Theoretically, corporate communication brings under a single umbrella all communication activities undertaken by different areas such as marketing and public relations, which are directed at image-building and developing human capital. In this integrated form, communication speaks to the world outside the organization and within it in a single voice that builds the corporate image.

Several changes in the modern technological age of information have made people pay more attention to communication as an important tool in successful management. These changes are:

The large size of organizations today poses problems in communication.

- *Bigger organizations:* Organizations are getting bigger and bigger, either due to increased levels of production or through multinational collaborations. The large size of organizations today poses problems in communication.
- *New developments in information technology:* The modern age, the age of information, is not just an era of new media—telephone, radio, television, communication satellites, computers, and so on; it is also an era of a new attitude towards knowledge and the value of sharing it with others. In fact, communication is now looked upon as a source of empowerment of people. But the success of these new media depends on the skills of those who use them. It involves a new attitude towards the value and use of good communication.
- *The concept of human capital:* Employees and workers are now considered to be the human component of business and not just the source of labour. Their attitudes, interests, and welfare constitute an important aspect of management. Hence, there has to be a live channel of communication between the employees and the management.
- *Need to learn corporate etiquette:* Top corporate executives are increasingly being sensitized to the importance of conducting meetings, seminars, presentations, and negotiations effectively. They realize that management executives should learn the rules of etiquette if they are not already familiar with them. This includes knowing how to greet others, shake hands, dress for success, exchange business cards, listen, and converse with a diverse variety of clients.

The success of new media depends on the skills of the people who use them.

Corporate etiquette training, which is a part of communication skills, focuses on the rules to be observed and practised for success in international and national business ventures. Good business manners speak of the culture of the organization, not just of the individual.

These contemporary changes suggest that organizations now need not only an effective communication system, but also executives and managers who are well equipped with effective communication skills.

COMMUNICATION CONCERNS OF THE MANAGER

In business, a manager spends most of his or her time either speaking or writing to colleagues, supervisors, subordinates, or clients. A manager's success depends largely on his or her ability to communicate what has to be done and why to colleagues.

To be able to do this, the manager has to devote his or her time to:

- Receiving and interpreting information from other managers and departments
- Sending information to other department managers
- Passing on information and suggestions on new plans or projects to senior/top management

The success of an organization requires an atmosphere in which there is a free flow of information—upward, downward, and horizontally.

- Transmitting information to subordinates
- Developing a positive attitude

To a large extent, the success of an organization requires an atmosphere in which there is a free flow of information—upward, downward, and horizontally. At the workplace, the primary goal is getting things done. For this, instructions, guidelines, supervision, monitoring, and periodic reporting are usually considered enough. But if the company wishes to achieve more than the set task, a real involvement of all employees, from the highest to the lowest levels, is required. This cooperation can only be secured by allowing every level of employee to suggest ideas, express their views, and share their experiences. Such a system of communication can only be established within the organization by the manager. In fact, the manager functions as the point of intersection for all communication channels. One of the most important concerns of the manager is to organize and ensure an effective information system across the organization.

One of the most important concerns of the manager is to organize and ensure an effective information system across the organization.

As analysed by Henry Mintzberg[1] of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, managers need effective communication skills to perform in the following interrelated situations:

3

Know why managers need strong communication skills.

- Interpersonal
- Informational
- Decisional

These situations, with their descriptions and examples, are clearly described in Mintzberg's book, *The Nature of Managerial Work*.

The interpersonal role refers to situations in which the manager acts as a figurehead, leader, and liaison officer. The informational role is when the manager is a monitor, disseminator, and spokesperson. In the decisional role, the manager functions as an entrepreneur, troubleshooter, resource allocator, and negotiator.

If interpersonal communication is effective, internal systems run smoothly.

- *Interpersonal role:* It is necessary to ensure the effective operation of the organization's systems and to maintain proper relationships within the organization and with clients, suppliers, and other functionaries. If interpersonal communication is effective, internal systems run smoothly. For example, personnel functions within the organization require managers to inspire confidence, win support, and guide workers. Managers are role models for others and must develop the skill of listening patiently and perceptively in order to understand the needs of their subordinates. This is essential for creating an atmosphere of mutual understanding and goodwill within the organization and transparent sharing of its objectives, mission, and problems.
- *Informational role*: If the internal information-sharing system of a company is effective, other systems such as stock control, personnel functions, financial systems, and quality control operate smoothly. Shortcomings and problems can be quickly identified and remedial action taken immediately. Proper maintenance of product and service standards can be ensured through timely monitoring and instructing. Through effective, interactive communication and a strong feedback system, high morale and satisfaction of workers can be secured.
- *Decisional role:* Decision-making is based upon receiving and interpreting all relevant and necessary information. Decisions that are based on guesswork and are made without access to all relevant information may turn out to be unrealistic and harmful. Managers need to possess the skill of receiving relevant and up-to-date information correctly and accurately to be able to take decisions and act rationally, fairly, and to the satisfaction of all concerned.

Decisions that are based on guesswork and are made without access to all relevant information may turn out to be unrealistic and harmful.

All these functions require the manager to handle people and situations with a good knowledge of human needs.

Human Needs

Maslow's hierarchy of human needs[2], shown in Exhibit 2.2, suggests a succession of needs through which people move as they fulfil their wants and desires.

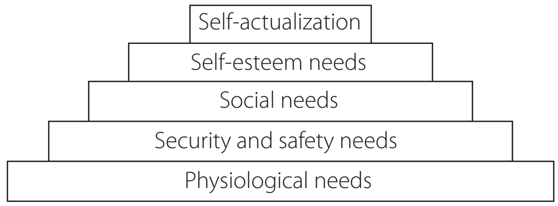


Exhibit 2.2
Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs

1. *Physiological needs:* These are the most basic needs of food, shelter, and protection from the elements.
2. *Security and safety needs:* Next come the need to be free from physical danger and the need of knowing that one's physiological needs are being met.
3. *Social needs:* This is the desire to be loved, to be accepted, and to belong.
4. *Ego needs:* Moving to a higher level of the pyramid, people feel the need to be heard, appreciated, and wanted. These needs of the ego are related to the status of the individual. Generally, the fulfilment of economic needs comes before the social expression of one's ego.
5. *Self-actualizing needs:* This is the desire to reach one's highest and complete potential through different forms of professional, social, intellectual, and cultural and artistic activities. It is the highest level of needs in the pyramid.

From the diagrammatic description of human needs shown in Exhibit 2.2, one should not conclude that any of these needs is absent from the human mind. The pyramid structure indicates that as the lower-level needs are satisfied, one feels the urge to satisfy other, higher needs. In such a situation the pressure of the lower-level needs is reduced, but they are always present.

Hence, a manager should be able to identify the needs of different individuals through close interaction with employees. By doing this, he or she can create a business environment in which individual needs are largely recognized and satisfied. It is common knowledge that a satisfied employee is more productive than a dissatisfied one.

Theory X and Theory Y

In highly developed countries like the United States, even those with an average income feel that their basic needs are satisfied. Hence, most people can pursue the satisfaction of their social and self-actualization needs: the need to be recognized and respected and, above all, to belong and be a part of a community.

In developing countries such as India, more people are primarily motivated to satisfy lower-level needs. Accordingly, this has been the focus of traditional management. The management usually assumed that employees were mainly working to collect their pay, to fulfil their primary needs of food, shelter, and security. Hence the management could simply tell people what to do, how to do it, and by when to do it. It was not considered necessary to explain why things had to be done a certain way. Workers were viewed as a source of labour that was not interested in the organization's general welfare. This view is no longer acceptable in most organizations, though in practice it still prevails at many places.

Douglas McGregor, in *The Human Side of Enterprise,*[3] discusses two styles of management: the traditional view of human capital and the emerging modern view that management increases productivity when it helps people satisfy their higher-level needs. McGregor calls these two styles of management *Theory X* (conventional) and *Theory Y* (modern). Theory X postulates that, traditionally, management functions through close control and concern for the job to be done and not concern for the doer of the job—workers' motivation was assumed to be imposed from outside through supervision, promise of reward, or fear of punishment.

Theory Y is the emerging style of management. It promotes a balance between control and individual freedom to actualize the individual's potential and help him or her evolve as a mature and responsible being. McGregor bases his concept on the maxim that freedom accompanies responsibility.

Hence, the new management style views people as humans and addresses the fulfilment of their higher-level needs. Managers should consider their audience/receivers as adults capable of change and of controlling their own destinies. The communication focus in this context shifts from the language of control and information to that of motivation and persuasion.

The new management style views people as humans and addresses the fulfilment of their higher-level needs.

In an organization, communication counts. It provides the network of sustenance essential for the growth and smooth functioning of the organization.

COMMUNICATION TRAINING FOR MANAGERS

In an organization, communication counts. It provides the network of sustenance essential for the growth and smooth functioning of the organization. But how should it be implemented? What are the strategies of communicating effectively? How can one learn them? Can communication be taught?

Today, communication has become a buzzword. Accordingly, a great deal of emphasis is being given to training aimed at developing the skills of writing letters, memos, and reports, participating in seminars and group discussions, interviewing, making presentations, and so on. In the world of business, managerial success depends largely on the ability to present one's ideas before others. In fact, verbal (written/oral) and non-verbal (body language) communicative competence is an important aspect of one's personality. In fact, many advanced institutions have incorporated communication in specialized personality development programmes as an additional input for management graduates at all levels of undergraduate and postgraduate education. There are formal courses in business communication, human communication, or organizational communication almost in all universities. In addition, there are training courses and workshops specially designed for executives and bureaucrats at all levels.

These communication courses and training programmes are offered because it is possible to learn and develop interpersonal skills. Of course, there are individuals who are "born communicators", able to think clearly and express themselves effectively with little training. However, others can become successful communicators by learning and practising the strategies of effective communication. All communications courses and programmes are based on simulating real situations in the workplace as well as social situations. Their basic objectives include written and oral/verbal competence and understanding of non-verbal communication/body language. At the end of these courses, students can effectively write letters, memos, reports, proposals, and so on, deliver oral presentations and seminars, and participate in meetings, group discussions, and negotiations.

In business, it is crucial to create and maintain relationships. Effective communicators weigh relationships and develop desirable, long-term ones. One's communication skills help nurture cherished relationships within the organization and outside it.

4

Understand the elements that form the structure of an organization's communication network.

COMMUNICATION STRUCTURES IN ORGANIZATIONS

In business organizations, the effectiveness of a communication system depends upon the extent to which the necessary information (required for decision-making) reaches the concerned person (the person who needs that information) at the right time (when the information is needed). The network of information should support the overall functioning of management by integrating and coordinating the workforce for achieving organizational objectives.

Hence, every organization creates a network (channel) for information to pass through different levels of authority and functional heads and units. The flow of communication follows the structure of the organization. In actual practice, the information passes through the organizational pyramid such as the one shown in Exhibit 2.3.

Vertical Communication

In organizations, there are well-defined lines or routes for passing on communication. Policy decisions are taken at the boardroom level. From there, information is sent downwards to senior managers or a group of senior managers. They ensure that the policy decisions are easily understood, implemented, sustained, monitored, reviewed, and reported. Feedback (performance data or employee experiences or suggestions) is, in turn, sent upwards.

In this system of communication, the key links are the managers and supervisors. They transmit information both upwards and downwards. They are also responsible for following up on ideas and instructions. In all large organizations, the human resource or personnel department manages the circulation of information among employees. Personnel managers

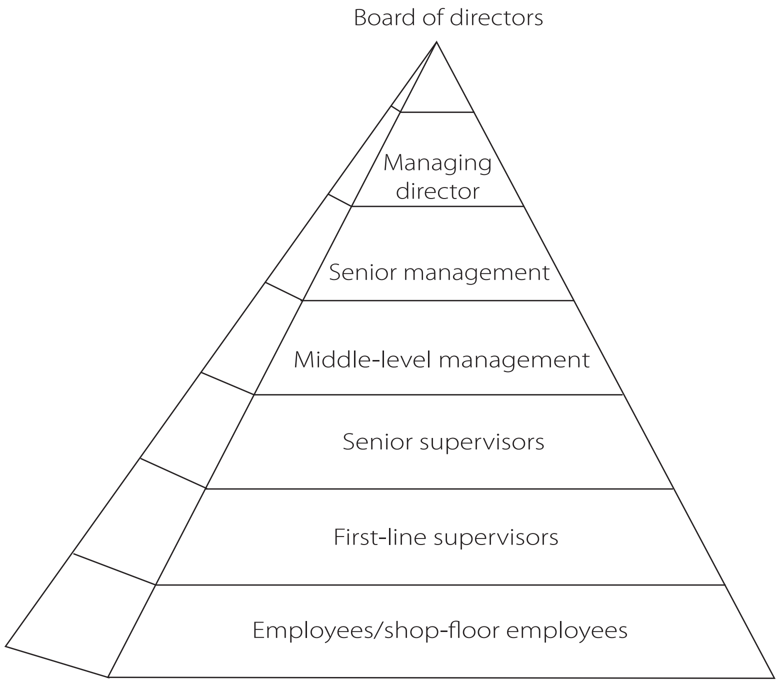


Exhibit 2.3
Organizational Pyramid

are in constant touch with all employees. They are able to identify needs, provide guidance on policy matters, and supervise infrastructural rearrangements.

However, when an organization has too many levels of hierarchy, managers may find it difficult to reach ground-level and shop-floor employees. In such situations, communication tends to be slow in reaching and delayed in being absorbed and acted upon. The cost of this delay, caused by the sheer size of the organization, may sometimes be too high.

When an organization has too many levels of hierarchy, managers may find it difficult to reach ground-level and shop-floor employees.

Hence, as Peter Drucker[4] holds, large organizations have more recently moved towards a "flatter structure" of information-based management and executives "walk down" the jobs. This is obviously to facilitate information flow downwards and to prevent employees from getting frustrated by their sense of isolation.

Horizontal Communication

Also known as peer communication, horizontal communication is usually needed within the organization due to:

- The geographical location of divisions
- The functional basis of division

Geographical Organization

In a large setup, divisions may be based on geographical areas. Such divisions may be known just by numbers or single letters. For example, at Tata Steel (Jamshedpur), the "G" blast furnace has its own division with a full-fledged hierarchy of employees and executives. There are other furnaces known by numbers, with their own divisions. They are all located on the vast Tata Steel site. There are also other divisions such as research and development, total quality control, and so on. Each of these divisions maintains close contact with the others through seminars, presentations, and executive meetings. These divisions communicate among themselves to share information and help each other as equal members of the same organization. Thus, communication helps sustain a sense of unity among the various divisions in the organization.

Functional Organization

Normally, business and industrial organizations are divided on the basis of different functions such as production, marketing, finance, personnel, and training and development. All divisions function independently and yet remain linked with each other through peer-group communication and workflow information. With the growth of technology and the increasing size of organizations, the widespread production of goods and services needs to be coordinated through the channel of horizontal communication. From the stage of selection of raw material to the finished product, numerous processes are involved in completing the given task of production. At each stage of the production process, the job of a workgroup depends upon the timing and form of work received from the preceding workgroup. Any interruption in the workflow adversely affects performance at successive stages of production. The workflow in a company can be steadily managed only through horizontal communication between the sections that are directly linked.

LINE AND STAFF MANAGEMENT

A network of relationships between those in line (functional) management and staff (support) management is created by means of an effective internal communications system.

Line and staff management (LSM) is a system of management in large organizations consisting of line managers and staff managers. *Line managers* are responsible for the main activities of the company, such as manufacturing and sales, while *staff managers* control the support and service areas, such as accounting, distribution, and personnel. A network of relationships between those in line (functional) management and staff (support) management is created by means of an effective internal communications system. Without this, an organization can neither function properly nor thrive in the business world. As shown in Exhibit 2.4, the internal communication system can be divided into two categories—formal lines of communication and informal lines of communication.

5

Understand the formal and informal lines of organizational communication.

Formal Communication

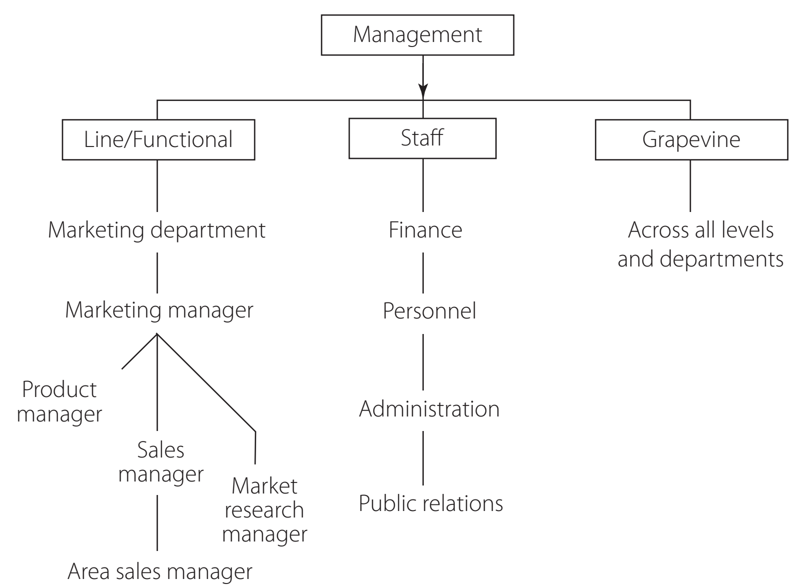
Formal lines of organizational communication include:

1. Line relationships
2. Functional relationships
3. Staff relationships

Line Relationships

Line relationships refer to the line of authority that sets down the path of communication from supervisors to subordinates and vice versa. All official communications, orders, and

Exhibit 2.4
Internal Communication System in Organizations



instructions move from seniors to subordinates. Similarly, all follow-up actions and compliance and execution information and reports move upwards, from subordinates to supervisors and executives. Usually, all organizations insist on following the normal chain of authority from one position to the next. If the communication is in the form of a letter, this respect for the chain of authority is indicated by writing the phrase "through the proper channels" in the beginning of the letter.

Usually, all organizations insist on following the normal chain of authority from one position to the next.

If the communication is oral, the message is conveyed to one's immediate supervisor.

Functional Relationships

Functional relationships are those between departments within an organization. Communication that occurs when departments share information regarding work and related organizational matters with each other is a formal line of organizational communication.

Staff Relationships

Staff relationships include the communication that supports line management, marketing, and production. They do not carry the executive authority of line relationships. Communications relating to personnel, public relations, administration, or finance are part of staff relationships.

Informal Communication

Informal communication in an organization usually flows through chat and the grapevine.

Chat

Horizontal or lateral communication is between managers from different departments or within the same peer group. Managers of the same level enjoy the same level of authority. Often, informal communication, which is usually in the form of a "chat", has to be confirmed in writing before it goes through the official channel.

The Grapevine

Theoretically, the network of formal communication may be adequate to meet the needs of exchanging information within an organization. But, in real life, this is seldom true. Often, employees feel inadequately informed in a formal system. They may suspect that the management uses formal channels to conceal rather than reveal the true message. They may thus accuse the system of lacking transparency. As a result, employees modify the formal methods of communication by bringing in an informal communication system, the grapevine.

Information obtained via the grapevine is always attributed to "a reliable source". "Learnt through a reliable source", is a common phrase used by the communicator to make the news sound authentic.

However, the grapevine may create complications for the information system of organizations.

The grapevine may create complications for the information system of organizations.

- The unofficial version of news, irrespective of its basis, is more easily believed by people.
- News through the grapevine spreads like wildfire, quickly and uncontrollably.
- Usually this version of information is somewhat distorted and exaggerated—a result of the vast chain of "filters" used in the process.

The grapevine exists in all workplaces. It is an informal adjunct or extension of the formal system of organizational communication. In a way, it is a corrective to the management's system of information as it is timely and has a wide reach. It poses a challenge to management's MIS (Management Information System).

The grapevine exists in all workplaces. It is an informal adjunct or extension of the formal system of organizational communication.

The presence of the grapevine shows that the management has missed an opportunity to share information of interest with their employees. The gap in formal communication is filled by informal gossip circulated among employees, who form relationships on the basis of their work or common social factors such as neighbourhood, language, culture, state, club memberships, and so on These relationships are formed on the basis of friendship and not official status.

Participants in the grapevine are non-official leaders who generally initiate and spread the gossip across the organization. As with formal communication, there is a sender and a receiver.

Normally, the management views the grapevine negatively as it undercuts confidentiality, secrecy, and guarded sharing of information with employees. However, sometimes the management itself may take advantage of the grapevine, for instance to learn in advance the reaction and response of employees to a proposed scheme or change. In such a situation, before officially announcing the change, the managers may deliberately feed the leaders of the grapevine with the concerned message and note employees' feedback and responses.

This managerial practice is not always on the sly. Some management scholars approve of this practice of supplementing formal communication with informal communication. Koontz and O'Donnell[5] observe, "The most effective communication results when managers utilize the informal organization to supplement the communication channels of the formal organization".

When using informal channels of communication, managers have to be very careful about the form of informal communication. For example, it could be very effective to "walk down the job"—move around the office, chat, and informally discuss formal matters. But, the effectiveness of this depends on the personal relationship between the executive and his or her subordinate and the image created by the executive by his or her official behaviour and personal attributes such as frankness, attitude, and sense of fairness. As Leland Brown says, "In using the grapevine, management must be able to pinpoint the leaders and work through them. It must feed in factual information, listen to the feedback response, and be discerning in not overloading the system and using it inappropriately. It is important that management be sure to follow up the grapevine message with official written messages and statements that will verify the accuracy of data obtained from the grapevine. This helps in building a mutual trust based on open communication followed throughout the organization or business."[6]

Merits of Informal Communication

The chief advantages of informal communication lines are:

- *Uniting force:* The grapevine brings together employees in matters of common interest.
- *Speed:* Informal channels of communication pass on messages speedily.
- *Creation of ideas:* Informal communication, through sharing of ideas and views or by spreading unofficial "grapevine", generates ideas and expectations that often prove of value to decision-makers and planners.
- *Good personal relations:* Public relations fail in organizations because of the lack of good personal relationships. Informal communication that promotes personal relations is, therefore, important for the success of public relations.

> Public relations fail in organizations because of the lack of good personal relationships.

Emphasizing the value of informal communication in management, especially via the grapevine, Myers and Myers[7] assert that field research and laboratory experiments indicate that "grapevine communication is fast; predictable in its course, directions, and membership; and also far more accurate than a casual observer might imagine. Grapevine communication is less heavily loaded with task information—how to do the job—than with information about people, attitudes, relationships, interpretation, prediction, values, norms, and needs"

Limitations of Informal Communication

The limitations of informal communication channels are:

> By exciting hopes or fears in employees, rumour mongering may result in a negative or misleading situation in the workplace.

- *Rumours:* Sometimes informal communication, especially grapevine, can prove very provocative and disastrous for the relationship between employees and management. By its very nature, grapevine is information that lacks solid evidence. Moreover, there is little accountability in spreading it. By exciting hopes or fears in employees, rumour mongering may result in a negative or misleading situation in the workplace. As a consequence, the management may be confronted with a wave of prejudice, emotions, biases, half-truths, and ambiguity.
- *Inadequacy:* Informal communication can only pertain to certain kinds of organizational information—that is, non-functional issues and matters. Secondary issues regarding staff and management relations are generally the subject of grapevine.

- *Changing interpretations:* When information is allowed to be spread through the grapevine, it tends to result in distortion and dilution of the main issue. The key person, the individual who starts spreading the news, is sometimes surprised by the final form in which that news gets back to him or her. Just as in the game of Chinese Whispers, the distortions are unintentional. Changes in interpretations happen owing to the different perceptions of the persons involved in the chain. The unlimited circulation of a statement can make it lose its original meaning and character. Great caution is, therefore, needed in using informal communication channels as a supplement to formal communication.

Changes in interpretations happen owing to the different perceptions of the persons involved in the whispering chain.

Finally, it is the responsibility of the formal communication system to ensure that opportunities for misinterpretation of information through the grapevine do not occur, by giving full and necessary information to employees in a timely manner. Therefore, besides interactions at the functional level, people should be able to talk to one another about formal matters informally on different occasions.

INFORMATION TO BE COMMUNICATED AT THE WORKPLACE

6

Know what and how much should be communicated to employees at the workplace.

To reduce the chances of misinterpretation or disinformation being spread by the grapevine, an organization should keep all its employees informed about certain facts regarding it. The content of the information is generally a mixture of facts, opinion, attitudes and interpretation. The purpose is to instruct, persuade, and ensure a routine first one-way transmission of information.

Broadly, all business communication can be divided into five types of information:

1. *Statutory information:* Information regarding terms and conditions of service should be communicated to all employees as a statutory requirement.
2. *Regular work-related information:* Information regarding normal work situations has to be regularly communicated through routine formal briefing sessions or through informal chat sessions between the manager and group members.
3. *Major policy or operational changes:* Any major changes in the organization's policies, which affect everyone or a large number of employees, have to be communicated to all by calling special meetings or by issuing notices.
4. *Information bulletin:* To keep people informed about events and happenings in the organization, periodic information in the form of a newsletter is disseminated to all employees. This helps create a sense of involvement in the working of the organization.
5. *Communication by expectancy:* Information regarding critical changes should be carefully and gradually communicated to those who are going to be directly affected by the decision. Before the decision is implemented, the people concerned must be prepared for it. This process aims at creating expectancy in the receivers, so that they are prepared for upcoming changes.

SUMMARY

- Effective communication plays a key role in enhancing the success of management functions in an organization.
- Communication helps management in planning, directing, coordinating, and controlling employees, materials, and production.
- Effective communication creates a healthy organizational environment in which all employees feel motivated towards the fulfilment of organizational goals.
- Both formal and informal communication channels exist together in all organizations.
- Informal communication and "the grapevine" should be taken advantage of by the management when there is a free and open system of communication in the organization.
- The motivation and involvement of employees increases when they are given the maximum possible information regarding the organization. Essential information includes statutory information, work-related information, information on operational and major policy changes, periodic bulletins regarding organizational events, and information that sets expectations regarding future changes.

CASE: COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN AT CITY HOSPITAL

City Hospital was losing money, and the hospital's executive director knew action had to be taken to reduce expenditure. Since a major portion of the costs were labour-related, the choice was clear—reduce staff.

A natural target for staff reduction was the fifth floor. This unit generally served "observation" patients but had been less than half-full for some time. Fifth-floor patients could be easily reassigned to other units, and closing that floor would save a significant amount of money.

Approximately forty employees worked on the fifth floor, all of them reporting to Lily Joe, the nurse manager. Hospital management decided that since her floor was being closed entirely, Lily's services would no longer be needed.

There were, however, some complicating factors. First, the hospital had a policy of "reassignment" rather than "layoff" and thus had a commitment to place the fifth-floor staff in other open positions for which they were qualified within the hospital. While it was unclear how many of the 40 displaced staff could be moved to other areas, management knew that many could be accommodated.

Second, most of the employees on the fifth floor were long-term staff who had become somewhat "set in their ways", compared to the employees in other departments. Indeed, the fifth floor had developed a reputation for being an uncooperative group that consistently resisted even the most minor changes, and most managers felt that the quality of care provided by the fifth-floor nurses was marginal at best. Similarly, Lily was generally regarded as the least effective of the hospital's nursing managers. As a result of all of these factors, managers in other units were extremely reluctant to accept displaced fifth-floor workers.

A series of management meetings took place to plan the closing of the fifth floor. The meetings were conducted by the assistant head of nursing and attended by the hospital's nurse managers, as well as the director of personnel, director of public relations, and a communications/labour relations consultant. Initially, management had considered keeping Lily out of these meetings, but later decided that it would "look better" if she were included in the planning process. During every meeting, Lily cried openly, much to the discomfort of the others present.

Everyone who participated in the meetings was sworn to secrecy; no one was to mention the closing of the fifth floor until the plan was completely developed and announced. Nevertheless, rumours quickly began to circulate that something was "in the works" and that the fifth floor specifically had been targeted by the management.

Eventually, a plan was developed. On the following Wednesday morning, the deputy head of nursing and the director in charge of personnel would meet with the fifth-floor staff to tell them the news and provide them with details either about their move to other units (for those for whom other positions had been found) or (for those who would be laid off) about the strikingly generous severance package the hospital was providing. Immediately afterward, this same information would be announced at a general meeting of all management; simultaneously, the hospital's chief medical officer (CMO) would conduct a meeting of the medical staff. Individual letters, signed by the director general, would be couriered to all employees on Monday (so that most would reach by Wednesday), and departmental meetings for employees would be conducted on Wednesday afternoon to discuss the situation in detail with all the staff. Finally, the news media would be contacted late Wednesday afternoon and provided with statements, which would appear on Thursday.

On Monday, two days before the layoffs were to occur, the group met with the CMO of the hospital, Dr Manoj Mehta, and the chief administrative officer (CAO), General Khurana, to review their plan. Much to their dismay, Dr Mehta and General Khurana both reacted extremely negatively to the plan. Both wanted to know exactly how many people would be laid off. The group was unable to produce exact numbers, since the number of vacant positions fluctuated almost daily due to resignations and new hires. "Nursing never gets its numbers right!" Dr Mehta roared in frustration. In addition, General Khurana strenuously objected to having the letter to employees come from the director general. "We've got to stop passing the buck and shoving the blame upward", he argued. Both demanded specific numbers and significant changes in the announcement letter drafted by the group before they would allow the plan to move forward.

At the same time, however, the organization's grapevine was functioning at full throttle. The fifth floor was going to be closed, probably this week, the rumour mill held. Indeed, the fifth-floor employees themselves had apparently gotten wind of the plan. On the hospital's computer system, one fifth-floor employee typed an announcement that was communicated throughout the hospital—"We're long-service, formerly loyal employees who are about to be kicked out onto the street by the hospital. If you would like to help, we are starting a fund to help support those who will be hurt by this. Please send your contribution to (name, address of fifth-floor employee)."

On Wednesday, fifth-floor employees came to work dressed in black and wearing black armbands. They covered the curtains in patient rooms with black sheets, much to the dismay and confusion of the patients in those rooms. When no one came to tell them their floor was being closed, they became all the more upset.

On Thursday, tension mounted. While senior management continued to debate the numbers involved in the layoff and the appropriateness of the communication plan, the fifth-floor employees waited for someone to tell them to go home. Eventually, the situation became unbearable. One nurse began to cry, and soon all were sobbing and hugging each other. The personnel director was called, and when she went to the fifth floor and saw what was happening, she told all of the employees to just go home. With the help of the deputy head of nursing, she oversaw the hurried transfer of fifth-floor patients to other floors.

On Friday, the hospital announced that the fifth floor had been closed.

Questions to Answer

1. Analyse the reasons for the spreading of rumours regarding the layoffs of the observation ward staff.
2. Was it correct to include Lily Joe in the initial discussion meeting?
3. Ideally, how should this situation have been handled?

Source: Based on Andrews and Herschel, *Organizational Communication,* "Case 2: Employee Layoffs," pp. 125–127, ©1996. Reproduced with permission of Pearson Education, Inc.

REVIEW YOUR LEARNING

1. Discuss how communication is the lifeline of an organization's health.
2. Indicate the new trends in organizational communication due to technological changes and developments.
3. What are the main concerns of a manager? How should he or she fulfil them through effective communication? Discuss.
4. Analyse the corresponding relationship between channels of communication and the structure of an organization.
5. Discuss the formal and informal lines of organizational communication.
6. What is the grapevine? What gives rise to this communication phenomenon in organizations? How can the management prevent it from spreading?
7. Discuss the advantages of informal lines of communication in the workplace.
8. What kinds of information need to be communicated to an employee by the organization?
9. Discuss how staff relationships affect communication in the case of City Hospital.
10. Discuss the responsibility of senior management for establishing and promoting a sound communication system.

REFLECT ON YOUR LEARNING

1. What are the ways in which organizations encourage or discourage "upward" communication?
2. "A flat organization is a myth". To what extent can an organization function without a structure with levels of authority?
3. How does training promote effective interpersonal behaviour?
4. In an organization, one learns new attitudes towards working with others. How does communication help an individual's learning behaviour?
5. Identify the advantages and disadvantages of having a clearly defined communication policy from a manager's point of view, especially in relation to employees' needs.

APPLY YOUR LEARNING

Choose an organization you are familiar with and prepare a diagrammatic presentation of its communications networks. Analyse and evaluate the strengths and limitations of the company's Management Information System (MIS).

SELF-CHECK YOUR LEARNING

From among the given options, choose the most appropriate answer:*

1. Managing as a process does not organize:
   (a) labour
   (b) capital
   (c) goods
   (d) material
2. Forecasting determines organizational:
   (a) budget
   (b) performance
   (c) feedback
   (d) objectives and policies
3. To create a cooperative, understanding, and pleasant work environment in an organization, decision-making should be:
   (a) transparent
   (b) strong
   (c) flexible
   (d) quick
4. In an organization, the functional areas are:
   (a) communications, production, and marketing
   (b) marketing, communications, and finance
   (c) production, marketing, and finance
   (d) finance, production, and communications

*For answers and self-evaluation, visit www.pearsoned.co.in/PDChaturvedi

5. In business, a manager spends most of his or her time in:
   (a) speaking
   (b) writing
   (c) meetings
   (d) planning
6. Managers need effective communication skills to perform the following roles:
   (a) personal
   (b) interpersonal
   (c) impersonal
   (d) decisional
7. There are ____ levels in Maslow's pyramid of needs.
   (a) four
   (b) three
   (c) five
   (d) six
8. In organizations, the flow of communication sometimes slows down because there are too many:
   (a) managers
   (b) channels
   (c) hierarchical levels
   (d) departments
9. Grapevine, as an information system, is:
   (a) informal
   (b) formal
   (c) predictable
   (d) personal
10. A limitation of informal communication is that it is:
   (a) inadequate
   (b) personal
   (c) unwarranted
   (d) false

ENDNOTES

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5. Koontz and O'Donnell, *Management—A System and Contingency Analysis of Management Function* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976), p. 623.
6. Leland Brown, *Communicating Facts and Ideas in Business* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1982), pp. 428–429.
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3 Intercultural Communication Skills

> *In some ways, all people are like all other people; in some ways, like some other people; and in some ways, like no one else.*
>
> — *Clyde Kluckhohn*

Upon completion of this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Understand the increasing need for clear and cordial communication with people from different cultures.
2. Understand how cultural context affects personal behaviour and business communication.
3. Know the main characteristics of low-context and high-context cultures.
4. Learn how to communicate across cultures with different concepts of formal and social behaviour, time, and space.
5. Understand e-mail etiquette for intercultural business communication.

Communication at Work

A group of French students, newly arrived in India on an exchange programme at Bajaj Institute of Management (BIM), Pune, faced some communication problems that they described:

"First of all, the difference in accents between French and Indian people is important. That is why it is sometimes hard for us to understand each other. We took time to adapt to this new accent, and it was sometimes difficult to be understood by Indians, who are unfamiliar with our French accent.

At the beginning, we often had to ask people to repeat themselves two or three times. Eventually, this would become embarrassing, so we would just say 'okay', even if we didn't understand that they had said. Likewise, in restaurants, it happened that after ordering a specific dish, we would get a different one because of pronunciation problems with the waiter.

To adapt, we quickly understood that it was better for us to speak in English without British or American accents that we learned at school. Indeed, it was better to adapt our accent to the Indian pronunciation, especially with the letter *r*. Moreover, we use very simple English and easy sentences such as 'You, okay?' instead of 'Do you agree with that?' to be correctly understood.

We, every day, face the difficulties generated by the difference in accents, but the major issue is communicating with non-English-speaking people. Not everyone in India speaks English and, unfortunately, we do not speak Hindi. We have faced many situations where it was difficult to be clear and to converse with the other side. For instance, when we want to bargain with rickshaws, it takes a long time and we often have to show numbers with our hands or by writing them on the floor or typing them on our mobile phones."

GLOBALIZATION AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

With increasing globalization, interaction between people from different societies and cultures has become unavoidable. More than just travelling as tourists, people now stay in foreign countries for business, higher studies, and employment. The new trend in international business is to "go local". This creates a work situation in which "locals" and foreign experts perform together as a team. This necessitates cultural orientation on the part of the visitors so that they are familiar with the host culture, specially the use of habitual expressions and expected behaviour in different situations. The process of acculturation is made possible by organizing specialized training of visiting teams in the language and work culture of host organizations. It is also necessary for those in the host country to be respectful and welcoming of their visitors' cultures, so that the interaction can be productive and cordial.

A prerequisite to setting up a business in a foreign land is being able to maintain cordial relations with the local people. One of the important ways to achieve this is to speak the language of the foreign land. For example, the representatives

Exhibit 3.1
Will Indian English Conquer the Globe?

According to Professor David Crystal, one of the world's foremost experts and author of the *Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language,* English will fragment into "global dialects", forcing speakers routinely to learn two varieties of the language—one spoken in their home country and a new kind of Standard English. The latter kind of English will have pronounced Indian characteristics, says Professor Crystal.

The new Standard English could signify the end of the primacy of American English. "Future users of global Standard English might routinely say, 'I am thinking it is going to rain' rather than the British/American 'I think it is going to rain'", says Crystal. Because Indians tend to use the "present continuous"—*I am thinking*, *I am feeling*, *I am seeing*—where the British/Americans would use the "present simple"—*I think*, *I feel*, *I see*—the present continuous form may become part of global Standard English. A second factor in this change in the nature of English could be the fact that India has a bigger English-speaking population than the rest of the native English-speaking world. It will be interesting to see the form English takes if the new Standard English gains popularity.

Source: Based on Rashmee Roshan Lall, "Indian English Will Conquer Globe: Expert", *The Times of India*, New Delhi, March 7, 2008.

1

Understand the increasing need for clear and cordial communication with people from different cultures.

The new trend in international business is to "go local".

of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) in Latin America converse in Spanish and Portuguese. Similarly, the executives of Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M) working in China undergo training in Chinese language, culture, and social customs in addition to picking up Chinese business etiquette in the course of their stay in China. Likewise, the local Chinese employees of M&M are given training in English so that they can follow and implement the company's new business processes.

Smooth cross-cultural presence in business, industry, or education is possible internationally or intra-nationally only by first developing knowledge and sensitivity of the other culture. Indian corporations seeking to establish businesses in foreign countries such as China, South Africa, Malaysia, Korea, and so on are preparing themselves by teaching executives foreign languages. This can facilitate easy intermingling with the people in these countries and help develop *cultural sensitivity*. According to a report published in *The Economic Times*, cultural sensitivity is increasingly becoming India Inc.'s "most important deal drill."[1] This is discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

Exhibit 3.1 provides an insight into some of the transformations the English language may undergo in an increasingly global world.

THE NEW GLOBAL MANTRA: GO LOCAL

To manage the cultural diversity they encountered in other countries, Indian multinational companies such as Tata, HCL, and M&M decided to go local in a big way. Consider the example of Tata Motor's Daewoo enterprise in Korea, wherein Koreans are employed to do most of the work and the small number of Indians who work with them speak Korean. Likewise, TCS in Latin America has in place a senior management team consisting mostly of locals, while a few Indians provide the support system. Bilt also believes in the "go local" mantra of globalization. Its decision to acquire Sabah Forest, Malaysia's largest paper and pulp company, without displacing people from their present jobs in the company is inspired by this philosophy.

The practice of absorbing locals into the workforce is ethically sound. It creates a cordial relationship between the hosts and the foreign employer and employees. But the visiting organization faces a number of challenges. For instance, consider the experience of SBI in China. T.C.A. Ranganathan had a great deal of experience managing bank branches across North India. But in Shanghai, he realized that he still needed to learn certain things about managing bank branches. Understanding and handling the Chinese staff was one of the major challenges. Another difficulty was codifying the local law in a manner that could be understood back in India. There was also the issue of building a brand for a bank that few in China had heard of.[2]

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

Executives seeking global business shores often join formal classes to get a feel for local cultures. Sensitivity to local cultures is necessary to stay in business. For instance, dinner diplomacy in China is often more effective than boardroom meetings for securing business. Those who understand this, like M&M, often manage to clinch deals over less-sensitive rivals.

2

Understand how cultural context affects personal behaviour and business communication.

Awareness about a client's cultural sensitivities often results in a positive advantage in business relationships. The phrase "cultural sensitivity" was first used in the *Harvard Business Review* in 2004, in the context of the cultural intelligence quotient (CQ). Shital Kakker Mehra, founder of Soft Skills International, defines cultural sensitivity as "an ability to interpret unfamiliar and ambiguous gestures in the way compatriots of the same culture would." Here, the term *gestures* stands for the whole range of non-verbal cues that accompany verbal communication between persons from two different cultures. In interpreting gestures, one can consider the human body to be part of the code for communication of symbolic messages that reveal an individual's thoughts and feelings. Gestures are often expressive of cultural context.

Here, it is important to understand that culture is not just behaviour. Culture is the received and accepted set of rules guiding human behaviour. These rules are absorbed and eventually become engrained in each individual's mind to the point where they are second nature. Persons with similar sets of social rules tend to behave in the same manner, which then becomes the normal behaviour expected in different situations. It is interesting to know that an individual's behaviour is noticed only when it deviates from the norm and becomes a noticeable behaviour in a particular culture. Thus, cultural sensitivity, which is measured by the cultural intelligence quotient, helps us to understand cultural differences. It enables us to interpret different gestures according to the rules of normal behaviour in that culture.

For example, here is a scenario illustrative of significant differences between cultures: a man travelling alone in a cab in New York will sit in the back seat, but in Australia, if a man is travelling alone in a cab, he will occupy the front seat next to the driver. According to Beatty and Takahashi, most New York cab drivers hold that if a single male attempted to get in the front seat, next to them, they would get out of the cab. For them, such an act would likely mean that the entering passenger is a thief. Australian cab drivers, on the other hand, feel that a man getting in the back seat alone is rather unfriendly and distant.[3]

Cultural sensitivity is considered to be very important in helping a person adapt to a foreign culture. This is why most nations include questions about their culture in their citizenship tests, assuming that a person who is aware about their culture will be able to adapt to it successfully. Exhibit 3.2 shows a few sample questions that a person may be required to answer as part of a U.K. citizenship test.

Meetings and Social Visits

Differences in cultures are seen in the way people from different cultures behave on meeting someone for the first time.

People's behaviour at meetings and social gatherings is nearly a ritualized act in various cultures. At a formal meeting between two persons or groups from different cultural backgrounds, people might behave according to their own culture. For example, in English one may say "Pleased to meet you" or "How do you do?", whereas in Japanese one says "Hajimemashite" (it is beginning). Differences in cultures are seen in the way people from different cultures behave on meeting someone for the first time. Japanese executives first exchange business cards instead of verbally introducing themselves. The card is handed over to the receptionist, without an introduction. The purpose of giving or showing the card is to announce the visitor's arrival for the appointed meeting. No verbal exchange takes place because the Japanese believe that verbal exchange should

Exhibit 3.2
Sample Citizenship Test

Several nations ask immigrants to take citizenship tests that examine their knowledge of the culture they hope to live in. Below is a sample citizenship test for the United Kingdom.

1. The United Kingdom has a vibrant popular culture. Which of the following is **not** a British musical group?
   - Westlife
   - Mis-teeq
   - So Solid Crew
   - Busted
2. Queen Elizabeth II, the head of state, celebrates an "official birthday", the date of which changes every year. What is her actual birthday?
   - 23 April
   - 14 June
   - 1 April
   - 21 April
3. You have a bought a kettle from a High Street electrical retailer. Under what circumstances can you demand your money back?
   - You changed your mind; you don't want it anymore.
   - It keeps switching off before the water boils.
   - You discover that a friend has already bought one for you.
   - All of the above.
4. The United Kingdom has a devolved government, which means there are special groups of elected officials who currently meet in both Edinburgh and Cardiff. Who is the first minister of the Welsh Assembly?
   - Rhodri Morgan
   - Jack McConnell
   - Peter Hain
   - Denzil Davies
5. Under working time regulations, after six hours of work, you are entitled to a break of how long?
   - 20 minutes
   - 30 minutes
   - 60 minutes
   - 90 minutes

be for prolonged interactions. The exchange of visiting cards involves no time as such. American businesspeople find this practice rather surprising. Americans and Europeans usually approach the receptionist and verbally announce, "I am so and so" and "I have come to meet so and so". On meeting the person concerned, they would greet them with a "Good morning/afternoon/evening" and "how are you doing?", which is followed by an introduction

Group Behaviour

Cultural differences are also noticeable in the way people in groups act when they are joined by a new person. In America, when a group of persons is talking and someone joins the group, the group drops the ongoing discussion as it is believed that the newcomer would have little interest in it or would fail to join in the discussion. In this matter, the Japanese follow the practice of continuing with the ongoing discussion and wait for the moment when the newcomer is able to join the conversation. Of course, if the newcomer has high status, the group drops the discussion to pay attention to the newly arrived person. Thus, one could say that "Americans regroup, whereas Japanese join an existing group."

Paying a Visit

Visiting is a formal act. Calling out the name of the host of a house is usually considered improper in most cultures. Ringing the door bell or knocking on the door is the normal practice. On entering a house, Japanese people (and those from some other Asian cultures) generally remove their shoes. People of western cultures do not normally do so.

Addressing Others

Different cultures have different ways in which people address each other. For example, in the United States, children address their parents or uncles/aunts by their relationship to them, such as "Mom", "Dad", "Uncle", "Aunt", and so on. Siblings or cousins use first names to address each other. Moreover, older adults who are not immediate family members are generally addressed by their first names, regardless of how old they may be. In some cultures, like in China, one can call a waiter in a restaurant by words reserved for relatives, such as for an uncle. Their use in such contexts shows politeness towards the person addressed. In India, there are specific terms for specific aunts and uncles—for instance, *tau* refers to one's father's older brother, whereas *chacha* refers to one's father's younger brother.

In the business context, greetings are more formal in Europe and East Asia than in the United States. Mr/Ms/Mrs (to be followed by the full name or the surname) and Sir/ Madam are more common in Britain, Germany, France, China, and Russia. Japanese businesspeople avoid first names, and instead use Mr/Mrs/Miss/Dr, or they add *san* after the surname, for instance, "Shin *san*" if the name is Jin Boon Shin. Academics can be addressed as *sensei* (teacher). In China, the surname precedes the personal name; for example, Zhang Hua is Mr Zhang, not Mr Hua. Therefore, when addressing a Chinese person, it is best to use Mr/Mrs/ Miss and the surname. The Chinese also refer to each other by their job titles, for example "Manager Li".

In Germany, even colleagues who have been working in the same office for 20 years, may use the formal form and address each other by their surname and title (*Herr* for a man or *Frau* for a woman). If someone has an academic title, it may also be added (for instance: Herr Dr or Frau Professor). The French also tend to be rather formal and do not use first names easily. They generally address each other by prefixing the surname with *Monsieur, Madame,* or *Mademoiselle* (for a young lady). Similarly, it is considered impolite to call an adult by their first name under any circumstances in Korea. Interestingly, titles such as Mr/Mrs/Miss are used to address juniors in Korea. On the other hand, Americans are more informal. They usually prefer to interact on first-name basis and may even greet each other with nicknames or shortened versions of their names, like "Bill" for William or "John" for Johnson.

For a non-Russian, the question of how to address a Russian person can be quite complicated. After 1917, the Russian words for Mr, Mrs, and Ms were abolished. The word *tovarisch*—meaning "comrade"—is used mainly in political meetings and is no longer common. Strangers use the word *grazhdanin* or *grazhdanka*—meaning "citizen" or "citizens". When strangers are introduced, they will use their first names and surnames.

In Spain, although *tu*, the informal form of "you", is used extensively, it is still the custom to use the more formal *usted* with strangers and older people. In Italy, when addressing others in business and professional contexts, one usually uses titles: *dottore* (doctor, but also anyone with a university degree), *ingegnere* (engineer), *ragioniere* (accountant), and *professore* (any teacher above elementary school level) are commonly used for male professionals. Female professionals are similarly addressed as *dottoressa*, *professoressa*, and so on.

A lack of awareness of the culture of the person one is interacting with may lead to serious misunderstandings, as evident from Exhibit 3.3.

Exhibit 3.3
Cultural Misunderstandings

On Arvind's first day as senior manager in a firm in Japan, he was asked if he would like to pick up his recruitment letter and other forms. "It seemed like a suggestion, so I said I would do so later." This casual remark lost him a lot of goodwill in the office. Suggestions are meant to be interpreted as commands in Japan, he learned later.

Preeti was preparing to receive her husband's Chinese boss for dinner. She ordered special Chinese lanterns to welcome him. But when he arrived, he took one look at the lanterns, bowed, and took leave. Preeti ruefully recalls, "The Chinese use different lanterns for different social occasions. I had decorated my house with funeral lanterns."

Deepa Sharma, a cross-cultural trainer who liaises between several Indian and American firms, says, "When doing business, many Indians, by and large, go on trust and goodwill. This creates an area of vagueness which can be problematic for Westerners who want everything on paper." She recalls a joint construction project between an Indian and American firm. The Americans were checking and cross-checking the modalities required to finish the project. "This irritated the Indian engineers who felt the Americans were questioning their competency, while the Americans felt they were being clear, thorough, and transparent," she says.

Cultural misunderstandings nearly derailed an Indo–Japanese project on a bridge. Ex-president of Turner Broadcasting (CNN) India and cross-cultural trainer, Bhaskar Pant, says, "An Indian firm sent a detailed list of technical questions to their Japanese counterparts. They panicked when no reply was forthcoming." What had happened? Was the deal off? A week later, the Japanese responded. "Unlike in India or the West, the Japanese take feedback from everyone. The queries probably went to heads of different departments, so when the Japanese finally responded, they were presenting as full a picture as possible. This concept is alien in India or the West where e-mail etiquette means a response is required the next day."

Source: Based on Ashwin Ahmad, "To the Manner Born at the Workplace", TNN.

3

Know the main characteristics of low-context and high-context cultures.

DEVELOPING CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE

Our attitudes, values, beliefs, social behaviour, and language crystallize in the crucible of culture. Therefore, to be able to act and respond correctly in intercultural situations, it is important to know the other individual's cultural background.

Verbal and non-verbal communication should be explained with reference to their cultural contexts. Edward T. Hall, an anthropologist, propounded the theory of strong linkage between culture and communication. While teaching intercultural skills to foreign service personnel in the 1950s, he developed the concepts of "high-context culture" and "low-context culture."

The kind of communication that dominates in a given culture relates directly to the type of the culture it is or, to be more precise, to the role of social context in that culture. Social context is interpreted as the network of social expectations that determine a person's behaviour. The rules act as social context and guide behaviour almost spontaneously, with little conscious effort on the part of the participants in the interaction. Context is a key factor in determining the effect of culture on communication. It implies consideration of the framework, background, and surrounding circumstances in which communication takes place.

In a *high-context culture*, there are many contextual elements that help individuals understand the rules. Much is taken for granted while communicating. A person who does not know the unwritten rules of the culture may find communication confusing.

High-context Cultures

In a *high-context culture*, there are many contextual elements that help individuals understand the rules. Much is taken for granted while communicating. A person who does not know the unwritten rules of the culture may find communication confusing. High-context cultures are found in many Asian countries and much of the Middle East, South America, and Africa. People from these countries are more likely to be relational, collectivist, intuitive, and contemplative. This means that people in these cultures emphasize interpersonal relationships. Developing trust is an important first step to any business transaction. According to Hall[4], these cultures are collectivist, preferring group harmony and consensus to individual achievement. People in these cultures may be less governed by reason than by intuition or feelings. Words are not as important as context, which might include the speaker's tone of voice, facial expressions, gestures, posture, and even the person's family history and status. A Japanese manager explained his culture's communication style to an American in the following words: "We are a homogeneous people and don't have to speak as much as you do. When we say one word, we understand ten, but here you have to say ten to understand one." High-context communication tends to be more indirect and more formal. Flowery language, humility, and elaborate apologies are typical.

4

Learn how to communicate across cultures with different concepts of formal and social behaviour, time, and space.

Low-context Cultures

In a *low-context culture*, very little is taken for granted. Therefore, explicit statements and explanations are required. The chances of misunderstanding by those outside that culture are minimized. Low-context cultures include those of North America and much of Western Europe. These cultures tend to value rationality, logic, action-oriented behaviour, and individualism. They emphasize reason, facts, and directness. Solving a problem means lining up the facts and evaluating them. Decisions are based on facts rather than intuition. Discussions end with actions. Explicit contracts conclude negotiations. Communicators are expected to be straightforward, concise, and efficient in explaining all actions literally. This is very different from communication in high-context cultures, which depend less on precise language and legal documents. Businesspeople from high-context cultures may even distrust contracts and be offended by the lack of trust they suggest. Knowledge of the culture of one's business associates helps set realistic expectations regarding the type of communication that is likely to happen. Exhibit 3.4 compares the characteristics of high- and low-context communication.

In a *low-context culture*, very little is taken for granted. Therefore, explicit statements and explanations are required. The chances of misunderstanding by those outside that culture are minimized.

Time As a Cultural Factor

According to Hall, another significant characteristic of a culture is how time is viewed in that culture. In his book *The Silent Language*, Hall coined the terms *polychronic*, to describe the ability to attend to multiple events simultaneously, and *monochronic*, to describe individuals and cultures with a preference for doing things sequentially. The main differences between the two are highlighted in Exhibit 3.5.[5]

Monochronic Time

M-time, as Hall calls it, means doing things in a sequential manner, one thing at a time. Monochronic people tend to carefully plan and schedule their work. They are known for their time management skills. A monochronic sense of time is more common in low-context cultures.

Monochronic time means doing things in a sequential manner, one thing at a time.

Exhibit 3.4
Communication in High-context and Low-context Cultures

Low-context Cultures
Examples: North-America, Germany, France

- More emphasis on accurate and correct information
- Detailed information and precise documents are crucial; the context is relatively unimportant
- Listeners try to gain as much information as possible
- The interpretation of the message should be unambiguous
- Decisions based on information and facts; objective data valued

High-context Cultures
Examples: Japan, China, Greece, Arab nations

- Seeks to appeal to emotions
- Lack of detailed information and precise documents, much information depends on the context
- Relaxed speaking and listening, no interference from listeners
- Listeners are free to interpret the message
- Decisions based on emotional factors; subjective relationships valued

Exhibit 3.5
Differences Between Monochronic and Polychronic Cultures

Monochronic Cultures Examples: North-America, Germany, France	**Polychronic Cultures** Examples: France
• Do one thing at a time • Concentrate on the job at hand • Think about deadlines and when things must be achieved • Put the job first • Seldom borrow or lend things • Emphasize promptness	• Do many things simultaneously • Are highly distractable and subject to interruptions • Think about what will be achieved • Put relationships first • Borrow and lend things more easily • Base promptness on relationship factors

In a *polychronic culture*, human relationships are valued more than time. Polychronic people do not hurry to get things done, and they get things done in their own time.

Polychronic Time

In a *polychronic culture*, human relationships are valued more than time. Polychronic people do not hurry to get things done, and they get things done in their own time. They are high-context people in their overall attitude towards information sharing.

Within western cultures people have different attitudes towards time. For instance, Americans and Germans are highly monochronic, whereas the French tend to be largely polychronic. Hence, being late to a business meeting is a much bigger faux pas for a German or American executive than for a French executive.

Space As a Cultural Factor

Different cultures vary in their concern for space and social relationships within it. Hall calls the study of human concern for space *proxemics*. Concern for space primarily suggests personal body space. But it also relates to space in other situations such as in one's room, in traffic, and in the office.

People are extremely sensitive to any intrusion into their personal space by others. But the area of personal territory differs from culture to culture and relationship to relationship. This concern for proper personal space will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7. However, here we will consider it as one of the cultural factors affecting human relations and levels of comfort. For instance, a Japanese person may need less space and may stand too close for an American's comfort without realizing it.

This concern for space may extend to the level of territorial possessiveness. In fact, perhaps all territorial feuds and wars result from an overzealous concern for space. This is often seen in offices, where some individuals with territorial tendencies fight for exclusive use of their office desks, behaving as if they possessed the desk and were not simply using it.

People of high territoriality tend to be from low-context cultures. People of low territoriality tend to have less of a sense of ownership of personal space and, accordingly, boundaries have less meaning for them. They readily share their territory and space. For example, in buses or trains some persons offer to share their seats with others with little hesitation.

Cultural analysis should help us understand an individual's actions in the context of the type of culture to which he or she belongs. For example, the reason for a person being late to a meeting may not be laziness or lack of respect, but, rather, his or her having a polychronic cultural background and a more flexible attitude towards timings.

This cultural analysis should help us understand an individual's actions in the context of the type of culture to which he or she belongs. For example, the reason for a person being late to a meeting may not be laziness or lack of respect, but, rather, his or her having a polychronic cultural background and a more flexible attitude towards timings.

SOME EXAMPLES OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY

An important prerequisite to understanding colleagues and acquaintances from other cultures is being able to accept various cultures on their own terms. It is important to guard against *ethnocentrism*—the practice of judging the behaviour of people from other cultures on the basis of what is considered to be "acceptable behaviour" in one's own culture. Ethnocentrism and stereotyping can be barriers to effective communication, so it is important to avoid such tendencies.

This section highlights the norms of four different cultures in an attempt to emphasize the need to be aware of cultural differences and to adapt one's style of communication when meeting people from different cultural backgrounds. However, one should always keep in mind that stereotyping can lead to incorrect assumptions, and individuals vary within cultures.

Japan

- *Culture:* Saving face is crucial in Japanese society. The Japanese believe that turning down someone's request causes embarrassment and loss of face to the other person. If a request cannot be agreed to, they will say, "it is inconvenient" or "it is under consideration".

  There is great emphasis on politeness, personal responsibility, and working together for the universal rather than the individual good. Facts that might be unpleasant are expressed in a gentle and indirect fashion. Since the Japanese strive for harmony and work well in groups, they often rely on facial expressions, tone of voice, and posture to understand others.
- *Business relationships and communication:* The Japanese prefer to do business on the basis of personal relationships. One way to build and maintain relationships is with greetings and seasonal cards. In general, being introduced or recommended by someone who already has a good relationship with the company is extremely helpful as it helps them know how to place others in a hierarchy relative to themselves.
- *Business meeting etiquette:* Greetings in Japan are very formal and ritualized. While foreigners are expected to shake hands, the traditional form of greeting is the bow. How far someone bows depends upon their relationship to the other person as well as the situation. The deeper someone bows, the more respect they show.

  Since this is a group society, foreigners should be prepared for group meetings. The most senior Japanese person will be seated farthest from the door, with the rest of the people seated in descending order of rank; the most junior person is seated closest to the door.

  The Japanese often remain silent for long periods of time. Others should be patient and try to determine if their Japanese colleagues have understood what was said. Some Japanese people close their eyes when they want to listen intently.

  The Japanese seldom grant concessions. They expect both parties to come to the table with their best offer. Business cards are exchanged frequently and with great ceremony. Business cards are given and received with two hands and a slight bow.

France

- *Culture:* The family is the social adhesive of the country, and each member has certain duties and responsibilities. The French are private people and have different rules of behaviour for people within their social circle and those outside it.
- *Business relationships and communication:* The handshake is a common form of greeting. Friends may greet each other by lightly kissing on each cheek. First names are generally reserved for family and close friends; one should not address someone by his or her first name until invited to do so. Mutual trust and respect are required to get things done.

  The French like to use their own language; someone who does know speak French could apologize for not knowing the language as this may aid in developing a relationship.
- *Business meeting etiquette:* Business cards are exchanged after the initial introductions without formal rituals. In business, the French often appear extremely direct because they are not afraid of asking probing questions. Meetings are held to discuss issues, not to make decisions. The French are often impressed with good debating skills that demonstrate an intellectual grasp of the situation and all its ramifications. Discussions may be heated and intense. One should never attempt to be overly friendly as the French generally compartmentalize their business and personal lives.

Germany

- *Culture:* In many respects, Germans can be considered the masters of planning. This is a culture that prizes forward thinking and knowing what they will be doing at a specific time on a specific day. Business and personal lives are rigidly divided. In a culture where most communication is rather formal, the home is where one can relax.
- *Business relationships and communication:* Germans do not need a personal relationship in order to do business. They tend to be interested in others' academic credentials and the amount of time their business partners have been in business.

  A quick, firm handshake is the traditional greeting. Business cards are exchanged after the initial introductions without formal ritual. Germans do not have an open-door policy. People often work with their office doors closed. Visitors should knock and wait to be invited in before entering someone's office.

  German communication is formal. Following the established protocol is critical to building and maintaining business relationships. One can expect a great deal of written communication, both to back up decisions and to maintain a record of decisions and discussions. Letters should be addressed to the senior-most person in the relevant functional area and should include the person's name as well as their proper business title.
- *Business meeting etiquette:* Punctuality is taken extremely seriously. If one is delayed, it is important to call immediately and offer an explanation for the delay. It is extremely rude to cancel a meeting at the last minute and it could jeopardize a business relationship.

  Meetings adhere to strict agendas, including starting and ending times. Germans prefer to get down to business and only engage in the briefest of small talk. They maintain direct eye contact while speaking. Business is hierarchical, and decision-making happens at the top of the company. Once a decision is made, it will not be changed.

Brazil

- *Culture:* Brazil is a mixture of races and ethnicities, which has resulted in rich diversity in the population. Unlike many other Latin American countries where there is a distinct Indian population, Brazilians have intermarried to the point that it sometimes seems that almost everyone has a combination of European, African, and indigenous ancestry. Families tend to be large (although family size has been diminishing in recent years) and the extended family is quite close.
- *Business relationships and communication:* Businesspeople usually shake hands when greeting one another, while maintaining steady eye contact. Women generally kiss each other on the cheek. Brazilians need to know who they are doing business with before they can work effectively. They prefer face-to-face meetings to written communication as it allows them to know the person with whom they are doing business. The individual they deal with is more important than the company. Communication is often informal and does not rely on strict rules of protocol. Anyone who feels they have something to say will generally add their opinion.
- *Business meeting etiquette:* In Sao Paulo and Brasilia, it is important to arrive on time for meetings. In Rio de Janeiro and other cities it is acceptable to arrive a few minutes late for a meeting. One should not appear impatient if kept waiting—Brazilians see time as something outside their control and the demands of relationships takes precedence over adhering to a strict schedule. Meetings are generally rather informal. One can expect to be interrupted while speaking or making a presentation. Business cards are exchanged during introductions with everyone at a meeting.

In a world where people from such varied cultures are required to communicate, Globlish—a simplified form of English—can be a great way of making our communication more effective. Exhibit 3.6 explains the concept of Globlish.

Exhibit 3.6
Globlish: A New Tool for Business Communication

To make communication in English easier in a world where professionals from different cultural and language backgrounds interact, former IBM vice president Jean-Paul Nerrier came up with the concept of a language of just 1,500 words: Globlish.

Globlish, or "global English", Nerriere maintains, is a tool of communication rather than a language. He feels that in the international context, speaking immaculate Oxford English is unnecessary, and can even be detrimental at times. In such situations, Globlish, which is a highly simplified and unidiomatic form of English, can be used to communicate with ease. It is important to note that Globlish is not "pidgin" or "broken" English. All the words are English, and so is the grammar. It's just that the sentences are kept short and words like which, who, whose, and whom are replaced with punctuation marks.

In a country like India, where the educated usually speak more than one language and English is a second language, Globlish can be of great use for communicating clearly and effectively.

Sources: Based on "Master Globlish, Use it for Business Communication," *The Times of India*, New Delhi, 27 July 2007; and S. Pathiravitana, "Superstitions in English Grammar", *Daily News*, 25 March 2008.

GUIDELINES FOR INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

The following are some general guidelines for communicating with people from other cultures. Cross-cultural communication is about dealing with people from other cultures in a way that minimizes misunderstandings and maximizes the potential for strong relationships. Because one cannot know everything about all cultures, these are general guidelines that should be applied for clear intercultural communication.

- *Speak slowly:* Slow down. Be clear and intelligible in pronunciation.
- *Ask distinct questions:* In cross-cultural situations, one should realize that the listener may understand only one question at a time. Therefore, ask distinct and separate questions and not double questions such as "Do you want to carry on or shall we stop here?"
- *Avoid negative questions:* Many misunderstandings are caused by the use of negative questions and answers. In English, we say *yes* if the answer is affirmative and *no* if it is negative. But in India, people tend to say *yes* if they think a negative question should be answered in the affirmative. For instance, if someone asks, "Is Neha not coming?", one should say "No, she is coming" if Neha is indeed coming. But people tend to say, "Yes, she is not coming." This response is based on the thought "You are right that she is not coming", hence the answer begins with "yes". This can lead to confusion, so such questions should be avoided.
- *Take turns:* To enhance cross-cultural interaction, people should speak and listen by turns. This means that the person who is speaking should make his or her point and then listen to the response.
- *Be supportive:* Speaking a foreign language when expressing oneself and understanding others may not be easy. Effective communication is in essence about being comfortable. Giving encouragement to those with weak English gives them confidence, support, and trust in you.
- *Write it down:* If you are unsure of whether something has been understood, write it down and check with the other person. This can be useful when using large figures. For example, in the United States, a billion is 1,000,000,000, while in the United Kingdom, it could mean 1,000,000,000,000.
- *Check meanings:* When communication with someone from an unfamiliar culture, never assume that the other person has understood you. It helps to summarize what has been said in order to verify it. This is a very effective way of ensuring that cross-cultural communication has been accurate.
- *Avoid slang:* Even the most educated foreigner tends to miss the meaning of slang and idioms. Avoid using slang in cross-cultural communication situations.

- *Limit the humour:* In many cultures business is taken very seriously. Professionalism and protocol are constantly observed. Many cultures do not appreciate the use of humour and jokes in the business context. While using humour consider whether it will be appreciated and understood in the other culture. For example, British sarcasm often has a negative effect abroad.
- *Maintain etiquette and do some research:* Many cultures follow a certain etiquette when communicating. When interacting with people from other cultures for the first time, do some research on that culture. For instance, one can read about the country online, refer to travel guides, talk to other people who may know about that country, learn some key phrases in their language, and so on.
- *Be sensitive:* Be sensitive to other people's religious and dietary restrictions.
- *Be attentive to cues:* Be conscious of and sensitive to cues that others send out. One cannot be prepared for every situation, but one can learn a lot by observing others. For instance, when visiting another country, one can observe and follow the host's lead (especially with regard to dining and greeting etiquette).

5

Understand e-mail etiquette for intercultural business communication.

E-MAIL AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

The globalization of business in the modern world demands that people of diverse cultures across the world communicate with one another. Physically, a manager and his or her team members may be located in far-flung locations. For example, a senior executive may be placed in the United States while his or her staff may be in India, Germany, or China. Similarly, an exporter in India may have associates in France, the United Kingdom, the United States, Japan, and China. Their communication is an example of intercultural communication.

People across the world use e-mail as an instant means of communicating, transmitting messages, and receiving responses. Through the Internet people are able to send documents, information, and requests to colleagues, customers, clients, or suppliers across the globe. With e-mail as the preferred mode of international communication, two issues need to be looked into: language and culture.

E-mail communication is highly culture-specific with regard to language, idiom, and style.

Despite its many advantages, e-mail has an inherent difficulty for the receiver. E-mail communication is highly culture-specific with regard to language, idiom, and style. For example, an Indian who has lived in the United States for a few years may pick up American slang and inadvertently expresses himself or herself in an American manner. The cultural colouring of the language of such an e-mail may pose some difficulties to persons in India. E-mail is a spontaneous medium and its effortlessness sometimes makes it more casual.

Language

English is the most common language of business across all cultures. Although English is used as the language of global business, it is not equally understood and is often not used as native speakers speak it. This causes problems in international communication. Those for whom English is a second language may have problems in grammar, syntax, and choosing the correct words. In an e-mail, any error of vocabulary or grammar can present difficulties for the reader.

Although personal e-mails tend to have a more conversational tone and often use abbreviations, business e-mails are treated as formal, official documents. Thus, they should not be casually written. The sentences should be complete, grammatically correct, and abbreviations such as "u" for "you" are not acceptable. The format of e-mail communication is fixed with fields such as *from*, *to*, *subject*, *date*, and *time*. Other details such as the sender's and receiver's e-mail addresses are mentioned (sometimes along with mobile numbers which are part of the signature) to facilitate quick responses.

Culture

The actual format of an e-mail may differ from culture to culture. In some formal cultures, the normal practice is to begin by addressing someone by their name (and perhaps surname). Others may be less formal and go directly to the content of the e-mail. In either form, one may find an e-mail to be too formal or too informal. The content of an e-mail is also culture-dependent. Some cultures permit the use of slang and humour and some insist on the use of proper business expressions and courtesies.

The choice of words in an e-mail is also influenced by the culture of its sender. It is possible to get replies that say neither "yes" nor "no" in response to an e-mail, especially when corresponding with someone from a culture that is indirect in its communication style (such as India or Japan). For example, as discussed earlier, the Japanese believe that turning down someone's request causes embarrassment and loss of face to the other person. If the request cannot be agreed to, they may say "it is inconvenient" or "it is under consideration". In India, if a request is to be turned down, it is usually done by saying "we'll see". Sometimes, the use of a culture-specific phrase in an e-mail will be problematic for someone who is not familiar with that phrase. For example, the phrase "will touch base later" in Exhibit 3A in Communication Snapshot 3.1 has an implied meaning. In India, one would examine the meaning of each word separately. But when "touch" and "base" are put together in this phrase, it means "we shall speak later" in American and British English. This significance would only be understood by those who are familiar with its use.

The examples in Communication Snapshot 3.1 show some different types of e-mails and illustrate how they may be inappropriate or difficult to understand in a different culture.

Communication Snapshot 3.1

Sample E-mails

Exhibit 3A shows a business mail from Pallavi, an advertising professional, to her colleague, asking him to remind her client about providing feedback on a draft proposal. Note how she uses U.S.-specific words and phrases in her mail. The informal tone and abbreviations used in the mail are best avoided in a business mail.

Exhibit 3A
Pallavi's Mail

To... achaturvedi@adityabirla.com
Cc... p.gupta@innovate.com
Bcc...
Subject: road trip in the US

heellooo….
am writing this mail from North Carolina…so far we have covered 10 states from LA to here… the total distance from coast to coast is 3200 miles (5000 km approx)…we have already driven over 2700 miles…and its been lots of fun…
we stopped in Dallas, TX… really worth seeing… am def going there again… as we cud hardly see the town… its huge… probably bigger than LA… with 3 to 4 downtowns and really a busy city… it was nice being there as well…
We were then headed to North Carolina, … n crossed Atlanta and South Carolina on our way… now we are headed to Washington DC and will go through Virginia and a lot of other smaller states…
B4 I forget…did Mr Ramanujam write back about the draft proposal? It needs to be finalized by the end of this mnth, so will you plz remind him to send us his feedback? I plan to take a cuple of days once I'm back and finalise the proposal, so it wud be a gr8 help if you cud remind him about the feedback.
so much for now… have to hit the road … the forecast has some showers n thunderstorms so we need to be ahead of them…
will touch base later
take care n have fun

Pallavi
(714) 5189788
Keep smiling N remember ME

Office: +1 949780-6512
Mobile: +1 995 331-7826

Inappropriate subject for a business e-mail: does not state the purpose clearly.

In India, the word "downtown" may not be understood by everyone.

Although the sender may be familiar with the receiver, informal abbreviations like "plz" and "wud" are best avoided in a business mail. Sentences should be edited properly.

In India, one may examine the meaning of each word, "touch" and "base", separately.

Inappropriate and informal signature for business mails.

Exhibits 3B, 3C and 3D illustrate a series of e-mails exchanged between the project manager of an airport upgrade unit of Royale Airlines and an official from an information systems provider based in the United States. Note the tone of the mails and the intended humour, expressions, etc.

Exhibit 3B
Tej's First Mail to Richard

The use of first names in the norm in the United States, but in more formal cultures like India, Germany and France, the surname is preferred.

Note that the tone of this e-mail is very direct. A more indirect tone may be used in some cultures.

To... richard.davis@us.solutions.com
Cc... bclaus@airroyale.fr
Bcc...
Subject: URGENT/Progress on EMC Airlines discrepancy

Dear Rick,

Could you please provide me with a quick status update on the remaining discrepancies regarding the EMC Airlines aircraft?

Also, please tell me what jobs Solutions is still undertaking on-site currently and the expected timeframe, as well as what will be corrected later.

On the certification side, I understand all documents have been finalized and will be transmitted to FAA to allow STC processing. This would also mean that a date could be given to Weber for partial delivery to them.

Regards,

Tej
Project Manager
MT.MO – Aircraft Upgrade Unit

Exhibit 3C
Tej's Next Mail to Richard

To... richard.davis@us.solutions.com
Cc... bclaus@airroyale.fr
Bcc...
Subject: Progress on EMC Airlines discrepancy

Rick,

Unfortunately, recovery is taking much longer than expected, and is still not over. As you are aware, Air Royale is still struggling with FAA on some subjects and, as of this morning, we are still unable to provide a schedule to EMC on when our DER will come back for his final inspection. I will of course let you know as soon as I have more information.

We do not expect to need any Solutions manpower for this test. The IFE system will need to be fully operational, but I suppose EMC Airlines can also run this. Air Royale will of course send people back to Mumbai together with our DER.

Regards,

Tej

Exhibit 3D
Richard's Mail to Tej

To... tejm@airroyale.fr
Cc... bclaus@airroyale.fr
Bcc...
Subject: Progress on EMC Airlines discrepancy

Tej,

Glad to see you've made a complete recovery and are preparing to come to Mumbai to take the bull by the horns. And there is a lot of bull being passed around…

Use of casual language is acceptable in formal situations in some cultures.

I have submitted the following corrective action items to EMC Airlines for review. I'm sure they will have some other points to add, although I did tell them that individual LRU removal/replacement is handled via another document that is frequently updated, and not for this document. Beyond this, we have some software and application issues that were captured in another document during the Final System Acceptance Test, so these don't necessarily need to be added to this list.

None of the items identified by Solutions is reason to delay release into service. So, with submittal of the STC/PMA applications, we will be ready to go pending your regulatory compliance inspections and applications. I expect to receive feedback from EMC Airlines tomorrow.

We are using the time to work on these issues and replace LRUs with the available installation spares. However, we are reaching the point where we will reduce the on-site support to our in-service team and manage the corrective actions through the Field Service Engineers.

Thanks,

Rick

SUMMARY

- Cross-cultural communication is about dealing with people from other cultures in a way that minimizes misunderstandings and maximizes the potential for strong relationships.
- With increasing globalization, interaction between people from different societies and cultures has become unavoidable. This necessitates cultural orientation on the part of the visitors so that they are familiar with the host culture, specially the use of habitual expressions and expected behaviour in different situations.
- Cultural sensitivity is very important in helping a person adapt to a foreign culture. Cultural sensitivity is required to understand how to conduct oneself when attending meetings, visiting someone, joining a group or simply addressing someone.
- When working in different cultures, one should consider whether a culture is high-context or low-context by observing the actions of others. When one understands the prevalent culture, it is easier to understand the business atmosphere and increase one's influence.
- In the international business environment, e-mail has become a prevalent method of communication. One needs to be aware of cultural differences when exchanging e-mails with colleagues, clients and business partners from different cultures.

CASE: INTERCULTURAL LESSONS FROM *CRASH*

On the morning after the Academy Awards, I awoke with a question on my mind: "What do movies do best?" Do they help us understand the challenges others face? Do they teach us about other cultures and diverse backgrounds, or do they just make us feel good? While all of these are possible, consider this: movies allow us to work out our own emotional issues through the actions of the characters on screen.

When *Crash* won the Academy Award for Best Picture in 2006, I was thrilled. Why? Because the movie did what it was supposed to do. It made a whole lot of people "uncomfortable". For some, it evoked memories of their own discrimination experiences; for others, it calls to mind their own biased behaviour or that of someone close to them. But is that enough?

Of course it's not enough. Now, it's up to you and to me and to anyone left with emotional questions to answer after seeing the film to take action and expand their understanding. What do we do with unconscious fears and unspoken prejudices the movie uncovered? If we don't find them, understand them, and deal with them, we end up repeating behaviour that creates cross-cultural misunderstandings.

Fear-based behaviour comes up when we least expect it as we experience racism, ageism, wealthism, homophobism or any number of "isms" and can't believe it's happening to us, inside of us, around us, or, in the worst case, that it's actually perpetrated by us—even today.

Kenneth Turan, film critic for the *LA Times*, suggests that *Crash* is a "feel-good movie about racism…a film that could make you believe that you had done your moral duty and examined your soul when in fact you were just getting your buttons pushed." He used this as a reason that the "liberal" Academy voters chose *Crash* over *Brokeback Mountain* for the Best Picture award.

Both movies made people distinctly uncomfortable. My diversity partner, Dr Jo Ann Piata, and I submit that *Crash* pushed more buttons. More people identified with the discomfort of *Crash*. We ask, "What's wrong with a little button pushing if it pushes people out of their comfort zones and into change?" Now the job to be done is to bridge the learning and understanding we garnered from *Crash* and apply them to our lives and our businesses or the movie's mission has been wasted and we will prove Kenneth Turan's pessimistic view to be right. Button pushing can be manipulative or it can be healing; it's our choice.

What can you do now? Listen to the prejudiced voices in your own head—they create cultural blocks. Notice the way you interact with others. Who do you choose to be with? Are the people around you similar to you or different than you? If you sense discomfort when close to someone who you perceive to be different from you, take just a few moments to imagine what it would be like to live that person's life. How does that feel?

Look below the surface of behaviours to identify the values and beliefs that drive particular behaviour. Do this for a few days, and then write down the thoughts and feelings that make you uncomfortable. Now try to determine who influenced you to think and feel this way. Once you answer that question, you can make a choice to give that thinking back to its original source and change your own thinking, feeling, and behaving. This is an exercise you may use for the rest of your life—it will definitely keep you from *crashing*.

Questions to Answer

1. Mention one area of sensitivity that you are not able to handle while dealing with people.
2. Analyse a professional or personal experience that created cultural block in you.

Source: Judith Parker Harris and Jo Ann Piña, "Cross-Cultural Communication Lessons from the Academy Award Winner CRASH" (www.culturalblockbusters.com).

REVIEW YOUR LEARNING

1. Do you believe in Hall's theory of cultural context? Give reasons for your answer.
2. What factors should be kept in mind when conducting business in unfamiliar cultures?
3. If you and your spouse are in New York waiting for a cab, and if a friend driving alone offers you a ride, where will you sit?
4. Discuss e-mail as a preferred mode of intercultural communication.
5. What is cultural sensitivity? How will it help in making your intercultural communication effective?
6. Discuss how cultural differences are seen in group behaviour when the group is joined by a new person.
7. What is culture? Show to what extent our behaviour as social beings reflects our culture.
8. Discuss the broad characteristics of communication in a high-context culture.
9. Show how differences between monochronic and polychronic cultures affect the behaviour of individuals in certain situations.
10. How is space a factor in intercultural communication?

REFLECT ON YOUR LEARNING

1. Reflect on the essential difference between cultural sensitivity and cultural intelligence.
2. What points would you keep in mind when you visit a family member in a foreign country?
3. Do you believe that training in foreign ways of eating, dressing, and meeting people is helpful in intercultural interactions?
4. What should we do to retain our own cultural identity when we are communicating with people from different cultures?
5. What aspects of one's interactions exhibit one's cultural context?

APPLY YOUR LEARNING

In an intercultural situation, you receive a message saying "no" from someone's lips, but their eyes send a contradictory suggestion saying "yes". How would you decide what to do? Give reasons for your answer.

SELF-CHECK YOUR LEARNING

From the given options, please choose the most appropriate answer:*

1. In international business, the trend to "go local" has led to the local people and foreign experts performing as:
   (a) workers and employers
   (b) trainee and trainer
   (c) a team
   (d) hosts and guests
2. Culture is embedded in our:
   (a) minds
   (b) gestures
   (c) expressions
   (d) beliefs
3. Cultural intelligence helps us to know cultural:
   (a) similarities
   (b) differences
   (c) rules of behaviour
   (d) rituals
4. An individual's behaviour in a foreign society becomes noticeable when it _____________ in relation to the foreign culture.
   (a) deviates
   (b) conforms
   (c) overlaps
   (d) irritates
5. Culture refers to:
   (a) behaviour
   (b) attitude
   (c) thinking
   (d) rules of behaviour
6. People in high-context cultures make business decisions on the basis of:
   (a) reason
   (b) interpersonal relations
   (c) individual needs
   (d) competition
7. The exclusive centre of interest in low-context communication is:
   (a) information
   (b) emotional factors
   (c) context
   (d) individual perceptions
8. In *monochronic* cultures, the priority is:
   (a) relationships
   (b) the job
   (c) goal achievement
   (d) multiple tasks
9. The aim of cross-cultural communication training is to:
   (a) improve behaviour
   (b) create strong cultural ties
   (c) develop business etiquette
   (d) give social status
10. An e-mail's style is determined by a person's:
    (a) English
    (b) culture
    (c) communicative ability
    (d) status

*For answers and self-evaluation, visit www.pearsoned.co.in/PDChaturvedi

ENDNOTES

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4 Oral Communication

> *Mend your speech a little,*
> *Lest you may mar your fortunes.*
>
> — *William Shakespeare*

Upon completion of this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Understand the nature and importance of oral communication in business transactions and personal interactions.
2. Kow when to choose oral communication instead of written communication.
3. Learn key skills of oral communication.
4. Appreciate how intercultural situations require thoughtful oral communication.
5. Apply oral communication skills to new communication technologies.

Communication at Work

In the final year of their B.Com., Rakesh and Suresh decided to appear for the GMAT. One afternoon, they planned to go to the American Center to collect some information on the exam. But one of their seniors advised Rakesh that it would be better to go to the American Education Center on Hailey Road instead. Accordingly, Rakesh asked Suresh to meet him at "AEC" at 3 p.m. As they were talking over the phone, Suresh heard him say "AC" (for American Center), which is on Kasturba Gandhi Marg. When Suresh tried to confirm, Rakesh, repeated, "Yes, AEC." Rakesh reached the AEC at the appointed time, but did not see Suresh and waited for him till 4 p.m. at Hailey Road. Meanwhile, Suresh was waiting for him at the American Center on Kasturba Gandhi Marg. Incidentally, there was no way they could have checked with each other as Rakesh did not have his mobile phone with him that day and he didn't want to leave the spot lest Suresh miss him. It was only late at night in the hostel that they realized what actually caused the misunderstanding.

WHAT IS ORAL COMMUNICATION?

Oral communication, also known as verbal communication, is the interchange of verbal messages between a sender and receiver. It is more immediate than written communication. It is also more natural and informal.

In human development, speech precedes writing. Children first learn to speak, and then, much later, develop the ability to read and write. The ability to speak/articulate single words and later speak groups of words in meaningful sequence comes to children in the course of their growth. This ability develops from listening to verbal sounds (words). As compared to written communication, therefore, the ability to communicate through the spoken word (speech) is a naturally developing ability (barring medical abnormalities).

In business, oral communication is used more than written communication. A study of executive working hours showed that 70 per cent of an executive's time is spent on communicating. Forty-five per cent of this time is spent listening, 30 per cent is spent on speaking, 16 per cent on reading, and 9 per cent on writing. As 75 per cent executive communication is oral, it is advisable that executives develop their listening and speaking (oral communication) skills.[1]

Importance of Oral Communication Skills

A manager's maximum time is devoted to oral communication. He or she is often engaged in one of the following tasks: meetings, discussions, negotiations, seminars, presentations, interviews, peer conversations, providing instructions, and telephone conversations. All these business activities, except telephone conversations, involve *face-to-face* verbal communication. A telephone conversation is one-to-one oral communication that requires skillful control of tone, voice, and pitch, and precise use of words.

1

Understand the nature and importance of oral communication in business transactions and personal interactions.

In business transactions that involve face-to-face interaction between individuals or groups of individuals, it is not enough to be able to talk, discuss, converse, argue, or negotiate an issue. A manager should be able to do all these persuasively, effectively, and convincingly. But to be convincing, he or she must know and apply the skills of oral communication.

Managers face difficulties in resolving the problems of workers and influencing others through dialogue and personal discussions. They need oral communication skills that include being able to:

- Solve problems
- Resolve conflicts
- Influence people to work together
- Persuade others to be involved in organizational goals
- Be assertive without being aggressive
- Listen thoughtfully
- Negotiate effectively
- Make proposals

A manager should be able to converse or discuss persuasively, effectively, and convincingly.

It is said that it does not matter what you say, but rather, how you say it.

These skills include developing the necessary tact to work effectively for mutual satisfaction in complex situations. Broadly speaking, one has to know when to talk; when not to talk but to listen; how to talk (the tone, pitch, and modulation); how to interpret the listener's facial expressions, physical gestures, movements, and attitude; and how to be aware of one's own *body talk* (leakage), which consciously or unconsciously sends signals to the listener. It is said that it does not matter what you say, but rather, how you say it. This includes one's choice of words, level of confidence, and sincerity.

2

Know when to choose oral communication instead of written communication.

Choosing the Form of Communication

The choice between using oral and written communication is guided by considering the suitability of oral or written form for the purpose and nature of the subject of communication. Both written and oral forms have advantages and limitations, which are listed in Exhibit 4.1.

Principles of Successful Oral Communication

There are three communication situations in which oral communication takes place:

1. Face-to-face
2. Intercultural
3. Via electronic media

Oral communication is indispensable in any group or business activity. Here are some of the characteristics and principles of effective oral communication:

- *Purpose:* The purpose of talking effectively is to be heard and understood by the listener.
- *Lively rhythm:* Oral communication should, first of all, have a lively rhythm and tone.
- *Simple words:* It is important to use language that is free from long-winded sentences, clichés, and old-fashioned words and phrases. It is best to employ commonly used words and short and simple sentences.
- *Pitch:* The pitch of the speaker's voice should take into consideration the distance between the listener and the speaker.
- *Tone and body language:* The speaker's tone should be marked by sincerity and confidence. The listener, unlike the reader of a written communication, has the advantage of watching the speaker in the act of verbalizing his or her ideas and feelings, and is able to note subconscious body language that may contradict the intent of the spoken words. Therefore, in face-to-face communication, the message is both heard and seen. A speaker has to be very careful, both about his or her choice of words and the manner of speaking them. The manner of speaking is, at times, more important than the actual words, which communicate

Exhibit 4.1
Comparative Advantages and Limitations of Oral and Written Communication

Oral Communication	***Written Communication***
Advantages	
More personal and informal	Better for complex and difficult subjects, facts, and opinions
Makes immediate impact	Can be read at the receiver's convenience or pleasure
Provides opportunity for interaction and feedback	Can be circulated
Helps the speaker correct himself or herself (and his or her message) according to the feedback and non-verbal cues received from the receiver	Provides opportunity to refer back to a more permanent record
Better for conveying feelings and emotions	Better for keeping records of messages exchanged
	Can be revised before transmitting
Limitations	
Demands ability to think coherently while speaking	Immediate feedback is not available for correction on the spot
A word once uttered cannot be taken back	Many people do not like reading, especially official or business messages
Hard to control voice pitch and tone, especially when stressed, excited, or angry	More impersonal and remote
Very difficult to be conscious of body language	The reader is not helped by non-verbal cues that contribute to the total message
	Do not know if the message has been read
	Is more time consuming[2]

only 7 per cent of the total meaning of the message. Albert Mehrabian's research reveals astonishing facts about how exactly different factors contribute to a speaker's total message:[2]

- Verbal factors (words): 7%
- Tone of voice and modulation: 38%
- Visual factors (facial expressions, body movements, and gestures): 55%

Effective speakers learn to control and use their tone and body language to support their words. The role of tone and visual expressions and body language as contributory factors in oral communication will be discussed in detail in Chapter 7.

- *Pace of speaking:* Unlike the written word, the spoken word is ephemeral and short-lived. Listeners cannot refer back to the spoken word as readers can in case they missed something. This is an inherent limitation of speech. To overcome this limitation, the listener has to listen closely and attentively and the speaker should converse slowly, with proper semantic pauses, to enable the listener to receive and register what is said. There should be a correlation between the pace of speaking and the rate of listening. Research has established that an individual speaks nearly 125 words a minute, but the listener can process the information nearly 4–5 times more rapidly than this. If the gap between hearing and registering is too wide or too narrow based on the pace of speaking,

Research has established that an individual speaks nearly 125 words a minute, but the listener can process the information nearly 4–5 times more rapidly than this.

Listening is activated and helped when the speaker delivers his or her words in an ordered manner.

comprehension will to be adversely affected. Hence, an important principle of oral communication is to speak fluently, without long pauses or without rushing.

- *Fluency:* Fluency is described in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as "the quality of being able to speak or write a language easily and well." A fluent speaker is one who is heard with ease. The listener does not have to strain his or her mind to receive, register, and interpret the message. Listening is activated and helped when the speaker delivers his or her words in an ordered manner. Each word is distinctly heard and easily connected with other words to form the structure of the message.

3

Learn key skills of oral communication.

Guidelines for Effective Oral Communication

Oral communication should provide a platform for fair and candid exchange of ideas. The communicator should keep in mind the following tips and guidelines:

- Consider the objective.
- Think about the interest level of the receiver.
- Be sincere.
- Use simple language and familiar words.
- Be brief and precise.
- Avoid vagueness and generalities.
- Give full facts.
- Assume nothing.
- Use polite words and tone.
- Eliminate insulting implications.
- Include some information that is interesting and pleasing to the recipient.
- Allow time to respond.

Barriers to Effective Oral Communication

Managers have to communicate individually with people at different levels—superiors, subordinates, peers, customers, and public figures. The oral mode of communication is easy, efficient, and functionally helpful in resolving issues. But oral communication demands great control and communicative competence to be successful. The foremost barrier to oral communication is poor listening. Listening is a psychological act affected by several factors, such as the speaker's status, the listener's receptivity and retention, language barriers, and so on. These are discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

THREE ASPECTS OF ORAL COMMUNICATION—CONVERSING, LISTENING, AND BODY LANGUAGE

The ability to present and articulate one's viewpoint in a conversation is one of the most important components of oral communication. Effective conversationalists try to present facts, not opinions; they stick to the point; keep the listener's interest in mind; support their arguments with suitable examples; and ask for feedback and answer questions honestly. It is also important to know how to negotiate between opposing viewpoints and control the direction of conversation without being aggressive. These conversation skills are discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

The other side of oral communication involves careful listening. To be able to understand and appreciate others, one should allow them to express themselves freely, without being interrupted, and listen carefully. To improve your oral communication skills, you should know whether you are an effective or ineffective listener. By knowing your own characteristics, you can improve your listening skills as an important element of effective oral communication. Inconsiderate listeners may annoy and disturb the speaker by interrupting or showing little interest in what is being discussed. Effective listeners on the other hand try to encourage the other person via positive body language and expressions. They indicate that they feel interested and understand what is being discussed. Chapter 6 discusses listening in greater detail.

Body language is the third major aspect of oral communication, as it often reflects unspoken thoughts and emotions. The speaker should not be vague or unfocused, but instead, should make eye contact with the audience, encourage questions and interaction, show confidence, and get to the point without unnecessary talking. The nuances of non-verbal communication and body language are discussed in Chapter 7.

By practicing the basic skills of good listening, effective conversation, and positive body language one can become an effective communicator and be successful as a manager or negotiator, or in any situation involving conversation or discussion.

INTERCULTURAL ORAL COMMUNICATION

4

Appreciate how intercultural situations require thoughtful oral communication.

Today, interaction with foreigners for business, education, and social purposes has become very frequent. The cultural differences in social behaviour, values, language, and articulation pose difficulties for both sides. Communication Snapshot 4.1 illustrates some such difficulties. Intercultural interactions take place not only when people go abroad or receive visitors from another country, but even in the home country. This is because we live in a multi-cultural society and interact with people who speak a variety of languages and belong to different subcultures.

Indian speakers of English often face difficulty in conversing with Americans, the British, or other English-speaking Europeans. The foreign accent and speed of speaking sometimes make it difficult to follow what is being said. Even though the conversation takes place in English, two persons from different cultural backgrounds rarely speak English in the same way or understand it to the same extent.

Communication Snapshot 4.1

Intercultural Communication

Besides language barriers, intercultural interaction is deeply affected by the lack of familiarity with business and social norms and conventions of the respective cultural groups. The advice that Sunil gives to his cousin Gopal, who has just arrived in the United States as a student from India, in Anurag Mathur's novel, *The Inscrutable Americans*, is valuable in this context.

> "Ah Gopal, that may not be the most accurate account of life here. You know I suggest that before you actually start socializing with people maybe you should first settle down a bit, get to figure out what's what, you know, check out the whole scene."

Sunil's advice is to view things as they are, and to not assume anything or pass judgment hastily in an unfamiliar culture. An example of Gopal's bafflement in his early days in the United States occurs in a grocery store and reveals how necessary it is to be familiar with the manner in which business is conducted in a different culture.

> "At the mall, Gopal felt totally helpless at the gentility all around and the effortless ease with which shopping could be conducted. However, he knew shopkeepers well and he felt he had no reasons to believe that their basic attitude to customers here [America] would be any different from what it was in India. So when the girl at the counter totalled his purchases for pots, sheets and plates and announced, "That'll be $37 and 52 cents, sir", Gopal was ready for her.
>
> "25 dollars," he replied firmly.
>
> "Sorry, sir", she replied, "that's 37 dollars and 52 cents".
>
> "27 dollars", Gopal suggested.
>
> "Er, no sir", she replied nervously, "if you've run short of cash we'll gladly accept all the major credit cards, cheques or traveller's cheques".
>
> "29 dollars", said Gopal firmly, "no more, or I am going to other nice shop. They are saying they are having sale but I am giving you chance first".
>
> The girl began to look around wildly. "Excuse me, sir", she pleaded, "I'll have to get the manager." She fled.

The girl felt exasperated. Gopal's conversation with her failed to convey what exactly he wanted. The parallel conversation made little sense to the American salesgirl, who was unfamiliar with the practice of bargaining, which is common in India. Even her manager could not follow Gopal's conversation correctly. Gopal was trying to bargain because he did not want to pay 37 dollars and 52 cents for his total purchase. This was not because he was short of money as the counter girl and her manager thought, but because he was used to bargaining when shopping. In that pleasant atmosphere, bargaining was unheard of, so when Gopal went on quoting different amounts in response to the fixed amount repeated by the counter girl, it made no sense to her.

When his friend Randy asked Gopal what was going on, Gopal replied that he was bargaining. Randy who knew about American business culture was amused at the prospect of the great fun to be caused by Gopal's bargaining.

> The manager arrived.
>
> "What seems to be the problem, sir?" asked the manager suavely. "Could I be of some help?"
>
> "Prices are too high," said Gopal firmly.
>
> "Ha, ha, ha," chuckled the manager, "isn't that the truth. I often say the same to the wife myself. Now I'll tell you what," he leaned forward conspiratorially, "if you've run out of cash, leave behind any one of these items, I'll reduce $5 and throw in free this packet of fine chewing gum. How about that? Is that fair or is that fair?"
>
> "Chewing gum rots teeth," said Gopal firmly.
>
> "All right", said the manager through clenched teeth, "what's the real problem here? Come on, spit it out. You broke or something?"
>
> "No," said Gopal, "but this only worth $25."
>
> "Oh, yeah", said the manager, "says who?"
>
> "Who is setting these prices?" demanded Gopal coldly.
>
> "How the hell do I know? Hey buddy, look, I just work here. I don't want no trouble, all right?"
>
> "27 dollars."
>
> "Hey jerko, what are you? Ralph Nader send you, hunh? He is an Arab too, isn't he?"
>
> "I am Indian. 29 dollars."
>
> "I don't believe this. What are you, nuts? Why don't you just take the whole damn thing free?"
>
> "Thank you", said Gopal, gathering the package.
>
> "Hey, hang on, wait up. Jesus, I get all the freaks. All right, 30 dollars, and that's it".

To facilitate intercultural interaction, it is necessary to ensure that the language, context, social and business practices, and values and norms are shared across different groups. Native speakers of English should remember what they themselves experience when they interact in a foreign language. To enable a foreign language speaker to follow them, native speakers should speak their first language (English) slowly and articulate each word as distinctly as possible. In addition, they should avoid the use of colloquial expressions that can cause difficulty for the other person.

Source: Based on extracts from Anurag Mathur, *The Inscrutable Americans* (New Delhi: Rupa Publications, 1991) pp. 23, 49–50. Reproduced with permission.

5

Apply oral communication skills to new communication technologies.

ORAL COMMUNICATION AND ELECTRONIC MEDIA

In business, the use of telephone, voice mail, phone conferencing, video conferencing, cell phones, and e-mail occurs in accordance with the need and purpose of the communicator. Since the communicators in these situations are not face-to-face, one has to have a high level of oral communication skills to be able to communicate effectively through these methods.

Phones

In business, for immediate information and response, the handiest mode of communication is the telephone. Though convenient for the caller, it is often viewed by top managers or very senior executives as a source of interruption. Hence, the phone is often received by an administrative assistant. After the caller explains the purpose of the call, he or she is put through to the concerned person.

Most organizations have a standard way of answering phone calls. The normal practice is for the receiver to greet the caller and then state his or her name and department. On picking up the phone, one should never say, "Yes—who is it—what do you want?" Instead, the receiver should sound polite by saying something like "May I know who is calling?" or "May I know in what regard you are calling?"

Nowadays, organizations have automatic exchanges that facilitate direct connections with the desired extension; alternatively, the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) may guide callers to the extension or ask them to wait for the operator. The operator usually begins by stating the organization's name, or by a greeting such as, "Good morning, IMT."

In business, courtesy counts. One doesn't automatically know how important the caller is for the company's business. So, every phone should be received with a standard sequence of phrases. If the intended receiver is not available, courtesy demands that a message be taken. But for that one has to be ready and equipped with a pen or pencil and paper. If the call reaches the receiver directly, generally, the response is just the name of the person, for instance, "Vinod".

Business telephone conversations should be only as long as is essential. If the other person starts going off-topic, the receiver may indicate that he or she wants to close the conversation by summarizing and repeating the intended/decided-upon action. The call should end with some expression of goodwill, such as "Thanks for calling", "Pleasure talking with you", or "I will get back to you."

Voice Mail

Voice mail facility is a common feature of an organization's phone system. It is a means of digitally recording voice messages that can be saved and forwarded, or skipped and deleted. It allows executives to attend to calls when they are free. When they are busy with meetings or work outside the office, they can transfer their calls to voice mail and check messages from any location at any time.

The voice mail message should sound as natural as possible and should be courteous. The caller should be able to recognize it as the intended receiver's voice. The recorded message may be something like "This is Pallavi Mehta in the R&D department. Please leave me a message. I shall call you back. Thank you."

Conference Calls

Telephones and cell phones have a conferencing system that allows several persons to talk with each other at the same time. This technology is now commonly used by companies across the globe.

There can be two types of business calls. The first is a one-way closed circuit communication that allows employees to tune in and hear an announcement; for example, daily/early morning progress reports, plant production reports, or other briefings are simultaneously heard by dozens of widely spread out persons via the phone and/or a public announcement system.

The second type of call is interactive. A number of persons can be on the same conference call. In this system, each participant can listen as well as talk. Through a conference call, different members of a team working on a project together are able to update themselves on the progress made by the team without conducting meetings face-to-face. Through the interactive conference call system, each team member can interact with others from their own work location. This saves companies time and transportation costs. Moreover, the interaction is real-time and can happen as and when required.

Conference calls are used by most organizations as a routine communication channel for planning, updating, coordinating, and monitoring activities without requiring employees to travel long distances for a meeting of a few hours.

Cell Phones

Cellular phones are a popular instrument of communication worldwide. Their utility for business executives has been greatly enhanced by the introduction of General Packet Radio Services (GPRS) technology. GPRS technology allows the radio transmission of small packets of data, especially between mobile phones and the Internet. Mobile handsets enabled with GPRS technology do the work of laptops/computers and voice recorders. They are more convenient than laptops, as they are smaller and easier to transport.

Video Conferencing

Internet-enabled video conferencing is an electronic version of face-to-face communication. Business meetings, interviews, and other urgent interactions among several distantly located individuals can be effectively conducted without requiring participants to move from their respective places of work. Video conferencing is more complex than talking on the phone. It involves the use of cameras for images and phones for speech and sound communicated back and forth over the Internet. As with face-to-face communication, video conferencing calls for a whole range of oral skills, such as clear and natural speaking, attentive listening, and positive body language. For successful video conferencing, the following points may be kept in mind:

- Choose a quiet place as this will eliminate background noise.
- Set sound/volume to an appropriate level.
- Ensure that the faces of the speakers are visible by checking the lighting in the room.
- Sit comfortably facing the camera. Do not move unnecessarily.
- Wait for the image of the other person and your own image to appear on the screen before beginning the discussion.
- At the beginning of the conversation, introduce yourself and your team to the other party.
- Wait for the transmission to complete before responding. Due to technical issues, there may be pauses between the two speakers.
- Always direct your message or question by specifying the person you are addressing.
- Treat video conferencing as an audio–visual medium of relaxed business and social communication connecting people in different locations.

SUMMARY

- There are advantages of oral communication over written communication, such as its immediacy and directness, the scope for immediate feedback and interaction, and the inclusion of non-verbal communication such as body language and gestures.
- There are also some disadvantages of oral communication when compared to written communication. These include the lack of a record that can be referred to later, the inability to rephrase or revise ideas and words once they have been expressed, the difficulty in controlling one's body language, and the inability to circulate the communication to a large group of people at a later time.
- The principles of effective oral communication include paying attention to tone and body language, modulating one's pitch, speaking naturally, listening thoughtfully, using simple language, and pacing one's speed when speaking.
- It is important to be careful and thoughtful when communicating in an unfamiliar culture.
- New electronic technologies call for skillful oral communication and should be thoroughly understood by business executives.

CASE: DEALING WITH OUTSOURCING BACKLASH

"I don't want to speak to you. Connect me to your boss in the US," hissed the American on the phone. The young girl at a Bangalore call centre tried to be as polite as she could.

With the increasing resentment over jobs lost to countries like India and the Philippines, hate calls and mails are a common occurrence, say call-centre executives and industry experts. According to them, many callers from the West refuse to speak to an Indian. When callers are unhappy with the fact that jobs are being outsourced to low-cost offshore destinations, their frustration often turns racist or sexist. A young girl at a call centre recalls how a Londoner unleashed himself, "Young lady, do you know that because of you Indians we are losing jobs?"

Call-centre employees are advised to "be cool" in such situations. They are often taught how to use neutral accents and say "zee" instead of "zed", and some call centres even try to educate their employees about American lifestyle and culture. Some call centres provide gyms and pool tables to help their employees counter the stress they experience as a result of irate or racist calls.

The furor raised by the Western media over job losses because of outsourcing has made many citizens resent the fact that their calls are answered by people in foreign locations. Angry outbursts are a reality that call centre executives are trained to deal with. "It's happening often enough, so let's face it," says a senior executive of a Gurgaon call centre, adding, "This doesn't have any impact on business."

Questions to Answer

1. Assume you are working as an operator at a call centre in India and are receiving irate calls from Americans and Western Europeans. How would you handle such calls? Imagine a situation and state what your response would be.
2. "Keep your cool." What does this mean in terms of business courtesy?
3. Do you agree with the view that such abusive conversations on the telephone do not have any impact on business? Give reasons for your answer.

Sources: Based on "Outsourcing Backlash Gets Abusive, Ugly," *Hindustan Times*, December 21, 2003, New Delhi; and Rama Lakshmi, "India Call Centres Suffer Sturm of 4-letter Words," *The Washington Post*, February 27, 2005.

REVIEW YOUR LEARNING

1. Give five reasons for choosing the oral mode of communication instead of the written form.
2. What skills does a speaker need to be successful in communicating with others? Give an example of difficulty or failure in oral communication.
3. Discuss some of the principles of effective oral communication.
4. In intercultural conversation, both how you talk and what you say is equally important for building good professional relations. Give examples and explain.
5. Why do conversations go wrong? Illustrate your answer with analysis of a situation you have actually experienced.

REFLECT ON YOUR LEARNING

1. What is fluency of speech?
2. How would you improve a person's fluency of spoken English?
3. What are the average per-minute speeds of speaking and listening?
4. How does a marked slowdown in the pace of speaking affect interpersonal communication?
5. What is the effect of electronic media on oral communication?

APPLY YOUR LEARNING

Romil and Sandeep had to go to Khan Market to run some errands. They decide to borrow a bike from one of their friends in college. When they asked him for the bike, he responded, "Normally, I do not lend my bike to anyone. A few days ago, I lent it to Arpan and the bike developed some problem—there was an overflow of petrol." Romil and Sandeep thanked their friend curtly and left without further conversation. Their friend was surprised. He wondered why they did not take the bike they had wanted to borrow.

Analyse the friend's response to Romil and Sandeep's request. What did he really intend to convey when he gave Arpan's example?

SELF-CHECK YOUR LEARNING

From the given options, please choose the most appropriate answer:*

1. Oral communication is the interchange of ______________ between the sender and receiver.
   (a) signs and gestures
   (b) cues and clues
   (c) verbal messages
   (d) written messages
2. Body talk is also known as:
   (a) leakage
   (b) overflow
   (c) physical communication
   (d) noise
3. Oral communication is better than written communication for:
   (a) providing opportunity to refer back
   (b) conveying facts and opinions
   (c) conveying feelings and emotions
   (d) saving time
4. The limitation of oral communication is that:
   (a) it is irreversible—what is said cannot be taken back
   (b) it is not affected by the speaker's feelings or stress or excitement levels.
   (c) it is easy to be aware of our body language
   (d) it does not require on-the-spot thinking
5. In business, oral communication is face-to-face:
   (a) in all situations
   (b) in some situations
   (c) in no situation
   (d) in all but one situation
6. The foremost barrier to oral communication is:
   (a) poor listening
   (b) humility
   (c) interestedness
   (d) concentration
7. The effectiveness of oral communication depends on the speaker's ability to use:
   (a) complex words
   (b) long sentences
   (c) simple language
   (d) foreign words
8. In oral communication, what matters most is:
   (a) what you say
   (b) how you say it
   (c) when you say it
   (d) where you say it
9. Oral communication is also known as:
   (a) verbal communication
   (b) non-verbal communication
   (c) impersonal communication
   (d) face-to-face communication
10. In business, oral communication is suitable for:
    (a) recording things
    (b) discussing things
    (c) delaying the decision-making process
    (d) confusing workers

ENDNOTES

1. Rankin, P. T., "The Importance of Listening Ability", *English Journal* 17 (October 1928), pp. 623–630.
2. Albert Mehrabian, "Communication Without Words", *Psychology Today* (September 1968), 53–55.

*For answers and self-evaluation, visit www.pearsoned.co.in/PDChaturvedi

5

Conversation Skills

> *A gossip is one who talks to you about others; a bore is one who talks to you about himself; and a brilliant conversationalist is one who talks to you about yourself.*
>
> — Lisa Kirk

Upon completion of this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Know the meaning and social purpose of conversation.
2. Learn how to break the ice and start conversations.
3. Comprehend conversation control and its applications.
4. Identify and avoid parallel conversations, while developing sequential ones.
5. Know how to control the direction of conversation in meetings, oral presentations, and negotiations, and how to influence or motivate the listener or audience.

COMMUNICATION AT WORK

Communication researchers suggest that our communication style has more to do with whom we are talking to than who we are. Language experts say men and women have gender-specific communication styles. Studies suggest that men speak in a more "male" way when they are interacting with other men, and women tend to speak in a more "female" way when they talk with other women. But when men and women converse with each other, these differences are less pronounced as each person adapts to the other's style. Studies also show that women refer to emotions, use personal information, and make self-derogatory comments more frequently than men. Men do these less frequently and are more likely to express opinions and use insults.

To study if such conversation patterns extend to e-mails, researchers from the University of Otago in New Zealand recruited 22 psychology students and had them correspond by e-mail with a "net pal" for two weeks. Each participant had one "female" and one "male" pal (these "net pals" were actually one of the experimenters using female-preferential or male-preferential language). They found these patterns to hold true in the study. The research team found that, regardless of their own gender, the students used "male" language while communicating with the "male net pal" and "female" language with the "female net pal". The authors of the study, Rob Thomson, and his colleagues from the University of Otago, Dunedin, concluded that it is erroneous to assume that the language a person uses in a conversation with someone of the same gender is the "natural" style for that person. Each person is capable of using a range of styles, depending on whom they are talking to.

Source: Based on Rob Thomson, Tamar Murachver and James Green, "Where Is the Gender in Gendered Language?" *Psychological Science* 12, no. 2.

WHAT IS CONVERSATION?

The art of conversation is an essential interpersonal skill that helps build a pleasing personality. Effective conversation helps in getting friendly cooperation in social and professional situations. Conversation involves speaking and listening in a sequence. It is an oral exchange of sentiments, observations, opinions, and ideas. The *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* defines conversation in the social context, which is the ordinary context of everyday life, as "an informal talk in which people exchange views, feelings and thoughts". The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines conversation in the professional context as "an informal discussion of an issue by representatives of governments, institutions or groups".

What distinguishes ordinary conversation from other forms of oral communication such as debates, public speaking, negotiations, or business discussions, is its informality, in the sense that it is relaxed and friendly without being restricted by

1

Know the meaning and social purpose of conversation.

2

Learn how to break the ice and start conversations.

the rules of formal behaviour. Conversation, in general, is spontaneous, friendly, and casual. The use of direct, informal, and commonly used phrases constitutes the conversational style.

SOCIAL CONVERSATION

Social conversation, also known as *chit-chat* or *small talk*, attempts to establish a sociable atmosphere. At a tea-party or social gathering, the conversation reveals feelings of togetherness, rather than communicating ideas or any specific meaning. Words are used in symbolic ways, as verbal social gestures. This social use of words is known as *phatic communion*.

The words and phrases used in phatic communion such as "It was a pleasure meeting you", "Do come again", or "How is your family?" can be best described as expressions of togetherness and camaraderie and an indication of the speaker's culture and sensibility as a social being. Hayakawa points out that it is regarded as a social error not to say these things, even if the speaker does not mean them, and that it is completely impossible for us in society to talk only when we "have something to say"[1]. According to Hayakawa, "the *togetherness* of the talking is the most important element in social conversation; the subject matter is only secondary".

Greetings and farewells, such as "Good morning", used to greet someone in the morning; "Take care", used to wish good luck while parting; or "How do you do?", used when being introduced to someone, do not carry literal meaning and are phatic in nature. According to Bronislaw Malinowski[2], phatic communion is a type of speech in which ties of union are created by a mere exchange of words. The words fulfil a social function and "that is their principal aim, but they are neither the result of intellectual reflection, nor do they necessarily arouse reflection in the listener". The *Oxford English Dictionary* explains phatic communion by saying, "they [the words] are used to convey general sociability rather than to communicate a

Exhibit 5.1
How Small Talk Facilitates Business Conversations

Divya Mehra, an architect and the owner of her firm, Interiors, has commissioned an advertising agency to create an ad brief for her new business plan. The plan involves creating modern office spaces for corporations and businesses. Daniel, who has been given the task of crating the brief and presenting it to Mrs Mehra, visits her to show her the draft and get her feedback.

Daniel: Good morning, Mrs Mehra. How have you been?

Mrs Mehra: Good morning, Daniel. Very well, thank you. Did you have a nice weekend?

Daniel: Yes, indeed. I met a couple of old friends, so we had a good time. How was your weekend?

Mrs Mehra: Not bad at all, thank you. A friend took me to see some of the beaches close to Mumbai. It all looks so lush green during the rains!

Daniel: Yes, some of the beaches in Maharashtra are very pretty, aren't they?

Mrs Mehra: You don't come from this part of the country, do you?

Daniel: No, I'm from Delhi. But I like it here very much.

Mrs Mehra: I'm glad to hear that. Well now, back to work! How's the brief coming along?

Daniel: I thought I'd show you the draft I've created. Would you please take a look at it and let me know what you think?

Mrs Mehra: Sure, I've been waiting to see the draft. Let's see the text first:

> "Interiors creates spacious and comfortable workspaces for you…easy-to-install fittings, employee-friendly workspaces, all at an affordable price… cut your costs by half…"

That last one's a bit of a tall claim, isn't it? Should we retain something so far-fetched?

Daniel: You're right, Mrs Mehra. I shall delete that part, go over the whole thing once more and show it to you in a couple of days.

specific meaning; for example, *Nice morning isn't it?*" Similarly, the phrase "How are you?" is not a question about the listener's state of health, and "Take care" is not a warning against danger. Phatic utterances are used to break silence. Their purpose is to initiate conversation. This type of conversation does not aim at discussing an idea that may provoke disagreement. Instead, the conversation is usually about some common, shared feeling that can be instantly appreciated, such as appreciation of fine weather or natural beauty. Fuller communication can grow from small, ice-breaking remarks made upon making someone's acquaintance.

Fuller communication can grow from small, ice-breaking remarks made upon making someone's acquaintance.

Exhibit 5.1 illustrates how small talk and informal, friendly conversation about unimportant subjects creates a relaxed atmosphere for discussing business.

Social conversation in the form of chit-chat, small talk, or phatic communion is not bound by any rigid order or sequence of subject matter. Its order and nature depends on the extent of both parties' desire to establish a relationship. People who are drawn to each other talk with the goal of reaching a stage where they have a better understanding and exchange of ideas. This is achieved by avoiding subjects that would lead to disagreements. With each point of agreement, no matter how commonplace or obvious, doubt and suspicion of the new acquaintance wear away and the possibility of friendship increases. And finally, when more intimate conversation reveals common tastes, opinions, and views, friendship replaces misgivings and communication in the real sense is made possible. Thus, social conversation is psychologically structured, beginning in casual chit-chat and developing into genuine communication expressive of friendship and cooperation. Exhibit 5.2 shows how one can make small talk and break the ice.

Exhibit 5.2
Tips for Successful Small Talk

The ability to connect with others through small talk can lead to big things, according to Debra Fine, author of *The Fine Art of Small Talk* (Hyperion 2005). A former engineer, Fine recalls being so ill at ease at networking events and even the 10 minute coffee break during a meeting that she would hide in the restroom. Now a motivational speaker, Fine believes the ability to develop relationships with people through small talk is an acquired skill.

Fine offers the following tips for starting—and ending conversations:

- Come up with three things to talk when preparing for a function along with a couple generic questions that will get others talking.
- Be the first to say "hello." Smile first and always shake hands when you meet someone.
- Take your time during introductions. Make an extra effort to remember names and use them frequently. Exhibit host behaviour by introducing others that join the group to each other.
- Get another person talking by leading with a common ground statement regarding the occasion or location and then asking a related open-ended question. For example, you can also ask them about their trip in or how they know the bride or groom.
- Show interest in your conversational partner by actively listening and giving verbal feedback. Maintain eye contact.
- Listen more than you talk.
- Be prepared to have something interesting to contribute. Staying on top of current events will provide you with great conversation builders, leading with "What do you think of?" Have you heard?"
- Be aware of your body language. People who look or act ill-at-ease make others uncomfortable.
- Have a few exit lines ready, so that you can gracefully move on. For example, "I need to check in with a client over there," or "Who do you know at this meeting that could help me with …?

Source: Extracts from Debra Fine, "Tips for Making Small Talk Success", available at http://www.debrafine.com/art_tipsForSmallTalkSuccess.html, accessed 15 September 2010.
Debra Fine is the author of *The Fine Art of Small Talk* (Hyperion). She presents keynotes and seminars on conversational skills and networking techniques internationally. Contact Debra at 303-721-8266 or visit her Web site at www.DebraFine.com.

In their daily interactions, people are constantly involved in the exchange of facts and opinions. In these conversations, it is important to avoid what is known as the *binary mode* and adopt a *multi-valued* approach. Sometimes, people tend to present facts and opinions in a binary manner, in which they try to prove that what they are saying is correct and what the other person has to say is totally wrong. This view tends to antagonize both participants and can lead to arguments. In some conversations, there may be a visible attempt at what Stephen Potter calls "one-upmanship"—an attempt to make oneself seem better than other people. A valuable part of a conversation is wasted when the participants want to prove that they are correct; instead, they should use the opportunity more profitably to exchange facts and opinions.

Rational human beings should follow what Karl R. Popper says, "Faith in reason is not only a faith in our own reason but also and even more in that of others. Rationalism is therefore bound up with the idea that the other fellow has a right to be heard and to defend his arguments". According to this view, no person is wholly wrong even if we do not accept him or her as correct. Rationally speaking, reality cannot be truly categorized into an "either–or" system of thinking. Reality is not simply right or wrong, or good or bad. This perception is further refined when truth is viewed in terms of a scale of values, such as 0 to 5 or 0 to 100. To value reality as 0 and 1 is to miss the vast design of reality that consists of numerous shades, not just black and white. Conversation should be inspired by the multiple possibilities of truth/reality and be characterized by tolerance and positivity.

EFFECTIVE CONVERSATION

Humans begin conversing from the time we begin to prattle as children. From infancy, we develop the basic tool of conversation that is language. Gradually we become familiar with complex uses of language suited to our purpose: to inform and to persuade. However, even though we naturally pick up the ability to converse, we may lack the skills of a good conversationalist, which include knowing how to speak as well listen. Conversation is not a monologue, it's a dialogue. Good conversation is characterized by the following features:

> Conversation is not a monologue; it's a dialogue.

1. It has natural directness and spontaneity.
2. It is live in the sense that it takes place face-to-face, and the participants can see and hear each other at the same time. The live presentation of conversation is enriched and made effective with the added power of body language—a great source of communicative effectiveness.
3. It is sensitive and flexible in that it can change quickly according to the participants' reactions.

These characteristics are clearly illustrated in Communication Snapshot 5.1, which is a conversation between Catherine and Linton in Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights.*

Communication Snapshot 5.1

Effective Conversation: An Example

Linton sat in the great arm-chair half asleep. Walking upto him, Catherine began in a serious tone: "As you don't like me, Linton, I'll not come any more. Let us say good-bye and tell Mr Heathcliff that you have no wish to see me and that he mustn't invent any more falsehoods on the subject." "Sit down and take your hat off Catherine", he answered. "You are so much happier than I am. Believe me, if I could be as happy, I would also be like you; but Papa talks of my defects so much and shows such scorn for me that I believe I am worthless, bad tempered, bad in spirit and I cannot help showing my nature to you, though I regret it and repent it till I die!"

Catherine is strong-willed and passionate. She talks to Linton in an impulsive, vehement way. "As you don't like me… let us say good bye." Linton on the other hand is cool, sad, and bares his heart, which is filled with remorse. He changes Catherine's negative thoughts and feelings by his moving self-expression. This is seen when Catherine tells Ellen, "I felt he spoke the truth; and I felt I must forgive him, and though we should quarrel the next moment, I must forgive him again."

Linton's words are full of genuine feelings of love and remorse for Catherine. When he narrates how scorn and bad temper were driven into his nature by his father's constant treatment of him as a worthless fellow, he sounds very earnest and convincing. Catherine is persuaded to change her opinion by the touching facts of Linton's helplessness, everlasting regret, and repentance.

CONVERSATION CONTROL

Conversation control refers to the skills of listening and talking in a positive and meaningful way at an appropriate time. It calls upon the ability to listen with concentration and respond well. It includes:

- the techniques of changing the direction of conversation smoothly, and
- the ability to allow a discussion to develop along key issues in an uninterrupted way towards the desired end.

Broadly speaking, conversation control helps the participants conclude and conclude their conversation (dialogue/discussion) effectively and satisfactorily with mutual understanding and agreement.

In business, the following situations require the application of conversation control skills:

- Selling and buying
- Negotiating
- Interviewing
- Participating in meetings
- Disagreeing without being rude
- Protesting without offending
- Complimenting/praising
- Responding to personal criticism

How an individual listens and talks in such situations shows the extent to which he or she is able to exercise conversation control. Charles J. Margerison in *The Art of Effective Communication* points out, "Conversation control does not mean that you can control someone's conversation. What it does mean is that with practice you can control your own conversation, and in time be able to influence others and encourage them to respond in a positive and relevant way."[3]

The following are situations where effective conversation skills are useful:

- Interacting with people in meetings in a convincing way
- Handling objections to a proposal
- Being able to react to criticism in a confident manner
- Developing skills in interviewing
- Learning how to get correct information quickly

3

Comprehend conversation control and its applications.

Conversation control refers to the skills of listening and talking in a positive and meaningful way at an appropriate time.

Controlling the Direction of Conversation

All conversations contain facts and opinions. The real purpose of conversation is to exchange feelings and facts. In positive situations, where the facts and opinions being discussed converge, the conversation is smooth and both the parties are in relative accord with each other. In such situations, agreement is not difficult to reach because there is not much divergence of opinion between the two parties involved. The real problem is when one participant finds that the conversation is directed against him or her and there is a distortion of facts. This distortion could be deliberate or it could be a misunderstanding in which a fact is unknowingly changed into an adverse opinion. The skill of the conversationalist lies in realizing the reasons for divergence, tensions, and complications. Empathy and real understanding help disentangle the conflict between opinion and fact. A skillful conversationalist is always able to separate facts from opinions to his or her advantage.

There are three possible directions a conversation can take. It can move against you, towards you, or away from you. The other person could disagree with you and wholly reject your viewpoint (i.e., the conversation moves against you) or he or she could agree with you and support your statement (i.e., the conversation moves towards you). He or she could also, without

Exhibit 5.3
The Direction of Conversation

Rejection — Disagreement — Consideration — Agreement — Commitment

The conversation could move either towards the left, in which case it is moving away from you and against you, or towards the right, from consideration to agreement and commitment. Conversation on the left tends to be parallel or sometimes divergent, whereas conversation on the right is sequential. Understanding what these reactions imply in the course of the conversation helps in knowing how to manage rejection and disagreement.

1. *Rejection:* If your point is completely turned down, it means that there is no possibility of further discussion on the issue. Hence the conversation has to end. For example, if a candidate asks an invigilator for more time to finish an examination, the request would be rejected summarily.
2. *Disagreement:* One should understand the subtle distinction between rejection and disagreement. Consider a discussion on whether children below fourteen years of age, who are legally disallowed from being hired as labour, should be permitted to work under special conditions of family hardship. Assume you hold the view that no specific circumstances should be considered for allowing child labour in our society. In other words, you reject the idea of allowing children to work, even under difficult circumstances. But suppose instead of rejecting the proposition, you disagree with it and say that perhaps on human grounds such situations should be decided on a case-by-case basis for each child. This indicates a willingness to continue with the discussion. (It is important to note that, in discussion, one should not say, "I disagree with you"; instead, it is better to say, "I disagree with what you are saying" or "I am not sure what you're saying is true". In this way, one does not disagree with the person, but with their point of view.)
3. *Consideration:* The point of consideration is when the other person does not reject your proposal and wants to further discuss or examine it in order to be convinced of its validity. At this point, you should offer more information to enable the other person accept your point or proposal.
4. *Agreement:* This is the positive expression of acceptance of the idea or proposal by both parties. It can lead to further action.
5. *Commitment:* This is the conclusion of a successful conversation. The opinions or proposals discussed are accepted and decisions are also made on how to implement them. This stage is the goal of all conversations.

rejecting what you say, suggest changes before accepting your statement (i.e., the conversation moves away from you). A skilled conversationalist knows in which direction the conversation is moving. In *The Art of Effective Communication*, Charles J. Margerison suggests assessing the other person's reactions on the conversation direction chart shown in Exhibit 5.3.

Managing Negative Responses

Disagreement and rejection tend to disturb a person's cool. When this happens, it is important to be patient and try to persuade the other party of your argument by showing an understanding of their viewpoint and by responding to the specific reasons for disagreement or rejection. To some extent, a negative response shows a failure to convince the other person of the validity, soundness, or correctness of one's idea or proposal. Do not attribute rejection or disagreement to deliberate or personal reasons on the part of the disagreeing person. With a positive mind, tackle negative responses as follows:

- Show that you do not doubt the positive intentions of the other person.
- Use expressions such as "You are right about that, but…". Avoid completely rejecting the other person's arguments.

- Do not use negative expressions. Instead of saying "Perhaps you do not know…" try "Perhaps, you know…". Using "perhaps" suggests possibility but not certainty.
- When the signs and cues of doubt, disagreement, or rejection become obvious, pause and summarize whatever has been discussed so far and ask the other person whether the summary is correct. Their acceptance of the summary is the first act of agreement.
- Use this psychological breakthrough for further agreement by asking what should be done next. This changes the response into a potential agreement.
- Assure the other person that you share their concerns and would keep their concerns in mind. Also elaborate on how you would meet their concerns.
- Finally, never get desperate, frustrated, or angry when confronted with rejection and disagreement. Emotional reactions affect your ability to convince logically.

Noticing and Recognizing Cues and Clues

Conversation consists of words as well as non-verbal gestures, and it communicates both stated and implied messages. Words communicate the stated message, while non-verbal signs and signals communicate the implied message. Cues and clues together with signs and signals point out what is important and what is not. A *cue* is a keyword or phrase a speaker uses when he or she wants to indicate that something is important to him or her. A *clue* is a word or a set of words that someone else says to us. Persons skilled in the art of conversation quickly recognize cues and clues and know what is of importance to the other party and could be the direction and basis of further conversation or discussion.

A *cue* is a keyword or phrase a speaker uses when he or she wants to indicate that something is important to him or her.

In written messages, the writer can draw the reader's attention by highlighting important words, phrases, and sentences by underlining, italicizing, or marking with a coloured lighter or by using qualifiers or modifiers—words such as *very*, *too*, *essential*, and so on, which indicate importance. In oral communication, the listener's attention is focused by not only the choice of words but also by the tone of voice or other signals such as facial expressions, eye contact, body movements, and gestures. These signals constitute cues and clues that emphasize ideas.

In oral communication, the listener's attention is focused by not only the choice of words but also by the tone of voice or other signals such as facial expressions, eye contact, body movements, and gestures.

Cues and clues flow to and from the speaker consciously or subconsciously. They highlight the parts of the message that the speaker emphasizes. There are always some key words in any conversation. These key words act as cues to others, drawing their attention to what is important. For instance, if someone says, "Let us discuss the teaching–learning function of the case-study method in management studies", the key words are "teaching–learning function" and "case-study method." These words direct others to focus on the case-study method as a tool of teaching and learning.

Generally, people give the most important clues unconsciously, through what is called "leakage", body talk that involves non-verbal signals comprising expressions, gestures, and postures. The success of meetings, discussions, lectures, or oral presentations depends on the participants picking up verbal cues and clues.

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Unfortunately, it is common for one side to fail to pick up the cues given by the other party. Here is an example. The director of a college went to the university's registrar to ask for permission to add a certain course to his college's curriculum. To support his proposal, the director spoke at length highlighting the overall achievements of the college in terms of its infrastructure, growing student population, and consistently excellent results. He said to the registrar, "I want you to send a team to inspect our college and to recommend the opening of the new course." The registrar replied, "But the university wants all colleges to improve their facilities and results, not just one college." The director went on to defend the existing facilities and academic results of his college. However, the meeting failed because the registrar ignored the key words that the director had used to support his request. The director, meanwhile, got the clue that the registrar was not interested in his proposal for the new course. When the conversation ended, the director left the registrar's office disappointed.

In this example, the key words used by the director were "to inspect", "recommend", and "the new course". The registrar did not pay attention to these key words. The clues in the registrar's response were the words "but", "all colleges", "improve", "facilities and results". These words indicate his priorities. What the registrar implied was that the university was not interested in adding further courses and its priority was an improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. But he communicated the priority of the university obliquely. The director's proposal for starting a new course was, in fact, intended to increase the intake of students. However, the communication failed because he failed to provide cues about this or state the purpose directly.

In real life, people often do not express their thoughts directly and completely. It is for others to look for cues or clues to draw more information. Otherwise, the real intent may remain unstated.

In real life, people often fail to express their thoughts directly and completely. It is for others to look for cues or clues to draw more information. Otherwise, the real intent may remain unstated. For example, consider a case where in a welfare meeting with workers, a manager was told by an employee: "I have been working under a lot of tension." The manager replied, "Yes, we all have to work under tension. Targets have to be met." This response suggests that the manager missed the clue underlying the word "tension". The employee may not have been talking about tension at work. He may have been facing some serious personal problems, such as his spouse's health or his child's education. The manager should have instead asked him, "What kind of tension are you under?" This would have encouraged the employee to talk further about the nature of his problem. Instead of a skillful, controlled conversation, we have here a worker's general statement about his tension, met with another general statement made by the manager in response. There is no attempt to draw out more information about the problem.

Let us see a case of skillful control of conversation. Film actor Dev Anand, a recipient of the Dada Saheb Phalke award, had a long TV interview. One of the questions the anchor asked Dev Anand was: "It is said that as a film director you always insisted on working with new faces." Dev Anand at once shot back, "It is not a question of insisting. You should think deeply. It is a very different pleasure to encourage young talent to develop, to help them [new people] express themselves, to get established as celebrities. It is a creative joy. And I have always been creative in my choice of characters and my themes. I have always experimented, I have always enjoyed that." *You should think deeply.* These words of Dev Anand's are significant. The message lies in these words. In this case, the word "insisted", used by the anchor, was important. Dev Anand caught the clue. He tackled the hidden meaning of the general statement (the allegation that he always "insisted" on working with new faces) by bringing out his pursuit of creative joy as a film director and actor in moulding talented newcomers into accomplished actors.

We can identify clues during a conversation by taking note when people use the following types of expressions:

- When people use the first-person pronouns, "I", "me", and "my", they are talking about themselves, the person of greatest importance to them.
- When people strongly qualify their statements with adjectives indicative of deep emotions or great enthusiasm, they give clues as to their state of mind. Watch out for words such as "pressured", "concerned", "angry", "worried", "annoyed", "unhappy", "disappointed", or "enthusiastic", "keen", "excited", and "inspired". For example, when a person says he is under pressure to finish a task, he is giving a strong clue about action that needs to be taken within the shortest possible time.
- We should listen carefully when people use words that indicate that they are under pressure to act in a certain way. For example, when somebody makes a statement like the ones given here, it indicates that they are under pressure:
  - "The whole plan went wrong! There was so much confusion and such little time. I think I failed in my responsibility to organize the event."
  - "I should have changed my strategy and approach, as I had planned to. The whole thing was a disaster."
  - "I am determined not to let it happen again."

  Here, the words "there was such little time", "as I had planned to" and "not to let it happen" act as key words. The sentences show that the speaker is under pressure to act in a certain way.

- When someone uses words that suggest doubt and concern, it is a clue to the speaker's personal problems. You can help the other person if you find out exactly what these issues are. By asking what he or she proposes to do or whom he or she is planning to consult, you can find out different ways of helping with the problem.
- Finally, listen and notice the natural pauses that people use after saying something important. It is at this point that you show the speaker that you have understood the key issues raised by him or her, by accurately and sympathetically talking on those issues. You can thus continue the conversation in a controlled way and convince the other person of your understanding of the real issues.

Interpreting Signs and Signals

Conversation is composed of verbal and visual indicators. *Verbal indicators* involve cues given and clues received. *Visual indicators* consist of signs given and signals received. Non-verbal messages flow through signs and signals. While in conversation, people unconsciously move their hands, eyes, head, legs, and other parts of the body or engage in other non-verbal behaviour, such as the frequent gulping of water. These non-verbal acts reflect the state of their minds. Body movements, gestures, and actions communicate in a visible manner what lies concealed in the mind.

> Conversation is composed of verbal and visual indicators. *Verbal indicators* involve cues given and clues received.

Signs consist of visual indicators such as frowns, smiles, eye movements, and so on. Signals are behavioural indicators others give us. For example, drinking water every 10 to 15 minutes during a speech is a sign of thirst. However, to the audience it may also signal the speaker's nervousness.

We will analyse gestures and expressions as modes of non-verbal communication in Chapter 7. Here, you should be able to identify from your own experiences those signals that encourage or discourage you during the course of communication. Also try to know which signs you habitually give to others when emphasizing important points.

Avoiding Parallel Conversation

> **4**
> Identify and avoid parallel conversations, while developing sequential ones.

People engage in conversations to explore something—such as facts, ideas, opinions, or solutions. This aim can be fulfilled by taking in an interest in what the other party says, especially at the beginning when the goal of the discussion is clearest. Both sides must seek further information on what is originally stated by asking questions and exploring the meaning of clues and non-verbal signals. But if both parties do not do so and just counter the original statement with another statement parallel to it, the conversation will not reach a satisfying resolution. Two parallel statements cannot meet and, therefore, cannot be linked together to resolve the issue or add more information on the original statement. In a situation of a series of parallel statements, there is no dialogue, but, instead, just statements shot at each other. There is no attempt to get to the meaning behind the words used by the other person.

Consider the following example of a meeting at a garment export company.

X: It is necessary that we increase our exports.

Y: I think it is most important for us to reduce our manpower immediately.

X: By increasing our exports we can build our brand image.

Y: By reducing the number of workers we can cut down our costs.

X: I always look to build our company image in a positive way by promoting its sales abroad.

Y: Cost reduction is the only way we can manage our company. And that can be done only by reducing the number of workers.

Here, X and Y are engaged in parallel conversation, where in each is trying to prove himself right and the other wrong. Neither is interested in exploring the true meaning of what is being said by the other person.

Practising Sequential Conversation

When two people converse in a skillfully controlled way, they do by making statements that are in sequence with each other's statements. There is a logical link between the statements made by the two sides. The listener carefully receives what is being said and waits for the appropriate time to join in and state his or her position clearly. The listener carries forward the conversation in a connected and sequential manner. In this way, within a short time, ideas and thoughts are developed in a structured pattern.

Sequential conversation between two persons is always fruitful. But it is possible only when the other person attaches some value to what is said by the speaker. The listener can then reflect on what is said, know more about the important ideas in the speaker's initial statement, and contribute to further exploration of the issue.

Using Reflection and Empathy

In verbal communication, the most important skill is to demonstrate a genuine interest in the other person.

In verbal communication, the most important skill is to demonstrate a genuine interest in the other person. To do so, both participants should be able to pick up cues and reflect upon their meaning. For instance, suppose Anuj says to Bharat, "I am not sure if I am required here any longer." If Bharat reflects on this initial statement, he would note an underlying frustration and a sense of rejection in Anuj's words. To give Anuj a chance to express himself further, Bharat could say to Anuj, "You feel your contribution is not being recognized. What can be done to change this?" This would allow Anuj to explore his own feelings with greater clarity and understanding.

Reflecting on someone's statement needs to be done most carefully. One must first understand the other person's underlying feelings exactly and accurately. Then, one must demonstrate empathy and understanding when responding to the person. This includes the use of positive body language to support one's words.

The purpose of reflecting on something is to help the other person understand his or her feelings with greater clarity and precision.

The purpose of reflecting on something is to help the other person understand his or her feelings with greater clarity and precision. Therefore, one may repeat the feelings expressed by the other person—this should be done objectively, without changing, adding, or altering their statements. One should not criticize or question their words.

One's body language should show real interest in the other person. Thus, it is important to make eye contact, lean forward, and speak with genuine concern for the other person.

Cultivating a Sense of Timing

In oral communication, the speaker should always keep in mind the time taken to communicate. To be able to observe the time limit, the speaker should plan out his or her words judiciously to reach a properly evolved end. The listeners should not feel rushed through any part of the conversation or presentation. One's pace of conversation or presentation should generally not exceed 110–120 words per minute. The speaker should not speak too quickly or gloss over explanations in order to reach the discussion of the solution. The analysis of the problem is equally important, and the speaker should not assume that the listeners are fully aware of the problem. Such an assumption affects both the pace and direction of the discussion. The other persons may feel uncomfortable and rushed, and may begin to lose interest and concentration. To be meaningful, conversation has to be lively and participative.

In one-to-one conversations/discussions, the desire should not be to monopolize conversation. On the other hand, passive listening generates disinterest and boredom.

The speaker should have a sense of time while discussing something even in less formal situations. In different business situations, the speaker should remember the purpose of communicating with the listener. The listener should never be made to feel like a passive, captive audience. Meetings should be interactive and should have controlled transitions from issue to issue. In one-to-one conversations/discussions, the desire should not be to monopolize the conversation. On the other hand, passive listening generates disinterest and boredom. In the case of lectures, seminars, and presentations, the audience can be saved from boredom and monotony by introducing humourous anecdotes or illustrative cases.

Summarizing

In oral communication, especially conversation, it is necessary to convey an understanding of the other person's point. You may agree or disagree, but the first requirement of skillful communication is that the other person has the assurance that you have understood the facts as presented.

Before expressing an opinion or responding to others' opinions, you should be able to recognize, analyse, and evaluate what the other person has said. This will help you in comprehending facts in terms of their significance and importance for the other person. This understanding is a critical summary of the ideas expressed by the other person.

> Before expressing an opinion or responding to others' opinions, you should be able to recognize, analyse, and evaluate what the other person has said.

Summarizing is the best form of expressing comprehension. It is not just the repetition of what someone has said. To summarize is to pick out the central thought—the main theme or the essential idea—at the core of the whole argument. It is a most difficult exercise to do successfully, and it needs a lot of practice.

In written communication, we have the full text before us and can re-read it when required. First, we try to understand what the document is about. Next, we re-read closely to understand the logical relationship between ideas. Finally, we can see the central idea to which all other ideas are related as cause, effect, or illustration. The summary is the statement of understanding of the central idea and its relationship with other ideas.

In oral communication, summarizing involves recognizing the leading cues and clues during the course of communication and making them the basis of a considered response after appreciating and understanding the underlying sentiments. It is a process of mental abstraction of the most central idea in the argument. Summarizing is, thus, of great value and is the skill most needed for negotiating or solving a problem.

We have frequent examples of crises faced by people when they are ordered to complete an assigned task within too short a period of time. The worker may feel that it is impossible to complete the given task by the deadline. They have to then convince their supervisor that the deadline is unrealistic. If the supervisor remains adamant and insists that in business orders and deadlines must be respected, the communication would end on a note of frustration. The supervisor would have failed to exercise conversation control in such a case.

However, the situation would be different if the supervisor did understand the employee's point of view and attempted to understand his or her problems and constraints. This would allow the supervisor to motivate the employee by helping him or her express their concerns. This may also give the supervisor the chance to state why the deadline must be met. One way to sum up the conversation is by telling the employee that his or her personal conditions are understandable, but the project in question is a top priority. Thus, by recognizing, appreciating, and understanding the concerns of the employee, the supervisor could successfully summarize the problem and resolve it.

All the skills of oral communication, whether they relate to the ability to speak personally, face-to-face, or at meetings, depend basically on the key skill of conversation control, which enables one to receive and understand the true meaning of the other person.

> All the skills of oral communication, whether they relate to the ability to speak personally, face-to-face, or at meetings, depend basically on the key skill of conversation control, which enables one to receive and understand the true meaning of the other person.

APPLICATIONS OF CONVERSATION CONTROL

> **5**
>
> Know how to control the direction of conversation in meetings, oral presentations, and negotiations, and how to influence or motivate the listener or audience.

Conversation control is particularly applicable in certain business situations. Note that detailed discussions on interviews and negotiations are given in Chapters 14 and 12, respectively.

Meetings

One often hears the chairperson of a meeting saying, "We are drifting away from the point" or "Let us keep to our agenda". Sometimes at the end of a meeting, it seems that nothing has been gained and everyone's time has been wasted. Such feelings arise when there is no conversation control. According to Charles J. Margerison, "Conversation control is concerned with ensuring that people communicate clearly to resolve problems and make the best of opportunities."

The Agenda As a Control

For formal meetings, the first requirement is to prepare a complete agenda of the issues to be discussed in the order of the sequence of discussion. The agenda indicates which issues will be taken up when and how much time will be devoted to them. To enable attendees to understand the issues and present their viewpoints, it is desirable to circulate the necessary agenda in advance, so that participants can read the supporting papers before the meeting.

Agendas create the necessary framework for holding discussions. They also provide cues to keep the discussion to the point.

Agendas create the necessary framework for holding discussions. They also provide cues to keep the discussion to the point. A carefully prepared agenda is the first step to control the proceedings. The chairperson can always use it to draw the attention of speakers who drift from the relevant points.

An agenda also helps in fixing the duration of the meeting by allotting appropriate time for discussing each item at the outset. As a precaution, the agenda should include a provision for raising/discussing any other matter with the permission of the chair. The agenda is usually sent along with the notice/invitation for the meeting with the proposed date, place, and time.

The Chairperson

The chairperson should be able to control the direction of conversation by focusing on important issues and creating conditions for sequential, linked, and meaningful discussions aimed at finding solutions and not confrontations.

A meeting is chaired by a person whose role is to direct and conduct the proceedings in an orderly manner. During the meeting, the ruling of the chair is to be taken as the final word to be followed and respected by all those attending. The chairperson should be fully conversant with the rules of conducting meetings. He or she should know the rights and privileges of members, non-members, invitees, and observers at the meeting. He or she should also know the voting rights of members and also how voting is conducted, if required. Above all, the chairperson should be able to control the direction of conversation by focusing on important issues and creating conditions for sequential, linked, and meaningful discussions with the aim of finding solutions and not confrontations.

The chairperson begins the meeting on schedule and conducts business by first reading out the complete agenda or, in case of a long agenda, the first item on the agenda, which is invariably the confirmation of the minutes of the earlier meeting. If no objections are received, the minutes are taken as approved and are signed by the chairperson.

It is customary to assume that all papers have been read if they have been circulated among the members before the meeting. The meeting then takes up issues that require discussion. It is at this point that communication skills are required to make the discussion meaningful and controlled. During the meeting, members may enter into irrelevant conversations in which all kinds of non-issues or off-topic matters are raised. The discussion may degenerate into personal criticism too. Sometimes, objectivity may be lost, which can result in the meeting slipping into confusion and unproductive argument. This can be avoided by observing clues and cues and by exercising conversation control.

The chairperson has a significant role regulating the discussion by drawing attention to the main issue being discussed. He or she can summarize what is being said and then ask how it relates to the point under discussion. In a meeting, each person should follow the cues for the important topics being discussed.

The skills of avoiding parallel conversation, ensuring linked, sequential conversation, disagreeing without offending, and asserting without being aggressive are basic for the smooth conduct of business in a meeting.

The chairperson can also bring the discussion from the past to the present, by asking for the implications of all that has been said about the past in relation to the present situation. He or she should have the skill of changing the direction of conversation by providing transitions, such as from the past to the present and to the future or from problem-centered to solution-centered themes. Above all, the skills of avoiding parallel conversation, ensuring linked, sequential conversation, disagreeing without offending, and asserting without being aggressive are basic for the smooth conduct of business in a meeting.

Being Assertive Without Being Aggressive

At the workplace, hierarchy may make some individuals submissive. Sometimes, asserting one's point of view runs the risk of being perceived as rude. In such a situation, the skills of assertive conversation become useful.

To be assertive is to be confident. An assertive person does not say "yes" when he or she means "no". Assertive individuals can say "no" in a positive and firm manner; being firm requires stating one's point of view clearly and without hesitation. This is the key to being assertive. It is important not to fumble or be indirect when conveying one's concerns.

An assertive and firm person should be able to analyse the situation as he or she sees it, and should indicate relevant concerns by drawing the attention of seniors to the consequences.

Firm communication with seniors or supervisors compels them to evaluate their assumptions, even if there is to be no change in the line of action to be taken.

In business, you have to be assertive when you strongly believe that someone's course of action involves risk and danger and may have undesirable consequences that you might be held responsible for. In such situations, say what you must say.

Negative thinking results from a negative attitude or negative perception, which, at times, is part of a person's personality. Some persons always focus only on the dark side of a situation. They say things such as "This is impossible", "It is too difficult", or "This is useless".

Negative thinking results from a negative attitude or negative perception, which, at times, is part of a person's personality.

When negative consequences are foreseen as a result of an expert's critical thinking, their assertion is valuable to discussion. Sometimes, even pointing out loopholes in assumptions is necessary. For example, take the case of the Bhopal gas tragedy that took place on 2 December 1984. The internal reports of the U.S.-based undertaking, Union Carbide, show that the officials were aware of the growing safety and maintenance problems since 1982 when management cut staff at the methyl isocyanate (MIC) facility from twelve to six operators and reduced the number of maintenance workers. Faulty safety devices remained unattended for weeks. In fact, a 1982 report by a group of Carbide's U.S. engineers had listed the problems, but the parent corporation made no effort to ask the Indian executives responsible for running the plant to correct them.

Obviously, the U.S. engineers failed to assert the need for safety. The Indian executives, also responsible for day-to-day operation of the plant, failed to point out the loopholes in the management's extensive cost-cutting plans. The management was attempting to reduce losses by cutting maintenance costs. The failure of engineers and executives to be assertive on the subject of safety measures led to one of the worst disasters of the twentieth century.

Controlled Response to Conversational Attacks

When an individual is charged with negative feelings, it is natural for him or her to attack and say unpleasant things. If the other person happens to be a client, customer, or supervisor, a controlled response is necessary because larger business interests and long-term personal career interests are at stake.

In such situations, it is best to answer emotion with cool facts and to try to change the direction of conversation if possible; strong, abusive language that will complicate the situation should be avoided. One way to respond is to listen thoughtfully to the other person so that they know that their words are being heard. When responding, speak in a level tone and avoid harsh, strong, or abusive words. Do not react emotionally because by being calm, understanding, and rational, one can draw the other person's attention to objective facts and focus on constructive solutions.

Remember that in business, rudeness and discourtesy should never be allowed to creep into your communication. Neither a client nor a supervisor should use rude words, whatever be the provocation; nor should you respond without courtesy. Conversation control teaches us self discipline. It trains us to convey to others that we really believe, understand, and appreciate their feelings, views, and grievances. Listen with full attention to grievances so that the other person feels that you are genuinely interested in his or her feelings. Conversation control will help manage situations of aggressive communication successfully.

Negotiating Through Conversation Control

Negotiation is an important activity in communication and will be discussed in detail in Chapter 12. Effective negotiation requires the skills of managing and controlling the interaction between two sides. Both sides try to present a case tactfully and achieve their goals. The strategy of using conversation control for negotiation basically involves showing an understanding of the other party's position without necessarily agreeing with it. The entire verbal exercise of give and take to reach a win–win end is skillfully managed by conversation control.

The entire verbal exercise of give and take to reach a win–win end is skillfully managed by conversation control.

SUMMARY

- Conversation is the lifeblood of social life. It creates a sense of togetherness. It is the primary form of face-to-face communication and is live, as it is done in person.
- The chief characteristics of good conversation are naturalness, simplicity, spontaneity, sensitivity, and responsiveness to the listener's reactions.
- Conversation shares elements of visual communication such as body language, facial expressions, and gestures.
- Effective conversation needs conversation control to make it a fruitful dialogue.
- Speakers skilled in conversation control are able to link their conversations by avoiding parallel conversation.

CASE: DISCUSSING VANDALISM

Meera was the group leader of a discussion that included Ritu, Amit, Chawla, Priti, Hema, and Reema. The group had been requested by the school board to make some recommendations on how vandalism could be reduced in their school. Here is a transcript of their discussion:

Meera: We're trying to formulate some recommendations on what can be done to help reduce vandalism in our school. So far, our group seems to have different opinions on whether vandalism is a serious enough problem that merits really strong action. Some of us feel the problem is large and growing. Others say that a few childish pranks have been exaggerated out of all proportion by the school board. Can we, as a group, reach some agreement on whether vandalism is really a serious problem?

Ritu: Frankly, I feel that any amount of vandalism is too much. Vandalism not only destroys school facilities and property, it also lowers the quality of our education. At the high school I attended last year, some students who were mad at the librarian set fire to the library. The entire senior class, who were working on their term papers for English, had to go across town to use the public library for the rest of the semester.

Amit: And if you've…

Chawla: Ritu's experience really opens my eyes about vandalism. I never thought of it that way before. We're losing out on educational resources, which will hurt us all in the long term.

Meera: Amit, were you going to say something?

Amit: I just wanted to add that this incident shows that vandalism has spread beyond the stage of childish pranks. There's big difference between soaping windows and burning libraries. The damage done to the library cost the school Rs. 1,000 per student. I'm sorry to say that vandalism has become a real economic problem in our school as well. In 2000, the cost to replace school property destroyed by students was Rs. 30,000.

Priti: You know, it really makes me sad to think about kids who are vandals. Psychologists say these kids cause all this destruction just to get some attention, even if it's negative.

Meera: You're right, Priti, it is sad but let's get back to our original question. Do the rest of you feel, then, that vandalism is a serious enough problem in our school to require serious action?

Since no one seems to disagree, let's move on to consider what can be done to reduce vandalism. We might consider this question in two parts: what can the school board do about it and what can the students do about it? First, let's discuss what the school board can do.

Amit: I talked to the security officer in the neighbouring district, and she said security guards had been hired to patrol the schools with the highest vandalism rate in her district. What do the rest of you think of recommending this to our school board?

Meera: I've always hated the idea of guards patrolling the school! School should be a place to learn, not a prison!

Chawla: I don't like the idea of security guards either. Most of the students aren't vandals, and they are naturally going to resent being patrolled. Besides, having security guards during the day may not help the problem at all, since all the vandalism this year has occurred at night.

Amit: Chawla, you've always got something bad to say about every suggestion! All you ever do is criticize!

Meera: Wait a minute! I think Chawla has just contributed something really very constructive. He's reminded us that most vandalism occurs at night. Maybe the best action the school board could take would be to hire a security guard to patrol the school grounds at night.

Hema: That sounds like a good idea to me. Let's make it one of our recommendations.

Meera: Does everyone agree that asking the school board to hire a security guard to patrol the school grounds at night is a worthwhile recommendation? Since there's no disagreement, go ahead and add that to our list, Priti.

Priti: Okay, I have got it down.

Meera: Are there any more ideas about what the school board can do? Since there don't seem be any at the moment, let's move on. What ideas can we come up with for how the students can control vandalism in our school?

Chawla: One school solved its problems when the school board agreed to give the student council the money that had been budgeted for vandalism but ended up not being used because students found ways to reduce the damage done to the school.

Priti: That sounds like the students were holding up the board for protection money. It shouldn't be necessary to pay off students to get them to stop tearing apart their school.

Meera: Chawla, you say the students found ways to reduce the damage done to the school, but you don't say how. Who has some concrete ideas about what students can do to reduce vandalism?

Reema: I belong to the senior class service club, the Olympians. Our group could be divided into teams that could take turns monitoring the empty halls and classrooms during lunch. Even though we haven't had any daytime vandalism yet, this would be a good deterrent.

Priti: That's a great idea, Reema! And economical—the board will like that.

Hema: I'd like to expand on Reema's idea. If the Olympians patrol the grounds during school hours, there will be money for regular security guards from when school lets out at 3:00 until the time the night security comes in. We have had some vandalism during those hours.

Questions to Answer

1. How does Meera guide the group's conversation?
2. During the discussion, one of the group members becomes more concerned with expressing ideas about the causes of vandalism than with helping the group think of ways to control it. What does Meera do to get the group back on the right track?
3. Why is it important for the group leader to refrain from imposing his or her views on the group? Why do you suppose that in parliamentary procedure the chairperson is not allowed to participate in the discussion of a motion? Discuss why such requirements for group discussions in small and large groups are important for maintaining an atmosphere in which participants feel free to express themselves.

REVIEW YOUR LEARNING

1. Explain the nature and purpose of "phatic communion". Describe an example of such a conversation in your personal life.
2. What is conversation control? Discuss with examples.
3. "A key conversation skill is to know the difference between opinion and fact and to use it to your advantage". Discuss.
4. Discuss the important characteristics of conversation as a spontaneous form of communication?
5. Discuss the structure of social conversation. Give some examples.
6. What is parallel conversation? Illustrate with an example you have encountered.
7. What is "one-upmanship" in conversation?
8. Explain and contrast the nature of the binary and multi-valued approaches to conversation.
9. What are keywords in the context of conversation control?
10. What are the benefits of dialogue?

REFLECT ON YOUR LEARNING

1. What is the role of conversation in our business and personal lives?
2. How important is informality in conversations?
3. According to Hayakawa, "The togetherness is not merely in the talking itself, but in the opinions expressed." Do you agree with this assessment?
4. As rational human beings, what should be our attitude towards others' opinions and beliefs?
5. Reflect on the difference between rejection and agreement in conversation. How would you behave if your suggestion as a manager is turned down by the vice-president of your company in a high-level meeting?
6. Reflect on the importance of noticing clues and cues in negotiations.
7. Do you believe one can be assertive without being aggressive at the workplace? Give reasons for your answers.

APPLY YOUR LEARNING

Analyse the following conversation[4] with respect to the psychological structure of conversation and the element of empathy.

> "We have two weeks before we leave," I said. "They have agreed to let us stay till then."
>
> "You think that is good of them?" Selvan said, his voice hard and sharp like crystals. He lifted his eyes to mine. I saw they were black and smouldering, as if some deep flame of anger or hatred burned in him. Nathan replied for me.
>
> "It is better than being sent out at once as others have been."
>
> Selvan turned on his father.
>
> "You have accepted it? You have made no protest?"
>
> "What options have I, my son! Naturally, I have protested but it has availed me nothing."
>
> "It is not just," Selvan said. "It is not right."
>
> "Yet there is no law against it," said Nathan wearily. "We may grieve, but there is no redress."

SELF-CHECK YOUR LEARNING

From among the given options, please choose the most appropriate answer:*

1. Conversation, in general, differs from other forms of oral communication with respect to its:
   (a) structure
   (b informality
   (c) purpose
   (d) technique
2. Social conversation is also known as:
   (a) gossip
   (b) idle talk
   (c) chit-chat
   (d) meaningless communication
3. Phatic communication uses words to express and share:
   (a) togetherness
   (b) meaning
   (c) beliefs
   (d) fear
4. The structure of social conversation is basically:
   (a) psychological
   (b) emotional
   (c) logical
   (d) moral
5. The underlying assumption of binary communication is that reality is:
   (a) multi-valued
   (b) black and white
   (c) personal
   (d) based on self-assertion
6. A conversation is successful when its direction is:
   (a) divergent
   (b) parallel
   (c) sequential
   (d) opposite
7. Our endeavour in effective business conversation should be to arrive at:
   (a) consideration
   (b) agreement
   (c) commitment
   (d) acceptance
8. At the workplace, to be a successful conversationalist, you should be:
   (a) submissive
   (b) aggressive
   (c) rude
   (d) assertive
9. An emotional outburst should be answered with:
   (a) facts
   (b) strong language
   (c) tolerance
   (d) humour
10. Conversation control means that, through practice, you can control the conversation of:
    (a) someone else
    (b) your own self
    (c) the whole group
    (d) your opponent
11. A "cue" is a key word or phrase used by a person to:
    (a) show that what is said is not important
    (b) hide his or her real intentions
    (c) mislead the listener
    (d) indicate to the listener that something is important for the speaker
12. Summarizing given facts is an act of:
    (a) comprehension
    (b) repetition
    (c) shortening
    (d) hiding
13. To be assertive is to be:
    (a) firm
    (b) loud
    (c) indirect
    (d) aggressive
14. Conversation control teaches us:
    (a) self-control as speakers
    (b) control of listeners' responses
    (c) how to prevent others from speaking
    (d) the use of strong, authoritative language

ENDNOTES

1. S. I. Hayakawa, *Language in Thought and Action* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1964), 72.
2. As cited by S. I. Hayakawa, *Language in Thought and Action* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1964), 69.
3. Charles Margerison, *The Art of Effective Communication* (New Delhi: Excel Books, 1996).
4. Kamala Markandaya, *Nectar in a Sieve* (Mumbai: Jaico Publishing House, 1955) 136.

*For answers and self-evaluation, visit www.pearsoned.co.in/PDChaturvedi

6

Listening

“
Are You Listening?
”
— R.G. Nichols and L. A. Stevens

Upon completion of this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Understand how listening is an essential component of communication and management.
2. Know the internal and external causes of poor listening.
3. Know some guidelines for improving listening skills.
4. Understand how to craft reflective and clarifying responses that demonstrate good listening skills.

COMMUNICATION AT WORK

Picture yourself teaching a class on business research methods—not an equally interesting subject for all students. During the course of the lecture, you see that a girl in the last row is busy writing in her notebook, not even once looking towards you. Next to the wall, a student is reading silently from a book. In the middle row, a half-asleep boy struggles to keep his eyes open. Only in the front two rows do you find students paying attention to what you have been discussing. They have been looking towards you and have been also taking notes from time to time.

You have explained the causal relationship between two variables, A and B. You have given a few examples of this relationship from actual life. Now, to ascertain how much of what you have been discussing has been followed by the class, you ask some students about the causal relationship between variables A and B. The last-row girl, the silent reader, and the dozing boy have no idea what your question is about. The front row students are ready with answers and answer you correctly.

Why is this so? They all have attended the same lecture. You were loud enough to reach everyone, clear enough to be understood, and logically ordered in your discourse. Then how did some students miss your point so completely? It seems as if they were not even present in the lecture.

The fact is that those who failed to answer you heard you, but did not listen to your exposition of the variables and their relationships. They heard you, for they could not fail to hear you. They were not deaf. But their minds did not absorb what you said.

WHAT IS LISTENING?

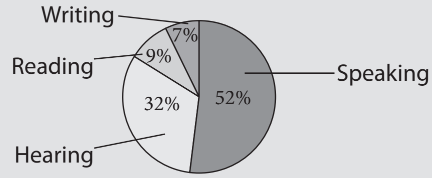
To listen is to pay thoughtful attention to what someone is saying. It is a deliberate act of attentively hearing a person speak. It is the mental process of paying undivided attention to what is heard. Listening is more than hearing, which is just the physical act of senses receiving sounds. Hearing involves the ears, but listening involves the ears, eyes, heart, and mind. It is rightly said that listening is an essential component of communication. Without this element, fruitful communication is not possible. Listening occurs when the receiver of the message wishes to learn, or be influence or changed by the message. When someone is interested in actively hearing, they are listening. Exhibit 6.1 shows the importance of listening in our daily lives.

How Do We Listen?

Listening is not passive. It is a deliberate act of concentrating on sound waves that the auditory nerve sends to the brain. As a first step in the listening process, the listener focuses his or her attention on what is essential in the communication. At the same time, he or she tries to understand, interpret, and register what is received. It is not easy to pay undivided attention to a speaker, and without giving proper attention to developing listening skills, many people remain poor listeners.

Exhibit 6.1
The Importance of Listening

Studies conducted since the 1930s reveal that 70 per cent of our waking time goes into communication. The pie chart below illustrates the activities that take up various portions of this 70 per cent:



Note that this break-up reflects the norms. The figures would differ from group to group. For example, for a group of young students, "speaking" would be lower than "hearing" (or listening), and their "reading" and "writing" figures will also be higher. For a group of teachers, "speaking" would be high.

Listening is more than hearing, which is just the physical act of our senses receiving sounds. Hearing involves our ears, but listening involves our ears, eyes, heart, and mind.

An Indian saying draws attention to the natural fact that we have two ears but one tongue. Hence, we should listen twice as much as we speak.

Listening, like speaking, reading, and writing, is a skill that can be dramatically improved through training. In this chapter therefore, we will discuss some basic things about listening such as the complete process from hearing to conceptualizing, causes for poor listening, and some techniques of improving listening as a voluntary behaviour.

Listening As a Management Tool

1

Understand how listening is an essential component of communication and management.

The *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* defines listening "considering what someone says and accepting their advice". In this sense, far-sighted business heads and senior executives use careful listening to benefit from the valuable views, perceptions, and experiences of junior and middle level workers of the company. They often owe many an initiative or cost-cutting measure to suggestions given by juniors in informal sessions. By listening to what others say about a specific situation, that is by considering and accepting the advice of others, the company succeeds in taking the best possible decision and effectively implementing it.

An example of successful "Management by Listening" is the case of Maruti Udyog, which has flourished using former Managing Director Jagdish Khattar's innovative methods of seeking suggestions from employees.[1] Maruti's decision to showcase a concept car at Delhi's annual Auto Expo was born out of an event called "Tea with the MD". Almost every fortnight, Khattar used to get together with a group of young Maruti engineers and managers in an informal meeting that encouraged them to articulate their ideas for the company's growth. Khattar's purpose was to elicit valuable suggestions for Maruti's growth by holding informal tea-sessions with his engineers and managers or by walking around at dealers' conventions, urging his dealers to make suggestions for improving sales and distribution. This was how he hit upon a formula that saved the company nearly INR 4 million.

Realizing that dealers hesitated to express themselves in an open forum, Khattar urged each of them to put down three of their suggestions on a piece of paper. He said, "On the five-hour flight back from Bangkok to Delhi, I went through each and every sheet. Our dealers had made several suggestions on how we could de-bottleneck distribution. I realized that increasing the sales force and opening small dealership extensions in rural and semi-urban areas could easily cut down on investments."

Khattar would routinely talk with and listen to youngsters before walking into his office. His example demonstrates how providing opportunities to others to express valuable suggestions holds the key to the successful management of problems.

THE PROCESS OF LISTENING

Listening is an integrated process, which consists of the following phases: undivided attention, hearing, understanding, interpreting, evaluating, empathizing and conceptualizing.

An explanation of these aspects of the process of listening would be helpful before proceeding. These phases do not occur in succession, but instead operate concurrently and in tandem. All aspects of oral verbal communication require one to focus on what is being said, understand it, and register it as part of one's body of knowledge and experience.

- *Undivided attention:* Effective listening requires a certain frame of mind. The process of listening is rooted in attentively hearing the message. Undivided attention admits no distractions and no intrusive thoughts or ideas that are unrelated to the message. To concentrate on what is being said, an earnest listener would focus on the message and not let other things compete for his or her attention. The listener in this phase discriminates between thoughts, ideas, or images that belong in his or her focus of attention and those that float on its margin and must be kept from entering into conscious consideration.
- *Hearing:* Listening involves hearing distinct sounds and perceiving fine modulations in tone. The receiver recognizes the shape of words and intonation patterns. Familiarity with the sound of words and the spoken rhythm of speech contributes to the attentiveness of the listener. Pitch, voice modulations, and the quality of sound are equally important for hearing with the right attention.
- *Understanding:* A listener can hear words but must listen to know their intended meaning. Perfect communication is when the full meaning of what is said has been understood. This includes words, tone, and body talk. A good listener hears words, observes body movements, gestures, facial expressions, and eye movements, and notices variations in tone and pitch of voice. If the listener attends only to words without paying close attention to how they are said, he or she may be missing the real, intended meaning of those words.
- *Interpreting:* Understanding and interpretation follow the phase of hearing. The listener attempts to comprehend what is heard. Understanding the language may not be enough for fully comprehending the message and successfully participating in the act of communication. It should be accompanied by the ability to interpret what is communicated, which occurs when the listener takes account of his or her own knowledge and experience.
- *Evaluating:* Communication requires that the listener have the critical ability to see for himself or herself the value of what is being discussed or heard. It is only then that the listener can closely follow the argument. The evaluation of content is closely related to the listener's own interest in what is being communicated.
- *Empathizing:* A sympathetic listener sees the speaker's point of view. He or she may not agree with what is said, yet such a listener allows the other person to say what he or she wants to say.
- *Conceptualizing:* Conceptualization occurs when the listener finally assimilates what has been heard in the context of his or her own knowledge and experiences. This is why listening is not only important but also indispensable for perfect communication.

FACTORS THAT ADVERSELY AFFECT LISTENING

2

Know the internal and external causes of poor listening.

Listening is a voluntary behaviour that can be easily affected by internal or external factors that can act as barriers to good listening.

Lack of Concentration

Many times listeners are not able to concentrate on what is being heard. There may be several reasons for this. There could be external factors responsible for the inability to listen properly. For example, there may be noise inside the room or loud music being played nearby. This external noise can be shut off in several ways. But the internal factors within the listener's mind that interference with concentration are more serious and difficult to avoid or manage. These can be overcome through practice once the listener is made aware that they are problematic.

Reasons for not concentrating include:

- *Hearing faster than speaking:* Humans normally talk at nearly 120 to 125 words per minute, but the brain is capable of receiving 500 to 600 words per minute. The listener's brain, therefore, must deal with gaps between words, and this gap tends to be filled by other thoughts and images. This phenomenon interferes with concentration. For example, some political leaders or religious preachers deliver t heir speeches with prolonged pauses every few words or sentences. They may be using the pauses as a rhetorical device to emphasize their point. However, these pauses may instead break the listener's attentiveness by letting him or her mentally wander away from the topic to thoughts about the speaker's fluency or halting speech, or altogether unrelated issues such as what he or she ate for breakfast. In such situations, there may not be much a listener can do to remain attentive. However, if he or she keeps looking at the speaker with steadfast eyes, the mind's tendency to wander could be significantly controlled.
- *Paying attention to the speaker and not the speech:* Many times listeners fail to listen properly because they are distracted by the speaker's face or dress or manner of delivery, just as if a dancer is very beautiful, we may be distracted by his or her beauty and miss the beauty of the dance. Thus, it is important to pay attention to the speech and its contents rather than focus on external factors that are not relevant.
- *Listening too closely:* The purpose of listening is to get the full meaning of what is said. The speaker's point is understood by looking for the central idea underlying individual words and non-verbal signs and signals. So when the listener tries not to miss a single word or detail of what the speaker is saying, he or she may get lost in the details and may miss the point.

Unequal Statuses

In organizations, there are formal and informal status levels that affect the effectiveness of face-to-face oral communication. A subordinate would generally listen more and speak less while interacting with his or her superior. The exchange of ideas is blocked by diffidence on the part of the subordinate because of the superior position of the speaker. Upward oral communication is not very frequent in organizations. Fear of the speaker's superior status prevents free upward flow of information. This limits free and fair exchange of ideas.

The Halo Effect

> Oral communication is conditioned by the impressions of the listener about the eminence of the speaker. The listener's impressions and not the intrinsic worth of the message determine the effectiveness of such communication.

The awe in which a speaker is held by the listener affects the act of listening. If the speaker is greatly trusted and held in high esteem as an honest person, his or her statements are readily taken as true. Oral communication is thus conditioned by the impressions of the listener about the eminence of the speaker. The listener's impressions and not the intrinsic worth of the message determine the effectiveness of such communication. For instance, due to the halo effect, buyers may go by a trusted seller's view rather than by their own judgment of a product's quality.

Complexes

Lack of confidence or a sense of superiority may prevent proper interaction between persons in different positions. Sometimes an individual may suffer from a sense of inferiority and therefore fail to take the initiative or involve himself or herself in conversation, dialogue, or other forms of oral communication. Similarly, some persons consider themselves too important to condescend to talk with others. Often, these are misplaced notions of self-worth, but they do block oral communication.

A Closed Mind

> Listening, to a large extent, depends on one's curiosity to know things.

Listening, to a large extent, depends on one's curiosity to know things. Some individuals believe that they know everything in a field or subject. Their minds refuse to receive information from other sources. In addition, some persons feel too satisfied with their way of doing things to change or even discuss new ideas. A closed state of mind acts as a barrier to oral communication, which demands a readiness and willingness on the part of the listener to enter into dialogue.

Poor Retention

In dialogue or two-way oral communication, a logical sequence of thoughts is essential for successful communication. To speak coherently and comprehend completely, one has to understand the sequence of ideas. The structure of thoughts must be received and retained by the listener to understand arguments. The cues that signal the transition from one set of ideas to another must be retained by the listener to be able to grasp the full sense of the message. In case of poor retention, the listener fails to relate what he or she hears with what he or she had heard earlier. Moreover, if the listener fails to remember previous discussions, the whole conversation is likely to be lost in the absence of any written record.

The cues that signal the transition from one set of ideas to another must be retained by the listener to be able to grasp the full sense of the message. In case of poor retention, the listener fails to relate what he or he hears with what he or she had heard earlier.

Premature Evaluation and Hurried Conclusions

Listening patiently until the speaker completes his or her argument is necessary for correct interpretation of an oral message. The listener can distort the intended meaning by prejudging the intentions of the speaker, inferring the final meaning of the message, or giving a different twist to the argument according to his or her own assumptions or by just picking out a few select shreds of information. These mental processes may act as a block to listening, affecting accurate exchange of information.

Abstracting

Abstracting is the mental process of evaluating thoughts in terms of the relative importance of ideas in the context of the total message. This is possible only by listening to the whole message. Abstracting acts as a barrier when a listener approaches a message from a particular point of view and focuses his or her attention on selected aspects of the conversation. This acts as a barrier to a full understanding of whatever is exchanged between two persons.

Slant

Slant is the biased presentation of a matter by the speaker. Instead of straight and honest communication, the speaker may adopt an oblique manner that could verge on telling a lie. When a matter is expressed with a particular slant, important aspects of the message are suppressed, left out, or only indirectly hinted at. Well-informed listeners usually do suspect the cover-up/slant. But uninformed listeners may accept the slanted message.

Cognitive Dissonance

At times listeners fail to accept or respond to assumptions deriving from new information as they may be unprepared to change the basis of their beliefs and knowledge. In such a discrepancy between a listener's existing assumptions and the position communicated by the speaker, some listeners try to escape from the dissonance by reinterpreting, restructuring, or mentally ignoring the oral interchange. Cognitive dissonance interferes with the acceptance of new information. It may also lead to several interpretations of a new message or view. In the absence of cognitive dissonance, a listener has the skill, ability, and flexibility of rational thinking, promoting effective oral communication. For business executives, the skill to move from one mental frame to another is essential for efficient oral exchange of ideas, beliefs, and feelings.

Cognitive dissonance interferes with the acceptance of new information.

Language Barrier

The language of communication should be shared by the speaker and the listener. In business, English is widely used in most parts of the world. The ability to converse in English is essential for executives in a multi-lingual country like India. English is now the global medium for conducting business, and the lack of knowledge and practice of spoken English acts as a barrier to verbal communication.

The listener should also be familiar with the accent of the language in use, as a new accent can often be difficult to follow for those unfamiliar with it. For instance, in India, even those who speak English fluently need special training to work in call centres so that they can understand what overseas callers say over the phone. Workers involved in outsourced businesses tend to overcome their initial language barrier.

The effects of most of these barriers that interfere with the proper response to oral messages can be reduced or even removed through effective listening. In order to develop good listening skills, we must first identify and understand the characteristics of effective listening.

Besides the barriers in listening discussed in this section, there may be other factors that affect listening, as shown in Exhibit 6.2. For instance, many studies show that men listen mostly with the left side of the brain while women tend to use both sides. Further, studies also suggest that left-handed people may use a part of the brain to process language that differs

Exhibit 6.2
Differences in the Listening Process

Left-sided Listening in Men

Our brains are divided into four parts, and each part performs different functions and has different abilities. The *right frontal* part is best at creative tasks and ideas; the *right basal* part is responsible for feelings, intuition, compassion and interest for others. Logic and reasoning are governed by the *left frontal* part, which is responsible for abilities such as problem solving, strategic vision, leadership, and decision-making skills. The *left basal* part is best at organizing the world; sorting, arranging and filing; and keeping order and maintaining routine.

Each of us possesses the abilities governed by the four parts of the brain to some extent, but there are differences in *how much* we use each part. About 95 percent of us use some part of the brain more than others (only 5 percent of us use all the parts equally). Studies show that men tend to use more of the left part of their brain while women usually use more of the right.

Studies also suggest differences in listening in men and women. According to some research studies, men listen with only one side of their brains while women use both. Researchers have compared the brain scans of men and women and found that men mostly use the left side of their brains, the part long believed to control listening and understanding.

The question is: which is normal? Maybe the normal for men is different from the normal for women. Could this be the reason why men don't like to listen to what doesn't interest them, and listen repeatedly to something they like?

Listening in Left-handed People

Right-handed people are many more in number than left-handed people on earth. But, when it comes to processing language, a higher proportion of left-handed people process language effectively, as compared to right-handed people.

Normally, people use both sides of the brain to process language. The dominant hemisphere deals with articulation and calculation, and the non-dominant part is used for abstract thinking. According to the findings of the American Academy of Neurology in Philadelphia, the United States, left-handed people may use a (dominant) part of the brain to process language which differs from their right-handed counterparts. As a result, left-handed people could have different types of intelligence. For example, a person could be the CEO of an organization and yet not have good road sense.

Sources: Information from "Men Do Hear—But Differently Than Women, Brain Images Show," *ScienceDaily*, 29 November 2000, http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2000/11/001129075326.htm, accessed October 2010; and Steve Smith (ed.), "Be Your Best! Readymade Tools for Personal Development", 1st South Asian edition (Cogan-Page India Ltd, 1999).

from their right-handed counterparts. Such differences in brain dominance and lateralization could affect listening, either positively or negatively.

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE AND INEFFECTIVE LISTENERS

To improve our listening skills, we must know the characteristics of effective as well as ineffective listeners and identify our own weaknesses as listeners. Exhibit 6.3 contrasts the characteristics of effective and ineffective listeners.

Exhibit 6.3
Characteristics of Effective and Ineffective Listeners

Effective Listeners	*Ineffective Listeners*
Do not interrupt	Take a "Yes, but…" approach
Remain patient	Do not give their full attention to the speaker
Make eye contact	Look away from the speaker
Show interest	Display impatience to talk
Look attentive	Are very critical
Concentrate	Have poor concentration
Ask open questions	Are over-talkative

Good listeners try to encourage the speaker by their body language and expression. They indicate interest and understanding regarding the subject of discussion. Poor listeners, on the other hand, annoy and disturb the speaker. They may have the habit of interrupting or showing little interest in what is being discussed. Unnecessary interjections such as “yes”, “but”, and “ifs” should be avoided when they disturb the speaker.

After knowing how effective and ineffective listeners differ in their listening behaviour, try to recognize your own behaviour and attitude.

GUIDELINES FOR IMPROVING LISTENING SKILLS

3

Know some guidelines for improving listening skills.

Effective communication is associated with the power of speaking well, but without good listening, successful communication is not possible. The spoken word fulfils its purpose only when it is carefully heard, understood, interpreted, and registered in the listener’s memory.

The effectiveness of communication is the function of both effective speaking and effective listening. To communicate successfully, the speaker’s words should be well articulated and, at the same time, they must be well received. The guidelines given here should be helpful in improving one’s listening skills.

When two people are talking simultaneously, neither can listen to the other. To have a successful dialogue, it is necessary that when one person wants to speak, the other person keeps quiet and listens. No one can talk and listen at the same time. In classrooms, it is common for teachers to ask students to stop talking to ensure that they are able to listen to the lecture. Similarly, the teacher stops talking when a student wants to say something.

1. *Speak less, listen more:* The purpose of listening is to know what the speaker wants to say or to learn from the speaker. Listening is an act of cooperation in the sense that it takes advantage of others’ knowledge and experience. Therefore, devoting time to listening rather than speaking is in our self-interest.
2. *Do not be a sponge:* It is not necessary to concentrate on every word of the speaker’s. Instead, it is more important to get the main point, theme, or central idea and concentrate on it. Minor details are not as important.
3. *Observe body language:* Effective listeners do not pay attention only to what is being said, but also notice how it is said. They observe the feelings, attitudes, and emotional reactions of the speaker based on his or her body language.
4. *Focus on the speaker:* Facing the speaker and making eye contact make the speaker feel that the listener is interested in what he or she is saying.
5. *Separate the ideas from the speaker:* Good listeners do not allow themselves to be overly awed by the speaker’s status, fame, charm, or other physical and personal attributes. They separate the person from his or her ideas. Effective communicators are not conditioned by their personal impressions and prejudices, but are able to focus on the content of what is being spoken.
6. *Listen for what is left unsaid:* Careful attention to what is not said, in addition to what is said, can tell the listener a lot about the speaker’s feelings and attitude towards the subject of discussion.
7. *Avoid becoming emotional:* Good listeners remain calm and do not become emotionally charged or excited by the speaker’s words. Becoming too angry or excited makes it difficult for the listener to respond or express himself or herself objectively and rationally.
8. *Do not jump to hasty conclusions:* Listeners should allow the speaker to conclude his or her point. Only then should they try to interpret and respond to it. Hasty inferences may not represent what the speaker intended to communicate.
9. *Empathize with the speaker:* Effective listeners keep in mind the speaker’s point of view by focusing on the big picture, background constraints/limitations, and special needs and the emotional state of the speaker.
10. *Respect the speaker as a person:* It is important to listen with respect for the other person. Do not allow the speaker to feel hurt, ignored, or insulted.

Exhibit 6.4
Effective Listening—Six Steps Away

Step1: *Keep quiet*—as much as possible.

Step 2: *Don't lead*—unless you want to hear the opposite of what is being said.

Step 3: *Don't react defensively*—if what you hear bothers you.

Step 4: *Avoid clichés*—to make meaningful statements.

Step 5: *Remain neutral*—no matter what you think of others.

Step 6: *Resist giving advice*—until asked for directly.

Source: Based on Michael Purdy and Deborah Borisoff (eds), *Listening in Everyday Life: A personal and Professional Approach* (University Press of America, 1997).

There may be nothing new in these guidelines. However, a reminder of the ways of improving listening, as illustrated in Exhibit 6.4, can be of great value for improving the effectiveness of communication.

RESPONSIVE LISTENING

4

Understand how to craft reflective and clarifying responses that demonstrate good listening skills.

Distortions in communication take place because of the nature of its three elements: the sender, the receiver, and the message. In earlier chapters, we have seen how messages get filtered and mixed with the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of both the sender and the receiver. Moreover, the message itself is subject to distortions resulting from the limitations of language as an adequate vehicle for communication.

Lynette Long, in her book *Listening/Responding: Human Relations Training for Teachers*[2], questions the possibility of appropriate communication between the speaker and listener. She defines the communication process as one in which:

1. What the speaker feels and what s/he means to say are not the same,
2. What s/he means to say and what she/he actually says are different, and
3. What s/he says and what the listener hears are also different. It's a wonder, then, that what the speaker thinks is ever what the listener hears.[3]

However, Long suggests a course of training to enable a listener to respond to what the speaker thinks and not what the listener hears.

In light of their value for teachers, managers, and interpersonal communicators, Long's two basic concepts of responses, *basic reflective response* and *basic clarification response*, are briefly discussed here.

Basic Reflective Response

Listening should be facilitative. The speaker should feel encouraged to speak out.

Listening should be facilitative. The speaker should feel encouraged to speak out. He or she should feel that he or she has been heard and rightly understood. According to Long, the easiest way to show facilitative listening is reflection, "which requires that the listener accurately paraphrase the essence of the speaker's message. This paraphrasing lets the speaker know that you have accurately heard him/her." A reflective response should not, however, have any new information based on the listener's own thoughts or views.

As an example of a reflective response, consider the following example in which Manisha accurately paraphrases Abhinav's thought:

> Abhinav: I'm feeling so stupid. I expected it to be a most entertaining movie. The way you described it, I thought it would be a fun. But the whole thing makes no sense. Like most Indian movies, it's just so lousy.
>
> Manisha: The movie does not meet the expectations I had raised on the day of its release.

Manisha's response rephrases the essential disappointment Abhinav expresses about the movie, and thus it makes him feel that he has been correctly heard and understood by her.

But suppose, Manisha responded as follows:

> "Yes, most Indian movies turn out to be boring".

Abhinav would have felt that Manisha missed what he wanted to convey—his disappointment. He was led to believe the movie was highly entertaining, but it turned out to be quite boring.

In crafting a reflective response, the listener responds only to what is presented by the speaker. For example, if only feelings are presented, the listener must respond to those feelings; if a cognitive matter is presented, he or she must respond to those components of the thought alone. The listener just repeats (mirrors/reflects) what the speaker communicates. He or she adds no new material while responding reflectively.

A message can have three component elements. The first is the experiential component, which answers the question, "What happened?" The second is the cognitive component, describing what the speaker thinks about what happened. These two components form the content of the message. The third component is the affective element of the message, which reveals how the speaker feels about what happened—this is more emotional than analytical. Most messages contain at least two of these three components. The listener must identify experiential, cognitive, and affective components and then decide which of these components to respond to. He or she also has to decide whether to respond with reflection or with some other listening technique.

As an example, let us break the following statement into its three component parts.

> Ankit: Sometimes only luck saves us. Today, while driving to my office, I happened to get delayed, and, therefore, I reached the office parking lot just after the blast.

1. The experiential component: What happened? While driving to his office, Ankit happened to get delayed and reached the parking place after the blast.
2. Cognitive component: What is Ankit's cognitive reaction to this happening? He explains what happened by attributing it to luck ("Sometimes, only luck saves us.").
3. Affective component: How does Ankit feel about what happened? No feelings are explicitly expressed in his statement, but it is implied that Ankit feels lucky to have been delayed while driving to this office.

Here, I may point out that many of you may not agree with Ankit's sentiment "sometimes, only luck saves us". It is indeed hard to differentiate between thoughts and feelings. Many times, we use the expression "I feel" to convey what we think about someone. For example, we might say "I feel he is a good person". In fact, this is a thought, not a feeling that we are talking about.

We can now see that the listener should respond to all the components of the message: the experiential, the cognitive, and the affective. Of course, all the three parts may not always be present in a message. But whenever the affective component is present, the listener must respond reflectively to it because this part communicates the speaker's feelings and is therefore most important from the speaker's point of view.

Now, assuming yourself to be a listener, analyse the following conversation and try to respond reflectively to the speaker's message.

> Abhishekh: I mostly go out for an evening walk with Juhi, but this evening when I reached her house, she had already left. She knew that I was on my way to her place. She is really so inconsiderate.

To respond to Abhishekh, first break the statement into the following three components:

1. What happened to Abhishekh?
2. What does Abhishekh think about what happened?
3. How does Abhishekh feel about what happened?

In your response, you may repeat the gist of the event, but you should reflect on the affective part by restating it completely. You can therefore respond by saying: "You were delayed on your way to her place, but Juhi should have waited for you." Another possible response is: "You were late. But Juhi's going out without you must really be so irritating".

Basic Clarification Response

The clarifying listener tries to understand the thoughts and feelings of the speaker by placing/ projecting himself or herself in the speaker's situation. Such a listener "assumes the internal frame of reference of the speaker".

A clarifying response is more refined than a reflective response. The clarifying listener tries to understand the thoughts and feelings of the speaker by placing/projecting himself or herself in the speaker's situation. Such a listener "assumes the internal frame of reference of the speaker" according to Long. It is important to note that clarifying listeners do not identify their own experiences with the speaker's. Instead, they focus and elaborate on the speaker's thoughts and feelings.

The reflective listener repeats the content of the message, whereas the clarifying listener "amplifies the stimulus statement" by elaborating on the unstated thoughts and feelings underlying the speaker's expression. Both what is said as well as what is left unsaid (but is implied by non-verbal body language) are together analysed to understand the finer workings of the speaker's mind.

According to Long, clarifying listeners integrate verbal and non-verbal messages to gain a full understanding of the message and bring into focus and "attend to details of the communication that might otherwise go unnoticed." In clarifying what the speaker has told them, they expand on both the feeling and content expressed by the speaker. Many times speakers may not be aware of the full meaning of their statements. Clarifying listeners help speakers better understand themselves.

A clarifying response responds to what is not said as well as what is said. Clarifying listeners amplify and elaborate on the comments of the speaker. They add deeper feeling and meaning to the expressions of the speaker by responding to his or her underlying thoughts and feelings.

Some of the words in this elaboration may need to be explained. Let us see how *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* defines these terms. Amplify means "to explain something that you have said by giving more information about it". Elaborate means "to give more details or new information about something". Clarify means "to make something clearer or easier to understand."

Difference Between Clarifying Listeners and Interpretative Listeners

The focus of clarification is on the speaker. The listener is engaged in interpreting the speaker's feelings and thoughts, which may remain incomplete or unexpressed. It should be noted that the clarifying listener adds no new information to the speaker's statement. The listener's comments expand—but do not interpret—what has been said. Clarification is done in terms of the speaker's thoughts and feelings. It starts by referring to the speaker. For example, it could begin with phrases such as "It seems you…" or "Perhaps you feel…". The exercise of clarification is done with the purpose of helping the speaker understand his or her own feelings more fully.

According to Long, an interpretative listener on the other hand adds "new content and feelings to the expressions of the speaker—content and feelings that are not contained in the previous expressions of the speaker but are based on the listener's projections concerning the speaker as a person"[4]. Interpretations are based on the listener's knowledge of the speaker, on the ways human beings act in similar situations, or on the listener's personal biases and opinions, with which the speaker may or may not agree. Incorrect interpretation shows lack of understanding on the part of the listener. To be helpful as a listener, one should first listen to what is said and not ask why it is said. The listener should develop the ability to clarify rather than interpret what others say to be able to respond successfully.

Consider the following example:

> Divya: I do not like oral reports. May I submit a written report, instead?
>
> Mr Chakrapani: I know speaking before the whole class is difficult. You feel nervous. It seems everyone is looking at you and you become self-conscious.

Mr Chakrapani responds to Divya in a clarifying way. He focuses on her and her feelings. He gives his response in terms of Divya. He projects himself in the situation and feels what she feels. He uses the phrase "You feel…", which communicates empathy. Finally, he amplifies her dislike of oral reports by bringing in her feeling of nervousness in standing before the whole class. Of course, this amplification is based on what Mr Chakrapani assumes about Divya's preference for a written report. And it may not be absolutely true. She may also be thinking that a written report could result in a better grade. One can be certain about the correctness of his clarification only when Divya nods "yes" in response to Mr Chakrapani.

Now, here is an example of interpretive listening:

> Divya: "I do not like oral reports. May I submit a written report, instead?"
>
> Mr Chakrapani: "I know it's easy to get a report written by a senior and submit it."

Mr Chakrapani responds to Divya's statement not in not in terms of what is said, but in terms of what he believes or knows about the practice of submitting reports. His listening is conditioned by his knowledge/information about student practices that Divya may not be aware of. In this case, the listener responds to what he assumes, not what he hears.

Recognizing Unexpressed Feelings and Thoughts

It is most important to understand the feelings in a message. Even the speaker may find it difficult to express his or her feelings properly and fully. The listener should help the speaker express his or her feelings more freely. This can be done by amplifying the speaker's feelings, which may be implied and not openly expressed. By listening to verbal expressions and non-verbal clues, the clarifying listener can get an idea of the problem that is bothering the speaker. The listener puts together the clues provided by the speaker's tone, choice of words, pace of speaking, and intonation pattern to sense the underlying feelings of the message. Non-verbal clues such as gestures, facial expressions, body movement, and eye contact and movement, in combination with verbal clues, affirm the unsaid feelings and thoughts of the speaker. The clarifying listener then conveys to the speaker that he or she has recognized the feelings and thoughts he or she has not openly shared. This encourages the speaker to open up and talk about suppressed feelings and thoughts.

To understand clarification further, let us analyse the expressed and implied feelings in the following statement:

> Monica: Of late, I have started feeling very distant from my family. I am unable to talk with anyone. I do not know what has gone wrong. Even when I talk to my brother or sister, I feel as if I am talking to some unknown person.

Expressed feeling: Feeling of distance

Implied feelings: Loneliness, worry, and anxiety about the loss of family ties and closeness

Now analyse the following statement for the speaker's expressed and implied thoughts:

> Surbhi: I tried hard to become the Indian Idol. I thought as a singer I was as good as anyone else. But, in the finals when I heard the other contestants, I realized I could not make it.

Expressed thought: I thought as a singer I was as good as anyone else

Implied thought: I did not estimate my singing ability correctly

We have now discussed some of the characteristics that help a speaker express his or her thoughts and feelings freely. Broadly speaking, a good clarification response has the following characteristics:

1. Encourages disclosures by the speaker
2. Pays close attention to the speaker's feelings
3. Communicates understanding of expressed as well implied feelings and thoughts
4. Helps the speaker understand his or her problem

To test your understanding, choose which of Meera's responses to Nidhi is a clarifying response and give reasons for rejecting the other three responses.

Nidhi: I have lot of problems with my finance professor. She does not like me. Can you do something about this?

Meera:

A. I do not know your finance professor.

B. You believe your finance professor dislikes you and you want me to do something to help.

C. When I was getting my MBA, my marketing teacher hated me. I was always scared about my grade in marketing because of our personal relationship.

D. You are worried about your relationship with your finance professor. You believe she does not like you. You fear you may not get a good grade in her course.

If you chose D as the clarifying response, you are correct. Here are the reasons for rejecting statements A, B, and C as clarifying responses. Response A does not reflect a deeper understanding of the problem of personal relationships in professional settings. Nor does it identify Nidhi's fear of not getting a good grade. Instead, it seeks to know more about her professor. Response B just reflects the feelings of the original statement; it does not amplify them or help Meera understand her feelings better. Response C is an example of the listener identifying with the speaker's experience. A clarifying response, however, should focus on Nidhi's experience and her feelings about it. Response D, on the other hand, is a correct clarifying response. In this response, Meera focuses on Nidhi's worries and concerns about her relationship with her professor and her grade in the course. Nidhi did not directly state these concerns, but Meera perceives them as fears hidden in Nidhi's mind. The original statement talks only of the teacher's dislike of Nidhi and asks for some help in this regard. Meera elaborates on this and helps Nidhi understand her worry more clearly. The speaker can get a lot of satisfaction and fulfillment from knowing that he or she has been heard, understood, and accepted by someone.

SUMMARY

- This chapter explains how listening means paying thoughtful attention to what someone is saying.
- Listening carefully is an important skill for managers, and the skills of thoughtful listening should be cultivated by managers.
- The listening process includes giving undivided attention to the speaker, hearing, understanding, and interpreting the words, evaluating non-verbal expressions, empathizing with the speaker, and conceptualizing.
- There are various factors that adversely affect listening: lack of concentration, unequal statuses of the speaker and listener, a halo effect or complex, a closed mind, poor retention, premature evaluation, abstracting, biases or slant, cognitive dissonance, and language barriers.
- Some guidelines for improving listening include speaking less and listening more, observing body language, and focusing on and empathizing with the speaker.
- There are two basic concepts of responses: the basic reflective response and the basic clarification response. A reflective response paraphrases the speaker's words and lets the speaker know that the listener has accurately heard him or her. A clarifying response "assumes the internal frame of reference of the speaker" and elaborates on the speaker's thoughts to draw out the speaker's unsaid thoughts and emotions.

CASE: TOO BUSY TO LISTEN?

There are times when teachers are too busy to listen to their students' difficulties. Students find them preparing the next day's lecture, correcting scripts, or discussing college problems with other teachers.

Geeta, a BBA student, finds herself approaching her program coordinator, who seldom encourages students to discuss their personal problems or any course-related questions or concerns. The teacher brushes her off saying she is too busy.

Geeta: Madam?

Ms Srivastava: Yes?

Geeta: Can I talk to you just for a minute? I need your help.

Ms Srivastava: Not now, Geeta. I am marking papers.

Geeta: Can I see you after my class, please?

Ms Srivastava: Not today. I have to attend the faculty meeting and then I have to prepare tomorrow's lecture. And I also have to enter these marks in the grades sheet. Today, I am too busy. Why don't you go to Rita madam?

Geeta: Madam, I had actually first gone to Rita madam. She also told me she was not free. She was very busy with the college's Annual Day function preparations.

Ms Srivastava: Yes, Geeta, we all are very busy till the end of this month.

Questions to Answer

1. Discuss the barriers to sympathetic listening as shown by the responses of the teacher to Geeta.
2. What, according to you, is the real reason for the teacher's inability to listen to Geeta? Are they really too busy to listen to students' problems?
3. "I am too busy." What does this statement show about the nature of the responses of some teachers?

REVIEW YOUR LEARNING

1. "Listening is hearing with thoughtful attention." Discuss.
2. What is the advantage of being a good listener for a business executive?
3. Describe in detail the process of listening.
4. Describe some internal factors that act as barriers to proper listening.
5. "Premature evaluations and hurried conclusions distort listening." Discuss.
6. Describe some methods of improving the listening ability of a person.
7. Explain how a reflective response facilitates listening.
8. Bring out the difference between "clarifying' listeners" and "interpretative" listeners.
9. What do you understand by the term "responsive listening"?

REFLECT ON YOUR LEARNING

1. Consider the reasons for one's occasional lack of concentration on what is said.
2. How would you evaluate yourself as a listener on the basis of the listening characteristics described in this chapter?
3. In this chapter, there are some guidelines given for improving listening. Which of these would you find suitable for improving your listening?
4. Do you believe that proper training can improve one's listening skills?
5. Do you agree with the view that it is not possible to have appropriate communication between a speaker and a listener?

APPLY YOUR LEARNING

Identify the nature of listening/responding given in the example below and give reasons for your choice:

Gaurav: I don't believe I can complete this project report. I'm so frustrated. I have no background information.

Prasant: You feel discouraged because you feel you do not have the skills to write the project report.

Prasant's response is:

(a) Interpretative
(b) Reflective
(c) Clarifying
(d) Responsive

SELF-CHECK YOUR LEARNING

From among the given options, choose the most appropriate answer:*

1. Most of our waking time goes in:
   (a) hearing
   (b) speaking
   (c) writing
   (d) reading
2. Listening, like speaking, reading, and writing, is:
   (a) a skill
   (b) a gift of nature
   (c) an art
   (d) a habit

*For answers and self-evaluation, visit www.pearsoned.co.in/PDChaturvedi

3. A serious listener concentrates on:
   (a) the speaker's physical appearance
   (b) the speaker's body language
   (c) the message
   (d) other thoughts
4. As a sympathetic listener, you should consider the message from the point of view of:
   (a) the audience
   (b) yourself
   (c) the speaker
   (d) others
5. When a listener abstracts partially, listening is:
   (a) helped
   (b) distorted
   (c) obstructed
   (d) slanted
6. Good listeners concentrate on:
   (a) the speaker's main thought
   (b) the speaker's every word
   (c) important words
   (d) minor details
7. A reflective listener:
   (a) thinks about the speaker's message
   (b) appreciates the message
   (c) ignores the details
   (d) repeats the message's essential parts
8. A clarifying listener:
   (a) explains the message
   (b) repeats what is said
   (c) illustrates the message with examples
   (d) elaborates the speaker's underlying thoughts and feelings
9. Listening and hearing refer to:
   (a) the same thing
   (b) different things
   (c) a specific act versus a general act
   (d) mental and physical acts, respectively
10. Listening, to a large extent, depends on a person's:
   (a) desire to know
   (b) interest in others
   (c) taste for gossip
   (d) closed mind

ENDNOTES

1. T. R. Vivek, "Strat Talk", *The Economic Times*, April 20, 2007.
2. Lynette Long, *Listening/Responding: Human Relations Training for Teachers* (California: Thomson Brooks, 1978), p. 16.
3. Ibid., p. 18.
4. Ibid., p. 88.

7

Non-verbal Communication

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but more endear'd,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone

—John Keats

Upon completion of this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Know the meaning and characteristics of non-verbal communication.
2. Understand the function of body talk in fully interpreting the underlying message of words.
3. Learn positive gestures, body movements, and facial expressions.
4. Recognize different cues and clues indicated by facial expressions, gestures, postures, body movements, and eye contact.
5. Understand silence as a mode of communication.
6. Learn how to build rapport.

Communication at Work

In his first week at the Indian Institute of Management, Ravindra had a misunderstanding with one of his classmates. One fine evening, Rishi stormed into Ravindra's room when he was studying. He asked Ravindra for a book, the work of a Nobel laureate, that Rishi had borrowed from the library. Giving Rishi the book was not an issue, but the way Rishi asked for it surprised Ravindra. Rishi came into the room and said rather abruptly: "What the hell are you going to do with the book? Why not hand it over to me?" This sounded a bit insulting to Ravindra; he felt that for some reason Rishi thought he could not read or understand the book. He was hurt. Still, he gave Rishi the book as he was not studying from it at that time.

Though Ravindra did not tell Rishi that he did not like his language and tone, Rishi could tell something was wrong from Ravindra's face. Before leaving, he told Ravindra that that was the usual way he spoke with his friends and he should not be offended. Initially, Ravindra was not satisfied by this explanation, but after interacting with Rishi for a few weeks, he no longer minded his brusque style.

WHAT IS NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION?

Non-verbal means not involving words or speech. Thus, non-verbal communication refers to the wordless messages received through gestures, signs, body movements, facial expressions, tone of voice, colour, time, space and style of writing, and choice of words.

Animals communicate their deepest feelings of love, anger, joy, hunger, and desire for mating through gestures, cries, whistling, body movements, and many other signals known through instinct. Of course, the exact interpretation of such signs and gestures does vary, but they are mutually understood within their species.

It is human beings alone who have evolved the language of words to convey our thoughts in a structured manner. Still, in moments of excitement, we tend to convey our feelings and emotions of joy, love, anger, and hatred by smiling, shouting, frowning, or using other wordless clues. Such non-verbal expressions of feelings come spontaneously. However, at times, we can deliberately lace our words with expressive tones, gestures, and facial expressions to heighten and modify the meaning of our words.

Some non-verbal message usually accompanies a verbal message. The verbal and the non-verbal together form the total meaning of the message communicated. In addition to the words uttered by the speaker, there is also usually something unsaid and implied, so to fully understand the message, the listener should pay attention to body language and non-verbal signals.

Unspoken messages are transmitted by non-verbal clues and signs (body movements and gestures). They exist in the form of meta-communication and kinesic communication (body talk). The receiver's response to them influences the interpretation of messages received through words. Body language is not

Exhibit 7.1
Some Examples of Kinesic Communication

Non-verbal Acts	*Possible Unspoken Idea*
A senior looks at his watch while you are talking	"Your time is over, go away."
A person winks after saying something	"Do not believe what I just said."
An executive is always late for meetings	"I am always very busy." "I am not bothered about your time."
A speaker prefers to speak from the floor rather than the dais.	"I want to show my sense of equality with you (the audience)."

1

Know the meaning and characteristics of non-verbal communication.

Meta-communication is an implied meaning conveyed by the choice of words, tone of voice, fumbling, silence, or omission. It is a message communicated not by words, but along with words.

Kinesic communication is the message conveyed through non-verbal acts in the form of body movements such as gestures, winking, smiling, posture, or style of dressing and grooming, which send out a message that supports or contradicts the verbal message.

Paralanguage includes pitch, loudness of voice, and speech breakers such as "er", "ah", and "uh", which can show hesitation.

2

Understand the function of body talk in fully interpreting the underlying message of words.

mind-reading. Rather, it involves instant revelations—flashes that are communicated from one subconscious to another. There is no deliberate attempt to give or receive non-verbal messages. The exchange happens spontaneously.

Meta-communication

Meta-communication is an implied meaning conveyed by the choice of words, tone of voice, fumbling, silence, or omission. It is a message communicated not by words, but along with words. Meta-communication can be intentional or unintentional. For example, consider the following statement: "Try to reach the airport well on time." The remark offers sound advice. But the sentence, without stating it explicitly, implies that the listener is not punctual or is habitually late. Similarly, when someone wishes another person "best of luck", it generally conveys good wishes, but also implies a sense of anxiety or fear that something untoward may happen.

Meta-communication also occurs through the use of paralanguage. *Paralanguage* includes pitch, loudness of voice, and speech breakers such as "er", "ah", and "uh", which show hesitation or caution. Just as a normal or low pitch of speaking shows calm and control, a loud voice communicates displeasure or anger. Prolonged gaps, pauses, or silence are also forms of paralanguage. When a leader speaks slowly with many uses of "er" and "uh", he or she is usually being very careful and suspicious.

Kinesic Communication

Kinesic communication is the message conveyed through non-verbal acts in the form of body movements such as gestures, winking, smiling, posture, or style of dressing and grooming, which send out a message that supports or contradicts the verbal message.

Kinesic communication is also known as body language or body talk. It includes the entire non-verbal behaviour of the communicator. A non-verbal act is often subconscious. It transmits unstated feelings and attitudes and hidden intentions. Non-verbal signs offer clues to the receiver, and help the receiver understand and correctly perceive the total meaning of the message.

A non-verbal message conveyed through body movements is known as *leakage*. A successful receiver is able to observe and interpret the leakage. Though it is not possible to have an exhaustive account of all leakages and what they signify, a few examples that illustrate the modifying effect of body movements on communication are given in Exhibit 7.1.

CHARACTERISTICS OF NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

A writer's style or a speaker's tone of voice and facial expressions indicate his or her attitude and feelings beyond what is being expressed through words.

- Non-verbal communication occurs via instrumental body movements. When someone moves their hands to perform some function, such as wash their face, it is an instrumental movement and not a symbolic clue. Most body movements, with the exception of instrumental movements, have meaning and communicate something. Communicative movements act as non-verbal clues. For example, wiping one's mouth when confronted by an authority figure communicates nervousness and using the hand gesture to wave goodbye communicates courtesy and friendship.

- Non-verbal cues may be conscious or unconscious. They reveal the speaker's state of mind and inner feelings and emotions, which may be real or affected. Trained actors and orators intentionally use gestures, facial expressions, body movements, and postures to create the intended impact on their audience. Effective writers use stylistic devices to convey hidden feelings and attitudes.

  However, in real-life, most people betray their inner thoughts and feelings through unconscious signs. The speaker may not realize that he or she is conveying these feelings. For example, consider the following statement on bilateral talks between two unfriendly countries made by the representatives with tense facial expression or without a smile: "The meeting has made history."
- The interpretation of non-verbal clues differs from person to person. For example, if a listener maintains continuous eye contact, the speaker may take it as a sign of perfect attention and full acceptance, but to someone else it could be a sign that the listener feels helpless or trapped.

  The visible is usually more convincing than what is heard as it may support or contradict the verbal message. Non-verbal clues are often taken as indicators of reality. For example, the pale face of a person in danger contradicts his or her claim of fearlessness. The trembling of a speaker indicates nervousness even though the speaker may say, "I feel encouraged and inspired to stand before such a learned audience." Dress or language can also reveal the communicator's status or education.

Dress or language can also reveal the communicator's status or education.

- The same gestures may also be interpreted differently in different circumstances. For example, consider two colleagues, A and B, who are good friends. When A pats B on the back endearingly to congratulate her on a successful project, the pat is taken as a friendly gesture. Now, suppose A is the chairperson of a promotions committee and B is a candidate for promotion. To create a misunderstanding between A and B, someone tells B that A, as chairperson, opposed her promotion. When, on meeting her the next evening, A congratulates B and as usual pats her on the back, she recoils. This example shows that the relationship between two people also determines how they interpret each other's gestures.

CLASSIFICATION OF NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Non-verbal forms of communication include the following modes—paralanguage, metacommunication, kinesics, grooming, proxemics, and time language. The symbolic meaning associated with different body movements, gestures, and expressions is only suggestive and not specific in its import.

The symbolic meaning associated with different body movements, gestures, and expressions is only suggestive and not specific in its import.

Ekman's Classification of Communicative Movements

Let us consider Ekman's classification[1] of communicative movements into five types:

- *Emblems:* When the movement of body parts represents ideas visually, the communicative act is emblematic, meaning it reflects the meaning non-verbally through a physical image. For instance, a circle made with the thumb and index finger, with the rest of the fingers stretched out straight, acts as an emblem for the "okay" sign in America. This sign is meaningful for those cultures that use the English alphabet. The circle is an image of the letter "O". But in a different culture, the same circle "O" can represent a coin, just as it does in Japan. Another instance is that of the arbitrary gesture of holding up the thumb, which in Japan refers to a "boss", and in India, means "perfect."
- *Illustrators:* Illustrators are movements of hands and arms for representing the size, shape, frequency, or speed of something. For instance, widely stretched arms show enormity of

size. According to Ekman, a speaker uses illustrators when he or she is enthusiastic or fully involved in the subject being discussed. In such a state, the speaker involuntarily dramatizes ideas by using the movements of arms to focus on an idea or an event.

- *Body manipulators:* These are acts of touching one's own body or an object for no reason. Examples include fidgeting with jewellery or touching one's buttons. These are unintentional acts. However, some consider them to be clues of nervousness, anxiety, or boredom.
- *Facial expressions:* The most expressive part of our bodies are our faces. Our faces reflect our thoughts and feelings. Smiling, frowning, blushing, paleness, and so on reveal positive and negative feelings. These are emotional expressions that show on the face. The most fundamental emotions of happiness, sadness, anger, disgust, surprise, and fear are involuntarily marked on our faces.
- *Regulators—eye movements:* Eye movements such as squinting, winking, and staring are called regulators. Eye contact, a smile, or a frown is a strong message of interest, involvement, acceptance, rejection, or annoyance. Other people notice these and form impressions about the person communicating based on these. While communicating, remember the popular saying: the face reflects the mind; the eyes reveal the heart. For example, eye contact shows attentiveness and interest. On the other hand, rolling one's eyes is associated with restlessness and contempt. Staring can communicate threat. Wide open eyes show wonder or shock. A wink following a statement negates the seriousness of the statement made. Similarly, raised eyebrows or a wrinkled forehead symbolizes objection and questioning. Avoiding eye contact shows nervousness or evasiveness.

A favourable impact can be created by using eye contact, natural facial expressions and eye movements, and a smile that reflects a pleasant state of mind.

3

Learn positive gestures, body movements, and facial expressions.

Face Facts

A smile shows that an interaction has been pleasant for the participant in a conversation. Perhaps, it would not be wrong to say that in most face-to-face communications, the most positive impression is made by a smiling face. The situation may be an interview, a negotiation, or a one-on-one meeting. Even in telephone conversations, one is able to feel the impact of a smiling voice. Unlike smiling, frowning is uninviting. It might suggest to other people that the person wants to be left alone.

By practising positive body language, one can gradually develop positive feelings. Body language can induce a state of mind that can act as a positive shield against negative feelings. One can learn to communicate sincerity and concern in business dealings by using positive body language to support words of greetings, courtesy, and customer care. Avoid negative leakage. Learn to look confident, assertive, and positive. Avoid appearing nervous, aggressive, rude, pompous, indifferent or overbearing, and superior to others.

> Most people are not aware of the non-verbal messages they give out to others. Therefore, it is important to develop awareness about various body movements and gestures and their possible interpretations by others.

As discussed earlier, most people are not aware of the non-verbal messages they give out to others. Therefore, it is important to develop awareness about various body movements and gestures and their possible interpretations by others. The associated messages of some significant body movements and gestures are discussed in this section.

Positive Gestures

When a person speaks, his or her hands move freely to indicate the meaning of his or her words. Such gestures are natural. They cannot be avoided. They give strength to the speaker's words. But gestures should be seen in terms of whether they have a positive or negative message. Although gestures are spontaneous, we can learn to monitor and use positive gestures and minimize, if not avoid, the negative ones.

> Positive gestures are body signals that make the communicator look relaxed, confident, and polite.

Positive gestures are body signals that make the communicator look relaxed, confident, and polite. Positive listening gestures include leaning a little towards the other person, tilting the head, making eye contact, and gently nodding as a sign of agreement or understanding. Such gestures encourage the speaker to a great extent. Positive speaking gestures include keeping the hands open and avoiding clutching or folding them across the chest.

When walking, keep your head upright. Hands should swing freely by the sides. Eyes should look straight in front. Steps should be well measured and steady. Many people carry books, files, and documents held against the chest. This makes the person look nervous and defensive. To avoid being perceived as a nervous person, one could carry them on one side. We can use our gestures to politely communicate what we want when we are unable to speak or are interrupting someone. For example, during a serious, formal conversation, if you are offered water or tea, you may politely hold up your palm to ask the other person to wait or to decline if you do not want to interrupt the conversation. Similarly, if you are on the phone and someone asks you something, you can politely request him or her to wait a minute by holding up one finger or some other symbolic gesture. This ensures that you do not ignore the visitor.

4

Recognize different cues and clues given by facial expressions, gestures, postures, body movements, and eye contact.

Gestures can be adequate substitutes for words. We should develop the skill of using them effectively. Equally importantly, we should recognize our negative gestures and learn to hide them.

Negative Gestures

Negative gestures involve certain body movements, postures, gestures, or non-verbal activities such as shaking, tapping one's feet, looking at the watch, and so on. Putting one's hands in the pockets is also a negative gesture. If you put one hand in your pocket, it usually suggests arrogance. If you put both, it might show nervousness. However, if you want to look confident, but not nervous or arrogant, thrust your hands in your pockets, then keep the thumb out, so that you do not fully insert your hands inside the pockets.

Take note of the clues in Exhibit 7.2.

Lateral Gestures

Besides non-verbal gestures that convey wordless messages through body language and facial expressions, there are other wordless signs of power, position, taste, and culture such as decoration and size of one's office, dress, grooming, and so on. These are called lateral gestures and include the following broad categories: (a) physical setting, (b) dress—clothes and shoes, and (c) personal space.

Besides the non-verbal gestures that convey wordless messages through body language and facial expressions, there are lateral wordless signs of power, position, taste, and culture such as decoration and size of one's office, dress, grooming, and so on.

Physical Setting

An executive's position of power may be gauged from the size and furnishings of his or her office. The quality of furniture adds to the impression created by the setting of the room.

In an office, the executive's table is usually placed a few steps away from the door. This compels visitors or subordinates to walk up to him or her and feel his or her presence. Space is one of the factors involved in indicating the proximity of a relationship.

Dress

Clothes can define a person. It is one of the first things people notice. A person's clothes—their texture, colour, design, style, and stitching—reveal their taste and aesthetic sense.

In business, it is important to pay attention to one's clothes, especially at an interview or presentation. While one should look impressive, it is important not to be overdressed. Instead of highly fashionable and trendy designs and styles of suits, business executives should favour elegant, conventional styles. Clothes should not distract from the conversation.

In business, it is important to pay attention to one's clothes, especially at an interview or presentation. While one should look impressive, it is important not to be overdressed.

In addition, one's clothes should be neither too loose nor too tight. It is important to feel comfortable in one's clothes, particularly in a high-stress situation such as an interview or presentation. Never try a new set of clothes for such occasions. New clothes may not sit comfortably, and they may distract the wearer from time to time. So, the first rule to follow is the principle of comfort.

Shoes should also be formal and in keeping with the colour of the clothes. Business bags, briefcases, handbags, or portfolios also indicate one's status as a professional. An overstuffed handbag is not as impressive as a sleek briefcase or a smart handbag.

Personal Space

The personal space between two interacting persons indicates the level of formality, informality, intimacy, or distance between them. Business executives should observe the personal territory that each individual wishes to enjoy. Breaking into someone's personal territory

Exhibit 7.2
Non-verbal Clues

Signs of nervousness include the following:

putting hands in one's pockets, covering the mouth with the hand while speaking, scratching, nail biting, sideways glances, finger-drumming, clearing the throat too often, foot tapping, hand-wringing, crossing arms or legs, a slumped posture, sitting on the edge of the chair, rocking one's legs, looking at the ceiling, straightening one's tie, fixing one's hair, speaking too fast or too haltingly

The following are the loudest gestures of nervousness:

adjusting one's glasses; blinking excessively; fidgeting with jewellery, watches, or cuf-flinks; clicking a pen; frequently sipping water; playing with a paperweight; smoking

Gestures showing aggression are as follows:

staring, pointing at someone, showing one's fist, folding both arms, bending over someone

Gestures showing rudeness include the following:

shaking hands too firmly or too limply; standing too close; whispering at a social gathering; talking, checking e-mail, or sending text messages on one's cell phone or BlackBerry in meetings or social situations; working while someone is talking; yawning; smirking; glancing at the clock frequently during a conversation; making "tut-tut" sounds; grooming, specially fixing one's hair, when listening or speaking; gathering and folding papers before the meeting is over

Gestures that show self-importance and should be carefully avoided in situations that demand solutions and negotiated settlements are:

keeping one's eyes closed while talking, tilting one's head backwards while talking, looking at the tip of one's nose while talking, pursing the mouth, steepling the fingers, peering over the top of one's spectacles, waving a glass or key while talking

Gestures showing lack of good sense include:

banging the table instead of laughing at a joke, chewing on the end of a pen, using air quotes and making a "T" in the air when asking for tea, waving one's hands around excessively while talking, wringing one's hands, opening or closing buttons or fidgeting with one's watch strap while talking, wiping one's hands on the face, touching the nose time and again

Some authority figures, without saying anything, can make one feel subordinate by behaving in the following ways, which display a sense of superiority:

not responding to or acknowledging the other's greeting, staring, shouting orders, standing too close, leaning or sitting on someone's desk, standing behind someone's seat and watching over his or her shoulder as he or she works, smoking in someone's space, attending to one's cell phone during meetings, making any unwanted or unwarranted physical contact, continuing to work when others address you, having a crushing handshake or holding the other person's hand for too long, reclining in the chair with hands folded behind the head

Creating a feeling of subordination and hierarchy adversely affects good working relationships and makes others uncomfortable. Therefore, executives should avoid such power posturing.

Creating a feeling of subordination and hierarchy adversely affects good working relationships and makes others uncomfortable.

Two interacting parties have a zone of invisible space between them, which is delineated by the nature of their relationship.

is likely to make him or her feel uncomfortable. When placed under such an intrusion, an important person is bound to show displeasure and signs of withdrawal from the interaction. Thus it is also important to understand the non-verbal message of displeasure and correct the space-relationship to have a fruitful interaction.

Two interacting parties have a zone of invisible space between them, which is delineated by the nature of their relationship. A public figure for instance, would be used to more space around him or her, whereas one would maintain a smaller distance with a friend or relative.

According to the nature of relationships, there are four distinct zones: (i) the public zone, (ii) the social zone, (iii) the friendly zone and (iv) the intimate zone.

The *public zone* is the widest territory between the speaker and audience. A public speaker addresses a large gathering of persons. He or she needs to speak from a raised platform at a distance of 10 to 15 feet from the audience. The distance and elevation of the speaker provide visibility and a sense of isolation and superiority for the speaker. An example of the public zone is seen in the armed services, where it is normal practice for army officers to issue commands from a distance of 8 to 10 steps from the troops.

A *social zone* is the space maintained between people who are known to each other in a formal way. All business transactions are to be treated as social interactions. An executive should keep a distance of 4 to 10 feet from his or her audience. This space will ensure the comfort of the listeners, especially if they happen to be seniors, customers, or clients. At this distance, one can observe the body language and facial expressions of the other party closely. The social zone will be applicable for new colleagues at work, new acquaintances, and small group training situations.

The *friendly zone* is the distance observed at business parties, seminars, and other informal business gatherings and get-togethers. In such situations, people remain close to each other, but not close enough to jostle against each other. The gap maintained is nearly 1½ to 4 feet. At this distance, people can comfortably chat, laugh, and joke with each other without invading each other's space.

The *intimate zone* is the distance between an individual and those he or she loves, such as close relatives and family members. This zone is not appropriate in a professional environment. In this zone, people tend to be near enough to whisper, about 6 to 18 inches. This nearness signals closeness among those involved in the conversation. However, this close distance is possible only when one is sure of the relationship because it is a zone in which one can touch the other person. In all other zones, including the friendly zone, one should not risk touching the other person. Touching can be strongly offensive.

> The *intimate zone* is the distance between an individual and those he or she loves, such as close relatives and family members. This zone is not appropriate in a professional environment.

Within the intimate zone, there are, according to the level of intimacy, further zones/bands. They are:

- *Near intimate sphere (up to 6 inches):* The zone for lovers, partners, children, family members
- *Distant intimate sphere (6 inches to 18 inches):* The zone for close friends, close colleagues and relatives

Both these spheres are sensitive. The difficulty lies in knowing how close is too close. When our intimate zone is intruded upon, we may feel embarrassed and, at times, threatened by the unwanted approach. We may have a "flight or fight" response, either confronting the intruder or removing ourselves from the situation. If our friendly zone is violated, we hide our discomfort by smiling or raising questions.

There are times when one cannot help having personal and intimate spaces violated, such as when travelling in a crowded compartment or entering a packed lift. In such situations, people are not usually resentful of others because body language indicates their helplessness. Moreover, to avoid discomfort to anyone, it is best to avoid eye contact with others in such situations and to try to stand straight to avoid physical contact with anyone.

RESPONDING TO POWER POSTURING

Knowledge of non-verbal skills strengthens the communicative competence of professionals. However, these skills do not give one the power to control others. Understanding others' body language does not mean having control over their responses or actions. It only means understanding them and their meaning better, which is helpful in fulfilling one's purpose.

> Knowledge of non-verbal skills strengthens the communicative competence of professionals. But these skills do not give one the power to control others.

One situation where understanding non-verbal communication can help a business executive is if he or she encounters power posturing by superiors or colleagues, which may lead to a sense of being subordinated or dominated. Consider a situation in which your boss, known for his arrogance and strictness, quietly enters your room from his side office and stands behind you. He keeps watching what you are working on for a few minutes. There is silence. You feel deeply nervous and upset. Finally, he says, "So, what's on?" in a stern voice. In such a state of nervousness, your body talk should not reveal nervousness. Nervousness can indicate that you were doing something wrong. Blurting out "Nothing" in a shaky voice could imply that you were wasting your time. Instead, you should reply with confidence by standing up and facing him, greeting him, and calmly saying exactly what you have been doing.

Power posturing makes its victim feel upset and nervous. It is the deliberate use of body language and behaviour to make the target feel inferior.

- Power posturing makes its victim feel upset and nervous. It is the deliberate use of body language and behaviour to make the target feel inferior. The person responsible for it may shout, bully, not respond, interrupt, or pretend not to notice the target by continuing to work. Some interviewers choose to make interviewees nervous by using some of these gestures. For instance, when the interviewee asks permission to enter the room, they give a loud response, "Come in!" Upon entering, the interviewee stands before the interviewer, but he or she continues to work, completely ignoring the interviewee. After a few minutes, the interviewer asks the interviewee his or her name, but by this time the interviewee's confidence is already drained.
- When encountering power posturing, it is best to remain calm and not feel hurt. The power posturer's goal is to bully the victim into such a state of mind. It is important to remember that the rude behaviour is not personal, but is directed by the particular professional situation at hand. The victim should not begin questioning his or her worth and should avoid nervous gestures such as wiping the mouth, biting one's nails, or looking lost in thought. Instead, the victim should analyse the technique used by the other person. It is difficult but possible to confront power posturing skillfully and allow yourself to remain comfortable.
- If the victim is sitting when confronted by power posturing, he or she should not sit at the edge of the seat. This will make him or her look nervous and ready to run away. Instead, for comfort's sake, he or she could cross his or her legs, but not the arms at the same time. The "double cross" looks very defensive.
- The victim should use comforting gestures, such as touching the earlobes or the back of the neck or stroking the hair, skillfully. These acts restore confidence. But they should be done sparingly so that the bully does not take them as signs of nervousness or anxiety.
- The victim should maintain a reassuring standing posture. He or she can keep nervousness away by standing in a relaxed manner, with the arms down by his or her sides and feet apart by 9 to 10 inches. This posture gives a firm, balanced footing.
- The victim should be assertive. Most people tend to respond to an adverse situation by either fighting or fleeing. An alternative way of responding to unpleasant behaviour or negative situations is by being assertive. Assertiveness should not be taken to mean imposing one's own will on others. It means understanding others' points of view while putting one's own point forward objectively. The victim should state what he or she thinks is right without being influenced by emotional considerations. In both fight and flight responses, one is affected by emotions. In being assertive, one should express facts as they are and say what should be said. The ultimate goal is to convince the other person that the assertion is correct.

Assertiveness should not be taken to mean imposing one's own will on others.

To be assertive, one has to learn the skills of discussing and negotiating. However, negotiation is a time-consuming process and requires patience. Impatience makes one react aggressively and fight or run away (flight). Both these reactions—aggression and passivity—have negative effects. Aggression negatively affects the other party by hurting their feelings and provoking them to react with similar behaviour (anger). Passivity, on the other hand, is frustrating. It results in the feeling of failure and suggests that others take you for granted. Hence, the proper way to respond is to say what you want to say, with the firm conviction of being right.

GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Most verbal communication is laced with emotional overtones expressed through body movements, gestures, facial expressions, and modulations of voice. These non-verbal elements indicate what is intended but not verbalized by the speaker. Those who pay attention to these non-verbal gestures can find something additional in their understanding of the message; the ability to do so can be improved.

1. *Watch and read non-verbal clues:*
   - Interpret non-verbal clues in relation to the situation and culture accurately.
   - Be careful about false non-verbal clues deliberately given to deceive you.
   - Consider the non-verbal message, along with what the speaker's words say, to know the total message.
   - Respond with self-control, but do not react to non-verbal signals.
2. *Know your body language:*
   - Develop self-awareness by visualizing yourself as others see you and interpreting your body movements and gestures.
   - Try to develop positive gestures and expressions to present yourself as you wish to be seen by others—as a confident, pleasing, well-meaning team worker.
   - Do not give conflicting non-verbal cues.
   - Convey sincerity through your tone of voice and facial expression.
   - Use symbols, non-verbal cues (gestures, posture, and so on), intonation (volume, pace of delivery, and enunciation), expressions, and so on to reinforce and clarify the meaning of the message.
   - Maintain eye contact with the audience.
   - Smile genuinely.
   - Avoid power posturing.
   - Remember that the first impression is the most important and lasting impression. Hence, present yourself well to make a positive and lasting impression.
3. *Know about culture-specific body language:* Though body language is a universal phenomenon, its meaning differs across cultures. Culture, like language, lays down rules for accepted social behaviour of people sharing a set of knowledge, beliefs, practices, and ideas. In present day multi-cultural workplaces, communication between persons of different nations and backgrounds requires an understanding of non-verbal acts such as eye contact, touch, and the sense of time in different cultures. People attach great significance to what they learn from non-verbal clues in addition to what they hear through words. Non-verbal clues are taken as true indicators of the speaker's subconscious mind. They are, therefore, considered more reliable than words. Be careful not to use non-verbal clues that violate the cultural norms of other countries. Persons who travel and work abroad or in multi-cultural environments must realize that gestures may not mean the same thing they do in their own country. Some of those gestures might even be unwelcome or offensive.

   > Culture, like language, lays down rules for accepted social behaviour of people sharing a set of knowledge, beliefs, practices, and ideas.

4. *Know about touching and its context:* Touching has limited communicative symbolism. It primarily conveys intimacy and closeness and also love. But its meaning is very closely linked to its context. Take the case of a doctor, who can touch a patient of the opposite sex when medically necessary, without offending the patient. In this context, the doctor's body movements, touching, and so on are instrumental acts, performing certain tasks. They are not communicative body movements that reflect the doctor's state of mind, emotions, or attitude. The context characterizes the nature of a body movement and determines whether it is a communicative or instrumental message.

   > Touching has limited communicative symbolism. It primarily conveys intimacy and closeness and also love. But the act of touching has its meaning in relation to its context.

5

Understand silence as a mode of communication.

Among lovers, parents, family members, and very close friends, touching is a normal gesture and goes unnoticed, but between strangers it is at once marked and may be objectionable. Even among those who share the zone of intimacy, only some parts of the body can be touched while communicating.

Touch usually communicates intimacy. However, which part of the body can be touched by whom and when depends upon the culture of the people involved. In western countries, men and women can walk freely holding each others' hands in public. But in India, Pakistan, and other conservative countries, men and women generally do not do so in public.

To refer to themselves when speaking to someone, Americans may place one hand on their chest, whereas the Japanese may place a finger on their noses. But some psychologists consider nose touching to be a Freudian symbol of sexuality.

Like other emblematic body movements, eye contact is also culturally decoded in different ways. Eye contact is an important clue of attentive listening. In most western countries, it is considered polite to maintain eye contact when speaking to someone. On the other hand, in Japan and India, subordinates often do not make eye contact when speaking and listening to their supervisors. It is possible that an American may consider a Japanese person to be impolite if he or she keeps his or her eyes lowered during a conversation. In India, this may speak of humility, not shame.

Silence is communicative, but it may say different things to people of different cultures.

Similarly, silence is communicative, but it may say different things to people of different cultures. For instance, in Japan, one may prefer to remain silent when one does not know much about the matter being discussed. In India, silence may indicate agreement. In the United States, silence may be seen as a sign of withdrawal and non-participation. An American usually looks for involvement and participation through raising questions or doubts.

No one can make an exhaustive study of all possible cultural variations of every body movement. However, this is an attempt to highlight the importance of context and cultural differences in the interpretation of body movements and gestures.

6

Learn how to build rapport.

COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN

In life and in business dealings, communication can sometimes break down. This can happen when one party is too keen to talk about its own point of view without regard for the other's interest or understanding. Sometimes, discussions become heated and argumentative and reach no satisfactory conclusion. Or a meeting might become boring because the same point is being repeated by the speaker without involving other members in the discussion. Such communication breakdowns do happen. No one wants the discussion to fail, but communication often does fail, mainly, because of two reasons:

1. There is no rapport between the speaker and the listener.
2. There is no balance between speaking and listening.

The purpose of all communication is to be useful and harmonious.

Harmony is the key word in personal and business communication.

The purpose of all communication is to be useful and harmonious. Harmony is the key word in personal and business communication. Harmony between the ideas of the speaker and the listener is the final aim of communication. The first step in achieving this is establishing a rapport between the non-verbal languages of the speaker and listener, which is reflected in the pace of the conversation.

For a fruitful discussion or dialogue, both the speaker and the listener should be on the same wavelength. This means that the two persons should use similar body language, particularly speed, tone of voice, pitch, words, gestures, eye contact, and timing. The non-verbal language used by the speaker should reflect the body language of the other person. You may notice that the word *listener* is being avoided in this context. This is because communication usually fails when the speaker treats the other person only as a listener. The speaker should not spend most of the time speaking and forcing the other person to listen without an opportunity to respond. A guideline regarding how time should be split between speaking and listening is a 30/70 ratio, which means that one should spend approximately 30 per cent of the time speaking and 70 per cent listening.

When one devotes 70 per cent of conversation time to listening, it gives one the time to study the body language of the other person and observe his or her state of mind and true feelings. To help the other person know how we perceive his or her response, our own body language should hold a mirror to his or her non-verbal language. This does not mean our body language should imitate the other person's. It means that our behaviour, verbal and non-verbal, should reflect an understanding of the ideas and feelings of the other person. The two behaviours should be complementary.

If two people speak at different speeds, pitch, and volume, neither would be able to keep pace with the other. Consider the following example:

Sonali, a senior HR executive, sat slumped in her chair, disappointed. She had come to office very happy. She had prepared a long document on how to reduce the company's costs without cutting the number of employees working in core departments of the organization. She had approached the general manager to discuss her proposed plan before formally submitting it for the management's consideration.

When Sonali stood at the door of the general manager's office and asked him, "Can I discuss something with you? I have a very exciting plan to show you regarding how to cut costs without reducing the number of employees. I think you will like it", the general manager did not look at her. Instead, he kept on typing. After a few minutes of silence, without turning his gaze from the screen, he said, "I have to finish this report first. Maybe later."

Communication in this case definitely broke down. There was no rapport or understanding between Sonali and the general manager. Understandably, Sonali was frustrated.

Now, suppose the general manager had responded to Sonali differently. If he had stopped writing, turned to Sonali, made eye contact, and said, "Wonderful! Let me first finish this report. We can meet in an hour. I will call you as soon as I am free. Will that be fine?" Sonali would have felt satisfied. Such a response would have matched her own enthusiasm and she would have felt valued for her ideas and validated as a colleague. This exchange would have satisfied both parties, as the general manager would have had time to complete his report undisturbed, and Sonali would know her proposal would be given attention. What is significant in this second response is that the GM shows appreciation for Sonali's enthusiasm and her keenness to discuss her plan. He therefore uses the word "wonderful" to communicate his own excitement about the plan. He fixes a time to discuss it. He also lets Sonali know that the plan would be discussed without any disturbance when both parties were free. This exchange demonstrates a rapport between Sonali and the GM.

A simple non-verbal act in everyday life may make someone feel unhappy. For instance, if someone calls their supervisor's cell phone to ask an urgent question twice, but does not get a response either time, he or she will be disappointed. The person may feel belittled because their supervisor knows their mobile number but choses to ignore it. The lack of rapport can be frustrating until the next time they communicate.

Some steps to establish rapport include:

- Develop the habit of talking less and listening and observing others more.
- Do not dominate the discussion.
- Maintain a natural pace of conversation.
- Recognize the pace of others and match it as closely as possible.
- Try to establish rapport during the first few minutes of the conversation.
- Do not introduce any controversial issues before creating this rapport.
- Avoid harsh criticism. Try to see reasons for differences of opinion and be tolerant of them.
- Focus on similarities of ideas.

These steps will help gradually overcome differences. Conflicting opinions will find resolution in the common understanding gained by both parties. In life, as in business, it is necessary to focus on those aspects of communication, verbal and non-verbal, that are shared.

SUMMARY

- Non-verbal communication involves the sending of messages through body movements, gestures, facial expressions, and other wordless channels such as space, time, and personal appearance. It works in tandem with the messages communicated by words.
- Non-verbal communication basically includes two types of communication: (i) meta-communication and (ii) kinesic communication.
- Meta-communication is effected through changes in pitch, tone of voice, and choice of words. Kinesic communication is via movement of body parts in certain ways, not to perform certain tasks but to involuntarily communicate subconscious feelings along with whatever is expressed by the spoken words.
- Communicative movements symbolize meanings. To be successful in knowing what others mean when they say something, listeners should pay attention to the communicative meaning of the speaker's body movements, facial expressions, eye contact, space, distance, and other non-verbal clues such as dress, hair style, and sense of time.
- To act and respond correctly in an intercultural context, one should know that different cultures interpret body language differently.
- Non-verbal communication is natural and spontaneous. One cannot control it, but it is possible to have good relationships with others by paying close attention to cues and clues that accompany words.
- Finally, it is also essential to develop skills of mutual understanding by creating rapport with the other person.

CASE: EVEREST TEXTILE MILLS

During the days of recession and growing unemployment, a job is considered a God-sent opportunity. There is not much choice in terms of place of work, position, or salary. The very first reaction is the decision to a job offer is to accept the opportunity of being employed.

Soon after completing his four-year program of B.E. (Civil) with a high first division, Sohan applied for the position of Assistant Engineer in response to an advertisement by the Building & Construction department of Everest Textile Mills. The mill was owned by the Kashiramkas, a well-known business family of Rajasthan. It was situated in Tipli, a semi-modernized village on the border of Haryana and Rajasthan. The village was connected only by roadways.

Nothing could dampen Sohan's enthusiasm to attend the interview and, if selected, accept the offer. At the interview, Sohan was a bit surprised to see the members of the selection committee. They all looked old, conservative, and semi-literate. The chief estate supervisor, the chief engineer, the project manager, and the mill owner himself were all either diploma-holders or non-matriculates. Sohan was able to sense their uneasiness whenever he answered their questions in English.

The committee members were all undoubtedly highly experienced persons with practical knowledge of construction work, design, material quality, soil integrity, and so on. The chief estate supervisor asked very searching, technical questions on structure and load, but in Rajasthani. When Sohan answered in English, the interviewer kept nodding and looked towards the other panelists when Sohan finished talking. The behaviour of the chief engineer was similar. He framed a project in broken Hindi, with a Bengali accent, and kept on saying "yes yes", and "thank you", when Sohan discussed the answer; he too turned towards Mr Kashiramka when Sohan finished talking. Finally, Mr Kashiramka asked Sohan if he would be able to live in a village and adjust to the rural life of the countryside. Sohan told him that he was a person of simple living and would have little difficulty in adapting. Mr Kashiramka appreciated Sohan's positive attitude and asked the chief engineer to show him the construction site.

Sohan toured the mill, which was spread out over a large distance, with hundreds of workers engaged in various sections. He was also taken to the Building & Construction department, which was located in a big, open area of the mill. It included the offices of the estate supervisor, the chief engineer, and four supervisors, the materials room, the fire brigade station, the power house, and the generator room.

The size of the mill and, especially, its Building & Construction department left Sohan highly impressed, and he decided to join the mill if offered the position. Before Sohan left, Mr Kashiramka told him about the close-knit relations of the workers. The mill was nearly 30 years old, and most of its employees were men who had been working there since its beginning. The workers had grown up together in the mill and had become family to each other. They had learnt their work through experience and looked down upon modern technical education and engineering degrees. They believed in practical knowledge and valued the expertise of their chief engineer, who was just a diploma-holder. They especially admired the insights and management skills of their estate supervisor, who could not even sign his name in English, but knew how to plan and get things done and helped the workers in times of need. During the conversation, Mr Kashiramka was intently studying Sohan, a newly graduated engineer hailing from an urban background. In fact, he would be the first university-educated engineer to join the homogeneous group of self-taught workers with no formal qualifications. On his first day, the workers looked at Sohan indifferently as he went around introducing himself as the new assistant engineer. Later, whenever he approached any group of workers and tried to start a conversation, they would remain tight-lipped. Gradually, he found that the supervisors would just shrug their shoulders whenever he suggested any change in their way of doing a particular job. Sohan was increasingly realizing that it was never easy to be accepted into a well-knit clan of people having their own idea on modern, technical education.

One day, in a meeting with contractors, supervisors, and senior workers from different sections, when Sohan wanted to support the plan of the chief engineer, the workers and the supervisor did not allow him to speak. When he tried to speak, they would interrupt and make distracting background noises. At the end of the meeting, the supervisor sitting next to Sohan deliberately stood up in such a way that Sohan's cup of tea fell onto his lap and hot tea spilled all over him. The casual way in which the supervisor swung around and left the room gave the impression that he had not even seen what he had done.

Questions to Answer

1. What conclusions do you think Sohan, the new assistant engineer, and the mill's employees reached about each other on the basis of non-verbal clues?
2. It seems that Mr Kashiramka, the owner of the mill, was not sure at the interview that Sohan, an urban, university-educated engineer, would be able to adjust to the rural mill work environment and culture. Was he right? What could be the reason for this skepticism?
3. Sohan does not respond or react to the workers' non-verbal expressions of their attitude towards him. Would his approach have been more effective if it were supported by some verbal communication?
4. Could this situation be avoided? If no, why? If yes, how?

REVIEW YOUR LEARNING

1. "When you lack confidence in a situation, your body language will shout out to others that you are unsure of yourself." Discuss some of the ways in which body language can betray lack of confidence.
2. Discuss the difference between communicative and instrumental body movements. Give some examples of communicative gestures.
3. What is "leakage" in non-verbal communication?
4. How would you act when a power-posturing superior confronts you?
5. Does our culture influence our interpretation of the behaviour of those from other cultures? Give examples to support your answer.
6. Explain the process of meta-communication as an intentional form of communication.
7. Discuss the main classifications of non-verbal communication.
8. Besides non-verbal gestures and facial expressions, there are lateral gestures, which communicate without using words. Discuss some of these lateral non-verbal gestures with examples.
9. What does personal space signify in interpersonal communication at different levels? Discuss with examples.

REFLECT ON YOUR LEARNING

1. Reflect on the guidelines for developing communication skills and the extent to which you are able to interpret non-verbal clues accurately.
2. How would you know if your communication with your colleagues is breaking down? Why do communication breakdowns happen?
3. What is "rapport"? How would you establish rapport between yourself and your audience?
4. (a) How would you interpret silence during a discussion between a Japanese businessman and your Indian colleague?
   (b) If a worker requests his supervisor for an increase in his salary and the supervisor remains silent, what should the worker gauge from his silence?
5. Consider the modifying influence of culture on non-verbal modes of communicating feelings and relationships in similar social contexts.

APPLY YOUR LEARNING

1. Interpret the following postures. What do they signify?
   - Arms folded across the chest while discussing a problem with a friend
   - Staring with half-closed eyes
   - Pointing at someone with the index finger
   - Leaning over the desk of a subordinate while talking to him
   - Looking at the clock while someone is talking

SELF-CHECK YOUR LEARNING

From among the given options, choose the most appropriate answer:*

1. Non-verbal communication does not involve:
   (a) silence
   (b) gestures
   (c) space
   (d) words
2. Meta-communication conveys a meaning that is:
   (a) implied
   (b) directly stated
   (c) incompletely conveyed
   (d) graphically communicated
3. Grooming is a form of non-verbal communication that is:
   (a) conscious
   (b) subconscious
   (c) arbitrary
   (d) hierarchical
4. Positive gestures are body signals that make you look:
   (a) arrogant
   (b) hurtful
   (c) nervous
   (d) relaxed
5. Between a speaker and a listener, the closest zone of personal space possible is:
   (a) friendly
   (b) social
   (c) intimate
   (d) public
6. The percentage of working time business executives spend in listening is:
   (a) 30 to 70 per cent
   (b) 40 to 50 per cent
   (c) 40 to 60 per cent
   (d) 20 to 80 per cent
7. By choosing to speak from the floor instead of the dais, a speaker can show the audience a sense of:
   (a) respect (b) closeness
   (c) equality (d) informality
8. If a speaker winks after saying something, it suggests to the audience that the subject is:
   (a) serious
   (b) non-serious
   (c) true
   (d) incredible
9. Paralanguage is a kind of action language that refers to:
   (a) actual words
   (b) body language
   (c) personal space
   (d) the tone of voice, speed of speech, and hesitation
10. Giving non-verbal messages is:
    (a) deliberate
    (b) spontaneous
    (c) tutored
    (d) a dramatic skill

ENDNOTE

1. Paul Ekman, *Emotions Revealed* (New York: Times Books, 2003).

*For answers and self-evaluation, visit www.pearsoned.co.in/PDChaturvedi

8

Written Business Communication

> "True ease in writing comes from art, not chance, as those move easiest who have learned to dance."
>
> — Alexander Pope

Upon completion of this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Understand the basic difficulties in writing clearly, simply, and correctly.
2. Identity the different purposes of writing.
3. Learn to plan written communication by paying special attention to the needs and expectations of prospective readers.
4. Know the essential principles of effective written communication.
5. Develop an effective tone in written communication.
6. Use appropriate words and language for writing correctly and effectively.

COMMUNICATION AT WORK

Shalini is an MBA student. She is required to write a paper on decision-making. After jotting down her ideas on the decision-making process in a notebook, she settles down to write her paper. She stares blankly at the white sheet of paper in front of her for a couple of minutes. Then she picks up her pen and starts by writing at the heading on top of the sheet: "decision-making".

Once again, she pauses, questioning the wording of the heading. Should it be *decision-making* or *decision-taking*? Do we *make* decisions or *take* decisions? To resolve the issue, she consults a dictionary. The white sheet continues to lie before her, blank. The dictionary tells her that *making* is correct, not *taking*.

She resumes writing. After writing a few sentences describing her upbringing by her father and how he had never allowed her to choose anything or do anything freely on her own, she slumps back in her chair. She stops writing and re-reads what she has written. She decides that she does not quite like the beginning.

After taking a short break, she begins to write afresh. The initial lines are struck off the white sheet of paper. She wonders how to begin correctly. At that moment, her elder brother enters the room. He tells her that the only way to write is for her to first put down whatever thoughts she has. Only after writing down her ideas, should she re-read, revise, and polish the language. He explains to Shalini that every creative act, whether of writing or speaking, has a painful beginning.

THE ART OF WRITING

Writing is a mode of communicating a message for a specific purpose. It reveals one's ability to think clearly and to use language effectively. A manager is responsible for a variety of written communications such as replies to clients, enquires, memos recording agreements, proposals for contracts, formal or informal reports to initiate action, and so on. A manager should be able to convey information, ideas, instructions, decisions, and welfare proposals in written form, in keeping with the level of the people who receive and read them. However, a manager's objective in writing a particular document is only met when readers understand exactly what is intended to be communicated to them. A manger, therefore, should be able to write down his or her thoughts simply and concisely.

THE SKILLS REQUIRED IN WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

Effective writing does not come by chance. It does not just happen. There is a set of skills required to write simply, clearly, accurately, and concisely.

Writing skills are as essential as the other knowledge and skills that form an executive's professional qualifications and requirements. The skills required for business writing are essentially the same as those required for general written

Communication Snapshot 8.1

Informatory Writing

The passage in Exhibit 8A is a piece of informative or expository writing. It successfully transmits a message about ants to readers. In the passage, the writer's opening sentence expresses the main idea. The subsequent sentences give information that supports the main idea, namely unusual facts about the social lives of ants.

As indicated, the purpose of the writer is to inform a reader objectively, with little bias. The information is logically arranged and clearly written.

Exhibit 8A
Ants

Ants have strange social lives. Like mediaeval feudal lords, some ants keep slaves to do their work. They attack other ants' nests and capture them. The victorious ants bring back the defeated groups of ants to their own nests and force them to work as slaves. Surprisingly, ants do not live alone in their nests. Hundreds of other small creatures, like beetles and crickets, dwell with the ants in their houses as inmates. Some of these small creatures do useful work for the ants. They serve the ants by keeping the nests clean and performing other duties. However, others seem to live without doing anything in return. Why the ants allow them to stay in their nests is a puzzling question. Is it just benevolence or is it the feudal spirit of keeping a large retinue of servants?

Exhibit 8.1
Informative Writing: A Checklist

1. Does the write-up focus on the subject under discussion?
2. Does it primarily inform rather than persuade the reader?
3. Does it offer complete and precise information?
4. Can the information be proven?
5. Does it present information logically and clearly?
6. Does it flow smoothly?

communication. Business writers should carefully check the grammar, punctuation, and spellings; ensure that sentences and paragraphs are structured logically; and follow the principles of sound organization—clarity, simplicity, and directness.

1

Understand the basic difficulties in writing clearly, simply, and correctly.

THE PURPOSE OF WRITING

The first task for writing effectively is to identify the purpose of the communication. There are mainly two goals of communication in business situations—to inform and to persuade.

2

Identity the different purposes of writing.

Writing to Inform

When the writer seeks to provide and explain information, the writing is called *informative writing*. It is also called *expository writing* because it expounds on or expresses ideas and facts. The focus of informative writing is the subject or the matter under discussion. Informative writing is found in accounts of facts, scientific data, statistics, and technical and business reports.

Informative writing presents information not opinions. Its purpose is to educate and not persuade. It is, therefore, written with maximum objectivity. For example, consider the passage in Communication Snapshot 8.1.

Informative writing presents information, not opinions. Its purpose is to educate and not persuade. It is written with maximum objectivity.

Exhibit 8.1 presents a list of questions that must be answered in the affirmative to determine if a piece of writing is effective.

Writing to Persuade

Persuasive writing aims at convincing the reader about a matter that is debatable; it expresses opinion rather than facts. This writing is also called argumentative, as it supports and argues for a certain viewpoint or position. The matter at hand generally has two or more sides to it. The writer seeks to influence and convince the reader to accept the position he or she has put forth.

Persuasive writing focuses on the reader. The writer attempts to change the reader's thinking and bring it closer to his or her own way of thinking. Persuasive writing is found in opinion essays, editorials, letters to editors, business and research proposals, religious books, reviews, or literature belonging to a certain political party.

Persuasive writing is found in opinion essays, editorials, letters to editors, business and research proposals, religious books, reviews, or literature belonging to a certain political party.

Communication Snapshot 8.2

Persuasive Writing

Exhibit 8B
Alternative Sources of Fuel

The case built in Exhibit 8B for considering alternative sources of fuel is well argued. The final paragraph clinches the argument for finding substitutes for fuel oil by convincing readers that, although it is not easy to solve the energy problem, the real need is "to find substitutes for fuel oil" and "replacement energy forms are available to fill that need".

Faced with today's high energy costs and tremendous consumer demand, we need to find alternative energy forms. During the past five years, consumers have tried conservation as a means of defence against high fuel (petrol and home-heating) prices. They purchased smaller, more fuel-efficient cars and insulated their homes with storm windows and doors. While these conservation measures improved the efficiency of oil consumption, they had no effect on continually increasing oil prices. Since conservation alone is not the answer, what alternatives are available now?

One readily accessible substitute energy form is solar energy, produced by the sun. Solar collectors—made of insulation, serpentine tubing filled with water, and glass—absorb heat from the sun and distribute it to radiators or baseboard heaters. Hot water for bathing is available through this same process.

Gasohol is another alternate fuel. Gasohol is a mixture of 10 per cent alcohol and 90 per cent gasoline. Cars travel more efficiently on this fuel due to its high octane content. In fact, Henry Ford designed the Ford Model-T to run on pure alcohol. Gasohol should be carefully considered as an alternate fuel, because the alcohol needed is easily derived from just about anything, such as corn, wood, or organic garbage.

We could also look to another natural resource: the wind. Some experimentation is being conducted in the Midwest using windmills to generate electricity. As a matter of fact, at least one major store sells windmills across the country.

Coal and wood should also be considered as substitute fuels. People heated their homes with wood stoves and coal furnaces long before oil was available as a home-heating fuel.

Although there are no easy or comfortable ways to get around our energy problems, comfort has to be placed after our real need, which is to find substitutes for fuel oil. Replacement energy forms are available to fill that need."

Source: Based on Diana Hacker and Betty Renshaw, "Alternative Source of Fuel", *A Practical Guide for Writers*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1982) 183–184.

Exhibit 8.2
Persuasive Writing: A Checklist

1. Does it focus on the reader?
2. Does it basically seek to convince rather than inform?
3. Does it support its argument by providing facts or valid reasons?
4. Does it follow a logical arrangement of thought and reasoning?
5. Does it evoke the intended response from the reader?

Persuasive writing does more than just state an opinion—that is not enough. The opinion must be convincing. There must be supporting evidence or facts to back the writer's opinion or point of view. Moreover, the writer's point of view should be well argued, meaning his or her reasoning should be logical and clearly arranged. Let us consider the example of "Alternative Sources of Fuel" shown in Communication Snapshot 8.2.

Exhibit 8.2 presents a list of questions that must be answered in the affirmative for a passage to be considered persuasive.

3

Learn to plan written communication by paying special attention to the needs and expectations of prospective readers.

CLARITY IN WRITING

An important requirement for effective writing is to recognize the needs, expectations, fears, and attitudes of the audience or receiver and the reader of the written message. Written communication is one-way—from the sender to the receiver. The receiver cannot immediately

When the transformation of thought into language is not effected under the guiding principles of language, the muddy clutter hides the meaning and makes it difficult to understand the writer's thoughts.

clarify doubts or confusion if the message is unclear. Therefore, communicating clearly is especially important when it comes to written communication.

A manager works out schemes and projects, a scientist or engineer solves a technical problem. As the "doer", he or she is clear about what is in his or her mind. But the moment someone takes up a pen and starts writing to communicate ideas, he or she must keep in mind that the structure of his or her thoughts has to follow the structure of language, that is, the format of sentences, paragraphs, and the composition as a whole. Writers must follow the principles of unity and coherence that bind words into sentences, sentences into units or paragraphs, and paragraphs into essays (the full composition). When this transformation of thought into language is not effected under the guiding principles of language, the muddy clutter hides the meaning and makes it difficult to understand the writer's thoughts.

Although the letter, for a long time, remained the most common means of written communication, its importance is frequently overlooked. Authors often dictate or write down a few scattered sentences in the hope that the reader will get the message.

Although the letter has remained the most common means of written communication for a very long period, its importance is frequently overlooked. Authors often dictate or write down a few scattered sentences in the hope that the reader will get the message. However, the message may be buried under a mountain of unnecessary words, or an unnatural style may conceal the writer's true intentions. Instead of letting business letters be friendly, interesting, and persuasive, such writing makes them overly formal and dull.

Exhibit 8.3 shows a well-written sample letter that has the flavour of easy conversation. Notice the use of everyday words such as "hope", "remember", "regret", "send", "says", "provide", "charge", "believe", "make", and so on that give the letter the simplicity of the spoken word.

The written word often gets cluttered with complex construction of sentences. Communication Snapshot 8.3 presents an example of a paragraph whose meaning is lost because of complex sentences. It also shows how this paragraph can be rewritten to bring clarity.

The purpose of business writing is to achieve the understanding and reaction needed in the quickest and most economical way. To do this one must follow the principles and structure of effective writing.

Exhibit 8.3
A Well-written Sample Letter

12 August, 2009

The Service Manager
Customer Satisfaction Division
Samsung India Limited
Nehru Place
New Delhi

Dear Sir,

I <u>hope</u> you <u>remember</u> our discussion last Monday about the servicing of the washing machine supplied to us three months ago. I <u>regret</u> to say the machine is no longer working. Please <u>send</u> a service engineer as soon as possible to repair it.

The product warranty <u>says</u> that you <u>provide</u> spare parts and materials free, but <u>charge</u> for the engineer's labour. This sounds unfair. I <u>believe</u> the machine's failure is caused by a manufacturing defect. Initially, it made a lot of noise, and, later, it stopped operating entirely. As it is wholly the company's responsibility to rectify the defect, I <u>hope</u> you will not <u>make</u> us pay for the labour component of its repair.

Thanking you,

Yours faithfully,

Mrs Roli Chaturvedi

Communication Snapshot 8.3

Examples of Clear and Unclear Writing

After reading Exhibit 8C, the only facts that a reader can be sure about are that the owners of the land were contacted on July 25 and that the president will be returning on August 25. The important information about the possible sale of the block is completely concealed by the excess of words. It is likely that the writer wanted to say something along the lines of Exhibit 8D.

Exhibit 8C
The Original Paragraph

When the owners were contacted on July 25, the assistant manager, Mr Rathi, informed the chief engineer that they were considering ordering advertising Block 25 for sale. He, however, expressed his inability to make a firm decision by requesting this company to confirm their intentions with regard to buying the land within one month, when Mr Jain, the president of the company, will have come back from a business tour. "This will be August 25."

Exhibit 8D
The Revised Paragraph

The chief engineer contacted the owner on July 25 to enquire if Block 25 was on sale. He was informed by the assistant manager, Mr Rathi, that the company was thinking of selling the block. He was further told that decision would not be made until the president, Mr Jain, returned from a business tour on August 25. Mr Rathi asked the chief engineer to submit a written proposal for sale.

PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE WRITING

4

Know the essential principles of effective written communication.

Effective written communication is achieved by following the principles of (a) accuracy, (b) brevity and (c) clarity, in addition to others. As we have already discussed clarity, let us focus on the other important principles of effective writing here.

Accuracy

To achieve accuracy, the writer should check and double-check:

- All facts and figures
- The choice of words
- The language and tone

For example, whether a communication is formal or informal, one should always write "between you and me", not "between you and I". In this case, the choice is simple as it is guided by the objective rules of grammar. But in other cases, word choice may not be as clearly indicated. The correct choice of words is determined by the appropriateness of the word for the subject, audience, and purpose of a particular piece of writing.

A message should be communicated correctly in terms of grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Of course, it is not always easy to be accurate in expression; however, some obvious pitfalls can be avoided by being alert to the following:

A message should be communicated correctly in terms of grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

- Follow the rules of grammar.
- Pay attention to punctuation marks.
- Check words for spelling and usage.

Only a few samples are given here to indicate the danger of overlooking the technical aspects of writing. Detailed study of the grammatical rules will be discussed in Appendix 1.

To avoid incorrect usage, it is important to check the suitability of the words used. Exhibit 8.4 presents a list of words that are often confused or used incorrectly.

Brevity

Brevity lies in saying only what needs to be said and leaving out unnecessary words or details.

Brevity lies in saying only what needs to be said and leaving out unnecessary words or details. Being brief does not mean saying less that what the occasion demands. Brevity is not to be achieved at the cost of clarity. Nor is brevity to be gained by sacrificing proper English.

To achieve brevity, avoid wordiness. This can be done in the following ways:

1. Do not use four or six words when one or two will do. It is not necessary to qualify one word with another word that basically means the same thing. For instance, in the phrase, "world-wide recognition by all", it would suffice to say just "worldwide" or "by all". Exhibit 8.5 lists phrases that are examples of wordiness; they can each be reduced to one or two words.

Exhibit 8.4
Some Commonly Confused Words

Accept, Except. *Accept*, a verb, means to agree to something, to believe, or to receive. *Except* means "not including" or "other than".

Advice, Advise. *Advice* is a noun, and *advise* is a verb.

Affect, Effect. Most frequently, *affect*, which means to influence, is used as a verb, and *effect*, which means a result is used as a noun.

Ain't. This is a non-standard way of saying "am not", "has not", "have not", and so on.

All Right, Alright. The phrase *all right* has two words, not one. *Alright* is an incorrect form.

All Together, Altogether. *All together* means in a group, and *altogether* means entirely or totally.

Alot, A lot. *Alot* is an incorrect form of *a lot*.

Among, Between. *Among* is used to refer to three or more nouns and *between* is used for two nouns.

Amount, Number. *Amount* is used for things or ideas that are general or abstract and cannot be counted. *Number* is used for things that can be counted.

Anyone, Any One. *Anyone* means any person at all. *Any one* refers to a specific person or things in a group.

As, As If, Like. *As* is used in a comparison when there is an equality intended; *as if* is used when a supposed situation is there; and *like* is used when similarity is intended.

Assure, Ensure, Insure. *Assure* means to declare or promise; *ensure* means to make safe or certain; and *insure* means to protect with a contract of insurance.

Awful, Awfully. *Awful* is an adjective meaning "extremely unpleasant". *Awfully* is an adverb used in informal writing to say "very". It should be avoided in formal writing.

Beside, Besides. *Beside* is a preposition meaning "at the side of", "compared with", or "having nothing to do with". *Besides* is a preposition meaning "in addition to" or "other than".

Breath, Breathe. *Breath* is a noun, and *breathe* is a verb.

Choose, Chose. *Choose* is the present tense of the verb, and *chose* is the past tense.

Compared to, Compared with. Use *compared to* to point out similarities between dissimilar items. Use *compared with* to show similarities and differences between similar items.

Data. This is the plural form of *datum*. In informal usage, *data* is used as a singular noun.

Different from, Different than. *Different from* is always correct, but some writers also use *different than* when a clause following this phrase. (For example, "This book is *different from* the others." and "That is a *different* outcome *than* they expected.")

Farther, Further. While some writers use these words interchangeably, dictionary definitions differentiate between them. *Farther* is used when actual distance is involved, and *further* is used to mean "to a greater extent" or "more".

Fewer, Less. *Fewer* is used for things that are countable (for example: fewer trains, fewer trees, fewer students). *Less* is used for ideas, abstractions, or things that are thought of collectively, not separately (for example: less gain, less furniture), and things that are measured by amount not number (for example: less tea, less money).

Good, Well. *Good* is an adjective and therefore describes only nouns. *Well* is an adverb and describes adjectives, other adverbs, and verbs.

Got, Have. *Got* is the past tense of "get" and should not be used in place of *have*. Similarly, "got to" should not be used as a substitute for "must". "Have got to" is an informal substitute for *must*.

Imply, Infer. Sometimes these two words are used interchangeably. However, *imply* means to suggest without stating directly. *Infer* means to reach an opinion from facts or reasoning.

Its, It's. *Its* is a personal pronoun in the possessive case. *It's* is a contraction for "it is".

Kind, Sort. These two forms are singular and should be used with the words "this" or "that". Their plurals, *kinds* and *sorts* should be used with the words "these" or "those".

Exhibit 8.4
(Contd.)

Lay, Lie. *Lay* is a verb that needs an object and should not be used in place of *lie*, a verb that takes no direct object.

OK, Okay. These can be used interchangeably in informal writing, but should not be used in formal or academic writing.

Such. This is an often overused word in place of "very" or "extremely". It should be avoided.

Sure. The use of *sure* as an adverb is informal. In formal writing, the adverb "surely" is used.

That, Which. Use *that* for essential clauses and *which* for non-essential clauses.

Their, There, They're. *Their* is a possessive pronoun; *there* means "in", "at", or "at that place"; *they're* is the contraction for "they are".

Theirself, Theirselves. These are incorrect forms that are sometimes used in place of "themselves".

Use to. This is incorrect; "used to" should be used instead.

Who, Whom. *Who* is used for the subject case; *whom* is used for the object case.

Who's, Whose. *Who's* is a contraction for "who is"; *whose* is a possessive pronoun.

Your, You're. *Your* is a possessive pronoun; *you're* is a contraction for "you are". (*Your* feet are cold. *You're* a great writer.)

Yours, Your's. *Yours* is the correct possessive form; *your's* is an incorrect version of "yours".

Exhibit 8.5
Examples of Wordy and Concise Constructions

Wordy Constructions	***Concise Constructions***
Along the lines of	Like
In the event of	If
For the purpose of	For
In the neighbourhood of	About
For the reason that	Since/Because
With a view to	To
In the event that	If
Inasmuch as	Because
With reference to	About
In the case of	If
With regard to	About
With the result that	So that

2. Wordiness can also be avoided by changing long clauses into phrases. Here are a few examples:

Wordy: The vast majority of farmers in India are poor in a greater or lesser degree.

Concise: Most Indian farmers are quite poor.

Wordy: The special difficulty in my case arises in relation to the fact that I live so far from my institute.

Concise: I am specially handicapped by living so far from my institute.

Wordy: In this connection, it is not without interest to observe that, in the case of many states, no serious measures have been taken with a view to putting the recommendations of the HRD minister into practice.

Concise: Most states have done little to implement the HRD minister's recommendations.

Wordy: Mr Singh, who was a newcomer to the city mentioned earlier in this report, proved to be a very able administrator.

Concise: Mr Singh, a newcomer to the above-mentioned city, proved to be a very able administrator. (Here a clause has been reduced to a phrase and a phrase reduced to a single word.)

Wordy: She is so honest that she will not tell a lie.

Concise: She is too honest to tell a lie.

Wordy: The wind is so cold that we cannot go out at present.

Concise: The wind is too cold for us to go out at present.

3. Drop "which" and "that" clauses when possible. For example:

Wordy: I need cards that are of formal type.

Concise: I need formal cards.

Wordy: She received a shirt that was torn.

Concise: She received a torn shirt.

Wordy: She cleared the debts that her husband had taken on.

Concise: She cleared her husband's debts.

Wordy: I am sure that I shall be able to help you.

Concise: I am sure I can help you.

4. Do not overuse the passive voice. For example:

Wordy: Technology can be used by children also.

Concise: Children also can use technology.

Wordy: The post of Prime Minister of India is held by Dr Manmohan Singh.

Concise: Dr Manmohan Singh holds the Prime Ministership of India.

Wordy: Many great lands had been seen by Ulysses.

Concise: Ulysses saw many great lands.

Communication Snapshot 8.4 illustrates a wordy and tedious business letter and one way to make it more concise.

The letter in Exhibit 8E can be rewritten in a brief and concise form, as shown in Exhibit 8F.

5

Develop an effective tone in written communication.

Language, Tone, and Level of Formality

To ensure that a piece of writing is understood by the target audience, it is essential to use language that is commonly understood. The tone used should also reflect the appropriate level of formality for a particular context.

Standard English

"Standard English" includes the most commonly used and accepted words. It is considered "standard" because it follows the norms laid down by the rules of grammar, sentence construction, punctuation, spelling, paragraph construction, and so on. It is the language used in formal writing, such as books, magazines, newspapers, letters, memos, reports, and other forms of academic writing. For example, *ain't*, a contraction of "I am not", "is not" or "has

Communication Snapshot 8.4

Rewriting a Letter

Exhibit 8E
A Wordy Letter

Dear Sir,

We are in receipt of your letter dated June 25 and have pleasure in informing you that the order you have placed with us will receive our best and immediate attention and that the fifteen ACs you require will be provided to you as soon as we are able to arrange for and supply them to you.

We are, however, very sorry to say that our stock of these ACs is, at this moment of time, quite short. Owing to the extremely hot summer and the consequent increase in demand, we have been informed by the manufacturers that they are not likely to be in a position to supply us with further stock for another three weeks or so.

We are extremely sorry not to be in a position to satisfy your requirements immediately, but we wish to assure you that we will always try to do everything we possibly can to see that your order for fifteen ACs is met as soon as possible. If you are not able to obtain the ACs you need from elsewhere, or if you are able to wait for them until the end of the next of month, you are requested to inform us in a timely manner.

Once again expressing our sincerest regret at our inability to fulfil your esteemed order on this occasion with our usual promptness and trusting you will continue to favour us in the future,

Yours truly,

PAhuja

Prem Ahuja

Exhibit 8F
The Rewritten Letter

Dear Sir,

We thank you for your order of 25th June, but regret that due to the exceptional demand for ACs thanks to the prolonged hot spell, we are currently out of stock of the brand you ordered. The manufacturers, however, have promised us further supply by the end of this month, and if you could wait until then, we would ensure the prompt delivery of the fifteen ACs you require.

We are sorry that we cannot meet your present order immediately.

Yours truly,

PAhuja

Prem Ahuja

not", is usually considered unacceptable in written (and also spoken) English. It can, however, appear as slang or in informal writing.

Tone

After determining the purpose and audience of a piece of writing, one has to then choose the appropriate tone in terms of formality. Tone refers to feelings created by words used to communicate a message. The tone of a piece of writing basically depends on the relationship between the writer and those who receive the message. As discussed earlier, communications in an organization can be classified as upward, downward, or horizontal. It requires skill and competence on the part of the writer to use the appropriate tone based on the status of the reader or receiver. It is obvious that something written for one's superiors will have a formal tone, whereas something written for one's peers will be more informal.

Tone refers to feelings created by words used to communicate a message.

According to Muriel Harris, "The level of formality is the tone in writing and reflects the attitude of the writer toward the subject and audience".[1]

The tone can be:

- Informal
- Semi-formal
- Strictly formal

6

Use appropriate words and language for writing correctly and effectively.

Informal Tone

A writer uses an informal tone for social or personal communication and for informal writing. Deviations from standard English change the tone of writing from formal to informal or very formal. The informal tone includes the use of slang, colloquialisms, and regional words. The writer may also include contractions and incomplete sentences. An example of informal tone is: "The guy was damn annoyed because he couldn't get a hang of the mumbo-jumbo."

- **Colloquialisms**: Colloquialisms are casual words or phrases used in informal writing. Some examples of colloquialisms are "guy" for a person; "ain't" for *am not*, *is not*, or *are not*; "kids" for *children*; "hubby" for *husband*; "flunk" instead of *fail*; "wannnabe" for an avid fan who tries to emulate the person he or she admires; "whopping" for *huge* (for example, "a whopping success").

Slang consists of informal words, phrases, or meanings that are not regarded as standard and are often used by a specific profession, class, and so on.

- **Slang**: Slang consists of informal words, phrases, or meanings that are not regarded as standard and are often used by a specific profession, class, and so on. Slang words, like colloquial words, are non-conventional. They are used in some special sense, but they exclude jargon and dialect-specific words. If a slang word acquires greater respectability, it moves into the category of colloquialism and may even reach the acceptability of standard English. For instance, "whodunit" is a colloquial word that appears in the critical writing of Northrop Frye, an eminent contemporary critic. It is gradually acquiring acceptability and is used to refer to modern murder mysteries. Some slang words and phrases are shown in Exhibit 8.6.

The richness of English lies in its openness to words from other areas and countries.

- **Regional words**: Regional words, as the term suggests, are used primarily in a particular geographic area. The richness of English lies in its openness to words from other areas and countries. Words such as "porch", "verandah", "portico", "gherao", "hartal", "bazaar", "bag", "sack", "tote", or "phone" form part of spoken and written English, sometimes as standard usage.

Words such as *hype* and *ad* are gaining wider acceptability among professionals and writers.

Slang and regional words constitute the texture of language and give colour and tone to communication. In the world of business, the main concern is to communicate with sincerity, courtesy, and a sense of mutual respect. The aim is to write or speak in simple and clear English using the language of everyday speech. The aim of business writing is to earn the goodwill of the reader. The writing should sound friendly and cooperative. For this purpose special care should be taken to create a friendly and pleasant tone in business writing (letters/memos) by avoiding harsh and rude words.

Semi-formal Tone

The semi-formal tone lies somewhere between informal and academic. It is expressed mostly through standard English and is written according to the accepted rules of grammar,

Exhibit 8.6
Examples of Slang

Slang	*Meaning*
Pot	Marijuana
Get one's act together	Prepare/properly organize
Hip	Trendy/stylish
Pie-eyed	Drunk
Pig	Derogatory use for a police officer
Pig out	Eat (food) greedily
Brass	Money
Brass tacks	Essential details
Hype	Extravagant or intensive promotion of a product
Ad	Advertisement (contraction)

punctuation, sentence construction, and spelling, with a few contractions that add a sense of informality. The following sentence also has a semi-formal tone: "Much to their embarrassment and Mammachi's dismay, Chacko forced the pretty women to sit at the table with him and drink tea."

Strictly Formal Tone

The strictly formal tone is scholarly and uses words that are long and not frequently spoken in everyday conversation. The construction of the sentence and paragraph is also academic and literary in its tone.

The strictly formal tone is scholarly and uses words that are long and not frequently spoken in everyday conversation.

Positive Language

Business letters and memos should accentuate positive thoughts and expressions while stemming negative ones. Some tips to do so are:

- Avoid using words that underline the negative aspects of the situation.
- Write with a cool frame of mind. Do not write out of anger of excitement.
- Do not allow anger or harshness to creep into the writing.
- Focus on the positive when possible.

The following are examples of how, by substituting positive-sounding words and phrases for negative ones, the general tone (effect/impact) of each sentence can be changed without changing the message.

Negative: We have received your complaint.

Positive: We have received your letter.

(We receive letters. No one can mail a complaint.)

Negative: Your faulty fan motor will be replaced.

Positive: We are sending you a new fan motor with a one-year guarantee.

Negative: The delay in dispatching your order because of our oversight will not be longer than a week.

Positive: Your complete order will reach you by July 24.

To eliminate the accusing and insulting tone of the original sentence, substitute neutral words for words that are insulting or make the reader feel dishonest or unintelligent.

Insulting: Don't allow your carelessness to cause accidents in the blast furnace.

Neutral: Be careful when you are working in the blast furnace.

Insulting: Because you failed to inform the members of the board about the agenda in time, the meeting had to be postponed.

Neutral: The meeting had to be postponed as the board members did not receive the agenda in time.

Remember that negative language regarding the situation is bound to distance the reader. To win the reader's cooperation, one must emphasize solutions instead of criticizing the situation.

You-Attitude

In all writing, the author has a point of view. *You-attitude* is the reader's point of view. In good business writing, especially letters, the author should write from the reader's point of view, by viewing things as readers would. He or she should be able to see and present the situation as the reader would see it. Writers should try to convey an understanding of the reader's position and present the information by visualizing how it will affect the feelings of readers.

In all writing, the author has a point of view. You-attitude refers to the reader's point of view.

In the following examples, the focus is shifted from the author's point of view to the reader's point of view by emphasizing the benefits and interests of the reader in the given situation.

Author's emphasis: I congratulate you on successfully completing the task.

Reader's emphasis: Congratulations on successfully completing the task.

Author's emphasis: To reduce office work and save time, we are introducing a new system of registration for you.

Reader's emphasis: To facilitate the registration process, we are changing our system of registration.

Author's emphasis: We are sending out interview calls next Monday.

Receiver's emphasis: You should receive the interview letter by Thursday, August 12.

The change of emphasis in these examples is psychological. By giving importance to the reader's concerns (his or her point of view) and benefits, one can develop a friendly tone.

Some guidelines for reflecting the "you" point of view in business correspondence are:

1. Empathize with the reader. Place yourself in his or her position.
2. Highlight the benefits to the reader in the situation.
3. Adopt a pleasant tone as far as possible.
4. Avoid negative words and images. Do not use words that insult or accuse the reader.
5. Offer helpful suggestions if possible.
6. Use words that are familiar, clear, and natural. Avoid old-fashioned expressions or jargon.

Natural Language

Letters and memos should be written in the language of everyday speech. They should avoid using clichés and hackneyed expressions. Archaic expressions will make the message dull and uninteresting for the reader. Exhibit 8.7 lists some examples of phrases that should be rewritten.

Consider the naturalness of the following sentence. Do we normally talk like this?

As per your request, we beg to inform you that we have booked a single room for you at our lodge for 4 days from 18 July to 21 July, 2003.

This sentence lacks the spontaneity and liveliness of a natural response. It should be revised as:

As you desired, we have booked a room for you from 18 July to 21 July, 2003.

The message should be brief. The specification of the room, single or double, need not be given here. Simply confirming the dates is sufficient.

Exhibit 8.7
Old-fashioned Expressions

Hackneyed Language	***Natural Language***
The undersigned	I/We
We beg to advise	We can say
Prior to receipt of	Before we/I received
As per your request	As you requested
Attached herewith	Attached is
Pursuant to	In accordance with
Hoping for the favour of your kind reply	We/I hope to
Yours to hand of 20th	Received your letter of July 20

Active Voice

There are two parts of a sentence—the subject and the predicate. The subject is that about which something is said; the predicate is whatever is said about the subject. In a sentence the subject is the main focus, the doer of an action. It is frequently positioned at the opening of the sentence.

Choose the active voice to help the reader understand the main message at the very beginning of the sentence. Passive voice is long-drawn because the "to be" form of verb is used with the preposition "by" and is then followed by the doer of the action. In passive voice, the main focus of the sentence, the subject (in the writer's mind), is mentioned at the end of the sentence—by then the reader may become impatient and lose focus. For example, read the following sentences closely:

> Choose the active voice to help the reader understand the main message at the very beginning of the sentence.

Active: Packaging often describes the product's look and feel to the buyer.

Passive: The product's look and feel are often described to the buyer by its packaging.

Read both the forms of the sentence together. You will find that the passive sentence reads slowly and moves heavily. It tells you about "packaging" only at the end of the sentence. It first speaks about the product's look and feel. Technically, the two sentences are talking about two different things. The passive-voice sentence tells the reader about a product's look and feel and how they are described for the buyer through packaging. It indirectly talks about packaging. The active-voice sentence speaks more directly about packaging and its functions of describing a product's look and feel to the buyer. The sentence is short and it grips the reader's attention. Readers therefore usually prefer active voice for its directness, faster pace, and clarity.

Here are a few problems readers often face because of the use of passive voice:

- *Passive voice in issuing instructions:* Instructions should be clear, direct, and complete because passive voice may confuse the reader. The instruction may omit the "by" preposition phrase and thereby leave the question "who should do it" unclear. The doer of the action is left implied and is not clearly stated.

  Unclear: The strike should be called off. [By whom? Not stated]

  Clear: The strike should be called off by the union.

- *Dropping the "by" phrase:* Often, the writer attempts to shorten the length of the passive-voice sentence by leaving out the "by" phrase after the verb. This makes it difficult for the reader to understand the full process of the action as the sentence does not offer complete information.

  Incomplete: To make these allocations, marketing managers use sales response functions that show how sales and profits would be affected.

  Complete: To make these allocations, marketing managers use sales response functions that show how sales and profits would be affected by the amount of money spent in each application.

- *Confusing use of dangling modifiers*: The reader is often confused by the misplaced modifier in the passive construction. Therefore, avoid this form of passive construction and write in active form.

  Unclear: Besides saving on mailing expenses, a double-digit response will be achieved by a customer database system.

  Clear: Besides saving on mailing expenses, a customer database system will achieve a double-digit response.

Sexist Language

Sexist expressions and ideas should be avoided in business communication. Sexist language consists of words or phrases that show bias against the competence or importance of women. In today's gender-sensitive age, business writing should scrupulously leave out all words that question women's dignity, competence, or status.

Often the use of sexist language is unconscious—one may fail to realize that a certain phrase or word is an unfavourable reference to the abilities of women.

Often the use of sexist language is unconscious—one may fail to realize that a certain phrase or word is an unfavourable reference to the abilities of women. However, such expressions are not acceptable to modern readers.

Consider the following guidelines to avoid sexist words and phrases:

1. Do not use "he" as a generic pronoun. In the past, it has been customary to refer to people in general, or a group of persons, as male. "He" is grammatically correct, but should be avoided in generic situations, especially job descriptions.

   Sexist: A manager writes to his peers in an informal or semi-formal tone.

   Revised: Managers write to their peers in an informal or semi-formal tone.

   In this example, the number of the subject has been changed from singular to plural, and "their" has been used as the pronoun, thus avoiding any hint of sexism.

2. In job descriptions, do not use words which suggest that all employees are of the same gender.

   Sexist: An experienced professor is needed. He should…

   Revised: An experienced professor is needed. He or she should…

   Or

   An experienced professor is needed. The person should be…

   Sexist: The policeman should listen to the common man's complaints.

   Revised: The police officer should listen to the common man's complaints.

   Sexist: The stewardess explained the safety measures before take-off.

   Revised: The flight attendant explained the safety measures before take-off.

Do not use words that lower the dignity and status of women. Also never use slang words to refer to women.

3. Do not use words that lower the dignity and status of women. Also never use slang words to refer to women.

   Sexist: The girls in the central office will endorse these papers.

   Revised: The office assistants in the central office will endorse these papers.

   Sexist: Do bring the little woman (*slang for one's wife*) to the party.

   Revised: Do bring your spouse to the party.

4. Always refer to women and men in the same way.

   Sexist: Denise Samrat, Dr Ian Campbell, and Dr Philip Kotler were members of the CRM panel.

   Revised: Ms Denise Samrat, Dr Ian Campbell, and Dr Philip Kotler were members of the CRM panel.

   Sexist: Women of this sector were represented by two doctors and one lady lawyer.

   Revised: Women of this sector were represented by two doctors and one lawyer.

   Finally, writing business letters clearly and accurately requires that the following points be kept in mind:

- A sentence is the smallest unit of a complete thought.
- Each sentence should have only one thought.
- Sentences and paragraphs should be constructed according to the principles of unity and coherence.

For instance, consider this sentence: "This activity makes no attempt to be a comprehensive test of accurate writing, but offers a valuable chance for you to test your own skill and identify areas of weakness." This sentence talks about only one topic—"a test of accurate writing". Other ideas are related to the main subject.

In contrast, examine the following sentence: "I hasten to inform you that your complete order has been shipped on April 10, the invoice will reach you with the goods." This sentence is not correctly constructed. It has two separate thoughts, which should be expressed in separate sentences. A better version would be: "I hasten to inform you that your complete order has been shipped on 10 April. The invoice will reach you with the goods."

SUMMARY

- This chapter shows that the ability to communicate information in a simple, concise, and accurate written form reflects a manager's professional competence.
- It discusses in detail the essentials of effective written communication—planning, identification of purpose, consideration of audience, choice of appropriate language, and use of effective tone.
- This chapter also provides tips and guidelines to help readers develop a good grasp of grammar, the use of words, and the construction of sentences, with the goal of strengthening their written communication skills.

CASE: ON WRITING WELL

In his famous book, *On Writing Well*, William Zinsser cautions potential writers about some common pitfalls of writing. Zinsser maintains that if the reader is unable to keep pace with the writer's train of thought, it is not because the reader is lazy or dumb. Rather, this difficulty can be attributed to the author, who, because of the many forms of carelessness, has failed to keep the reader on the right track.

The "carelessness" Zinsser alludes to may be of many kinds:

- Writers often write long-winding sentences and switch tenses mid-sentence. Also, a sentence may not logically flow from the previous sentence, although the writer knows the connection in his or her head. This makes it hard for the reader to make sense of what is being said, and they lose track.
- Sometimes, writers don't take the trouble of looking up a key word, and end up using the wrong word. For example, the word "sanguine" (confidently optimistic and cheerful) may be confused with "sanguinary" (accompanied by bloodshed), which changes the meaning of a piece drastically.
- Surprisingly often, writers do not know what they are trying to say. So, they should always question themselves about what they are trying to say, and if they have said it. They should re-read the piece and ask themselves: "Will it be clear to a person who reads it for the first time?" If the answer to this question is "no", it means that some "fuzz" has crept into the writing.

Says Zinsser, "The clear writer is a person who is clear-headed enough to see this stuff for what it is: fuzz."[2] He further adds that thinking clearly is an entirely conscious act. It's not as if some people are clear thinkers and, therefore, clear writers, and others are born fuzzy and can't hope to write well. The ability to write well comes from clear thinking and logic, which a writer should constantly aim to inculcate.

Unless Zinsser's list of potential obstacles to clear writing is kept in mind, a writer runs the risk of turning in a piece where the reader is left wondering who or what is being talked about.

Questions to Answer

1. What is fuzz? Explain Zinsser's notion of fuzz with a few examples.
2. Do you believe that some people are born writers? Give reasons for your answer.

Source: Based on William Zinsser, *On Writing Well* (New York: Harper, 1998).

REVIEW YOUR LEARNING

1. Give at least three reasons for knowing and following the conventions of grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
2. What is the difference between unity and coherence?
3. What is the relationship between brevity and clarity?
4. Give some important characteristics of effective writing in business.
5. What is "you−attitude" in business writing?
6. Explain the function of tone in making communication truly effective.
7. Define the role of the reader in determining the form and style of business letters.
8. How do we make our writing natural?
9. To what extent does clarity of writing depend on the clarity of thinking?
10. Why should we avoid using jargon and clichés in business letters or memos?

REFLECT ON YOUR LEARNING

1. Why do most of us find it difficult to convey our thoughts in written form? How can we overcome these difficulties?
2. Do pre-writing thinking and post-writing revising help the writer? Please discuss.
3. "It is simple to be difficult, but very difficult to be simple while writing." Elucidate.
4. How does extensive reading help in writing effectively?
5. Reflect on the value of short and simple sentences in creating a lucid style.

APPLY YOUR LEARNING

1. Change the following expressions into more natural language:
   (i) Pursuant to
   (ii) Prior to the receipt of
   (iii) It has come to my attention
   (iv) The undersigned will
   (v) Hoping for the favour of a reply
2. Rewrite each of the following sentences to reflect more positive thoughts:
   (i) To avoid further confusion and delay, our Assistant Engineer will visit your place and try to rectify the problem.
   (ii) I was not invited to the party, so I did not come.
   (iii) The company will not hold the wages you have earned.
   (iv) He left no plan untried.
   (v) Do not let carelessness cause an accident when working on the machines.
3. Change the following sentences from passive to active voice:
   (i) I am sorry to find that you were not promoted this year.
   (ii) This is a suitable time for the new project to be started.
   (iii) I am extremely astonished at your behaviour.
   (iv) It is now time for the applications to be invited.
   (v) The idle candidates were selected.
4. Write the correct form of the verb given in brackets in the blank space.
   (i) On __________ the news, the meeting was postponed. (receive)
   (ii) We were surprised to __________ our boss there. (find)
   (iii) By __________ early, they avoided traffic jams. (leave)
   (iv) Do not let me prevent you from __________ what is right. (do)
   (v) He was charged with __________ into a house. (break)

SELF-CHECK YOUR LEARNING

From the given options please choose the most appropriate answer:*

1. To complete the function of the written word, we require:
   (a) three persons (b) one person
   (c) two persons (d) four persons
2. In business, the purpose of writing is mainly to:
   (a) entertain (b) inform
   (c) persuade (d) Both (b) and (c)
3. Informative writing focuses primarily on the:
   (a) reader (b) subject under discussion
   (c) latest news (d) writer
4. In writing business letters, one has to be:
   (a) formal (b) dull
   (c) conventional (d) friendly
5. Technical accuracy of language means:
   (a) direct narrative (b) active voice
   (c) correctness of grammar, spelling, and punctuation
   (d) simplicity
6. The principles of effective writing include:
   (a) brevity (b) clarity
   (c) accuracy (d) all of the above
7. In a sentence, the verb agrees in number and person with its:
   (a) object (b) subject
   (c) adverb (d) preposition
8. How many kinds of articles are there in English?
   (a) Three: *a*, *an*, and *the*
   (b) Two: *definitive* and *indefinitive*
   (c) One: a
   (d) Both a) and b)
9. "There", as an introductory subject:
   (a) requires the verb to agree with its unreal subject
   (b) requires the verb to agree with the real subject that comes after it
   (c) requires the verb to agree with the object
   (d) is always singular
10. In issuing instructions, one should avoid the:
    (a) passive voice (b) active voice
    (c) imperative form (d) subjunctive form

ENDNOTES

1. Muriel Harris, *Guide to Grammar and Usage* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002).
2. William Zinsser, *On Writing Well*, New York: Harper, 1998.

*For answers and self-evaluation, visit www.pearsoned.co.in/PDChaturvedi

9 Business Letters, Memos, and E-mails

"If he [the person you are replying to] is rude, be specially courteous. If he is muddle-headed, be specially lucid. If he is pig-headed, be patient. If he is helpful, be appreciative. If he convicts you of a mistake, acknowledge it freely and even with gratitude."

—Sir Ernest Gowers

Upon completion of this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Identify business situations that require writing letters, memos, and e-mails.
2. Write simple, complete, and persuasive letters and memos.
3. Know the essentials of good business correspondence.
4. Plan written communication by first considering the needs, levels, and expectations of readers.
5. Acquaint yourself with different formats of letters, memos, and e-mails.

COMMUNICATION AT WORK

The sales department of Luxor Writing Instruments receives an inquiry from Mr Mukherjee about the availability of a set of Exception Solid Gold Waterman ball-point and fountain pens. The manager, Mr Sharma, knows that his response to the inquiry is an important first step in securing the order for the highly expensive writing instruments. He carefully considers Mr Mukherjee's letter of inquiry.

Mr Mukherjee wants to know the availability and the best price at which he can buy the set of pens. As the pens are not readily available, Mr Sharma writes to Mr Mukherjee to ask for some lead time and suggests that he select another set of pens from the wide variety immediately available. He dispatches a copy of the latest product catalogue along with the letter. He also mentions that the price will depend on the product selected, as the discounts ranged from 10 to 20 per cent and varied from product to product. He goes on to suggest that Mr Mukherjee visit one of the exclusive Luxor showrooms to see the full range of products at the location nearest to him and informs him that the full range could also be viewed at the company Web site, www.luxor.in.

Mr Sharma concludes by thanking Mr. Mukherjee for his interest in Luxor's products and assures him of the company's best services. His entire effort is to convert the initial inquiry into a sale.

INTRODUCTION

Letters, memos, and e-mails are brief pieces of communication. They are so short that most people hardly think it necessary to spend much time planning them before writing. It is common to just jot down one's thoughts—the basic information needed to communicate. In fact, it is important to be careful when writing letters, memos, and e-mails, because these small pieces of communication are used in less formal contexts. They tend to affect the receiver's feelings and thoughts with great immediacy and power. Writers should, therefore, consider two questions before writing:

1. What is the exact message?
2. How will it affect the receiver? That is, what would be the receiver's reaction—would he or she be pleased or displeased, interested or not interested? These four kinds of reactions should guide the writer. They determine the sequence of information in letters.

WRITING ROUTINE AND GOOD-NEWS LETTERS

Letters that please the receiver are called *good-news letters*. Those that neither please nor displease but are received with interest are known as *routine letters*. Both follow the same sequence of presentation of ideas and have a deductive pattern, which is a direct organization of ideas (Exhibit 9.1).

Exhibit 9.1
Sequence of Presentation of Ideas in Routine and Good-news Letters

A good-news letter

Pleasant news or idea → Details or explanations → Closing messages or thoughts

A routine letter

Major ideas → Details or explanations → Closing thoughts

> Letters and memos are brief pieces of communication. They tend to affect the receiver's feelings and thoughts with great immediacy and power.

The direct organization of ideas in good-news and routine letters follows human psychology. A pleasant or interesting idea will always hold the receiver's attention. Hence, good news can be given in the very first sentence, followed by details and the final message.

This basic plan of presenting ideas can be used in many business situations. These situations include:

1. Routine claim letters and "yes" replies
2. Routine request letters and "yes" replies
3. Routine order letters and "yes" replies

> 1
> Identify business situations that require writing letters, memos, and e-mails.

Routine Claim Letters and "Yes" Replies

A *claim* is a demand or request for something to which one has a right. Examples are a refund, payment for damages, a replacement for something defective, exchanges, and so on. A claim letter is, thus, a request for adjustment. When a writer thinks that because of guarantees or other specified terms and conditions, the request for adjustment will be automatically granted without delay or without requiring persuasion, he or she writes the letter in the *routine* form. When the writer believes that a direct statement of the desired action will get a positive response without arguments, he or she can use the following sequence/pattern of ideas:

1. Request action in the opening sentence.
2. Give reasons supporting the request or action.
3. End by appreciating or thanking the addressee for taking the action requested.

The writer of the claim letter in Exhibit 9.2 obviously thought that his routine request for an exchange would be granted. He, therefore, stated his claim in the very first sentence without any complaints. Similarly, the person replying to a routine claim letter knows that the recipient will be glad to know that his or her request has been granted; therefore, the writer states an expression of willingness in the first sentence of the response. The details and closing sentence follow the opening. This is demonstrated in Exhibit 9.3.

Exhibit 9.2
A Routine Claim Letter

Directly states claim — Please send me another copy of *How to Communicate Under Pressure* to replace the copy returned herewith.

Gives reasons — This is the latest edition, but this copy has four pages, from page 60 to page 64, wrongly sequenced, which is confusing and annoying.

The enclosed receipt was packed with the book sent to me.

Ends with a confident repetition of action desired — I shall appreciate an early replacement.

Date…

Dear…

A copy of *How to Communicate Under Pressure* is on its way to you. You will not be charged for its mailing.
You should receive it within a few days. Our catalogue for the latest arrivals in Communication Strategies/Studies is also enclosed.
Sincerely,

Exhibit 9.3
A "Yes" Reply to a Routine Claim

The "yes" reply in Exhibit 9.3 grants the request but the writer does not use the word "grant". Moreover, there is no reference to the letter being answered as a claim, though these words are often employed for referring to such letters. Phrases such as "your request is granted" or "we are granting your request" may convey to the receiver "we see ourselves as superiors and in a position of power". Similarly, "we are adjusting your claim" can also suggest "We are responding to your dissatisfaction". Therefore, words such as "grant" and "claim" are not used in such letters.

The recipient of a claim letter should always try to view the complaint positively. He or she should not be angered by customers, clients, or defective products. Business letters in all situations should be written with politeness and respect for the other party. Negative expressions should be avoided, though it is easy to react sharply when people complain about something one has done, said, or sold. Neither the writer nor the person replying should use expressions of accusation, such as "because of your careless packing, several pieces of the crockery set sent to me are broken" or "I have been cheated by you because the colour of the shirt, which was guaranteed to be fast, has completely faded".

Business letters in all situations should be written with politeness and respect for the other party.

Instead of using the harsh language used in Exhibit 9.4, the writer can simply state the facts of the situation and the action desired. For example, it is more businesslike to say:

> "I have received the sunglasses I ordered from your company. I find that there is a scratch on the right lens; perhaps it happened in transit. I would appreciate an early replacement of the sunglasses as I am going on a trip to Rajasthan at the end of the month."

508, Sector 9
Faridabad

June 18, 2010

Agfa Company
531, Linking Road
Bandra, Mumbai – 400 052

Dear Sir,

I am returning a pair of Rayban sunglasses, which you sent me per my order of June 6, 2010.

You will notice there is a scratch on the right lens. As the lens is guaranteed against imperfections, I am returning it to you.

Will you send me a new pair of sunglasses as soon as you can? The enclosed receipt was packed with the sunglasses when they were mailed to me.

I shall appreciate an early exchange as I am going on a trip to Rajasthan at the end of the month.

Yours truly,

Exhibit 9.4
A Businesslike/Impolite Routine Claim

Exhibit 9.5
A "Yes" Reply to a Businesslike/Impolite Routine Claim

> Date…
> Dear Mr…,
>
> One long-lasting, pink Easy Knit shirt is being sent to you against the one you returned to us. Compared with other shirts, Easy Knit shirts do not normally fade in colour and remain wrinkle-free. But for best results, they must be washed by hand and without using any strong bleach.
>
> Our Special Discount sales catalogue is being mailed to you separately.
>
> Truly,

Another example of a businesslike claim is,

> "I am returning the Easy Knit shirt that I purchased from your shop a week ago. Its colour has faded after washing by machine. The colour was guaranteed as long as the shirt was not exposed to the sun. I request you to exchange it with a new shirt of the same colour."

The "yes" reply letter in Exhibit 9.5 directly grants the request, reassures the buyer that he made a wise choice when he chose Easy Knit, and goes on to explain how to maintain the product. The reply avoids negative language. Through positive language, the customer is made to see his mistake. The letter also suggests ways to prevent future trouble and finally expresses hope for a continuing relationship by informing the buyer of discount sales. The "yes" letter is carefully written to guarantee customer confidence in the product and full satisfaction in the transaction. The letter has a direct, positive approach.

Routine Request Letters and "Yes" Replies

Now that we know how routine claim letters and replies to them should be written, let us take a look at *routine requests*. A letter to, say a vendor, requesting information about a product, should state clearly and completely what information is desired. A request for information should not suggest that the writer wants to place an order. Exhibit 9.6 shows a sample routine request. Exhibit 9.7 shows how a "yes" reply to a routine request should be written.

Routine Orders and Their "Yes" Replies

Routine orders should be explicit and thorough. In addition, they should be very clear about what they expect by giving complete details of the desired product. This includes specifying the time of delivery and the mode of shipment. There should be no ambiguity or chance of confusion or misunderstanding. A sample of a routine order letter is presented in Exhibit 9.8.

Since the response to the letter in Exhibit 9.8 is positive, the "yes" response should follow the pattern shown in Exhibit 9.9.

Guidelines for a "Yes" Reply

The guidelines a writer needs to follow while drafting a "yes" reply to a routine claim, request, or order are summarized here:

1. The beginning should state the reason for writing the letter and the main idea.
2. The middle paragraphs should give details of the good news, reaffirm the guarantee if any, describe the product offered, and explain why the replacement would satisfy the receiver.

Pearls Repair Service

155, Kashmere Gate
New Delhi
"If they make it, we repair it."

April 30, 2010

Mr Abhishek Chaturvedi
Order Department
MML Electronics Suppliers, Inc.
135 C, Kolkata

Dear Mr Chaturvedi,
Re: Order No. 497; Shipment No. 246032

In our order of April 10, 2010, we included a request for an electron tube X518E. The shipment we received today does not include the tube we ordered but does include a proton tube. Upon checking your catalogue, I discovered that you intend this tube to be a replacement for the tube X518E, which you have discontinued from your product line.

The supervisor of our repair shop, however, says that he cannot use the replacement tube sent by you. Because of this, we are returning this item from the shipment.

Please credit our account for Rs 2,000 for the tube we did not order and have returned.

Sincerely yours,

Ajay Saxena
Administrative Manager

Exhibit 9.6
A Routine Request Letter

NEW INDIA TILE COMPANY
444, New Main Street
Charki Dadri – 120072

April 12, 2002

Ms Sonia Suri
General Manager
Escorts Medical Hospital
Neelam Bata Road
Faridabad, Haryana

Dear Ms Suri,

We will be more than happy to replace the Durafinish tiles in front of the elevators and in the lobby area of Escorts Hospital as you requested in your letter of March 28, 2002.

When we installed the tile (Model 520) in December 2000, we guaranteed the no-fade finish. The tile you selected is imported from Italy and is one of our best-selling products. Recently, the manufacturer added a special sealing compound to the tile, making it more durable.

Our sales representative, Mr Deepak Rai, will call on you in the next few days to inspect the tiles and make arrangements for replacing them, at no additional cost. I appreciate your calling this situation to our attention because we are always eager to know how our products are performing. We guarantee our customers' full satisfaction.

Sincerely yours,
Mokshit Sharma
MS:tk
cc: Mr Deepak Rai

Exhibit 9.7
A "Yes" Reply to a Routine Request

Exhibit 9.8
A Routine Order Letter

Maria Interiors, Inc

12, Andheri West

Mumbai – 400 012

July 1, 2001

Silvania Office Products
B-27, Lajpat Nagar
New Delhi

Attention: Order Department

Dear Sir,

Please send me the following office supplies as listed and priced in your summer catalogue 91:

8 pkgs	D33E-886	Colour-coded files with heavy manila folders—letter size
4 boxes	D33E-276	Square box-files—capacity 2
24	D33E-3325	Large capacity 3-ring binders—letter size

Please charge these to the Maria Interiors account. I would appreciate quick delivery of these items. Please ship by the fastest freight available.

Sincerely,

Akshay Sharma
Office Manager

Exhibit 9.9
A "Yes" Reply to a Routine Order

Silvania Office Products

B-27, Lajpat Nagar
New Delhi

July 12, 2009

Mr Akshay Sharma
Office Manager
Maria Interiors, Inc.
12, Andheri West
Mumbai – 400012

Dear Mr Sharma,

The following items were shipped to you today by Worldwide Express, rush service:

8 pkgs	D33E	Colour-coded files with heavy manila folders—letter size
24	D33E-3325	Large capacity 3-ring binders—letter size

Enclosed is the invoice for Rs 4,000, which includes sales tax. Your order for four boxes of square box-files—2 in capacity (D33E – 276) should reach you within 14 days, also by Worldwide Express. Because of the great popularity of these durable, high-capacity hole punchers, they are currently out of stock. A shipment from the supplier is due shortly, and when it arrives, we will fulfil your order immediately.

Thank you for your order, and please let me know if I can be of service in the future. For your convenience, I am enclosing a preview copy of the new catalogue, No. 107, which will be mailed to our customers in early December.

Sincerely,

Rajesh Bhatia

Sales Manager

RB:rb
Encl. : Catalogue No.107
: Invoice

3. The end should draw the reader's attention to the conditions, if any, attached to the positive response. The letter should close on a positive note of thanks for the original order and hopes for continuing good relations with the buyer.

Guidelines for a "No" Reply

In business, at times we have to say "no". In some situations, it may not be possible to grant the writer's request or deliver what he or she has ordered. On such occasions the goal of the person who is responding should be to write a "no" letter inoffensively, while stating facts and giving reasons as convincingly as possible. A refusal is a refusal. It is bound to disappoint the reader. However, the goal is to reduce the negative emotions as much as possible. The writer of a "no" reply cannot convey an unfavourable decision in an unfavourable way if he or she wants to retain the customer's goodwill. Thus, he or she must be able to write "no" while minimizing the reader's disappointment. To achieve this objective, the information should be patterned as follows:

> The goal of the person writing a "no" reply is to reduce the negative emotions as much as possible. The writer of a "no" reply cannot convey an unfavourable decision in an unfavourable way if he or she wants to retain the customer's goodwill.

1. The letter should begin with a paragraph that describes the general situation as the context in which the reader's request was considered. It should indicate in a neutral or friendly tone the reasons that led to the negative information or a refusal.

   Some possible methods to do this are:

   - Assuring the receiver that his or her matter was considered with great understanding and care.
   - Making the reader believe that it is the circumstances or situation and not the merit of his or her request that is responsible for the "no" response. (For example: "This session, there are more than ten thousand admission requests from your country.")
   - Agreeing with the reader in some way. (For example: "You are right that the guarantee period is one year.")
   - Giving a sincere compliment. (For example: "Your CAT score is quite high…")
   - Showing (without raising false hope) that the possibility of fulfilling the request was there. (For example: "Your plan for opening a business school of international caliber sounds excellent.")
   - Mentioning good news of interest to the reader. (For example: "The government has passed a bill to open new credit banks for farmers.")
2. The "no" letter should give facts and provide reasons and factors for refusal. (For example: "The manufacturer's instructions have not been strictly followed.")
3. The refusal should be mentioned in the same paragraph. It is important not to highlight the refusal. Therefore, no separate paragraph should be given to this negative point; instead, it should just be stated at the end of the paragraph that mentions the reasons for it.
4. The end of the "no" response seeks to maintain good business relations with the reader by suggesting an alternative course of action or a better deal in the future.

   The aim of indirectly organizing a "no" response letter is to assure the reader that the bad news or the unfavourable decision was arrived at after careful consideration of the total situation and facts that could not be altered by the writer (the decision-maker). The purpose of indirect organization is to ensure that the reader does not believe that the refusal is based on arbitrary, subjective, or personal reasons.

Consider Exhibit 9.10, a letter of refusal written by New India Tile Company to the replacement request. Exhibit 9.7 is a "yes" response to the same request, but the factors involved in making the decision are different in this situation. Hence, the company's response to replacing the tiles is "no". The letter seeks to convey the negative message through indirect organization.

Exhibit 9.10
A "No" Reply (to a Routine Request)

NEW INDIA TILE COMPANY
444, New Main Street
Charki Dadri – 120072

April 13, 2002

Ms Sonia Suri
General Manager
Escorts Medical Hospital
Neelam-Bata Road
Faridabad, Haryana

Dear Ms Suri,

You are certainly correct that we guarantee our tiles for 20 years after installation. We always stand behind our products when they are used according to the recommendations of the manufacturers and design consultants.

When I received your letter, I immediately studied the sales contract and checked the reports of the design consultant. Our records show that the consultant did explain on December 6, 2000 that Paloma Tile (Model 520) was not recommended for heavy traffic. Although another tile was suggested, you preferred to order the Paloma Tile, and you signed a waiver of guarantee. For your information, I'm enclosing a copy of that page of the contract. Because our recommendation was to use another tile, our usual 20-year guarantee is not in force in this situation.

For your needs, we recommend the Watermark Tile, which is specially sealed to withstand heavy traffic. The Watermark Tile is available in a design that would complement the Paloma Tile that is already in place. Our design consultant, Mr Ramesh Singh, would be happy to visit Escorts Medical Hospital and recommend a floor pattern that could incorporate a new Watermark Tile, without sacrificing the Paloma Tile that does not show wear. Enclosed is a brochure showing the Watermark designs. Mr Singh will call you for an appointment this week, and because you are our customer, we will be happy to schedule prompt service for you.

Sincerely,

Mokshit Sharma
Production Installation Manager
MS/dc

Encl.: Watermark brochure
Contract page

cc.: Mr Ramesh Singh

2

Write simple, complete, and persuasive letters and memos.

WRITING PERSUASIVE LETTERS

Letters that arouse the reader's interest and induce him or her to act as directed are essentially letters that sell ideas to others. They are called *persuasive letters*.

Persuasion is used when the writer suspects that the reader will not be interested in the message and the action to be taken. In such a situation, the writer may use the device of startling the reader by informing him or her about something unexpected at the beginning of the letter. This way, the reader is made to see right away why he or she should accept the letter's proposal. The letter goes on to show how the reader will greatly benefit by taking the suggested action. Such letters, which arouse the reader's interest and induce him or her to act as directed, are essentially letters that sell ideas to others. They are called *persuasive letters*. Writing them well requires skillful patterning of information. The persuasive pattern, also known as persuasive organization, involves the following sequence of ideas:

1. The opening sentence in a persuasive business letter (usually sales) catches the reader's attention by saying one of the following:
   - A startling statement of fact—"Every second, 6 children die of malnutrition in our country."
   - A remedial measure to a problem—"At last, you can build your own house."
   - An alarming question—"Would you like to die without providing for the safety of your children and spouse?"
   - A special product, scheme, or plan—"Within the next 14 days you should expect to receive important authorized mail from our sweepstakes manager."

2. The middle section of a persuasive letter gives details regarding the product or scheme that is being promoted. This section mainly describes the benefits to the reader. It explains why the reader should accept the proposal.
3. After arousing the reader's interest in the proposal, the letter then requests action such as a "yes" response to the proposed request.
4. The last paragraph acts as a reminder to the reader of the special benefits he or she would gain by acting as urged and requests action within the given deadline.

Such persuasive sales letters are also known as *form letters*. They differ from other business letters in the following ways:

1. They may not be dated: These letters can be used by the company for many months. Therefore, the date of the form letter (sales letter) may not be necessary and relevant.

Communication Snapshot 9.1

Writing a Persuasive Letter

The focus of the letter in Exhibit 9A is "be advised". The advice is in bold and is placed at the centre of the letter in an eye-catching position. The letter bears no date. It has no personal salutation. The expression "Dear Valued Customer" establishes a friendly tone at the very outset. It goes on to arouse the reader's curiosity by stating, "expect to receive important authorized mail".

The middle paragraph gives details of the reader's undoubted chance to win the Rs. 1,000,000,00 First Prize. This paragraph uses strategy to hold the reader's attention and interest by saying, "You already stand ahead of many…". This paragraph also gives details of how the reader is going to benefit from this message.

In a friendly tone, the writer calls this letter a "pre-disclosure". It motivates the receiver to act further by disclosing that "You already stand ahead of many…". The letter does not include the usual "Subscription offer", "yours sincerely", and so on. Instead, it ends on a sincere note of advice: "Be sure to reply as instructed". This sample letter is an actual letter written by the sweepstakes committee of the magazine Pottery Weekly. It is a good example of a persuasive sales letter. The organization, language, and sales strategies followed by the writer persuade and urge the reader to participate in the sweepstakes.

Exhibit 9A

The Letter

Pottery Weekly

Dear Valued Customer,

In the next 14 days, expect to receive important authorized mail from *Pottery Weekly's* sweepstakes manager. This mail will provide you with details on your current sweepstakes eligibility status.

You should know that as of June 2009, there is no doubt that you are enviably well positioned to have a shot at our Rs. 1,000,000.00 First Prize. You already stand ahead of many who have not been invited to participate in *Pottery Weekly's* 2-million-rupee sweepstakes.

Be advised that the sweepstakes documents that are due to arrive at your address have strictly controlled deadlines!

This is why you are entitled to receive this pre-disclosure—to provide you sufficient notice to reply on time. The post office has assured expedient delivery of the package to you.

IMPORTANT

Please watch out for a red envelope from *Pottery Weekly,* marked with the same package code as in this letter. It contains two sweepstakes entry cards. Then, reply in strict conformance with the instructions provided therein.

This is the only step required of you to secure your eligibility to enter the 2-million-rupee sweepstakes for your chance to win well over Rs. 1,000,000.00. Please do not discount the vital importance of this pre-disclosure. Be sure to reply as instructed.

2. There may be no personal salutation: The sales letter is not addressed to a specific individual. The receiver's name is superimposed as a mailing device.

   Dear Friend,
   Dear Reader,
   Dear Valued Customer,

   The opening sets a pleasant tone by saying that the reader is known for his or her interest in the kind of proposal made.
3. There is usually a postscript message to remind the reader of the action to be taken by the specified deadline or to highlight the benefits or any other important point.
4. Most persuasive sales letters include some mention of further material to be received by the reader. For example, the box with the word "important" in the sales letter shown in Communication Snapshot 9.1 highlights that two sweepstakes entry cards would be sent in the near future.

Most persuasive sales letters include some mention of further material to be received by the reader.

There is another style of formatting a persuasive form letter, which is shown in Exhibit 9.11. To look more informal, the letter leaves out the salutation completely. It also drops the formal ending "subscription". Instead, it closes with "best wishes" from the writer of the message.

Exhibit 9.11
An Alternative Style for a Persuasive Letter

Konnect Cellphone

Mr P. D. Apte
508, Sector 9
Faridabad, Haryana 121006
31 July 2010

You have been a valued member of the Konnect Cellphone family. As you may be aware, Konnect Cellphone is now a part of Konnect Telecom, one of the largest cellular operators in India and the third largest in the world. We have taken the leadership in launching new and exciting tariff plans in Delhi, thereby making cellular telephony more affordable.

As per the Honourable TRAI ruling dated 25 January 2001, an amount of Rs. 595.36 is refundable against your contract number 00124813301 and mobile phone number 9811071974. This refund is on account of a reduction in license fees. This amount will be refunded to you via an account payee cheque at the address mentioned above.

If you have any queries regarding the same, please feel free to contact us on our toll-free hotline number, 9811398133, and we would be glad to address the same.

Keep smiling!

Joydeep Chatterjee

Joydeep Chaterjee
GM—Customer Services
Konnect Telecom
Nariman Street, Fort,
Mumbai 400001

WRITING MEMOS

Persuasive letters partly share the form and intimacy of memos, which are frequently written to persons within the office/organization to communicate routine matters. A memorandum, often referred to as a memo, is a form used by a person known to the receiver personally. Therefore, it is less formal in tone and does not have formal elements such as the salutation, subscription, greeting, or even a signature at the end. It directly states the subject after mentioning the following:

From ________ Subject ________

To ________ Date ________

Alternatively, it can have the following format:

To ________ Date ________

From ________

Subject ____

How to Write a Memo

A memo addresses the subject under discussion immediately. It is short and written in a friendly tone. All business messages and information solicit a friendly, cooperative, and positive response from employees, clients, or senior or junior colleagues. For this purpose, the memo writer (manager) should write in a friendly and cooperative tone. A harsh or unfriendly tone will dishearten the reader of the memo and lower morale.

For example, consider the following memorandum from a works manager to the supervisors under his management:

> "Every Saturday morning all supervisors in my plant must meet and report on the clean-up of their individual shop floors. All reports must be submitted by afternoon."

In this memo, the tone is of distrust and authority. The works manager uses "all" and "must" twice. It shows that he does not consider any of his supervisors responsible. The use of "must" indicates that he doubts their sense of duty. The manager can direct his supervisors without doubting their sense of duty. Further, the memo is vaguely worded. The reader will not know which Saturday the meetings begin and when they are to be held—*morning* is a long period of time and is not specific. In addition, questions such where the meetings are to be held are not addressed. No reference of place is made. Again, *afternoon* is a vague deadline. The manager should indicate the specific time by which the reports are due. Finally, the phrase "clean-up" does not completely convey all that is to be considered while inspecting the work. Such vagueness should be avoided by observing the following principles of writing memos:

A harsh or unfriendly tone will dishearten the reader of the memo and lower morale.

- Do not assume that everyone knows everything related to the issue discussed in the memo.
- Explain the causes of problems or reasons for changes being suggested.
- Be clear, concrete, and specific.
- Be pleasant rather than commanding or authoritative. Use you-attitude.
- Ask for feedback or suggestions.

In the case discussed here, show how the supervisors would benefit from the proposed change. Explain the need to hold a Saturday supervision meeting to discuss and report on the clean-up of the shop floors. Ask for feedback. It is necessary to know supervisors' ideas on the monitoring and reporting of the clean-up. If they are invited to give their views, they will have sense of participation and involvement in the decision-making and execution processes.

Uses of a Memo

The various functions of memorandums are given in Exhibit 9.12.

As a written record of business decisions, policies, institutions, and so on, a memorandum acts as a permanent record of whatever is communicated. Therefore, it should be written with great care and skill.

A memorandum acts as a permanent record of whatever is communicated.

The two versions of the memo in Exhibit 9.13 show the difference in the effectiveness of a well-written memo and a poorly written one. The revised memo is specific and friendly in tone. It gives adequate details and explains why the change is needed and how it would help the engineers.

Exhibit 9.12
Functions of a Memorandum

Function	*Example*
To provide information	I attended the meeting of the executive committee. The main points discussed were…
To issue an instruction	Staff members are requested to attend the orientation session to be held in the conference room at 11 a.m. today.
To convey a policy decision	The executive committee has decided to pay one day's salary for working on a Saturday.
To offer suggestions	I think in-house training should be a regular feature for all cadres.
To record/report an agreement	During the meeting held on August 5, it was decided that we buy 3 LCD projectors.

Exhibit 9.13
Ineffective and Effective Sample Memos

Part A: The Original Memo

TYC

May 12, 2008

To: Lab Personnel
From: Sushil Kumar
Subject: Final Report Requirements

Beginning Monday, December 19, *all* our final test reports must indicate:

1. Test results
2. Dimensions in metric terms
3. Photos in proper order—also identify each one on its reverse
4. The distribution list
5. Write the report immediately after the test
6. Be sure all terms are spelled correctly
7. Complete formulas

Part B: The Revised Memo

TYC

May 12, 2008

To: Laboratory D-66 Personnel
From: Sushil Kumar, Supervisor
Subject: Final Test Report Requirements

I've received some requests for changes in our test reports from the chemical engineers who use them. Therefore, beginning Monday, December 19, all final test reports must include the following:

1. Full test results at each stage of the testing process
2. Dimensions stated in metric terms
3. Photos in proper order and each identified on its reverse
4. The distribution list
5. Correctly spelt terms
6. Full formulas

Please write your reports immediately after completing the test while the data are fresh in your mind. I'm sure with these minor adjustments in report style, we can give the engineers what they need.

ESSENTIALS OF GOOD BUSINESS LETTERS AND MEMOS

3

Know the essentials of good business correspondence.

Businessmen and women do not have time to read long letters and messages. They want to know facts, results, and important details. Therefore, business letters should provide only what is essential in the shortest space. The key is to keep to the point and be simple.

Simplicity, clarity, and conciseness are interrelated concepts. "Simple", according to *The Pocket Oxford Dictionary of Current English* (1998), means, "(1) understood or done easily and without difficulty (2) not complicated or elaborate; plain (3) not compound or complex (4) absolute, unqualified, straightforward." Most writers want their written communication to be simple in all the four senses. In fact, clarity and conciseness result from simplicity.

Simplicity

Simplicity in writing essentially means plainness.

Simplicity in writing essentially means plainness and saying exactly what one means. The writer should not bring in irrelevant details or information. Instead he or she should be straightforward and choose just one word instead of many whenever possible. Unnecessary adjectives and adverbs should be avoided. Qualifiers, adjectives, adverbs, and other unnecessary words often creep in without the writer realizing their presence. It is commonly believed that to be clear, the writer should be elaborate and repetitive, using several words with the same meaning. However, this creates clutter in writing instead of providing clarity. The key to writing simply, clearly, and concisely is to tighten the writing. Hence, while writing business letters, memos, or reports, one should choose one from among several nearly identical possible words and only use those that convey the message exactly. This basic principle of choosing one word carefully is usually called the principle of "unity"—the unity of thought and expression. This basic principle is discussed here:

- *One main subject in one letter:* Practical wisdom tells us if we have to write about two different subjects to the same company, department, or office at the same time, we should write two letters discussing each subject separately. Why? Two separate subjects placed together may adversely affect each other's importance. The two subjects may belong to two different sections and after taking action on one of the subjects, the department may just file the letter, resulting in the other subject being forgotten.

Only when two subjects are related and are to be considered for action by the same person, should they be discussed in the same letter. In all other situations, it is better to write separate letters.

- *One thought in one sentence:* Each sentence should be formed so that it contains a single, complete thought. Complicated (complex and compound) sentences are confusing in a business letter. For example, compare the following sentences:

  Complicated: The benefits that he derived from his early training were soon lost and he began to do things as he was accustomed to doing them.

  Simple: The benefits of his early training were soon lost. He started doing things in his usual way.

- *One idea in one paragraph:* Each paragraph should open with a sentence that summarizes the central idea of the paragraph. The sentences that follow should support, illustrate, and develop the thought by providing additional information.

Each paragraph should open with a sentence that summarizes the central idea of the paragraph.

Clarity

The clarity of a business letter is two-fold:

1. *Clarity of message:* Ideas should be logically sequenced in a coherent way.

2. *Clarity of form:* Presentation of matter, format, paragraph divisions, layout, margins, and spacing between the lines should be done neatly. The letter should appear well organized and properly formatted.

Conciseness

It is best to be "short". This means writing short letters, choosing short words, forming short paragraphs, and constructing short sentences. The goal is to give only relevant information in the fewest possible words.

Besides simplicity, clarity, and conciseness, there are many other issues that need to be kept in mind while writing business letters and memos. These are discussed here.

Standard and Neutral Language

Writers of business letters should use standard, neutral language and should avoid jargon, technical terms, and slang. They should also eliminate hackneyed and old-fashioned expressions from their writing.

You-Attitude

Writers should keep in mind the point of view of their readers (customers and clients). All writing is for a specific reader, and it is at his or her level that the letter or correspondence should be written. In addition, the writer should know his or her readers' expectations, fears, beliefs, and feelings about the matter at hand. The writer should be able to visualize the readers' reaction to the message before writing.

Sincerity and Tone

The writer's tone and sincerity reflect his or her personality. These two aspects of a letter or memo are important to convince readers that the writer really means what he or she is saying. The tone of the letter should reflect the writer's personality. Today, good writers believe that a business letter should be characterized by confidence, directness, enthusiasm, and humanity.

- *Confidence:* Before writing a letter, the writer should have complete information on the subject and should be certain about the facts that will be discussed. If the writer is definite about what he or she is saying, the letter will not be evasive or vaguely worded with indirect expressions and passive verbs. Passive verbs are weak. They convey withdrawal in the writer's subconscious mind. In contrast, active verbs are strong. Expressions such as "it is recommended that" (I recommend), "it was considered that" (I considered), "it was felt that" (I feel), "it is an indication of" (it indicates), "conducted a survey of" (surveyed) show hesitation and should be replaced with their active forms, which show directness and confidence.

> Passive verbs are weak. They convey withdrawal in the writer's subconscious mind. In contrast, active verbs are strong.

- *Directness:* Directness in letters results from confidence. One's letters should not only say what is intended, but should say so in a straightforward and courteous manner. However, while directness is desirable, one should not be abrupt.
- *Enthusiasm:* The writer should be enthusiastic in his or her sincerity. The letter should make the reader feel that the writer is genuinely interested in him or her. This cannot be done by just saying something like "Believe me I am really interested in solving your problem." Instead, the writer must choose words that show interest in the reader.

> Write your letters in short and simple sentences. Use simple, familiar and short words. Avoid abstract words. Choose verbs that express forceful action.

- *Humanity:* Business letters are generally written in a stiff, formal, and mechanical manner. They often lack personal warmth and the feeling of speaking to another living being. To counter this, writers should use the personal pronouns "we", "I", "you", "he", "she", and "they". These give a personal touch to business letters. For achieving the right tone, the letter and other forms of business correspondence should be written in a simple, formal, and friendly way. Remember that criticizing or apologizing should be done carefully, as should complimenting.

Emphasis

In business correspondence, specially a letter or memo, ideas must be placed in order of their importance. The main idea must be stated at the beginning. Even in the case of a sentence or paragraph, the rule is to place the main idea first. Position reflects importance. Emphasis can be indicated also by repetition, use of punctuation, and the mechanical devices of using bold letters or underlining.

4

Plan written communication by first considering the needs, levels, and expectations of readers.

Planning, Writing, and Revising: The Three Steps of Successful Writing

The writers of letters and other forms of business communications are advised to follow the three steps of successful writing to communicate clearly and accurately: (1) planning, (2) writing, and (3) rewriting (revising).

- *Planning:* Writing a letter or memo is a one-way communication exercise. The words written on the page are all that convey the message. The reader does not have other non-verbal means to interpret the message. Usually, the reader is not in a position to immediately clarify something that is unclear. For example, suppose you write a letter to the Hill View Resort to make arrangements for a business meeting and lunch three days before the event. You would need to give complete information about everything the manager would need to know before making arrangements for the meeting and lunch. This includes the number of persons, the time, duration, and size of the conference, the hall desired, the number of collar microphones needed, the seating plan, the duration of the meeting, the kind of food needed, the number of vegetarians and non-vegetarians, the beverages and snacks required, and so on.

  Hence, to write a complete and short letter, plan before writing it. In addition, it is generally helpful to write a draft first.

  The writers should always consider:

  - The reader
  - The purpose of writing
  - The situation (context)

  These three elements determine the choice of the letter's/memo's/report's content, organization, and format.

- *Rewriting and revising:* Writing is a mode of thinking. Rewriting or revising what has been written or dictated is a mode of improved thinking. Revising the first draft is not just useful for fixing grammatical errors. It is also an attempt to check if the writer has been able to say what was intended in the best manner possible. *Revision* is, therefore, a process of clarifying ideas, meanings, and purpose. It involves eliminating clutter that hides the writer's true intentions.

Revision is a process of clarifying ideas, meanings, and purpose. It involves eliminating clutter that hides the writer's true intentions.

Very few of people are capable of expressing themselves accurately in the first draft. This is not due to poor command of the language. It is related to the process of accurate thinking. Writing is an act of transcribing ideas into words. The transcription will be accurate only when the thinking is accurate. Each revision sharpens the writer's thinking and thereby helps tighten his or her expression to a close transcription of what is in his or her mind.

How rewriting changes the thinking and message of a manager from verbiage to intent, eliminating wordiness, correcting the tone, and revising the policy itself can be explained with the help of the example discussed in Communication Snapshot 9.2.

Communication Snapshot 9.2

Redrafting a Memo

The management of Excel Corporation is concerned about the misuse of office telephones by its employees. In the past few months, expenses have soared because employees have been using their desk phones to call friends and relatives. In fact, employees have been making outstation calls for personal conversations. Lisa Christopher, the head of administration, drafts a memo (Exhibit 9B) to stop employees from misusing their office telephones, which has cost the company a lot of money and employee time.

Exhibit 9B
The Original Memo

Excel Corporation

INTERNAL MEMORANDUM

To: All employees

From: Lisa Christopher, Head, Administration

Subject: Misuse of office telephones

We have noticed that, in the past few months, the company's expenses have been soaring because employees have been misusing their desk phones. Office telephones are being used for personal communication.

The use of office telephones for personal calls is against company policy. Employees are advised to use their desk telephones (and other office phones) for official purposes only. The use of office phones for personal calls must stop with immediate effect. The management will take strict action against anyone who is found guilty of misusing office telephones, and their employment may be terminated.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any queries about the issue.

Lisa Christopher

Before signing the memo, Lisa reads it a few times. She wonders if she will be able to change the behaviour of the employees by writing such a stern memo. She revises the memo a couple of times, until it is in the final form. The redrafted memo is shown in Exhibit 9C.

Exhibit 9C
The Revised Memo

Excel Corporation

INTERNAL MEMORANDUM

To: All employees

From: Lisa Christopher, Head, Administration

Subject: Misuse of office telephones

In view of the soaring administrative costs, we have revised our policy on the use of office telephones. So far, our policy has been to discourage the use of office telephones for personal purposes because of the costs involved. We realize that this may not be a convenient solution, so employees can now use office telephones for personal calls by paying for each call.

The details of charges for local and outstation calls have been put up on the notice board.

Lisa Christopher

The revised memo is certainly better. The writing is simplified, the wordiness is removed, the tone of the memo is made courteous, and the revised policy is clearly stated. In short, the purpose is exactly and effectively communicated.

If you very carefully compare the first and final versions of Lisa's memo, you will discover a basic change in her thinking on the use of office phones. Lisa had first considered the use of phones for personal matters to be misuse of office phones (see the subject line of the memo). Now, she treats it as regular use of phones. This psychological shift in Lisa's perspective has improved the tone of her memo and her attitude towards other employees in the company, who now become part of "we". Her tone now is free of harshness and the threat of termination.

Work out the changes in Lisa's mind as she moves from a poor first draft to a final revision that has simplicity, brevity, courtesy, and the you-attitude. Notice the following steps in Lisa's process of revising and reaching the final draft, which are part of all successful revisions.

- Focusing on intent
- Eliminating wordiness
- Correcting the tone
- Revising the policy itself

For realizing how rewriting sharpens thinking and changes both content and form, you should trace each one of the above changes in the two memos. This exercise will improve the effectiveness of your written business communication.

FORM AND LAYOUT OF BUSINESS LETTERS

5

Acquaint yourself with different formats of letters, memos, and e-mails.

The appearance of business letters should be impressive. The stationery should be of quality that speaks to the status of the company and the individual writing the letter. The layout should be neat, with proper margins on all sides. The text should be carefully positioned on the letterhead. In addition, there should be a sufficient margin (at least half an inch) on the left side to allow for binding or filing. The typeface should be attractive and easy to read. Proper line spacing (double spacing instead of single) helps readability.

Business-letter Styles

A business organization usually selects one of the following formats for its business letters:

1. The full-block style
2. The semi-block style
3. The simplified style

Usually, the *full-block style* is preferred. It is convenient to set left-hand margins for paragraphs and other parts of the letter, such as the date, address, salutation, text, close, signature, and notations. It also looks simple and clear. Every line begins at the same distance from the left margin, which results in each paragraph looking like a distinct block. The convention of open punctuation further simplifies the use of the full-block style. Earlier, the address, salutation, and closing followed close punctuation and used a comma after each line and a full stop at the end. The full-block style has a disadvantage when following close punctuation, as it looks heavy on the left side. However, the trend now is to leave the choice of open or close punctuation to the writer, as long as the writer is consistent with his or her choice.

In the *semi-block style*, the beginning of the paragraph is not left aligned; only the lines are left aligned. The first line of each paragraph is indented. The date, closing, signature, name, and title are indented to the right half of the page.

In the *simplified style*, the letter has neither a salutation nor a closing. A subject line takes the place of the salutation. All lines begin from the left margin. Exhibit 9.14 illustrates each of these styles.

In the simplified style, the letter neither has a salutation nor a closing. A subject line takes the place of the salutation.

A business organization can use any of the styles, but it should use a consistent format for all business correspondence.

Exhibit 9.14
Business Letter Styles

Part A: The Full-block Style

BioLeather Pvt Ltd
Malkapet, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh 500036
Ph: 24545539 E-mail: info@bioleather.com Web site: www.BioLeather.com

Date	September 12, 2009
Inside address	Mr Henry James Marketing Manager Bioleather Products Corp. Sector 14, Gurgaon
Subject line	Subject: Bioleather Products Promotion
Salutation	Dear Mr James:
The message	
	Yours sincerely,
Signature	KMahajan
Name, title	K. Mahajan (Vice President of Marketing)
Initials of the writer in bold and the typist in lowercase letters	**KM**/sk CC: Name, Designation
Other notations	Encl:

Part B: The Semi-block Style

BioLeather Pvt Ltd

Malkapet, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh 500036

Ph: 24545539 E-mail: info@bioleather.com Web site: www.BioLeather.com

2 February 2010

Inside address

Salutation

Re: Our Order No Your Dispatch No.

The message

Sincerely yours,

Signature

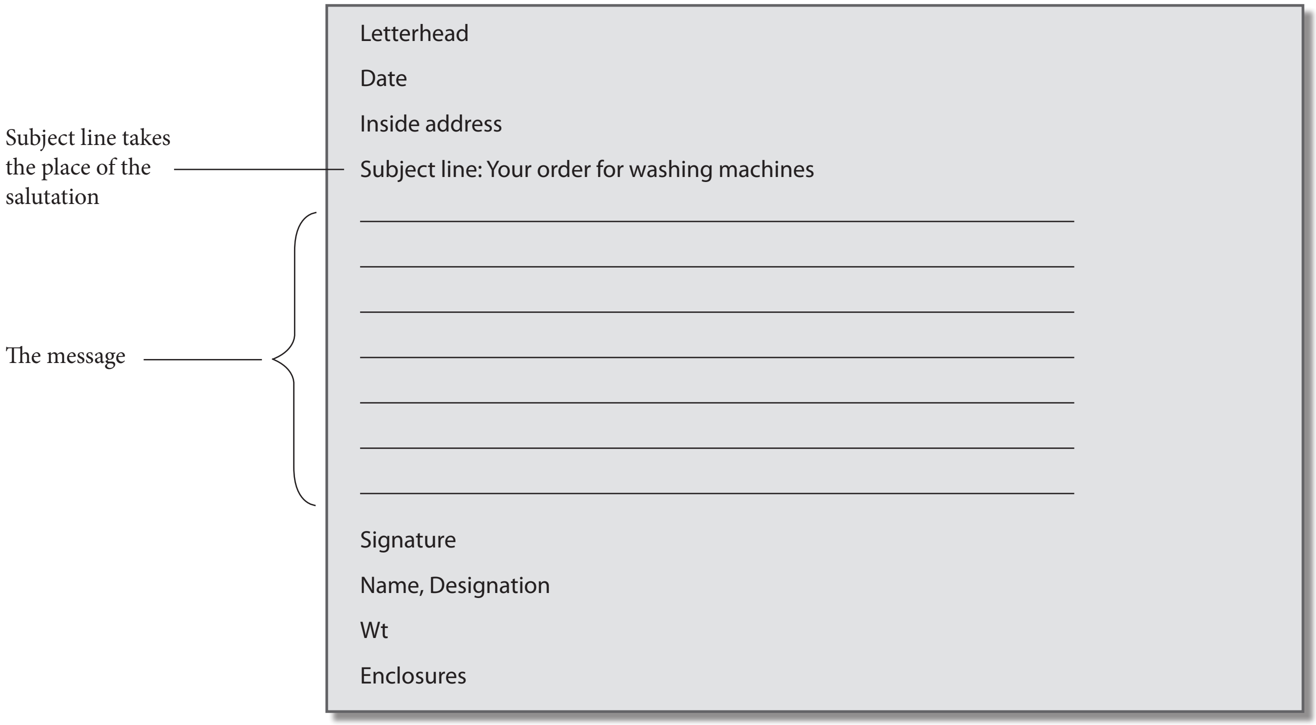
Name

Designation

Closing, signature, name and title

SP: CK

Part C: The Simplified Style



Layout and Formatting Guidelines

The following are a few guidelines regarding the layout and formatting of various elements of a business letter:

- *The attention line:* The attention line should be placed between the inside address and the salutation. It is no longer necessary in business letters. When used, it is generally found in letters addressed to the company as a whole, to draw the attention of a particular person to the matter discussed in the letter.
- *The subject line:* The subject line is positioned between the salutation and the inside address or the first line of the letter. For instance:

  Dear Ms Ray,

  Subject: Order No. 4567

- *The date line:* The month should be spelled out and the date placed one double space beneath the letterhead. The date line should be typed at the left margin in the full-block or simplified style. Place it at the centre if the semi-block style is used. There is no need for a comma between the month and year. One can separate the date from the year by using a comma as in June 21, 2003.
- *The second page of a letter:* The second page of a letter is usually plain and without the letterhead. Therefore the heading should come after leaving approximately six lines of space from the top. The heading should mention the addressee, page number, and date. This is done so that the second page is identified as a continuation of the first. The heading can be written in one of these ways:

  1. Mrs S. Uberoi ———— 2 ———— July 9, 2003
  2. Mrs S. Uberoi, July 9, 2003, page 2

3. Mrs S. Uberoi

   July 9, 2003

   Page 2

   The first heading style is the simplest. The same form should be followed for subsequent pages, if any.

- *The letterhead:* If printed stationery is not available, white paper sized 8½" × 11" should be used and the company's name and address should be typed and centred at the top of the page.
- *The envelope:* The block form is best for the address. The standard official size for an envelope is 9½" × 4⅛", which is used for standard sheets and letters that include an enclosure. The commercial size envelope, 6½" × 3⅝", is used for letters typed on pages smaller than the standard size.
- *Punctuation:* Choose either open or mixed punctuation. In open punctuation, there is no punctuation after the date, lines of the inside address, salutation, and closing. Mixed punctuation also drops this punctuation except when a colon or comma is used after the salutation.

WRITING E-MAILS

E-mail is the most commonly used mode of interaction among executives and departments, and between a company and its customers, clients, distributors, retailers, suppliers, and vendors. It is the quickest channel of written communication. Any amount of information, documents, pictures, and so on, can be sent to the recipients as attachments.

Receiver's E-mail Account

For e-mail connectivity, one needs to have just the e-mail address of the intended receiver. Many persons have more than one e-mail account—an official account and a personal account. Therefore, the sender of the e-mail should know which address is appropriate to use. In addition, one has to be careful in typing the address. For example, in the address mukesh.chaturvedi@bimtech.ac.in, if there is any mistake, say an extra space, a spelling error, or a missing dot, the mail would not be delivered.

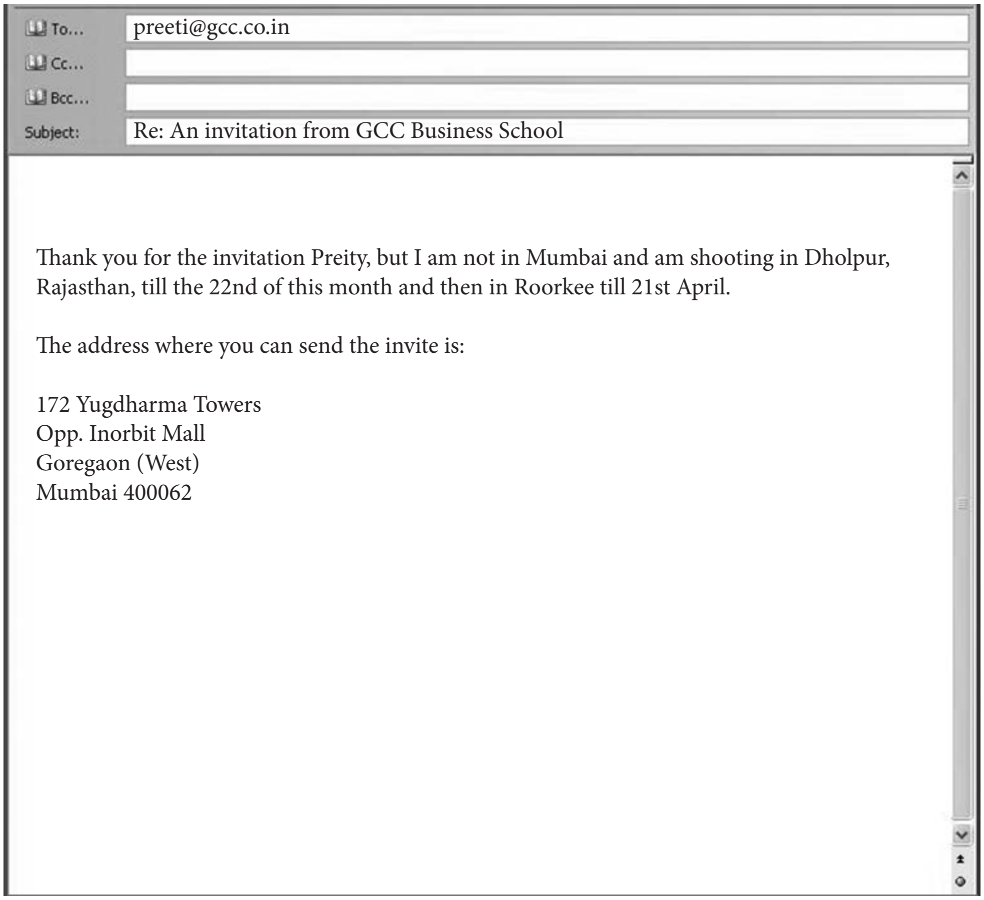
Subject Line

In an e-mail, the subject line is the first thing that is noticed by the receiver. Therefore, it should be composed as precisely as possible. The writer needs to carefully work out the wording of the subject line so that the title and context are clear and the reader gets the gist of the message. Examples of good subject lines are "Visit postponed to next Monday" and "Annual report to be ready this Saturday".

Sending Copies

The sender may need to send a copy of the e-mail to several persons at the same time. This is generally simpler if group e-mail IDs are provided. For example, if a company has internal group IDs set up, then by writing "marketing" in the "To" line, an e-mail can be sent to all the people in the marketing department. Usually, this is an internal facility. In external e-mails, the e-mail addresses of all intended receivers are listed in the "Cc" line. A "blind carbon copy" of the e-mail can also be sent to one or more persons without the knowledge of other receivers, by entering their addresses in the "Bcc" line. However, caution should be exercised in marking blind carbon copies as this can lead to difficult situations. For example, if the sender marks a copy to a person without the knowledge of the receiver and the person marked in the "Bcc" field hits "Reply All" in response to that mail, it places the sender in a difficult spot.

Exhibit 9.15
A Short, Clear E-mail


To... preeti@gcc.co.in
Cc...
Bcc...
Subject: Re: An invitation from GCC Business School

Thank you for the invitation Preity, but I am not in Mumbai and am shooting in Dholpur, Rajasthan, till the 22nd of this month and then in Roorkee till 21st April.

The address where you can send the invite is:

172 Yugdharma Towers
Opp. Inorbit Mall
Goregaon (West)
Mumbai 400062

An e-mail is like a memo that needs neither a salutation nor a closing subscription. However, if the two persons are communicating for the first time and do not know each other personally, the sender may indicate a favourable disposition towards the receiver by being friendly. Exhibit 9.15 shows an example of a short, friendly, and clear e-mail written by a famous Bollywood actor and youth icon in response to an invitation from a business school.

Communication Snapshot 9.3 shows a series of e-mails between the COO of Time Industries and one of his former employees.

The following is a summary of the broad guidelines that need to be followed while writing business letters, memos, and e-mails:

- Consider the readers' (receivers') needs and expectations.
- Understand the purpose for writing the message and the total context in which it is being written.
- Put essential information first.
- State each point clearly and directly.
- Use conventional formats.
- Be courteous.

Communication Snapshot 9.3

A Series of E-mails

The style of the e-mail in Exhibit 9D is businesslike, formal, and brief, but not brusque. It is written with conversational ease, in a pleasant tone. The closing sentence reassures Abhinav that the issues he raised in his e-mail (Exhibit 9E) would be addressed.

Exhibit 9D
Harish's E-mail to Abhinav

To... c.abhinav@hotmail.com
Cc...
Bcc... chrischacko@time.com
Subject: RE: An Urgent Appeal!

Dear Abhinav,

Many thanks for your message. May I request you to contact Chris Chacko? He will be your single point of contact in Time to resolve this matter. He will also advise you regarding whom you should meet to obtain clarifications relating to the various areas highlighted by you.

We are committed to ensuring that you obtain a full and fair response.

Kind regards,

Harish

Exhibit 9E
Abhinav's Original Message to Harish

To... harish.g@time.com
Cc... chrischacko@time.com
Bcc...
Subject: An Urgent Appeal!

Dear Sir,

This is with reference to Mr Chris Chacko's mail of 19 July regarding the issue of clearance. Mr Chacko asked me to get in touch with OneCommercial. According to him, OneCommercial reported a mismatch of Rs 38,000 for the WOT–TDI Mall project. As per his advice, I got in touch with the commercial team at OneCommercial on the 19th. However, on 27 July, I received a mail from Mrs Chopra stating that there was a shortage of Rs 1,50,350, seemingly held against me. In addition, some stock reports were sent to Mr Aakash in OneCommercial by WOT–TDI Mall between 31 May and 21 June with some other figures altogether.
I sent a detailed message to Mrs Chopra regarding this, along with the necessary supporting documents. To bring to your notice the kind of ambiguity there is in the system, I have also sent you and Mr Chacko hard copies of the entire set of supporting documents, which should reach you in a day or two.
I am deeply pained because it seems that there is some intention to implicate me. I shall be very grateful if you could please advise me how I should proceed with the matter.

Regards,
Abhinav Chaturvedi

An e-mail should be written the way we talk. This makes the writing vivid. It should read like the sender (writer) and the receiver (reader) are conversing face-to-face. Exhibit 9F is an example of a conversational style of writing an e-mail; it is from Chris Chacko to Abhinav in response to Abhinav's e-mail (Exhibit 9G).

Exhibit 9F
Chris's Message to Abhinav

To... c.abhinav@hotmail.com
Cc... harish.g@time.com; saumya.shah@OneCommercial.com
Bcc...
Subject: Re: An Urgent Appeal!

Hi Abhinav,

There has been stock mismatch worth Rs 38,000 that has been reported by OneCommercial for TDI Mall, which is being looked into.

I too do not know under what head the amount of Rs1,947 has been credited to your account. I am surprised to hear that you have not received any response regarding this from OneCommercial despite your follow-up. Could you tell me whom you spoke to? Saumya Shah, the Regional HR Manager, confirms that you have not spoken with her.

I cannot give any timeline regarding when your clearance will come through, as it is was clearly mentioned that clearance formalities need to be completed by you, and you have not obtained clearance from OneCommercial. Please take this up with OneCommercial directly as you need to get your clearance formalities completed to settle your accounts.

Regards,
Chris

The opening phrase of Chris's e-mail in Exhibit 9F, "Hi Abhinav", sets an amiable tone. Further, the use of passive voice does not allow him to sound accusatory. In addition, Chris shares the chain of his thoughts in a candid manner with Abhinav. Chris's e-mail is written in a style that makes the official communication between a senior executive and a junior business manager more like a personal chat.

Exhibit 9G
Abhinav's Original E-mail to Chris

To... chrischacko@time.com
Cc... harish.g@time.com
Bcc...
Subject: An Urgent Appeal!

Dear Sir,

It has been three weeks since I wrote to you about my clearance. On the 13th of July, I received an amount of Rs 1,947 from Titan Industries Ltd, but I am unable to find out from OneCommercial what head this amount has been credited under.

Also, despite sending a reminder on 9 July, I am still waiting for my clearance. Could you please help me determine how long this will take?

Regards,
Abhinav

In fact, the success and popularity of e-mail in the world of global business is partly because e-mail has the speediness of a telephone conversation and the crispness of a well-written memo.

SUMMARY

- This chapter showed that the ability to communicate information in a simple, clear, concise, and precise written form is of great value for a successful manager and for the smooth functioning of his or her organization.
- It is extremely important to plan ahead before writing, as this is essential for achieving clarity of thought and expression. The writer must know his or her audience and purpose and choose the correct words and the appropriate tone to write effectively.
- Revision is also essential to the writing process as it helps the writer clarify or reconsider his or her thoughts.
- There are various types of routine, good-news, and persuasive letters, which all require a certain organization, tone, and content.
- E-mails have become popular in business communication because they combine the speed of telephone conversations with the crispness of a well-written memo.

CASE: A REPLY SENT TO AN ERRING CUSTOMER

In businesses, it is important to write tactful letters that promote good customer relations. This is particularly true for letters that refuse the customer's request for whatever reason, because these letters should try to retain the customer's goodwill. The writer should believe that the customer is king and that the customer is always right. Examine the following letter with this perspective and answer questions given at the end of it:

Dear Sir,

Your letter of the 23rd, with a cheque for Rs 25,000 on account, is to hand.

We note what you say regarding the difficulty you experienced in collecting your outstanding accounts, but we are compelled to remark that we do not think you are treating us with the consideration we have a right to expect.

It is true that small remittances have been forwarded from time to time, but the debit balance against you has been steadily increasing during the past twelve months until it now stands at the considerable total of Rs 85,000.

Having regard to the many years during which you have been a customer of this house and the generally satisfactory character of your account, we are reluctant to resort to harsh measures.

We must, however, insist that the existing balance be cleared by regular installments of say Rs 10,000 per month, and the first installment should reach us by the 7 April. Meanwhile, you shall need to pay cash for all further goods; we are allowing you an extra 3 per cent discount in lieu of credit.

We shall be glad to hear from you about this arrangement, as otherwise we shall have no alternative but to close your account and place the matter in other hands.

Yours truly,

Questions to Answer

1. Comment on the appropriateness of the sender's tone to a customer.
2. Point out the old-fashioned phrases and expressions.
3. Rewrite the letter according to the principles of effective writing in business.

REVIEW YOUR LEARNING

1. Discuss the organization and pattern of ideas in "yes" letters.
2. Analyse the pattern of "no" letters. Give ideas on how to organize these letters.
3. What is the basic outline of a persuasive letter? Justify the structure of ideas in a persuasive letter.
4. What strategies can be used to de-emphasize a refusal to a customer?
5. How does a memo differ from a letter?
6. Mention three important characteristics of written communication that you would like to achieve in your letters and memos.
7. Bring out the basic relationship between clarity of thought and clarity of writing.
8. What causes wordiness in business letters? Give examples of wordiness and provide the concise forms.

9. Should a business letter necessarily be written in a formal and impersonal style? Discuss your viewpoint clearly.
10. "Many business letters don't produce immediate and/or discernible results." Give reasons for their ineffectiveness.

REFLECT ON YOUR LEARNING

1. Formal, stiff letters, written in ceremonious language are a thing of the past in modern business transactions. Discuss whether this is true.
2. "Most letters written in the course of business are important to the writer as well as the reader." Show how this is the case.
3. Writing marketing and sales letters offers challenges to the writer. Discuss some of these challenges.

APPLY YOUR LEARNING

1. "Last week, I paid my balance in full with a personal cheque. However, the enclosed statement shows a current balance of Rs 300. Will you please correct my account balance to the correct figure—zero?" Write a "no" response to this letter explaining why the request cannot be granted.
2. Comment on each of the following sentences:
   (a) "Yes, we appreciate the reasoning behind your letter." (As an opening sentence.)
   (b) "Our policy is always to refuse such requests. We are sorry your request, therefore, is refused."

SELF-CHECK YOUR LEARNING

From the given options please choose the most appropriate answer:*

1. Business letters produce immediate effect because they are:
   (a) brief
   (b) formal
   (c) informal
   (d) interesting
2. Letters that please the receiver are called:
   (a) good-news letters
   (b) routine letters
   (c) invitation letters
   (d) "yes" letters
3. The purpose of a "no" response letter is to leave the reader with:
   (a) no future hope
   (b) minimum disappointment
   (c) unpleasant feelings
   (d) reasons for the rejection of the request
4. Form letters are also known as:
   (a) persuasive sales letters
   (b) bad news letters
   (c) formal letters
   (d) circular letters
5. A memorandum (memo) is considered a brief form of written communication for:
   (a) internal use
   (b) formal use
   (c) external use
   (d) legal use
6. Simplicity in writing means essentially:
   (a) the use of simple words
   (b) the use of simple sentences
   (c) the use of simple tense
   (d) plainness
7. Writing a letter with "you-attitude" means writing:
   (a) from the point of view of the writer
   (b) from the point of view of the reader
   (c) from the point of view of other persons not concerned
   (d) using the word "you" repeatedly
8. Good business letters are characterized by the following personal quality of the writer:
   (a) sincerity
   (b) seriousness
   (c) humour
   (d) formality
9. The simplified style business letter has:
   (a) a salutation
   (b) a complimentary close
   (c) a subject line
   (e) indentation
10. Modern business letters are usually written in:
    (a) full-block style
    (b) semi-block style
    (c) indented style
    (d) simplified style

*For answers and self-evaluation, visit www.pearsoned.co.in/PDChaturvedi

10

Report Writing

". . . a report covers everything that has to be covered but nothing more."

—H. A. Shearing and B. C. Christian

Upon completion of this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Understand that a report and an essay are two distinct forms of written communication and be able to differentiate between their physical structures and the styles in which they are written.
2. Know the various types of reports and their essential elements.
3. Develop organizing and outlining skills.
4. Learn how to write both long and short formal reports in a clear, objective style, using the appropriate layout.
5. Know how to write abstracts and summaries, introductions, final recommendations, and conclusions.
6. Understand the role and use of graphics in reports.

COMMUNICATION AT WORK

Rajesh Tewari, a middle-level executive in the marketing department of Samsung, Noida, faced some difficulties when he was asked to submit a report on his plan to expand the company's retail outlets in metropolitan areas he had recently visited. More than a week had passed since his visit, but he had not been able to begin the report. Something or the other kept happening to make him postpone writing the report. He felt that if he had been asked to write an essay on his business visits to Mumbai and Chennai, he could have easily written it. But writing a report, he thought, was a technical thing. He thought he did not know how a report was written. Finally, he searched the Internet to learn about the form and structure of short technical/business reports. Before it was too late, he hurriedly dashed off a report to his senior manager.

However, the report left the senior manager asking himself several questions that were not answered by Rajesh in his report. Moreover, Rajesh had presented the data in words that ran into several pages. He failed to include graphs and illustrations that would give the reader an idea of the overall picture at a glance, and this further affected the quality of his report.

WHAT IS A REPORT?

After the letter and the memo, the report is the most used form in business writing. A report can be defined as a communication in which the writer (or speaker if it is an oral report) provides information to some individual or organization because it is his or her responsibility to do so.[1] It is an assigned communication for a purpose and for a specific receiver/reader.

The common element in all reports is the element of responsibility. The writer is obliged to communicate what he or she knows to those who need this information, as a part of an assigned, clearly defined, time-bound task.

The differences between a report and other forms of writing are:

- Other forms of writing, such as essays, are subjective in nature. They reflect the writer's personality.
- Reports generally draw on outside sources. They present facts, conclusions, and recommendations based on investigation and analysis of data obtained by observation of facts. Appendix 2 discusses the investigation process in a research study in detail.
- The word "paper" can mean several things, such as an article, a detailed report, or a project report. However, it most commonly refers to research writing.
- Reports have a highly structured format.
- Each part of a report is numbered and captioned with headings and sub-headings.

1

Understand that a report and an essay are two distinct forms of written communication and be able to differentiate between their physical structures and the styles in which they are written.

- The language of a report is concise and concrete.
- Reports contain recommendations and conclusions.
- They make use of tables and graphs.
- Reports are usually preceded by a summary.
- Reports can be oral or written, but essays are always written.
- An essay can be factual, but it remains subjective in its treatment and presentation. The essayist does not usually offer evidence for his or her writing, nor does the reader look for it. The reader of a report, on the other hand, looks for facts and evidence.
- As a form of creative writing, an essay's purpose is largely self-expression for the author and providing entertainment or enjoyment for the reader.
- An essay is rooted in the writer's imagination, whereas a report is rooted in investigation and analysis. This is why an essay has a beginning, but may not have a report's logically derived conclusion. Moreover, it has no signposts, headings or sub-headings, or bullet points to indicate a coherent structure that moves from the beginning, through the middle, to the end.

The common element in all reports is the element of responsibility.

Thus, a report is distinct from an essay or any other form of writing.

THE PURPOSE OF A REPORT

While collecting data, the investigator should remember that the report is not a descriptive statement of facts, events, or future possibilities. For example, the purpose of a report is not fulfilled if it speaks about "the possibility of change of work site". Instead, the report should explain the reasons for changing the workplace, discuss the need for doing so, compare the relative advantages of different choices available, and choose and recommend the best option. The basic purpose of a report is to help the management identify the reasons underlying a specific situation. The factors responsible for the problem, the alternatives available for solving it, and the best course of action to take emerge from a thorough study of all relevant facts and factors. The main purpose of report is to present specific conclusions regarding the problem's existence and solution.

The basic purpose of a report is to help the management identify the reasons underlying a specific situation.

2

Know the various types of reports and their essential elements.

KINDS OF REPORTS

Broadly speaking, reports are of two kinds:

- Formal reports that contain all essential elements of a report
- Semi-formal/informal reports

Reports are known by the names from which they get their purpose and form. They are usually identified as:

- Routine reports: reports made by filling in a printed form
- Letter reports: reports in the form of letters
- Memo reports: reports in the form of memos
- Progress reports: reports on the progress and status of a project
- Periodic reports: reports for keeping records, made routinely at regular intervals
- Laboratory reports: reports on the results of laboratory work
- Short reports: short reports that are like formal reports in tone and other general qualities, but are simpler in design because they do not have all the front and back matter, and have a shorter main body
- Formal reports: reports that are impersonal in tone, detailed, and fully structured

In the world of business, a report can vary from a short, informal account (essentially a memo) of the present state of a project to a long, formal, well-documented report of a corporation or government department. Each organization normally has its own in-house method of presentation, which its report writers will adhere to. The writer of a report in an organization is guided by the following:

- A specific layout—the sequence in which information is presented. For instance, recommendations and conclusions may precede the discussion.
- Its cover details and terms of reference—this includes the name of the organization, report code number, and other related information about the author, subject, and details of submission.

THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

In an organization, the task of producing a report on a specific problem can be assigned to an individual or a team. The problem, purpose, scope, limitations, budget, cultural considerations related to the ethical values of the organization, and the date for submission (time limit) are clearly specified when the report is authorized. These specifications guide the report writer. They form what is called "the terms of reference". The person authorizing or sanctioning the writing of the report sets down these terms.

The process of writing a report is left entirely to the writer. Report writing involves research, analysis, and presentation. The writer has to first investigate the problem, search for facts, gather evidence, and then analyse the data before presenting observations, conclusions, and suggestions for solutions to the problem. The writer can choose from a variety of methods when studying the problem—visits, interviews, questionnaires, data banks, past records of the organization, and consulting existing literature and documents as relevant sources of information. The writer also needs to know the total context and background of the subject of investigation. Background study and data collection may sometimes pose difficulties, but without this effort, a report will not be authentic.

> The writer has to first investigate the problem, search for facts, gather evidence, and then analyse the data before presenting observations, conclusions, and suggestions for solutions to the problem.

THE OBJECTIVES OF A REPORT

A report is primarily a source of information that helps in decision-making. It can also be used to offer a solution to a business problem. Its objective can be:

> A report is primarily a source of information that helps in decision-making.

- To give information about a company's activities, progress, plans, and problems.
- To record events for future reference.
- To recommend a specific action.
- To justify and persuade readers about the need for action in controversial situations.
- To present facts to the management to help decide the direction the business should choose.

The study and report should be comprehensive. They should examine all aspects of a problem and the potential solutions. The recommended solution and its advantages or disadvantages should be analysed in relation to management as a whole, not just the entrepreneur. All groups—workers, staff, customers, and so on whose interests may be affected in different ways by a change should be considered.

The report writer should consider the objectives of the report from the point of view of its recipients and ask the following questions as guidelines:

- For whom is the report written?
- What is their level of information and education?
- How much do they already know about the problem?
- Why do they want the report?
- What do they want to know, and in how much detail?
- How does the report's result (conclusion) help them?

3

Develop organizing and outlining skills.

PLANNING AND ORGANIZING INFORMATION

The writer of a report should choose a method of data collection according to the nature and purpose of the proposed study. Before writing the report, he or she should evaluate the information collected for its relevance and usefulness, and should plan and organize the information. The findings should be logically grouped to form an outline of the report.

Planning the message before writing the report will make it clear and easy to follow.

Planning the message before writing the report will make it clear and easy to follow. Planning involves organizing the ideas already identified as important. In the case of a short, simple piece of writing such as a letter or memo, the material can be organized by deciding what points to include and how to arrange them. When the material to be covered is vast and complex, like in long reports, the writer must plan not just the sequence of presentation, but also the subordination and coordination of ideas and facts in relation to each other and to the text as a whole.

Organizing involves two parts:

- Sequencing information
- Outlining information

Sequencing Information

Information can be arranged in three different ways:

- Randomly
- Sequentially
- Hierarchically

Random Organization

Random organization, as the term suggests, indicates no visible relationship among the ideas and facts presented. The communicator (writer/speaker) expresses thoughts and ideas as they come into his or her mind; the document is just a string of ideas, not a pattern.

Sequential Organization

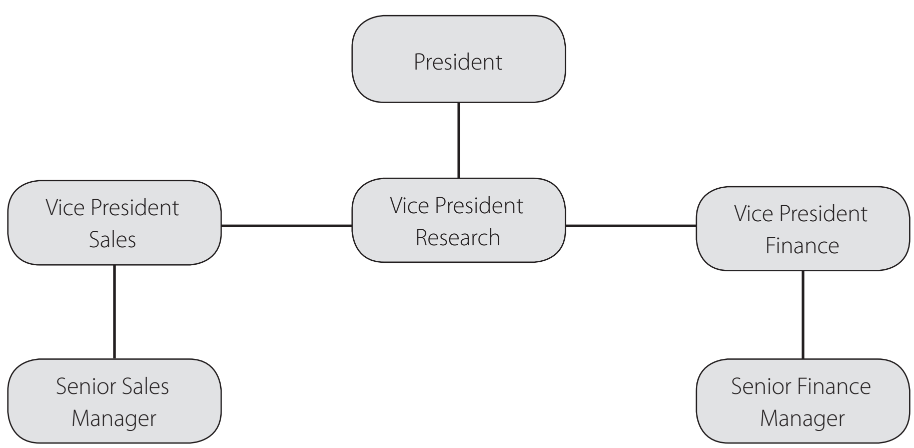
A sequence is a set of things relating to one another in sequential order. Each item has the same relationship to each of the other items. Examples are alphabetical, numerical, or chronological ordering.

Hierarchical organization is based on multi-level relationships.

Hierarchical Organization

Hierarchical organization is an ordering of items according to their relative importance. It is based on multi-level relationships. In this pattern, items have other items placed under them. Hierarchical organization is best shown as a tree-structure given in Exhibit 10.1.

Exhibit 10.1
Hierarchical Organization



Statement of thesis ____________

I. First main idea ____________
    A. First subordinate idea ____________
        1. First reason or illustration ____________
        2. Second reason or example ____________
            a. First supporting detail ____________
            b. Second supporting detail ____________
    B. Second subordinate idea ____________

II. Second main idea ____________

Exhibit 10.2
Layout of a Formal Outline

This hierarchical relation among ideas/items is what an outline shows. This form of organization helps a reader understand the information more easily. Random and sequential organization, which are used in computer theory, are not as well suited to reports. A reader would feel lost in the maze of unarranged and unpatterned ideas. Hence, related ideas should be grouped together.

Grouping material for writing is done by considering levels of generality. Generality is a relative concept because each idea is to be viewed in the context of the whole set of ideas. One idea is more general than another if it represents a larger category. For example, "literature" is more general than "novel", and "communication" is less specific than "report". "Report" is more general than "progress report", which itself is more general than "third-term progress report", which in turn is less specific than "third-term progress report of XYZ".

Considering levels of generality is useful as both general statements and specific details are included in effective communication. For example, in informative and persuasive writing, general statements have to be developed with specific facts, reasons, arguments, and examples.

Outline As a Structuring Device

An outline is a shape-giving device. It is a valuable planning strategy. By making an outline, the writer structures the relevant ideas and groups them together on the basis of their generality. An outline can be used at different stages of report writing. For instance, before writing or presenting the report orally, an outline helps arrange and organize material; when revising, it can be used to see how far the first draft is logically arranged. An outline also points out any weakness in the written document, such as missing points or digressions from the main point.

An outline is a tentative plan or projection of what the final draft will say. It is possible for the outline to change somewhat during the actual writing. In that case, the writer should alter the original outline and ensure that the changes do not disturb the logic and order of the argument and ideas.

Formal Outline

In a formal outline, the content and format follow the conventions formed to show relationships among ideas clearly. A formal outline can be a topic outline or a sentence outline. A topic outline consists of a word or a phrase, whereas in a sentence outline each item is a complete sentence. The two methods are never used together in the same formal outline. However, a sentence outline is more helpful for writing. For example, "differences in the arts" is a topic outline, but a sentence outline such as "the arts differ in terms of objects, manner, and mode of imitation" provides more detail. A general layout of a formal outline is given in Exhibit 10.2.

In a formal outline, the content and format follow the conventions formed to show relationships among ideas clearly.

Framing an Outline

Some guidelines for framing an outline include:

1. *Introductory and concluding sentences:* These do not form part of a formal outline. The *thesis* or the topic statement is placed before the first sentence.

2. *Numbers, letters, and indentations:* The formal outline begins with the capitalized Roman numeral I, which numbers the first main idea and is followed by the Roman numerals II, III, and so on, which are used to indicate major subdivisions of the topic. Indented capital letters (A, B, C, and so on) are used to mark the next level of generality, while small letters (a,b,c, and so on) indicate a further level of generality, if any. This arrangement is based on the principle that each subdivision is placed above the next level of specific detail given by the outline. It may be noted that in a sentence outline if an entry is longer than one line, the second line is indented by one word. That means that the second line begins under the second word of the first line.
3. *At least two entries at each level:* In an outline, there can be a topic numbered "I" only if there is "II" that follows it, and similarly, there can only be an "A" when there is a "B". Without at least two parts, no category can be divided. Where a category has only one subdivision, it should either be left out or reclassified, or expanded to include at least two subdivisions.

   For example:

   Incorrect
   I. Standards of hygiene in the canteen not satisfactory
   A. Food left over from lunches
   II. Fridge not defrosted frequently

   Correct
   I. Standards of hygiene in the canteen not satisfactory
   II. Safety issues regarding electrical sockets in the canteen

   Correct
   I. Standards of hygiene in the canteen not satisfactory
   A. Food left over from lunches
   B. Fridge not defrosted frequently
   II. Safety issues regarding electrical sockets in the canteen
4. *Levels of generality:* All subdivisions should have the same level of generality. A main idea and a supporting detail cannot be placed at the same level.

   Incorrect
   I. Starting an IT centre
   II. Conducting computer courses

   Correct
   I. Starting an IT centre
   II. Opening a health resort
5. *No overlap:* There should be a fresh point under each heading. The same idea should not be repeated in different places.

   Incorrect
   I. People move away from villages
   A. The go in search of jobs
   B. They go to seek their livelihoods

   Correct
   I. People move away from villages
   A. They go in search of jobs
   B. They often change their outlooks
6. *Parallelism:* All statements (divisions and sub-divisions) should have grammatically parallel construction. For example, if one item begins with the *–ing* form of the verb, other items should also begin with form *verb* + *–ing*.

I. Introduction
  A. Definition of the problem
  B. Description of the methods used
II. Findings
III. Conclusions

Exhibit 10.3
A Sample Outline

Incorrect
I. Negotiating peace
II. Promote understanding

Correct
I. Negotiating peace
II. Promoting understanding

7. *Punctuation and capitalization:* Only the first word or a proper noun should be capitalized in each entry. Please note that a full stop should be used at the end of each entry only when it is a sentence outline. No punctuation mark is used at the ends of entries in a topic outline.

Outlining is the key to organization; it is essential for writing any form of business communication. To determine the sequence of ideas (or presentation) in any piece of writing, the writer has to consider the level of importance of the information and also the order in which it should be known. For instance, when writing a report, one could mention the problem first and then discuss the method used to solve it, followed by findings and conclusions.

Since the reader of a report is more interested in the findings and conclusions, it is better to give more importance to these elements. The details of the problem and the methodology used to solve it receive less attention as they are of less interest to the reader. However, they provide the necessary background for the findings and conclusions. One could have an outline including all the four elements of a report in the form shown in Exhibit 10.3.

As the statement of the problem and description of research methodology are of lesser interest to most readers, they can be put together as two elements under the same entry, *Introduction*. As the other two elements, *findings* and *conclusions*, are of greater interest, they are entered separately as item II and item III.

The effort and time devoted to forming an outline are rewarded by the gain in clarity and understanding of the levels of significance of different elements in the composition.

The effort and time devoted to forming an outline are rewarded by the gain in clarity and understanding of the levels of significance of different elements in the composition.

Cultural Differences in Report Details

There may be some differences in the way people from different cultures write reports. Here are some broad examples of how different types of details are emphasized in different cultures:

- German report writers consider historical facts and in-depth explanations very crucial for a proper understanding of problems and their solutions.
- French reports tend to present more abstract concepts and theories. The French are theorists by nature and are known for their creative concepts in all forms of art and literature.
- Latin Americans sometimes leave out negative information, and potential problems may not be reported and discussed.
- Indian report writers prefer to follow the conventional structure and offer the expected quantity of details, but when guided by the psychology of the reader, Indians modify the form suitably.

WRITING REPORTS

A report presents facts, conclusions, and recommendations in simple and clear words and in a logical and well-defined structure. The elements (parts) of a full report, in the order of their sequence in a long, formal report are:

- Cover
- Title page
- Acknowledgements
- Table of contents
- Executive summary
- Introduction
- Discussion/description
- Conclusions
- Recommendations
- Appendix
- List of references
- Bibliography
- Glossary
- Index

The first five elements (cover, title page, acknowledgements, table of contents, and executive summary) constitute the front matter; the next four elements (introduction, discussion, conclusions, and recommendations) form the main body; and the last five elements (appendix, list of references, bibliography, glossary, and index) constitute the back matter.

Structure of a Report

Business executives are usually short of time and are, therefore, more interested in knowing the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

In the *normal arrangement***,** the conclusions and recommendations are positioned after the discussion. However, this is not the case in the *alternative arrangement* of a report. Business executives are usually short of time and are, therefore, more interested in knowing the conclusions and recommendations of the study. A detailed description of the discussion may, therefore, appear after the conclusions and recommendations in the alternative arrangement.

The order of elements in a formal business report may be as given in Exhibit 10.4. The researcher should also keep in mind the non-technical background of his or her readers and demarcate certain parts differently as shown in Exhibit 10.4.

Basic and Subsidiary Parts of a Report

The basic and subsidiary parts of a report are delineated in Exhibit 10.5.

Exhibit 10.4
Order of Elements in a Formal Business Report

Summary Introduction	Non-technical
Conclusions Recommendations	Partly technical
Discussion Appendix	Fully technical

Exhibit 10.5
Parts of a Formal Report

Basic Parts of a Report	***Subsidiary Parts of a Report***
Executive summary	Cover
Introduction	Title page
Discussion	Table of contents
Recommendations	Bibliography/references
Appendix	Glossary

Some subsidiary elements—the table of contents, the bibliography and references, and the glossary—are used only in long, formal reports. The cover and title page in short reports are replaced with the heading and other similar devices.

SHORT MANAGEMENT REPORTS

4

Learn how to write both long and short formal reports in a clear, objective style, using the appropriate layout.

A short report is usually written either in the form of memorandum (memo) or a letter. Usually, reports meant for persons outside the company or clients are written in letter form. The short report:

- Uses the title page or just the report's title as the heading or subject.
- Is usually in direct order, beginning with a summary or a statement summarizing the content.
- Presents findings, analysis, conclusions, and recommendations.

Memos

Memos are used as internal messages in companies. They are informal and need very little introductory or background information. Their goal is to address and solve an internal problem. An example of a memorandum is given in Exhibit 10.6.

Letters

Letters are usually written to deal with smaller problems and are organized in an indirect order. They usually end on a note of goodwill. An example of a letter report is given in Exhibit 10.7.

Exhibit 10.6
A Memorandum as a Short Report

MEMORANDUM

To: All departments
From: Debasish Roy, HR
Date: 19 August, 2010
Ref: MR/ 02/ 06
Subject: **Pest-Control Problems**

On 17 August 2010, I inspected the company office as part of my routine monthly inspection. The inspection concentrated on two main aspects—hygiene and maintenance issues in the office.

1. **Hygiene:** Standards of hygiene in the office need to be improved. Cleanliness and pest-control are becoming difficult issues because:
   - Despite the fact that employees are allowed to carry only beverages to their desks, we constantly find food particles in the carpeted area. This attracts a lot of pests.
   - Food left over after team get-togethers is frequently stored in the fridge and left there for days.
   - Used coffee mugs and glasses left on desks and spilled sugar near the coffee machine attract ants.
2. **Maintenance Issues:** A little involvement on the part of employees can go a long way in helping reduce waste.
   - Lights are not switched off as employees leave the office for the day.
   - The printer is often overloaded because of multiple-page printouts. This also delays other peoples' work. There is also a lot of wasted paper around the printer.

Recommendations

1. Employees are requested to avoid carrying food to their desks. Used coffee mugs and glasses should be returned to the pantry at the end of the day. Food stored in the fridge should be consumed in a day, and the maintenance team should be informed if coffee/sugar is spilled.
2. Employees are requested to switch off their cabin lights at the end of the day. To help save electricity, computer monitors can be switched off when not in use. Employees should not print more that 30 pages at a time using the common printer. Further, everyone is requested to take two-sided printouts if possible.

Exhibit 10.7
A Letter as a Short Report

Report on the Fall in Profits at *Mom and You*, Noida

30 August 2009

Terms of Reference

At the request of the General Manager, *Mom and You*, in his letter of 16 July 2009 (ref PO/ST/24/03), I was instructed to:

1. Investigate the reasons for the fall in profits at *Mom and You*, Noida, during the period 1 January 2009 to 30 June 2009.
2. Suggest corrective steps in light of the findings.

Procedure

1. The sales records for the period 1 January 2009 to 30 June 2009 were inspected and compared with those for the second half of 2008.
2. Two hundred customers were interviewed over seven days (2nd to 8th August).
3. The shop and its vicinity were carefully inspected.
4. The store manager, sales assistants and cashiers were interviewed.
5. Recent developments in Noida and the surrounding area were observed.

Findings

1. A study of the sales records show that profits fell from a monthly average of 8% in the second half of 2008 to an average of 6% in the first 6 months of 2009.
2. The factors responsible for the fall in profits can be divided into internal and external factors.

A. Internal

1. A new manager, Mr N.M. Shah, joined *Mom and You* in late 2008. Soon after joining, he went through a prolonged period of illness, which has clearly affected his efficiency in dealing with a new store.
2. Two of the sales assistants —Arun Sharma and Prem Kumar—have been uninvolved in their dealings with customers. A majority of the customers interviewed complained of their brusqueness and unhelpful attitude.
3. The cashier appointed between December and April to replace the previous cashier is inexperienced. The regional manager found that accounts books have not been maintained systematically, and there are gaps in some areas.

B. External

1. The prolonged construction of a flyover in Noida has affected the area. Customers prefer to avoid the dust and the traffic in this area and go to the new market that has opened in Sector 43.
2. The opening of Mother's Angels in GP Mall has diverted some of the customers. The new mall has a big food court, multiplex and parking space, and this seems to have attracted some loyal customers.

Conclusions

1. The decline in profits is because of external developments—competition from a children's store in the new mall and restricted access to the store because of ongoing construction activities.
2. The performance of the manager, along with the inexperience of the cashier and the discourtesy of some of the staff, is a factor that cannot be ignored.

Recommendations

1. Mr Shah should be consulted to help raise his efficiency and to provide him any support that may help him resolve his health issues. His performance should be reviewed again after six months.
2. Arun and Prem should be warned about their behaviour.
3. The cashier should be provided training.
4. The store and its offers should be given coverage in local newspapers. Special offers and children's activities should be organized to promote the store and increase footfall.
5. The viability of the store be reviewed in December 2009.

P. Misra
Regional Sales Manager
M&Y Group of Stores

Exhibit 10.8
Example of a Title Page

Identification of Market Potential and Entry Strategy for Consumer Paper Bags

Submitted to
Mr Suresh Kumar
Director and Chief Executive

By
Anil Gupta
Marketing Manager

PPL Feedback Packaging Ltd
Thane, Maharashtra
September 29, 2003

LONG FORMAL REPORTS

Some of the elements of a long formal report are discussed in detail in this section.

The Title Page

The title page includes the following:

- The heading (title of the report), which should be short, clear, and unambiguous
- The name and affiliation of the author(s)
- The department and date of issue

An example of a title page is given in Exhibit 10.8.

Acknowledgements

The writer of the report should thank everyone associated with the assignment and preparation of the report. He or she should be generous in expressing gratitude. An example is:

> I thank my organization, PPL Feedback Packaging Limited, for giving me the opportunity to conduct this research project. A special word of thanks to Mr Suresh Kumar (Director & Chief Executive), Mr Nitin Khanna (DGM), and the executives of PPL Feedback Packaging Limited for giving me the necessary guidance and help.
>
> I also thank all the respondents of the survey, who gave me valuable information to carry out the study.
>
> Finally, I wish to thank my colleagues in the marketing department, whose inputs were invaluable to the research.

Cover Letter

The cover letter is usually written by top management or project guides as a preface or foreword to a report, reflecting the management's policy and interpretation of the report's findings, conclusions, and recommendations. It introduces the report and tells readers why it is being sent to them. The cover letter is usually placed between the cover and the title page. It is never bound inside the report. It can be written in the form of a memo, a letter, or a forwarding certificate.

Letter of Transmittal

Many times, a formal report is accompanied by a letter to outside readers. Although the letter of transmittal is usually placed after the title page, it functions as a greeting to the reader. The letter summarizes the findings, conclusions, and recommendations and gives an idea of what is in the report. It is best written in a direct, conversational manner.

1. It begins by directly talking about the subject of the report. For example:

    Dear Ms Singh,

    Here is the report you requested on August 20 regarding a plot of land for your proposed playschool in Greater Noida.

2. It then gives a brief review of the contents of the report.
3. It acknowledges the contribution of others to the study, if any.
4. The letter ends by thanking the person or body who authorized the report and expressing hope for future interaction. This letter should be written in the personal style of a business letter—that is, using personal pronouns, first person, and active voice. The tone should reflect sincerity. Nowadays, a cover letter is generally preferred to a letter of transmittal.

Table of Contents

The table of contents indicates the hierarchy of topics and their sequence.

Long reports must have a table of contents placed after the acknowledgements and before the executive summary. The table of contents is an important element in a long, formal report as it identifies the topics and their page numbers in the report (or any long document). The table of contents also indicates the hierarchy of topics and their sequence and mentions the main sections of the report exactly as they are worded in the text. An example is given in Exhibit 10.9.

Abstract and Executive Summary

5

Know how to write abstracts and summaries, introductions, final recommendations, and conclusions.

An abstract or executive summary comes immediately after the list of tables in the table of contents or on/after the title page itself. Normally, a report has either an abstract or an executive summary, based on the length of the report and expectations of readers. A company practice may be to have both an abstract and an executive summary with long reports.

A summary:

- Should give the context of the report
- Should provide the most important findings, conclusions, and recommendations
- Should act as a time-saver for busy management executives

Usually, management reports use executive summaries instead of abstracts. An *abstract* is a summary of a report's most important points. It can be either descriptive or informative and is generally written in about 200 words and in one paragraph. An *executive summary* gives a more detailed overview of a report than an abstract does. It can run into one or two pages. It presents the reader with a preview of the report's findings, conclusions, recommendations, and impact on the company. Management executives sometimes need to know just the main contents of a report, specially its conclusions and recommendations, and a detailed synopsis in the form of an executive summary serves this purpose.

A *descriptive abstract* only mentions the topics discussed in the report. It does not give details on these topics. Busy executives have little patience with such a skeletal account of a report's important conclusions and recommendations.

Descriptive Abstract

A *descriptive abstract* only mentions the topics discussed in the report. It does not give details on those topics. For details, the reader has to go through the report. Busy executives have little patience with such a skeletal account of a report's important conclusions and recommendations. Therefore, descriptive abstracts are less popular with writers of business

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Exhibit 10.9
Sample Table of Contents

reports. For example, consider a descriptive abstract of the report "Identification of market potential and entry strategy for consumer paper bags". It would be as follows:

> The study finds that the market potential for paper bags is not picking up due to the price of paper bags when compared to polybags. It is recommended that the company PPL Feedback supply paper bags at a lesser cost to compete with polybags.

Informative Abstract

An *informative abstract* discusses the main subject and presents conclusions and recommendations. Formal reports and scientific and technical articles often use an informative abstract. An informative abstract for the report "Identification of market potential and entry strategy for consumer paper bags" would read as follows:

An *informative abstract* discusses the main subject and presents conclusions and recommendations.

> This report explores new ways to expand the company's (PPL Feedback and Packaging Limited) business, from industrial bags to consumer bags, to meet its growth targets.
>
> The objective of the study was to study the market potential of consumer paper bags for rice and to identify entry strategies for the company. It was found that the market potential for paper bags for rice is about 27 million bags per annum

at present; there is an interested segment whose requirement is 27 million bags. The recommendation is that PPL Feedback should price paper bags lower than polybags.

This abstract provides more details of the report's contents than the descriptive abstract.

Executive Summary

An executive summary covers all the major elements of a report's content:

- Background of the problem
- Major topics
- Important details
- Main conclusions
- Recommendations
- Discussion of how implementation of the recommendations would affect the company.

An executive summary of the PPL report is shown in Exhibit 10.10.

Exhibit 10.10
Executive Summary of the PPL Report

Stiff environmental regulations have brought up new concerns in packaging. These concerns include hygiene, safety, disposability, and recyclability in a developed world. Paper, being eco-friendly and having a premium image, has replaced other packaging materials such as tin, plastics, and so on for packaging goods for export.

The export market is highly volatile and so is the demand for packaging material. Last year, that is, in 2009, exports were low in the first half of the year as compared to the second half. Also, in segments like carbon black where paper packaging is used, the demand is almost saturated.

Considering these factors, the company (PPL Feedback and Packaging Ltd) is exploring new ways to expand business from industrial bags to consumer bags to meet its growth targets. The more lucrative segments are shopping bags and consumer bags for rice, for which there is a steady demand.

The aim of this research was to study the market potential of shopping bags and consumer paper bags for rice to identify entry strategies for the company. To calculate the market potential, the consumer sample survey method, explained in Chapter IV, was adopted. Chapters I and II provide details about the existing business of the company. Chapter III provides details about the significance of the study for the company, the research objectives, the scope of the study, and data sources. Chapter V explains the design and methodology of the study. To estimate the market potential, the questionnaire approach was followed and the respondents were interviewed personally for relevant details about paper bags. Chapter VI provides details of the results and conclusions reached by the study. The market potential for paper bags for rice is about 27 million bags per annum at present. There is an interested segment whose requirement is also for 27 million bags. The main factor working against the popularity of paper bags is their price in comparison to polybags. However, PPL can supply bags at a lower cost as it has an existent idle capacity to manufacture bags and its machines are fully depreciated. The consumer paper shopping bags market has a potential of about 32.4 million bags per annum at present. If the company invests in mechanized operations at this stage, then the operations may not be profitable for the company in the short run as per the break-even capacity utilization for the machine (discussed on page 35). The operations, however, may be viable in the long run.

This study was for the corporate retail segment only; there is another segment of individuals and retail showrooms who also use paper bags. At the time of market testing for corporate retail segments, the company could also study this segment under the set conditions of product mix explained in Chapter VI, to calculate the size of the market for retail showrooms. At the time of test marketing, which is essential for entry-strategy finalization, the company should test the various possibilities identified in the marketing mix and specifications for the final product launch, which are explained in Chapter VI.

Introduction
The introduction of this executive summary states the details of the:
- Authorizing person or body requesting the report
- Author or group of authors responsible for investigation (and submission of the report)
- Purpose or reason for the report
- Methods of enquiry (the research method used)
- Arrangement or grouping of data
- General background of the report's subject

Findings
The findings present the results of the investigation.

Conclusions
The conclusions of the executive summary:
- States the results of the investigation
- Offers answers to questions raised in the beginning of the report.
- Contains no new information

Recommendations
The recommendations of the executive summary:
- Are the action centre of the report
- State how the conclusions should be acted upon.
- Make clear and definite suggestions/proposals.
- Mention the need for further investigation as a condition for a more comprehensive study of the problem if required.

It is not possible to have a report without recommendations, even if recommendations were not specifically requested when the report was assigned. Recommendations flow from conclusions, as conclusions flow from the discussion.

Discussion and Analysis of Findings

This is the main body of the report. It discusses findings and analyses results. The information is developed in one of the ways discussed here.

Recommendations flow from conclusions, as conclusions flow from the discussion.

Chronological Development

The information can be arranged in the order in which the events happened. This is the simplest method of presenting information—as a story with a beginning, middle, and end. Chronological development requires relatively little planning and organizing. The writer selects and arranges the major topics in the order of their occurrence. Non-significant events are left out.

This method is usually used for writing short reports, progress reports describing the status of a project, and investigative reports that discuss investigations conducted over a long time and at different places.

Chronological development requires relatively little planning and organizing.

By discussing each event step by step, the cumulative effect of a variable (factor/thing) can be seen through the conclusions drawn at suitable intervals. The organization of information is easy to determine, as the report writer is guided by the order in which events actually took place.

Subject-wise Development

The information can also be arranged according to the subjects or topics discussed within the report. The subjects are grouped in a predetermined order. This arrangement makes the presentation of information coherent and logical.

When a report involves the study of two or more variables acting upon something, the writer has to arrange the discussion by subject. The writer could describe the effect of one variable on the subject and then proceed in chronological order to determine the cumulative effect of the variable on the subject. Then, in a similar manner he or she would study and describe the effects of the other variable, and record chronologically its cumulative effect.

The question that then concerns the writer is regarding the sequence in which each variable should be discussed if there are several variables of equal importance. The writer has to choose the sequence according to the variable he or she wants to recommend or emphasize. The report can move in increasing order of suitability or move from the most suitable to the least suitable. Before structuring the information, the writer should make the order clearly known by stating whether ascending or descending order is being followed.

Suppose an automobile dealer wants to recommend the most suitable model of luxury car to an executive. He or she will follow the descending order. After evaluating the price, fuel consumption, speed, automation, seating capacity, space, and after-sales guarantees for different models of luxury cars, the dealer would then recommend the model most suitable for the customer. In this case, the dealer has, in fact, made a comparative study of the essential parameters that determine a buyer's choice of a car and presented the information accordingly.

Concept-wise Development

The logic of the argument guides the organization of the report. Each part or stage of the project is seen as part of a well-linked procession of ideas forming a complete concept.

The information can be organized "concept-wise". This means that the writer develops his or her argument and reasoning on the lines of his or her thoughts.

A report writer can arrange the report by following the logical sequence of the investigation. The writer can develop the topic by describing each step in sequence with the step that follows it, in a series of steps that builds up his or her argument. The logic of the argument guides the organization of the report. Each part or stage of the project is seen as part of a well-linked procession of ideas forming a complete concept.

In the concept-wise method, the writer tells the reader how he or she arrived at the results and why they are valid. This method should be employed when the topic is complex and reasoning and careful consideration are required to explain the various concepts used in reaching the conclusion. When the best result can be selected by a simple and direct analysis, for instance the choice of a car or a site for a new house, subject-wise development would be more appropriate than concept-wise development. Whatever the method of developing the main argument, the report should be logically organized and the narration interesting and convincing.

Glossary

A glossary of usage includes rules for forming compound words, abbreviating technical terms, and writing unusual or difficult words.

The glossary is the list of technical or special terms used in a report or technical paper and is placed at the end of a report, before the index. It alphabetically lists words or phrases that need special attention. It explains the usage of technical terms peculiar to the industry. A glossary of usage includes rules for forming compound words, abbreviating technical terms, and writing unusual or difficult words. A glossary also acts as a dictionary for some select words that are often confused, misused, or wrongly spelled. These are:

- Words that are often confused because they are similar in meaning or spelling; examples are *diplex* and *duplex*, *ground floor* and *first floor*, *postpone* and *cancel*, or *imply* and *infer*.
- Common errors of usage such as *many a times* (should be *many a time*), *one of the best option* (in place of *one of the best options*), *comprised of* (for *comprises*).
- Words that tend to be wrongly spelled; examples are *agism* (correct spelling is *ageism*), *accomodation* (instead of *accommodation*), *seprate* (should be *separate*).

- Words having more than one acceptable spelling, such as *program* and *programme*. In case of words like *symposiums* and *symposia* where both versions are in use, both are given in the glossary and a choice is indicated for one of them.
- Words like *data*, which is often wrongly used as singular or as *datas* for the plural, are specially entered in the glossary and their usage is fully explained. *Data* is plural (but is also treated as singular, although the singular form is *datum*). In scientific, philosophical, and general use, *data* generally means a number of items and is thus regarded as plural, with *datum* as the singular. But in computing and related subjects, it is taken to denote a mass or collective noun and is therefore used with words like *this*, *that*, and *much* and with singular verbs (for example, "useful data has been gathered"). The glossary, like the *Oxford English Dictionary*, will draw our attention to the meaning as well as usage of the word *data* and point out that although some people consider the use of *data* with a singular verb incorrect, it is now in common use. It will also point out that *data* is not a singular countable noun and should not be preceded by words such as *a*, *every*, *each*, *either*, or *neither* or be given the plural form *datas*.

> In scientific, philosophical, and general use, *data* generally means a number of items and is thus regarded as plural, with datum as the singular.

Appendix

The *appendix* is used to give a variety of information separately when its inclusion in the main body could interfere with the smooth reading of the report. It usually includes the text of questionnaires or other instruments of survey. Tables, flow charts, maps, summaries of raw data, and details of mathematical formulation are generally included in the appendix. Each appendix is numerically or alphabetically labelled to help the reader identify the material. Sometimes a descriptive title is given. The word "annexure" is sometimes used for the appendix.

The appendix may also include the distribution list. When a report is sent to several persons, it will contain a list of all the persons who receive a copy. The distribution list is placed according to its size or the customer's or company's practice. However, it seems proper to place it as a separate appendix if the list happens to be long. A short distribution list can appear at the foot of the table of contents.

Bibliography and References

All published and unpublished sources of information used in preparing the report are listed in the bibliography. All reference documents, previous reports, books, periodicals, and even letters written and received by the writer are mentioned in it. In using written material from secondary sources, report writers must always mention the source of the information by citing it as a footnote or endnote. Failing to document sources amounts to plagiarism.

Rules for bibliographies vary. In a report, the bibliography should conform to the style of documentation followed by the concerned company, just as a technical article or paper conforms to the form followed by the journal or society that is publishing the material. Though each organization usually has its own standard format of documenting sources, the general system followed is either that of the Modern Language Association (MLA) or the American Psychological Association (APA).

Documentation of cross-references should be done in a way that does not disturb the flow of the argument. The writer can provide references in footnotes at the end of each relevant page or can describe all references together in endnotes, which is the list of all references at the end of the report. In both cases, the reader can find all the details about sources mentioned in the report and can check the accuracy of facts by consulting the original sources. Endnotes are usually preferred as they are easy to refer to when desired. Also, footnotes create the problem of spacing the material on the page.

It is to be noted that each reference to be cited in the endnotes is numbered consecutively as 1, 2, 3, and so on. Each reference should have the same number when mentioned in the body of the discussion. The various styles for documenting the sources are discussed in greater detail in Appendix 1.

Index

An index (plural *indexes* or *indices*) is an alphabetical list of subjects, names, and so on, with references to page numbers where they occur in the report or book. It is usually placed at the end. It should not be confused with the table of contents, which always appears at the beginning of the report or book.

In long reports and voluminous works, an index helps the reader locate a subject easily wherever it has been mentioned or discussed in the text. For example, "Order refusals 115" entered in a report's index means one can find order refusals mentioned on page 115. In a book's index, the entry "Research questions 34 a — 675" means that the topic of research questions is discussed on page 675 under section 34 a.

Normally an author's note about the symbols used in indexing subjects appears at the beginning of index entries, which helps the reader follow the way entries are made. For more information, see Lynn Quitman Troyka's note on indexing in the *Handbook of Writers*.[2]

USING DIAGRAMS AND VISUAL AIDS IN REPORTS

Diagrams, like all visual aids, communicate information clearly and effectively.

Report writers use tables and graphics such as bar charts, line charts, and pictograms to explain ideas briefly and vividly. Diagrams, like all visual aids, communicate information clearly and effectively. For example, written instructions supported by illustrations to show how an eye-drop should be opened and applied would be far more effective than plain instructions in words alone.

Use of Tables

A table presents numerical or topical data in rows and columns. A report writer should know some of the techniques of preparing tables for clear presentation of content. The most important technique is to label each table in a manner that allows the reader to locate the desired table easily. Some tips are given here:

1. *Numbering all tables*: The writer should number all the tables in the report consecutively by calling them "Table 1", "Table 2", "Table 3", and so on. When referring to them, one can simply say, "as shown in Table 1, …" or "… in the following table". This makes cross-references simple and clear. The table number should be written at the top of the table.
2. *Labelling each table*: There should be a complete heading or title for each table that clearly describes the contents of the table for the reader. As headings, the table titles can be long as long as they completely describe the table's contents. The title can even run into two lines. It may mention sources of data, numbers included in the figures in the table, and the subject of the table. An example is: "Segmentation of market (5–20 kg) based on the usage of bags in the total market of 3,150 million". For emphasis, the title of the table can be written in bold letters.
3. *Column heads and sub-heads:* Column heads and sub-heads should be used to classify information when several columns are given. For example, if the column head is "Cities" and the column lists several cities, they may be segregated by sub-heads that classify the cities under various zones, such as "North", "South", and so on.
4. *Rows:* Similarly, the subject of each row should be indicated by identifying its contents. For example, in a column that lists various sectors of the economy, the subject of the row should be identified as "Economic Sector".
5. *Footnotes:* Footnotes are used to explain or qualify specific entries, if required.
6. There should be sufficient space between columns so that the data remain well separated.

Exhibit 10.11 is an example of a table with various parts labeled; it illustrates the layout, title placement, and headings for the vertical columns and horizontal rows effectively. Notice that if the table is taken exactly from some other source, the source must be mentioned.

Table 1 Choke Points: Highest Pollutant Levels in Various Parts of Delhi on Diwali Day (2003)

Exhibit 10.11
A Sample Table

Column Heads

Parameters	***Location***	***Permissible Levels (mg/m³)***	***Actual Levels (mg/m³)***
SPM	Meera Bagh	100	2,292
Respirable SPM	Meera Bagh	200	4,772
Carbon monoxide	Karawal Nagar	100	8,000
Sulphur dioxide	Vasant Kunj	80	201
Nitrogen dioxide	Meera Bagh	80	174.8

Row subject

Source: Delhi Pollution Control Committee

Source details

Note: The data was collected at 11 p.m.

Notes

Use of Graphics in Reports

In reports, the following forms of graphics are commonly used:

- Bar charts
- Line charts
- Pie charts
- Pictograms
- Actual pictures
- Maps

6

Understand the role and use of graphics in reports.

These graphics are also used in oral presentations of reports. The writer or presenter of the report considers how the use of graphics helps in grasping the information conveyed through words. Sometimes, reports use graphics as a source of embellishment that makes the presentation colourful.

Bar Charts

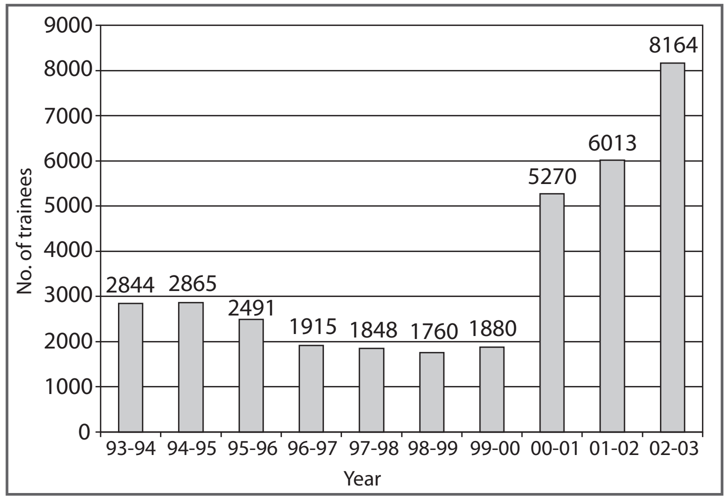
A bar chart can be simple or complex. A simple bar chart is used to compare quantities that can be depicted on a scale. A bar chart can be broken up when the quantities are too large to be covered by the chart. In such a case, the chart is broken up to show that some quantities are not shown in the diagram.

A simple bar chart is most effective for comparing quantitative data. The layout for vertical bars is shown in Exhibit 10.12. The lengths of the bars, whether they are horizontal or vertical, show quantity. The quantitative scale should always begin at zero. The graduation space must be equal. Also, the width of the bars should be equal. Different colours, shadings, variations, and cross-hatchings are usually used to bring out differences in bars.

Segmented Bar Charts (Component Bar Charts)

Sometimes bar charts represent more than one item. They include several components, which are depicted by segmenting the bars into different parts shown in different colours or cross-hatchings. The labels to identify different parts can be given separately in the legend if there is inadequate space along the bars. The *segmented bar chart* is also known as the *component bar chart* or *subdivided bar chart*. For example, consider the segmented bar chart in Exhibit 10.13, which presents the creation of thousands of jobs in the Indian IT sector since 2000; the fastest growth is in call-centres, not software.

Exhibit 10.12
Growth in the Number of Trainees at NPTI Faridabad (1993)



When negative quantities also are included in the data, zero can be placed at the midpoint on the scale and not at the beginning. By doing so, one can present both positive and negative bars.

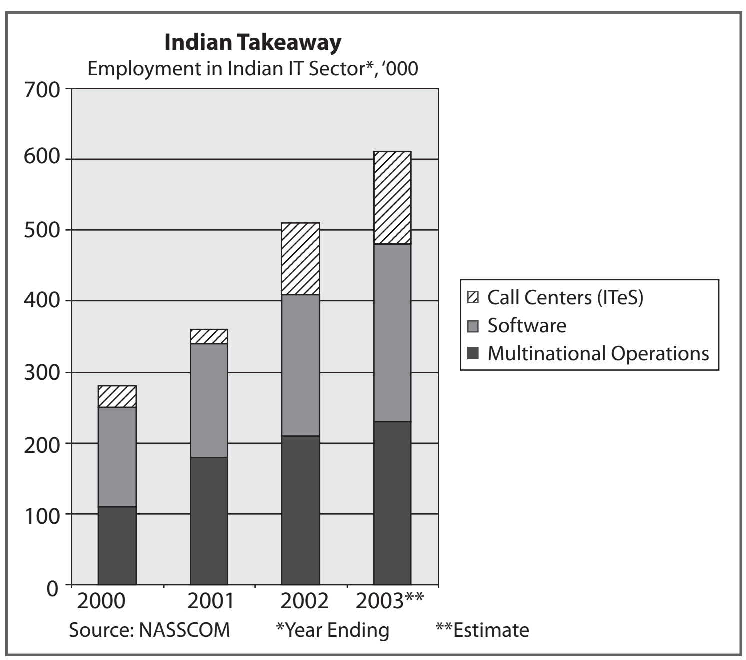
Line Charts

Line charts are useful for showing changes in quantitative data spread over some time. Line charts also help in projecting trends (Exhibit 10.14).

Some guidelines for constructing line charts are:

1. Use the vertical axis to represent amount and the horizontal axis for time.
2. Begin the vertical axis at zero and divide the scale according to the size of the amount to be shown on it.
3. Make both vertical and horizontal gradations equal. That is, all spaces on the amount (vertical) axis should be the same, and all time scales should be the same. But it is not necessary that the time space and amount divisions be equal.
4. Use proper proportions in the sizes of the vertical and horizontal measures so that the lines drawn are marked by natural slopes (see the line chart in Exhibit 10.14).

Exhibit 10.13
A Segmented Bar Chart



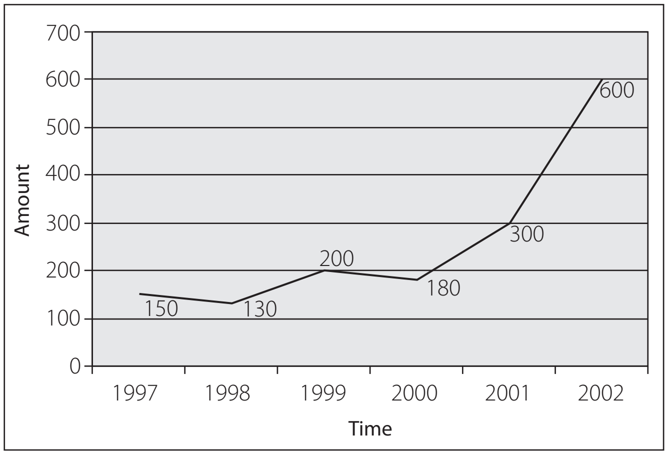


Exhibit 10.14
An Example of a Line Chart

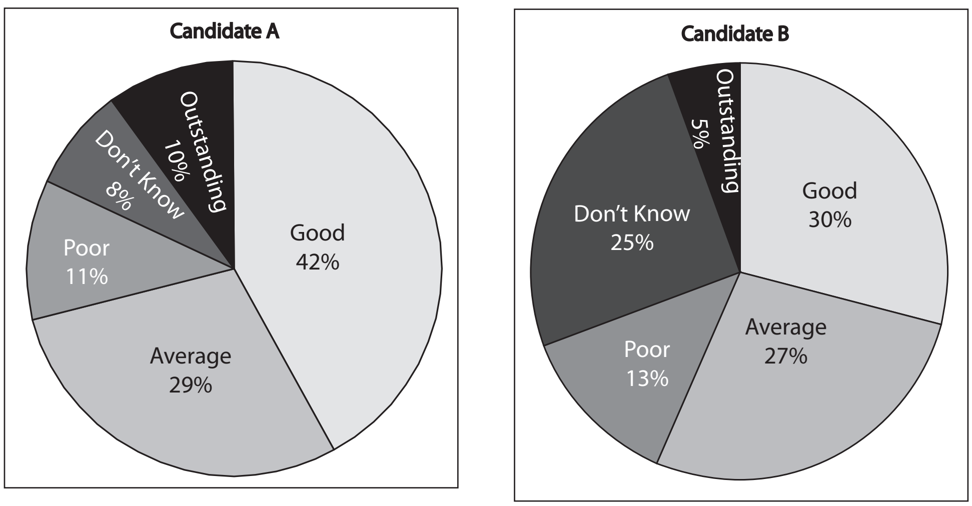


Exhibit 10.15
Examples of Pie Charts

Pie Charts

A *pie chart* presents a whole that is divided into various parts. The pie represents the whole, and its segments represent parts of the whole. A pie chart is used to show the relationship among parts only when there are more than two parts forming the whole. If only two parts are to be described, their relationship can be simply stated in the report. A pie chart should have three or more segments. The pie is cut clockwise, beginning with the largest part on the right side, with other parts following (clockwise). It is not necessary to cut the parts in descending order of size. The size of the pie chart should be large enough for its segments to have labels and unit values clearly written on them. Different colours are often used to emphasize and contrast the relationships among the parts. Exhibit 10.15 represents the popularities of two candidates for the position of prime minister.

A *pie chart* presents a whole that is divided into various parts.

Histograms

A *histogram* is a graph of frequency distribution. A histogram consists of a series of rectangles, each of which is proportional in width to the range of values within a class and proportional in height to the number of items covered by the class, that is, the frequency. If the class size is the same, then each rectangle will be of the same width.

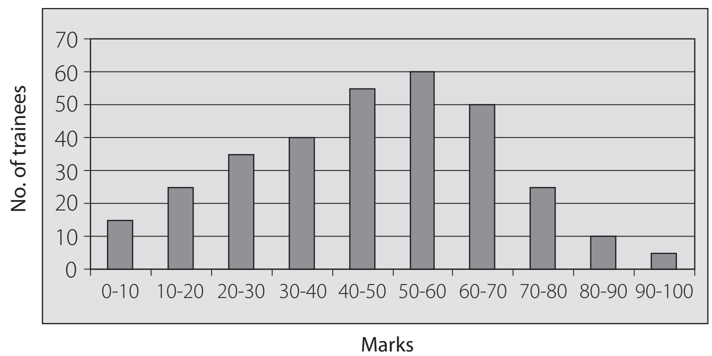
A *histogram* is a graph of frequency distribution.

When drawing a histogram, the variable is always shown on the x-axis and the frequency is determined on the y-axis. A histogram consists of a series of adjacent rectangles, each having a class-interval distance as its width and the frequency distance as its height. The area of the histogram represents the total frequency distribution across the classes.

Exhibit 10.16 (a)
The Data for the Histogram

Marks	***Students***
0–10	15
10–20	25
20–30	35
30–40	40
40–50	55
50–60	60
60–70	50
70–80	25
80–90	10
90–100	5

Exhibit 10.16 (b)
The Histogram



It is important to understand that a histogram is not just a bar diagram. In a bar diagram, only the length of the bar matters, not its width. But in a histogram both the length and the width are important. The histogram in Exhibit 10.16(b) shows the marks distribution of 320 students.

Pictograms

Pictograms illustrate numerical relationships by using pictures to represent quantities. In a pictogram, figures of the same size should be used to represent amounts and relationships clearly. For example, assume that the merchant tonnage of four different countries, say the United States, Russia, Japan, and India, needs to be pictorially represented. A picture of a ship can be used to symbolize merchant tonnage, with the value of say 1,000,000 tons assigned to each ship. Accordingly, this will depict the differences in tonnage using different numbers of ships in relation to different countries. For example, if the merchant tonnage of the United States is four times greater than that of India's, one can illustrate the numerical relationship between India's and the United States' tonnage by vertically placing four ships for the United States and one ship for India. Similarly, suppose Japan's and Russia's amounts are double India's, then one would use two ships each for both countries, and one ship for India. The increased amount is not shown by changing the height and width of the ship in the picture, as this would be misleading. The pictures are placed along the y-axis and the names of the countries are on the x-axis (Exhibit 10.17).

How to Use Figures and Diagrams in Reports

Figures and diagrams can be used in the text of the report if they are not very large. If they can be accommodated on a page within the running text without breaking the continuity of the text, they should be kept as part of the text. Otherwise, tables, charts, and other diagrammatic representations should be placed in an appendix. Each figure should be serially numbered throughout the report. First the data should be introduced, then the diagram should be explained, and finally, the reader's attention should be drawn to the diagram itself by specifying the figure number and the appendix number if needed.

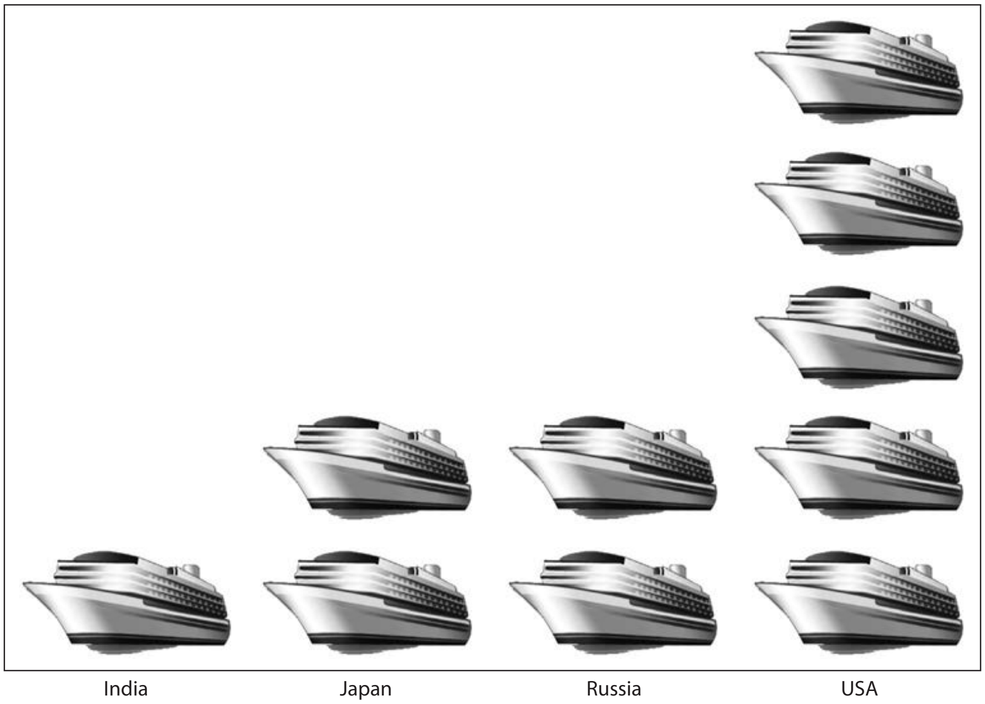


Exhibit 10.17
A Pictogram

SUMMARY

- The report is a distinct form of written communication involving investigation, analysis, and presentation to give its receiver the required information. There are various methods of enquiry, data collection, and analysis of information that the report writer should make use of.
- The terms of reference guide the report writer. They delineate the problem, purpose, scope, limitations, budget, cultural considerations, and deadline for the report when it is authorized.
- Planning and organizing information by outlining before writing helps in writing a clear and logically arranged report.
- A report writer should know the essential elements of reports and their normal or alternative sequences in different types of reports (short informal reports and long formal reports).
- There are several types of visual aids that a report writer can use; examples include tables, bar charts, pie charts, pictograms, and histograms.

CASE: SURVEY REPORT FOR INDIA REPRESENTATIVE OFFICE OF HRC BUSINESS SCHOOL, FRANCE

Objective

This project aimed at studying the interest of students in studying abroad. This primary survey was conducted for 200 respondents of different age groups and backgrounds. The survey involved some multiple-choice and open-ended questions, which were carefully interpreted and analysed. The personal and contact details of the students surveyed have also been maintained in a database for future reference. More specifically, the project had the following objectives:

1. To understand what potential candidates look for when applying to a university abroad.
2. To understand their country preferences.
3. To find the range of expenses they are prepared to pay for studying abroad.

Data Collection

The data have been collected through both primary and secondary sources. Primary data have been obtained through a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire takes into account all the relevant variables required for research so that meaningful analysis could be computed at the end of the survey. Secondary sources of data, like the Internet and various books, were used for exploratory studies.

Results of the Primary Survey

1. According to our survey, 47% of students think that studying abroad is a better option than studying in India.

2. Results also revealed that the majority of the students would prefer to go to the United States—46 students chose the United States, 40 students preferred the United Kingdom, 30 students preferred Australia, and 4 students chose France.
3. There were very few students willing to spend INR 10,00,000 to 12,00,000 each year to study abroad. Most of them were comfortable spending around INR 5,00,000 a year.
4. From this survey, it seems a lot more would need to be done in terms of marketing and promotion for HRC Business School, France, as there was a lack of awareness among students.

Results of the Secondary Survey

1. According to the secondary survey, 1,53,000 students go abroad every year from India—the second largest group of international students in the world after China.
2. In 2007, 970 students went to France to study; in 2008, the number increased to 1,757.
3. The French government provides specific scholarships for Indian students, like the Eiffel scholarships sponsored by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. There are also scholarships co-financed by French companies or institutions. These scholarships are attracting many Indian students.
4. Indian students are highly cognizant of the fact that they need to learn French and studying in France gives students the opportunity to learn the language and add to their overall professional profile.

Challenges Ahead

Marketing and promotion barriers:

- Awareness of French universities is very low among Indian students, so very few students want to go to France for higher studies.
- Increasing awareness of HRC Business School is also a major challenge; only 4% of students were aware of HRC Business School in our survey.

Expense barriers:

- Indian students perceive that doing one-year, full-time MBA abroad would cost more than doing it from India.
- Indian students perceive that France is a more expensive place to live in.

Solutions

- Increasing awareness of HRC Business School among students.
- Promoting French education as world-class education.
- Taking part in various education fares for increased visibility.
- Forging good relations with our strategic partners for wider reach.
- Making strategic relationships with some financial institutions for loan facilities.

Questions to Answer

1. Give a very brief overview of this report.
2. Mention the reasons for taking up the survey.
3. Sum up the conclusions you draw from the report and give your recommendations.
4. Does the report contain all the necessary parts that help a reader understand it easily? Suggest the missing parts, if any.

REVIEW YOUR LEARNING

1. Mention the points you would need to know if someone asked you to write a report and not an essay.
2. State the purpose and place (sequence) of the following elements in a report:
   - Summary
   - Introduction
   - Appendices
   - Table of contents
   - Recommendations
3. What part(s) of a report are most important to a business executive?
4. List the basic parts of a short formal management report in their preferred sequence.
5. Discuss the points covered by the introduction of a report.
6. Discuss the significance of graphics and diagrammatic representations in a report. Illustrate your answer with some examples.
7. Identify the elements of a long formal report.
8. Discuss the importance of planning and outlining in writing a formal report.
9. Define and discuss a report as a specially assigned task.

REFLECT ON YOUR LEARNING

1. What is the difference between formal and informal reports?
2. Discuss the chief characteristics of a good business report.
3. Describe the difference between direct and indirect organization of a report.
4. Bring out the difference between "conclusions" and "recommendations" in a report.
5. If the basis of a report is a problem, what should be the first step necessary before moving further into the writing process?

APPLY YOUR LEARNING

1. Prepare a title page of a report to be written by you as a management graduate at BITS Pilani on "Communication Needs of Business Management Executives". The assignment is to be submitted to the Dean, Instructions Division, BITS Pilani.
2. Write a formal report as a marketing manager to your company's vice-president of marketing on the reasons you have investigated for the sudden fall in demand for your product. You can create the details on the company, product, and location.

SELF-CHECK YOUR LEARNING

From the given options, please choose the most appropriate answer.*

1. Reports present conclusions based on:
   (a) investigation
   (b) intuition
   (c) impression
   (d) belief
2. The terms of reference for producing a specific report are given by the:
   (a) writer
   (b) reader
   (c) organization
   (d) expert
3. The index forms a part of the:
   (a) front matter
   (b) main body
   (c) end matter
   (d) glossary
4. How many basic parts of a formal report are there?
   (a) Five
   (b) Four
   (c) Six
   (d) Three
5. Which of the following is not a subsidiary part of a formal report?
   (a) Table of contents
   (b) Appendix
   (c) Glossary
   (d) References
6. A cover letter is normally written by the:
   (a) report writer
   (b) top management
   (c) CEO
   (d) reader
7. The chronological development of information in the body of the report is done according to the:
   (a) choice of the writer
   (b) logical sequence of events
   (c) collection of data
   (d) order in which events occurred
8. The glossary is the list of:
   (a) subjects covered in the report
   (b) diagrams used in the report
   (c) technical terms used in the report
   (d) references
9. Business research gives information to guide:
   (a) scholars
   (b) stockholders
   (c) brokers
   (d) business decisions
10. A report can present the information in:
    (a) four ways
    (b) two ways
    (c) five ways
    (d) three ways

*For answers and self-evaluation, visit www.pearsoned.co.in/PDChaturvedi

ENDNOTES

1. Theodore A. Sherman and Simon S. Johnson, *Modern Technical Writing* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1975), p. 141.
2. Lynn Quitman Troyka, *Handbook of Writers* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987).

11 Presentation Skills

> "In sports, you don't play a game with just one part of you, for example, your arm in tennis or hands in basketball. You play the game with your whole physical being. The same is true in presenting."
>
> —Anne Miller

Upon completion of this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Know what a presentation is and how it differs from a lecture or a written report.
2. Learn how to design a presentation.
3. Select the proper medium of presentation and visual aids.
4. Understand the chief principles of delivering an effective presentation.
5. Know how to handle questions and give answers.

Communication at Work

Ramesh is a first-year management student. He has to give a presentation before his class tomorrow. He is nervous. He has, until now, neither attended nor given a presentation. He has no idea whatsoever about the way a presentation is made or given. Is it like a convocation address or director's annual report at the college annual function—an oral essay to be read out? How long should it be? Is it some sort of a lecture based on questions and answers? What exactly should the presentation be given on? Ramesh's mind was full of unanswered questions. Moreover, he was unable to find a book on presentation skills. Then to make matters worse, he realized that he had to give the presentation in English. That thought made him very nervous, as he believed he was not very fluent in English. Would he be able to speak in English before the whole class and that too for about 10 minutes? He was up against two challenges: one, to prepare the presentation; the other, to give it in English. But as he had never allowed himself to be swayed by the feeling of helplessness, he finally decided to sit down and act.

He decided to write a long essay titled "What is modern management all about?" in English and read it out before the whole class He thought doing this would be better than doing nothing or telling the faculty that he did not know anything about presentations.

The next day, Ramesh went to his communications class, where he was asked to give the presentation. He walked to the dais, addressed the class, opened his essay, and read his essay clearly, loudly, and confidently. When he finished, the class applauded; however, the faculty did not say anything. Because of this, Ramesh was left wondering if he deserved all that applause!

INTRODUCTION

Today, it is necessary for students, researchers, job-seekers, and managers to know how to develop and make a presentation on a specific subject to a select audience. For instance, students may be required to deliver a presentation to gain admission to a postgraduate programme, to defend their research findings before examiners, to be shortlisted for a job opening, or to advocate a proposal. The ability to deliver a presentation effectively helps students in two ways. First, it helps in communicating information clearly and vividly. Second, it creates a good impression about the student as a speaker, scholar, or manager. The impact of a presenter is immediate. A presenter's confidence, fluency, and readiness of mind in conducting discussions and debate stand out as attributes of his or her personality.

WHAT IS A PRESENTATION?

A presentation is a live mode of sharing information with a select audience. It is a form of oral communication in which a person shares factual information with a particular audience. To get a clear idea of presenting as a distinct communicative

A presentation is an oral activity that uses a visual medium (such as LCD projectors or PowerPoint slides) to discuss new ideas and information with a specific audience in a persuasive and convincing manner.

activity—different from lecturing or training—it is possible to define a presentation as an oral activity that uses a visual medium (such as LCD projectors or PowerPoint slides) to discuss new ideas and information with a specific audience in a persuasive and convincing manner.

Essential Characteristics of a Good Presentation

A good presentation has the following characteristics:

- There is a clear structure with an introduction, discussion, and conclusion.
- The presenter recognizes and matches the audience's needs, interests, and level of understanding, while discussing his or her ideas.
- Facts and figures are visually represented in tables, graphs, and charts, and different colours are used to make the presentation vivid and interesting.
- Humour and anecdotes may be employed to create a good relationship and connection with the audience.
- The presenter speaks clearly and logically and uses body language effectively.
- Questions are given serious attention and are regarded as an essential part of the presentation.

1

Know what a presentation is and how it differs from a lecture or a written report.

The Difference Between a Presentation and a Lecture

A presentation is not a lecture. Classroom lectures have well-defined educational objectives. The outcome and excellence of a lecture is measured in terms of its interactive and participative character. Effective lecturers generally encourage students to ask questions and continually put forth questions for the students to consider. The Socratic mode of teaching (the question-and-answer method) is considered highly effective. Thus, a classroom lecture is ideally a two-way communication process. But presentations are one-way, at least initially, when the audience listens, watches, and takes notes.

A classroom lecture is ideally a two-way communication process. But presentations are one-way, at least initially, when the audience listens, watches, and takes notes.

A presentation has a well-defined format. As a normal practice, the audience sits through the delivery without interrupting the presenter. It is only when the presenter completes his or her part that the audience is invited to ask questions or seek clarifications.

Another significant distinguishing feature of presentations is that the presenter acts as an advocate of the information shared with the audience. The focus is on persuading the listeners to buy the ideas that are shared. A teacher, on the other hand, is basically interested in imparting information as correctly as possible. The focus is on a clear understanding of the ideas by the students.

The Difference Between a Presentation and a Written Report

A presentation is often made on the basis of a written report. However, it is not simply an oral rendering of a written report, which usually uses formal language and has long explanations and several examples. Such features can be presented to a reader, but not a listener. In accordance with the nature of the spoken form, a presentation is delivered in everyday language, covers select information, and only gives a few examples. A presentation should use simple, concise, and clear language and be free of jargon and passive words and phrases. It should be delivered in a natural manner and be as close as possible to the rhythm and syntax of a conversation.

PREPARING A PRESENTATION

A trained presenter approaches a presentation with an awareness of all its elements and a fully planned strategy. A good presentation involves prior preparation and planning.

Presentations have three major elements:

- The presenter
- The audience
- The specific content and definite objective to be achieved

A trained presenter approaches a presentation with an awareness of all its elements and a fully planned strategy. He or she knows that just standing up and speaking to an audience for a given amount of time to show how much he or she knows on the topic does not imply that the presentation is good. A presentation is a particular mode of communicating with a group of people and conveying a message. It involves prior preparation and planning.

A presenter should undertake the following steps to prepare for the presentation:

- Identify the purpose and goal of the presentation
- Analyse the audience and their needs
- Collate the relevant information
- Design and organize the information
- Time the presentation
- Decide on the medium of presentation and visual aids
- Become familiar with the location of the presentation

Identify the Purpose of the Presentation

The presenter should ask himself or herself: *Why am I giving this presentation?* He or she may be giving the presentation to:

- Sell something or persuade people to follow a course of action that they may not be inclined towards.
- Inform people about an idea or describe a business opportunity to gain support for some course of action or to suggest a likely course of action for the future.
- Gather people's views on new plans, products, or proposals to introduce changes.
- Put across a problem to seek a solution or to minimize people's reaction to it.
- Create awareness by sharing information, without requiring any action or response.
- Motivate, educate, or impart training to promote a more productive work culture.

After identifying his or her objective, the presenter should outline it in a single sentence. For example, assume the dean of the BITS Distance Learning Programme (DLP) has to put forward a proposal to the board of governors to expand the institute's Distance Learning Programme by creating off-campus centres in Gulf cities such as Dubai or Muscat. He is required to make a presentation before the board members to justify the proposal. He knows exactly why he is giving the presentation; the purpose can be written in a single sentence that outlines the structure of his ideas: "To convince the board members of the viability and desirability of creating overseas (off-campus) learning centres in Gulf countries, in view of the growing demand for BITS courses abroad". This precise formulation of the objective will help him organize his ideas in a logical manner that will convince the board.

Analyse the Audience and Identify Their Needs

Before making a presentation, the presenter must know the audience he or she is going to address. The presenter should have an idea of the number, nature, needs, level of knowledge, and likely attitude of those who are going to receive the message. These factors will determine the language of delivery and selection of inputs. Understanding the audience's needs will help the presenter focus the presentation on issues that would be of interest to his or her listeners. In addition, knowing about the likely attitude of the audience in advance would make the presenter feel more confident. All members of a group will not have a similar attitude and as individuals they are bound to respond differently. Also, presenters should keep in mind that different persons attending the presentation may be looking for different information based on their own interests or needs. Therefore, the presenter must define the focus and scope of the presentation at the very outset. Most importantly, the speaker must never consider the audience to be a hostile group. They may be opposed to one's ideas or message, but they are not the speaker's enemies.

Before making a presentation, the presenter must know the audience he or she is going to address. The presenter should have an idea of the number, nature, needs, level of knowledge, and likely attitude of those who are going to receive the message.

Guidelines for analysing an audience include finding answers for the following questions:

- Who is the audience?
- Why are they attending the presentation? What are their needs?
- What is their background and level of knowledge, in relation to the subject of presentation?
- How many persons will there be?
- What is their attitude towards the subject and the speaker expected to be?
- What does the audience expect will be the outcome of the presentation?

The last question is the most important and needs to be clearly understood and answered. The answer to it will clarify and define the speaker's purpose. It will help the presenter understand the audience's expectations. For instance, in the presentation on creating overseas BITS DLP centres in the Gulf, the expected outcome will be: "After listening to the presentation, the board members will agree to approve, in principle, initiating overseas DLP centres and setting up a committee to work out the feasibility of opening two centres, one each in Dubai and Muscat". The presenter can visualize the audience's response as if the presentation has already happened. Positive expectations will give the speaker added confidence. In addition, if the speaker has too many ideas or too much information on the topic at hand, knowing the audience's needs and expectations will help him or her determine what information is most relevant and interesting.

The needs of the audience vary from category to category. For example, a student's content will change depending on whether he or she is making a presentation before fellow students, professors, local business people, or friends. In some cases, one would expect that the audience already has a high level of information, while in other cases, there will be little information known. The speaker should consider the audience's needs and tell them what they need to know without talking about everything.

2

Learn how to design a presentation.

Design and Organize the Information

By this point, the speaker has done two essential things to give shape to the presentation: he or she is aware of the purpose of the presentation and the audience's needs. These will guide him or her in gathering and systematically arranging the information to be presented. The speaker should structure and design the delivery to be effective, with the goal that the audience will ultimately accept his or her ideas.

Considerable thought should be given to how to start the presentation. What should be said first? This does not refer to how to greet the audience but, rather, to what main point the speaker should begin with. The normal order of any exposition is to first list the main ideas and then elaborate on each of them. This is the pattern that all written reports follow too. The sequence and timing of each part in a 30-minute presentation should be:

The normal order of any exposition is to first list the main ideas and then elaborate on each of them.

- *Introduction:* 3 minutes
- *Main body:* 15 minutes
- *Conclusion:* 2 minutes
- *Question–answer session:* 10 minutes

The presentation should be designed in such a way that it is logical, clear, and complete in the 30 minutes allotted to it. Let's use the BITS DLP proposal example to see how this can be done.

Introduction (3 minutes)

The introduction indicates the main idea of the presentation. It does only that, without giving details of what is to follow. This helps the audience know the subject and focus of the presentation. For instance, the objective in this situation is: "We propose that BITS should open Distance Learning Centres in two Gulf cities, Dubai and Muscat". Next, the presentation should explain why it is proposing overseas BITS centres by speaking about how popular BITS' educational programmes are nationally and internationally. This background provides

Exhibit 11.1
The Main Body of the Presentation

Benefits to BITS

- Will help the faculty develop new teaching strategies to promote BITS' academic rigour and excellence in a different climate where there is economic affluence but limited opportunities for higher education, specially in technology, science, and management.
- Will support BITS programmes in general and add opportunities for summer training and placements.
- Will increase financial benefits and foreign exchange earnings.

Benefits to DLP-associated Countries

- Will create good opportunities for Arab and non-resident Indian students to study engineering, science, or management at an international level.
- Will help Gulf countries use the research capabilities of BITS' faculty and postgraduate students to promote their technical know-how in the areas of construction, plant management, and human relations development.
- Will enable developing countries to learn new ways of social and intellectual growth through interaction and contact with India.

Viability: How Will BITS Centres Abroad Work?

An MOU can be signed between BITS and the partner countries. The BITS centre will be recognized as a centre for higher learning and education, duly approved by the Sultanate of Oman and the Emirate of Dubai.

- All physical facilities such as land, building, furniture, laboratories, and library are to be provided by the host country free of rent and cost for five years. Subsequently, rent and costs will be fixed through mutual agreement.
- Faculty provision: The teaching faculty and administration will be provided by BITS, Pilani (India).
- Syllabus and exams: The courses and evaluation systems used abroad will be the same as those used in BITS Pilani, India.
- Admissions system and fees: Admissions will be made on the basis of merit and will be determined through normalization of the marks of applicants (mostly NRIs).

the launching pad for more detailed information, which is covered in the main body of the presentation.

Main Body (15 minutes)

The main part of the presentation is devoted to informing the audience about the advantages of the proposal, both for BITS and the concerned countries in the Gulf (see Exhibit 11.1). This section would include findings of a survey and analysis of the data. This section of the presentation should generally be divided into sub-sections. As a general rule, the speaker should avoid having more than three sub-sections under the main point.

Generally, a presentation is delivered in an analytical and logical manner: the introduction leads to the main content, which in turn leads to the conclusions and recommendations. To integrate these parts into a continuous whole, there should be proper transitions from one section to the next and from one stage to another. The speaker should summarize what has been said in the previous section or stage before explaining how the next point is related. An example is: "So, you have seen how BITS overseas centres are feasible and viable. Now let's discuss some of the potential problems that we may face".

Conclusion (2 minutes)

The conclusion (see Exhibit 11.2) summarizes the speaker's main arguments and connects them to the objectives stated in the introduction and the larger picture.

Exhibit 11.2
The Conclusion

- BITS' experience of running three DLP centres in India has built confidence and expertise regarding its abilities to do so abroad, negating distance as a factor for excellence in education.
- The faculty is committed and ready to take advantage of this opportunity.
- There is a lot of faith in the promised support from the Gulf nations.

To end the presentation, the speaker should do the following:

- Repeat the main idea of the presentation.
- Restate the most important points with supporting information.
- Thank the audience and invite questions.

Question–Answer Session (10 minutes)

This is an important opportunity for audience interaction. The speaker should encourage questions and answer each question seriously and with honesty. The speaker should not try to bluff; if he or she does not know the answer to a question, it is best to be frank and admit this.

3

Select the proper medium of presentation and visual aids.

Decide on the Medium of Presentation and Visual Aids

A presentation can be made more vivid by the use of statistical data, figures, diagrams, and so on, which can be displayed via transparencies or PowerPoint slides. Through visual display of ideas, the presenter can make the audience see what they hear. Graphics tend to garner and hold attention more easily than spoken words, so they also help keep the audience fully absorbed. Having visual projection of the message also enables the speaker to keep to the structure of the presentation. Moreover, often a greater amount of information can be communicated with a visual than lengthy verbal explanations. This saves time.

A presentation can be made more vivid by the use of statistical data charts, figures, diagrams, and so on, which can be displayed via transparencies or PowerPoint slides.

When to Use Visual Aids

Visual aids should be used to:

- Present numerical and statistical data.
- Present topics related to art, design, or any subject that is visual in nature.
- Present comparative statements of facts and figures, specially graphic and diagrammatic forms. Visual presentation of comparisons always helps comprehension. For instance, if the presenter wants to demonstrate the comparison of two structures, the point of comparison can be better appreciated when shown rather than described.
- Present new interpretations of old data. If the speaker has discovered or noticed something new as a fresh interpretation of an existing phenomenon, showing it makes the information look more concrete. By projecting the old information side-by-side with the new, the speaker can demonstrate how he or she has gone beyond the old data.

Often, a greater amount of information can be communicated with a visual than lengthy verbal explanations. This saves time.

How to Use Visual Aids

Here are some guidelines regarding how to use visual aids:

- One should not use too many images as this will lessen their impact.
- The speaker should plan the graphics according to the main points and make one graphic for each point.
- It is best to use bold, clear letters that can be seen from the other end of the room.
- The speaker should not fill a slide with too many words. As far as possible, one should write single words or short phrases to summarize concepts. See Exhibit 11.3 for an example.
- Different colours can help to distinguish different points.
- The presenter should reveal only one point at a time. This can be done by progressively exposing the hidden portion of the slide.

One should not use too many images as this will lessen their impact. The speaker should plan the graphics according to the main points.

Exhibit 11.3
An Effective and an Ineffective Slide

Functions of a Finance Manager

The finance manager of an organization is involved in:

- forecasting and predicting the short- and long-term requirement of money by the business
- analysing the costs and benefits associated with long-term investments
- Coordinating and controlling the various organizational activities are to ensure cost effectiveness and maximum efficiency in terms of value generation
- eliminating, reducing and avoiding the risks the business faces
- evaluating the performance of his/her firm

A word-heavy, ineffective slide; the audience may find it hard to grasp the main points in a short time.

Functions of a Finance Manager

- Forecasting and planning
- Analysing and evaluating the investment activities
- Coordination and control
- Risk management
- Performance measurement

An effective slide that captures the main points in brief. If required, the presenter should explain these points in detail.

- The slides should be numbered and the presentation should be rehearsed with the slides. This ensures that the words match the visuals.
- The speaker should explain the purpose and content of each slide when it is shown. It should be displayed for sufficient time to allow the audience to read it and, if required, make notes from it.

Different Mediums of Presentation

Some common mediums of presentation are boards (black or white), flip charts, overhead projectors and transparencies, and Microsoft PowerPoint slides.

Boards A board is a primary aid used in classrooms and can be black or white. The use of a board helps listeners concentrate, as it is used to note important words and concepts, or to do calculations. It is better to divide the board into different parts for noting down points, doing calculations, and drawing figures. Bold, clear letters should be used so that words are visible at a distance.

Flip charts A flip chart is a large pad of paper set on a stand. It is used for presenting information to a small group of 15 to 20 persons. The advantage of using flip charts is that they can be readily generated and added to during the talk. They can also be prepared in advance for presenting complex diagrams, bar charts, and graphs. The speaker can sketch outlines of a diagram in the presence of the audience. He or she can also use them for prompting and for creating and presenting the audience's feedback, suggestions, comments, or any other observations at the end of the talk. Flip charts that can be written over in water-soluble ink can be reused.

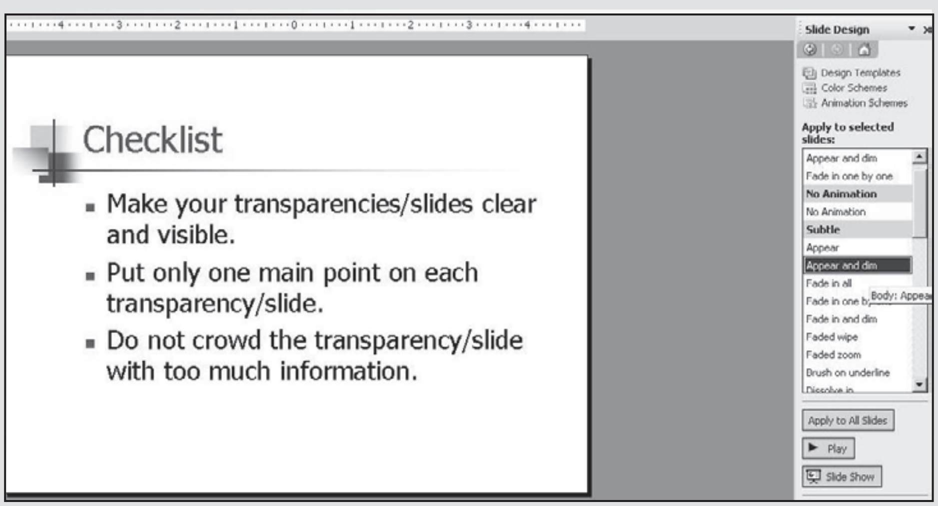
Overhead projectors and transparencies A frequently used medium of presentation is an overhead projector (OHP). Overhead projectors allow the presenter to speak while looking at the audience and also have a prepared transparency projected on the screen.

An OHP can have typed or handwritten matter, but the best impact is made when the content is neatly and clearly typed. Tips on preparing transparencies and using OHPs are given in Exhibit 11.4.

PowerPoint presentations Computer-based Microsoft PowerPoint presentations have now become more widespread than transparencies and slides. These are projected with the help of multimedia projectors. Usually, a computer screen displays the information to a large audience. Pictures and photographs are all displayed as part of the presentation. The entire presentation is saved on a laptop (with a backup on CD, if possible). The laptop is then connected to the projection equipment so that the laptop screen is cloned on the projector. The whole operation is automatic and simple. The visual impact is impressive and absorbing.

Exhibit 11.4
Tips for Preparing Transparencies and PowerPoint Slides

- Make your transparencies/slides clear and visible to everyone in the audience.
- Put only one main point on each transparency/slide.
- Do not crowd the transparency/slide with too much information. Place information at the centre, and do not crowd the margins.
- Avoid having more than eight lines on each transparency/slide, and use about six words in each line. Thus, try to limit each transparency to about 48 words.
- Mark sections and sub-sections with clarity to make the organization of information clear.
- Check before the presentation that the projector is working. In the case of PowerPoint presentations, ensure that the laptop is not low on battery and that it is connected to the projector.
- Clean the projector lens and surface if needed.
- Adjust the focus and projector position to obtain the brightest and largest image possible.
- Switch off the machine between visuals. In the case of OHPs, run the fan inside the projector when showing visuals.
- The projection screen should be clean. If the projection is made on a whiteboard or wall, ensure that there is nothing written or marked on the board/wall.
- Use a pointer to point to parts of the transparency and emphasize specific points.
- Show the points one by one. In the case of an OHP, one may hide the matter that has not yet been discussed with tracing paper. In the case of PowerPoint slides, this can be done by clicking on **Slide Show** on the tool bar, selecting **Animation,** and selecting the required effect (*fade in one by one*, *appear and dim*, etc.) from the right-hand side panel, as follows:



- Finally, one should remember that slides and transparencies are aids in presentations, and not a substitute for one's own words and explanations. So, it is important to face the audience while speaking and to make eye contact with them.

Time the Presentation

The total presentation, including the question–answer session at the end, should be covered within the time allotted to it. In actual practice, while speaking, many people tend to ignore the fact that the audience's interest and attention are affected by the time factor. An effective presentation is one that has a smart beginning and logically arrives at a conclusion without wandering off-topic or rambling, while providing sufficient explanation for tricky or controversial points. The speaker should not repeat his or her points excessively. In addition, he or should learn to change the pacing of the presentation in response to the non-verbal cues received from the audience's body language.

The total presentation, including the question–answer session at the end, should be covered within the time allotted to it.

Become Familiar with the Location of the Presentation

Before presenting, the speaker should check the size, ventilation, and seating arrangement of the room. This helps position the screen according to the number of persons and the size of the room, ensuring it will be visible to everyone. The presenter should keep enough space between himself or herself and the screen so that he or she can refer to points on the screen with a pointer.

DELIVERING THE PRESENTATION

4

Understand the chief principles of delivering an effective presentation.

Regardless of how interesting or well drafted a presentation is, its delivery must be effective in order for the presentation to achieve its goals. Here are some guidelines on delivering presentations:

- Do not read aloud. A presentation is essentially an oral, face-to-face communication. Reading notes or slides aloud does not foster discussion of ideas. This is a common mistake: it does not hold the audience's attention as they can read the slide themselves. What the speaker should do is explain and expand on what is on the screen, pointing out what is important and how it relates to the point.
- Use the "you attitude" to ensure audience involvement; tell the audience how the information being presented is useful to them. What do they stand to gain from the presentation? Why should they listen to you? Answering this well shows how one's presentation is relevant to the needs and interests of the audience.
- Outline the content of the presentation in the beginning itself. This will help the audience follow the presentation and understand its structure and arguments.
- Use transitions. If the audience are told what comes next in the presentation, they will be able to follow it better and will know how one part relates to the others. The speaker know best when he or she moves from one stage or step to another. He ors he can help the audience know when a new point is being introduced so that they follow the sequence. Transitions must, therefore, be well indicated by using connectives and inferences. For example, phrases such as "Now we can consider", "So we can see that", and "The next step involves" are useful for this.
- Try to involve the audience and encourage their participation. Avoid doing things that reduce audience involvement such as speaking in too low a voice that cannot be heard and may be perceived as feeble, or shouting, which sounds angry and jarring.
- To arouse and sustain audience interest, the speaker should maintain eye contact throughout the presentation, ask interesting questions of the audience, use anecdotes if possible, invite volunteers to role-play, stand close enough to the audience to be fully visible and to feel less removed from them, and present material enthusiastically.

Reading out notes or slides aloud does not foster discussion of ideas. This is a common mistake: it does not hold the audience's attention as they can read the slide themselves.

Rehearsal

To give a good presentation, the speaker should rehearse his or her full performance ahead of time. This helps to:

- Coordinate speech with visual projections
- Know if the information has been properly edited
- Check if the duration of the presentation is appropriate
- Minimize stage fright

It is best to rehearse before a discerning listener and in conditions as close to the actual presentation conditions as possible.

It is best to rehearse before a discerning listener and in conditions as close to the actual presentation conditions as possible. The listener should be able to evaluate the material in terms of its technical accuracy. He or she should also be able to provide objective criticism.

Some tips for rehearsing a presentation are:

- Rehearse using the microphone and visual aids and in the chosen mode of presenting to practice coordinating verbal delivery and visual projection.
- Practice using eye contact. This requires lifting one's eyes from the written notes and facing the audience for as long as possible.
- Practice voice modulation, proper intonation, correct pronunciation of the words, and proper variation in volume.
- Rehearse by recording the presentation and playing it back to observe your own voice and manner of delivery. It is possible to improve one's performance by analysing the recorded performance. A video recording would be most useful to help improve body language.

Body Language

Since a presentation is a live performance, the speaker's non-verbal cues will influence the audience and vice versa.

Since a presentation is a live performance, the speaker's non-verbal cues will influence the audience and vice versa. We have already discussed the power of non-verbal body movements, gestures, and facial expressions in positively or negatively modifying the meaning of the message in Chapter 7. For presentations, the following aspects of non-verbal behaviour are particularly relevant:

- Professional appearance
- Good/positive posture
- Eye contact
- Use of positive gestures and hand movements that reinforce the argument
- Appropriate movements. It is important not to stand fixed like a statue in one spot, but to move with ease between the projection screen and the podium or the area in front of the audience
- Smiling and looking relaxed while answering questions

Handling Questions and Debate

5

Know how to handle questions and give answers.

A good speaker treats questions as an important and necessary part of his or her presentation. Questions are an opportunity for the speaker to further explain his or her point. He or she can go back to the slides to further explain a point, or he or she can also add new evidence or examples to support the point. If a presentation is followed by a series of questions, it shows that the presentation was able to involve the audience and hold their interest. A genuine question reveals that the speaker's content was relevant to the audience.

If a presentation is followed by a series of questions, it shows that the presentation was able to involve the audience and hold their interest. A genuine question reveals that the speaker's content was relevant to the audience.

Questions help the speaker to:

- Further clarify what he or she has already said.
- Add new information. Some presenters deliberately leave out details that they propose to provide during the discussion session.
- Demonstrate his or her knowledge. The speaker's ability to answer questions shows that he or she is fully informed on your subject. It also increases the speaker's confidence.
- Prove the relevance of the presentation. A genuine question shows that what the speaker has said is relevant and interesting to the audience.

Questions can be motivated by different reasons, ranging from rivalry or jealousy to genuine curiosity. They can be classified as:

- *Genuine questions:* A question may be asked to get more information or to seek clarification regarding a particular point. This sort of question is not meant to embarrass the speaker but intends that he or she elaborate or explain what has already discussed.

- *Questions asked for the sake of questioning:* There are some questions that do not seek any answer. They are raised either to show off the knowledge of the questioner or to expose gaps in the presenter's knowledge and information. Such questions can be:
  - Attention-grabbing—asked to steal the limelight.
  - Unanswerable—no answer can satisfy the questioner.
  - Tangential—have no bearing on the subject discussed and posed to oppose the speaker's viewpoint.
  - Challenging—challenge the speaker's knowledge and raise doubts about the validity of his or her information.

In all situations, the speaker should exhibit a sense of honesty in answering questions. If he or she does not know the answer, it is best to admit this—nobody is expected to know everything. Everybody is, however, expected to be honest enough to acknowledge what he or she does not know.

Tips to Fight Stage Fright

Stage fright is a natural experience for all presenters. Some tips to deal with it include:

1. Always look for some smiling faces among the listeners and make eye contact with them; they will make you feel at ease.
2. Rehearse your presentation before friends.
3. Memorize opening lines to help get yourself started.
4. Do extensive research on the topic and be over-prepared.
5. Use it as a positive source of nervous energy for performing well.

SUMMARY

- This chapter concentrated on imparting the skills of effective presentation. These skills can be developed by paying attention to preparation and delivery techniques, and the handling of the audience's response.
- There is a difference between presentations and lectures and written reports.
- A presentation is a form of oral communication. Its success depends on the presenter's preparation, clarity of purpose, understanding of audience needs, ability to structure information, choose the proper medium of presentation and visual aids, and ability to appeal to the audience's interest and respond to their questions with ease and honesty.
- There are various mediums that can be used in presentations, such as boards, flip charts, OHPs, and PowerPoint, and these are helpful in projecting complex information visually.
- A good presenter uses the skills of non-verbal communication to reinforce his or her words.
- A good presenter must also be able to encourage and handle questions.
- Speakers can overcome stage fright and develop self-confidence by practising and rehearsing the presentation before a chosen audience/critic.

CASE: THE PRESENTATION EFFECT

Mr Jon Hauser, President of A&E Education in Germany, visited a management institute in Chennai. After an informal meeting with the principal director, they moved to a large seminar hall equipped with a multimedia projection system. Jon proposed to give a presentation on his Learning Management System model. He spoke for about 40 minutes, covering the worldwide processes of educational administration and e-management. His presentation used PowerPoint and was visually supported by graphic data—charts, graphs, and diagrams. At places, he was difficult to follow because of the unusual accent in which English is spoken by a German. However, the elaborate visual aids helped him put his point across successfully. The PowerPoint slides were in the form of bullet points outlining the structure of the presentation.

During the discussion at the end of Jon's presentation, the principal director opined that the international model discussed would need to be customized with specific local content, and went on to share his own software model of Learning Management System. Jon appreciated the new insight, and they agreed to collaborate and integrate the models for marketing the software to educational institutions across India.

Questions to Answer

1. Does the size of the venue affect the quality of the presentation?
2. Discuss the benefits of using PowerPoint and visual aids when giving a presentation to a foreign audience.
3. What were Jon's presentation objectives? Was he successful in achieving them?

REVIEW YOUR LEARNING

1. Suppose you have just made a presentation. There is a coffee break. People are standing around discussing the presentation. You are able to overhear what they are saying. What would you like to hear them say about you and your presentation?
2. What according to you is a presentation? List some characteristics of a presentation that distinguish it from a written report.
3. Discuss the difference between a presentation and a lecture/seminar.
4. Often it is difficult to know where to begin a presentation. What do you think is the first thing to consider? Why?
5. Why is the time limit important in the case of a presentation? Why do you try to plan a presentation? List at least two reasons for each answer.
6. How do you indicate what is next in your presentation to the audience?
7. Choose a topic and show how you would summarize its content for your audience at the beginning of the presentation.
8. Identify the main content of a presentation on a topic of your choice and break it up into different sections and sub-sections.
9. List the visual aids that would be most effective in your presentation. Mention some of the advantages of these aids.
10. Mention the characteristics of effective presentation language.
11. List the characteristics of your audience that are important to consider before giving your presentation.

REFLECT ON YOUR LEARNING

1. How does a young business executive benefit from success in his or her first presentation before peers and seniors?
2. Should a presentation be allowed to change into a group discussion at any stage?
3. A presentation is often the result of team work. How is the work of different team members coordinated and presented as a single, well organized presentation?
4. "The question–answer session is an integral part of a presentation." Do you agree? How much time should be kept for the audience's questions in a presentation of about 30 minutes?
5. Discuss the different kinds of questions one can face from an audience and how you would handle them.

APPLY YOUR LEARNING

It is the audience that acts as the main factor in determining what your presentation contains and what it does not. Choose a topic for a presentation and briefly indicate how you would change the content of your presentation to suit the following audiences:

(i) Fellow students in your subject of study
(ii) Persons who have no knowledge of the subject
(iii) Professors and experts in your department

SELF-CHECK YOUR LEARNING

From among the given options, choose the most appropriate answer:*

1. A presentation is a form of oral communication in which a person shares factual information with an audience that is:
   (a) large (b) small
   (c) specific (d) mixed
2. The presenter acts as the:
   (a) medium of the information
   (b) advocate of the information
   (c) supporter of the information
   (d) deliverer of the information
3. The three major elements of presentation do not include:
   (a) visual aids (b) specific content
   (c) an audience (d) a presenter
4. The audience for a presentation consists of people who:
   (a) are uniform in their level of information and purpose
   (b) vary in their level of information and purpose
   (c) are uninformed and lack a purpose
   (d) are confused in their purpose
5. To be able to give a good presentation, a full rehearsal is:
   (a) necessary (b) optional
   (c) useless (d) audience based
6. Reading out a presentation is:
   (a) allowed (b) not allowed
   (c) helpful (d) dull
7. To make a presentation effective and impressive, you should use:
   (a) complex sentences
   (b) jargon
   (c) passive sentences
   (d) a simple and active form of sentences
8. To select the content of your presentation, you should know:
   (a) your purpose (b) the audience's needs
   (c) the available material (d) the time limit
9. In presentation design, maximum time is given to the:
   (a) conclusion (b) introduction
   (c) main body (d) question–answer session
10. Initially, a presentation is a form of:
    (a) one-way communication
    (b) two-way communication
    (c) group communication
    (d) intrapersonal communication

*For answers and self-evaluation, visit www.pearsoned.co.in/PDChaturvedi

12

Negotiation Skills

“

I’ll make you an offer you can’t refuse!

”

—*Vito Corleone in* The Godfather

Upon completion of this chapter, you should be able to:

1 Explain the negotiation process.

2 Understand the factors affecting negotiation.

3 Know about the subjective factors that affect negotiation outcomes.

4 Understand the stages in the negotiation process.

5 Identify different skills of initiating, discussing, and concluding the process of bargaining.

6 Know how to handle deadlocks.

Communication at Work

Anil and Manav are friends. They are trying to decide whether to go to the cinema or watch a cricket match.

Anil: You are coming to watch the cricket match with me today, aren’t you?

Manav: No. I really don’t want to. There’s a very good film showing at the Ritz. Come to that instead.

Anil: No, I don’t think a film would be as interesting as the cricket match. Surely, you’d rather come to the match?

Manav: No. I think today’s match will be quite boring. Don’t you prefer the cinema to cricket?

Anil: I suppose so, but this is a crucial match for our team. You like cricket too, don’t you?

Manav: Yes, I do, but the film is on only today. I think you should come with me to the cinema and watch the match tomorrow. How does that sound?

Anil: No. I’m not coming to the film.

Manav: You are, you know.

Anil: I really want to watch the match—I’m not coming to the film!

Manav: Oh yes you are. It’s raining today.

Anil: Oh dear. So it is. Okay, you win but if the weather is good tomorrow, you’ll come to the match with me, won’t you?

Manav: Yes. Of course.

WHAT IS NEGOTIATION?

Negotiation is a process of bargaining in which two parties, each of which has something that the other wants, try to reach an agreement on mutually accepted terms. Everyday examples of negotiation are:

- A brother and a sister debating which movie to watch
- Two friends trying to settle the amount for which one wants to sell his old car to the other
- Two sisters fighting over how a box of chocolates should be divided between them
- An employee making a suggestion to her manager regarding her salary
- A salesperson trying to arrange a meeting with a prospective wholesaler/dealer

The *Oxford Dictionary of Business English* defines negotiation as:

(a) “a process of trying to reach an agreement through discussion”,

(b) “a meeting where this discussion takes place”.

The Winston Simplified Dictionary defines negotiation as, “the discussion and bargaining that goes on between parties before a contract is settled or a deal

1

Explain the negotiation process.

Negotiation is a process of bargaining in which two parties, each of which has something that the other wants, try to reach an agreement on mutually accepted terms.

is definitely agreed upon". Alan Fowler defines negotiation as "a process of intervention by which two or more parties who consider that they need to be jointly involved in any outcome, but who initially have different objectives, seek by the use of argument and persuasion to resolve their differences in order to achieve a mutually acceptable solution"1. According to Bill Scott, "A negotiation is a form of meeting between two parties: our party and the other party"2. The objective of most negotiations is to reach an agreement in which both parties together move towards an outcome that is mutually beneficial.

THE NATURE OF NEGOTIATION

The following points make the nature of negotiation quite clear:

1. Negotiation takes place between two parties. Both the parties are equally interested in finding a satisfactory result.
2. Negotiation leads to agreement through discussion, not instructions, orders, or power/influence/authority.

When a manager deals with other managers or customers and suppliers over whom he or she has no authority, he or she tries to reach an agreement through discussion, persuasion, and argument. In other words, the manager must negotiate with the other party.

Suppose you are a manager in the marketing department of a company. You need the help of an analyst from another department to complete an urgent project report. The other department may not be willing to spare the services of the analyst you badly need. You would need to discuss the matter with your colleagues and make your case using convincing arguments, by negotiating with the analyst and the other department. Reaching an agreement is the objective of negotiation.

Reaching an agreement is the objective of negotiation.

Consider the following situation, which shows how negotiations work.

Mr and Mrs Rai wanted to sell their house. They had approached many property dealers in their area. Several agents had seen their property and knew their intentions, including the minimum price they would be willing to accept. The Rais quickly realized that in their area, nearly every property agent had come to know of their desire to sell the house as early as possible. This worked against them, and every time they were made an offer, it was lower than the previous one. They became desperate and began to believe that it would not be possible to sell their house for a reasonable price because they made the mistake of disclosing their keenness to sell. One day, they happened to mention this to one of their friends. He gave them the contact information of a very prominent builder, Mr Devraj, from another part of the city. Mr Devraj answered the Rais' call and immediately enquired about the location of the plot and the built-up area. Next, he asked them their asking price. He paused, and then said, "Think about the price again". This made the Rais feel a bit shaky. They had told him the price they wanted, not the prices the property dealers had offered them thus far. Not wanting to lose the chance of selling their house, they reduced their asking price by Rs 5 lakh. Mr Devraj promptly asked, "Is that final?" With some trepidation, they said, "Yes". In a businesslike tone, he said, "Done" and promised to send them Rs 10 lakh as an advance the next day. He also remarked that he would have the remaining amount sent within a week. The Rais wanted him to see the house, but he said, "There is no need for that; I am familiar with the sector".

At the time of the full and final payment, the Rais learnt that they were not able to get the desired price for the house from other, smaller property dealers because the house had an old-fashioned design and would need to be demolished. What these property dealers were offering was the price of the land only. However, Mr Devraj, being a builder, would be able to use the basic architecture and give the house a new look.

THE NEED FOR NEGOTIATION

The need to negotiate is defined by the situation. Some situations require negotiating, others don't.

Situations Requiring Negotiation

Negotiation is necessary when an issue involves more than one person and the problem cannot be resolved by a single person. Whenever two or more persons or parties are involved, they are bound to have different views or aims regarding the outcome. The way to overcome disagreement is by negotiating.

Negotiation can take place only when both concerned parties are willing to meet and discuss the issue at hand. That is, they both must want to reach a decision by discussion, not force or authority.

There are formal and informal situations in negotiation.

Formal Negotiations

- There is a prearranged meeting of the two parties.
- The agenda is already fixed, and both parties know what is going to be discussed.
- Generally, more than two persons are involved in the discussion.
- In formal negotiations, there is time to prepare and assign roles for each person in each party. For instance, one person can put forth their side's reasons and suggestions, another can explain the side's points more thoroughly, and the third can closely follow the flow of the discussion and point out anything that has been missed.
- A formal negotiation is simpler to handle than unannounced meetings. There is time to study the entire situation and find out the strengths and weaknesses of the other party.

A formal negotiation is simpler to handle than unannounced meetings.

Generally, a formal negotiation is for settling a dispute or a conflict between two warring parties, such as for a labour or workers' strike. Negotiations in such situations are formal; the meeting between the two parties is fixed beforehand and both parties have time to prepare their bargaining points.

Informal Negotiations

Informal negotiations are unannounced and casual meetings, such as when a staff member drops by a colleague's office and discusses a problem, which they attempt to resolve. This is an informal negotiation because:

- It is unannounced.
- It involves just two persons.
- It appears casual (although the colleague who initiated the discussion might have planned this approach deliberately).
- It does not give one time to prepare for the discussion, so one cannot study the strengths or weaknesses of the other side.
- Its friendly and informal approach is meant to influence the outcome.

Situations Not Requiring Negotiation

The following types of situations will not require negotiation:

- When one of the two parties/persons immediately accepts or agrees to what the other is suggesting. In such a situation there is no need for negotiating. The desired result is already achieved.
- Whenever one of the two parties refuses even to consider or discuss the suggestion or proposal. For example, suppose a supplier or a dealer completely refuses to reduce the price or consider any suggestion of partial payments, there is no possibility for negotiation.

However, people often encounter situations in which there is neither direct acceptance nor complete refusal at the outset. In such cases, the two persons deal with each other by discussing the possibility of reaching a mutually acceptable end.

2

Understand the factors affecting negotiation.

FACTORS AFFECTING NEGOTIATION

The factors discussed in this section usually affect the outcomes of negotiations.

Location

The location of a negotiation can influence the level of confidence of one party. When the location is one party's office, for instance, that party has several advantages. They are on home ground, an area of strength. They can access whatever information or material is needed during the course of the negotiation. They can also extend social courtesies as a token of goodwill; this could move the negotiation towards agreement.

Timing

- The choice of time for holding discussions and the length of the discussion should be fixed according to mutual convenience.
- There should be adequate time for the smooth exchange of ideas through different stages of negotiation. The preparation time and the timeframe for implementing the agreement afterwards should also be carefully fixed.
- To be effective, negotiations should be timely. That means they should be carried out before it is too late to reach an agreement.

3

Know about the subjective factors that affect negotiation outcomes.

Subjective Factors

Often the outcome of a discussion does not depend wholly on objective factors such as logic and the facts of the matter under consideration. The final outcome may also be determined by subjective factors relating to influence and persuasion.

1. *Individual relationships:* The conduct of negotiations is influenced not only by the real situation of the matter but also by the relationship and rapport between the two persons/parties involved in the process of discussion.
2. *Fear of authority:* Often one side's bargaining power is conditioned by fear of authority, higher connections, and the other party's capacity to hurt their professional future.
3. *Future and practical considerations:* When personal relationships are at stake, the negotiators may not wish to win the argument at the cost of the relationship. Moreover, the fear of losing business in the future is a strong factor in bargaining/negotiation positions, as is the effect on the participants' reputations.
4. *Mutual obligations:* The memories of past favours by the other party may also influence the negotiation.
5. *Personal considerations:* Self-questioning helps the negotiator identify the factors influencing his or her bargaining position and strengths. Both formal and informal negotiations are influenced by questions such as:
   - "How does my position on this proposal/issue take into account the likely effect on our future working relationship?"
   - "Am I allowing myself to be unduly influenced by a sense of obligation? Am I hoping to achieve too much by emphasizing past obligations?"
   - "What are my goals for this negotiation?"

Persuasive Skills and the Use of You-Attitude

Persuasion includes a range of skills for convincing other people of the need to accept or agree to a course of action.

Persuasion includes a range of skills for convincing other people of the need to accept or agree to a course of action. It is an essential element of effective business communication. It helps in resolving issues on which there is a difference of opinion, but that need solutions that are in the interest of all. In negotiations, people are gradually persuaded to accept the other party's view to some extent.

As you must have seen yourself, persuasion is not one single thing. It is a mixture of skills—attitude, psychology, language, tone, body language, and so on—used to convince the other party to accept one's view despite their objections or alternate proposals.

"You attitude" is an essential aspect of negotiations. Nothing convinces more than facts. But in order to persuade people, the facts should be discussed from the other party's point of view. A skilled negotiator should be able to highlight how the other person stands to gain from his or her suggestions. He or she must understand the other party's needs and be able to reconcile what would be a good result for him or her with the needs of the other party. This allows persuasion to end negotiations and discussions with a satisfying conclusion for both sides (creating a win–win situation).

Persuasion is not just one single thing. It is a mixture of skills—attitude, psychology, language, tone, body language, and so on—used to convince the other party to accept one's view despite their objections or alternate proposals.

The range of persuasive skills can be classified under the following broad headings:

- Style: Being collaborative rather than confrontational
- You attitude: considering the other person's viewpoint
- Talking and listening
- Probing and questioning
- Taking breaks when necessary
- Concessions and compromises
- Summarizing
- Reaching an agreement

A skilled negotiator must understand the other party's needs and be able to reconcile what would be a good result for him or her with the needs of the other party.

At the end of the discussion, both sides should be sure that the final agreement covers all necessary points and they are clearly expressed and understood.

STAGES IN THE NEGOTIATION PROCESS

4

Understand the stages in the negotiation process.

Generally, the process of negotiation moves from the stage of "offer" to that of "agreement" via the stages of "counter-offer", "concession", and "compromise". All discussions that progress successfully from opening differences to a final, mutually acceptable outcome/conclusion usually move through the same general sequence. During informal discussions this sequence may not always be obvious, yet it is there with respect to the most important aspects of negotiations.

At the end of the discussion, both sides should be sure that the final agreement covers all necessary points and they are clearly expressed and understood.

According to Alan Fowler, the stages of an effective discussion are:

- Preparing and planning
- Exchanging initial views
- Exploring possible compromises
- Searching for common ground
- Securing an agreement
- Implementing the agreement

These six stages can be grouped into three basic phases:

- A preparation phase before the negotiation begins
- The actual negotiating process—the interaction that leads to the final agreement and an outcome
- The implementation of the agreement

Negotiation implies that both parties accept that an agreement between them is needed (required or desirable) before any decision is to be implemented. The direction of the discussion is towards that desired agreement. Hence, it requires careful preparation and handling.

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The Preparation Phase

Like all effective communication/discussion, negotiations have to be planned. Tim Hindle, in his book *Negotiating Skills*, says, "Bear in mind that it is almost impossible for a negotiator to do too much preparation".[3]

There are two respects in which the negotiator has to be prepared before the negotiation:

- Assessing the relative strength of the two parties
- Setting negotiating objectives. At this stage, the negotiator should try to answer the following two questions:
  - What are the real issues?
  - Which parties should be involved?

Knowing the real issues at hand helps the negotiator feel confident and fully prepared about two things:

- That he/she knows the subject matter well and is not likely to be surprised by the other party introducing unexpected facts or figures
- That he/she is clear about the desired goal of the discussion

Negotiators should be realistic about their objectives. If they fail to persuade the other side to accept their ideal solution, they should be prepared to lower their expectations. If the ideal is not achievable, they should be very clear and firm about the lowest outcome acceptable to them. It is important for the negotiators to know what points they are willing to concede and what their limits are.

In the preparation stage, negotiators should also plan the best way of arguing their case, considering particularly the other person's likely viewpoint and objectives. They should assess the strength of each party's bargaining position. To be well prepared before the actual negotiating process begins, negotiators should:

- Be sure that they know enough about the subject matter to be discussed
- Decide their objectives and limits
- Plan how best to argue their case

The Negotiation Phase

Most effective negotiations follow a set sequence:

- The parties begin by defining the issues at hand. They ascertain the scope of the negotiation.
- Each side then puts forward what it is seeking. First, the party that is making a claim presents its case, and then the other party gives an initial response—thus, both the parties define their initial positions.
- After that comes a more open phase in which the initial positions are tested through argument.
- The parties then move to discussing a possible solution that could result in a resolution.
- Firm proposals in more specific terms are then discussed and modified before both parties accept them.
- Finally, an agreement is spelled out and a conclusion is reached.

The Implementation Phase

> Some scholars do not consider preparation and implementation to be parts of negotiation.

Some scholars do not consider the stages of preparation and implementation to be parts of negotiation. But they constitute two basic phases of the actual process of negotiation—one before initiating the negotiation process and the other after concluding discussions.

- The purpose of negotiation is to achieve a decision; the purpose of an agreement is to implement the agreed-upon decision/outcome.
- If due attention is not paid to the implementation of a negotiation, then the negotiation fails.

Three steps to prevent failure of implementation are:

- In all formal negotiations, confirm in writing all that has been agreed upon.
- As far as possible, mention an implementation programme in the agreement. This includes mentioning who is supposed to do what and by when. This matter, if left undefined, may become the subject of disagreement later.
- Ensure that every concerned person, not only those involved in t\he discussion, is told about the agreement, its implications, and the actions that are to follow.

NEGOTIATION STRATEGIES

5

Identify different skills of initiating, discussing, and concluding the process of bargaining.

Some of the elements listed as part of the negotiation process are strategic in nature. They are discussed here as strategies to be used at different stages of negotiation.

Initial Strategies

Before the negotiation, the negotiators must plan their strategies.

- A successful negotiation should plan the discussion according to the psychological needs of the other party and use appropriate strategies to maximize his or her advantage and gain information about the objectives of the other party.
- He or she should focus on the need to reach a mutually satisfactory conclusion by joint problem-solving.
- The negotiator should sell “sunny-side up”. He or she should think about how the other person will see the proposal and should try to identify and “sell” the benefits of his or her case.
- The negotiator should be able to alter his or her position (within planned limits) if needed to achieve this approach.
- Instead of talking compulsively, a good negotiator allows the other party to say what they wish and develops a dialogue with them.

Instead of talking compulsively, a good negotiator allows the other party to say what they wish and develops a dialogue with them.

One can start the discussion with language such as: “The general point of our discussion is…, which I think has come up because of.... But before I go into details, it would be helpful if you first outline your view”.

During the Discussion

The following are some strategies that should be used during the course of the negotiation:

- Neither side should state its entire case in the beginning of the discussion; this should develop as the discussion proceeds. If one side puts forth everything at the beginning, it leaves itself no chance to change position in light of the other side’s arguments.
- It is important to listen carefully to the other speakers’ arguments and notice their facial expressions, gestures, and body movements, in addition to the words. Non-verbal clues and cues will tell the listener how the other side feels—confident or nervous, irritated or calm.
- Neither side should interrupt the other. Interruptions annoy instead of encouraging cooperation.
- Good negotiators put forth searching questions to verify the correctness of facts offered by the other party, such as dates, figures, and so on, or of their logic. If a negotiator doubts the accuracy of the other side’s information, he or she should not directly challenge them by saying, “You are wrong”. Instead, the negotiator may ask further, probing questions, such as “Could you explain the connection between that point and what you said earlier about X?” or “I have not understood the logic of that. Could you put it in a different way?”
- One should not take on a confrontational tone. The strategy should be to allow the discussion to move towards agreement. To do this, one must psychologically encourage cooperation throughout the discussion.
- Both parties should use impersonal terminology to point out corrections, rather than making personal criticisms.

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- It can be useful to take breaks. During the discussion, a short break of 10 minutes can be useful for two purposes: to have a chance to consider new points or proposals before deciding on final commitments and to change the mood of the discussion if it has become too emotionally charged.
- Both sides must use concessions and compromises. At times, it may be impossible to move further without making some concessions. Strategy is concerned partly with timing and partly with the way possible concessions are introduced into the discussion. When the participants realize that attitudes are hardening and the same points are being repeated without a resolution, the discussion could be changed to an exploratory phase.
- Participants can use conditional compromises such as by saying things like, "Since we now know each other's initial views, could you tell me what your response would be if I accepted this part of X, which you have suggested?", "Would you do X if I agreed to do Y?", and "Would you be able to agree to X if I am able to postpone taking action on Y?"
- It helps to emphasize what the other person stands to benefit from the compromise. The other side should not feel that he/she is losing by accepting the concession or compromise. Some tips include:
  - Commending and thanking the other party for a good suggestion.
  - Not allowing the discussion to go on for too long without bringing in concessions/compromises necessary for reaching agreement.
  - Introducing concessions/compromises on a non-commitment basis.
  - Seeing that the concessions made by each side match.

Reaching an Agreement

Tips for reaching a final agreement are:

- After a long and difficult discussion, "final" should be taken as final. No further concessions or compromises should be allowed.
- Negotiators should be tactful and persuasive to ensure that the final outcome is seen as beneficial by the other party.
- The key strategy in any negotiation is persuasion.
- Negotiators should emphasize the other party's benefits and should be enthusiastic about the other party's cooperation and suggestions.

Be tactful and persuasive to ensure that the final outcome, which is of advantage to you, is also seen by the other party as a benefit to them.

Summarizing

It helps to summarize the agreements and conclusions at the end of the discussion.

- The negotiators can suggest something such as, "I think it would be helpful if we could summarize all that we have discussed to reach this agreement".
- Alternatively, one party might suggest: "Let's note it down so that no point is later missed by anyone". It is a good strategy to use written summaries at the end of discussions. This leaves no scope for disagreement later about what has or has not been agreed upon.

6

Know how to handle deadlocks.

Deadlocks

Reaching a mutually satisfactory end is the basic objective of any negotiation. If there is no final agreement reached, even after a prolonged discussion, the strategy should be to:

- Instead of going round in circles on a contentious point, move on to the next point on the agenda.
- Point out that no further concessions can be made regarding the point of contention, as they would be of no benefit to either party.
- Explain and emphasize the consequences that would result from a deadlock, such as the need to refer the matter to those with greater authority or eventually to external arbitration or third-party mediation.

- Use the ethical aspect of agreement, such as upholding the organization's values, the greatest good of the largest number of people, and so on.
- Even in the situation of a deadlock, remain positive and hopeful of reaching a mutually agreeable solution.
- Finally, point out that third-party intervention in the form of legal arbitration or conciliation may not benefit either of the parties, for whom it is best to decide the matter through mutual understanding.

SUMMARY

- This chapter explains the process of negotiation with the help of examples of formal and informal situations that require skillful discussion to reach an agreement.
- Negotiation can take place only when both concerned parties are willing to meet and discuss the issue at hand. That is, they both must want to reach a decision by discussion, not force or authority.
- Factors affecting negotiation include location; timing; subjective factors such as the relationship between the two individuals involved, the bargaining position of each side, practical future considerations, mutual obligations, and personal considerations; the use of you-attitude; and the persuasive skills of each side.
- The three stages of the negotiation process are the preparatory phase, the actual negotiation, and the implementation of the agreement.
- Negotiators must be well prepared for negotiation, and should understand the various strategies of initiating, discussing, and concluding negotiations, as well as how to deal with deadlocks.

CASE: FARSIGHTED NEGOTIATION

Several years ago, when Rakesh wanted to build a house in Faridabad, a property dealer showed him a number of plots in different sectors. He liked a particular plot of 500 square yards in Sector 9. The owner of the plot, Mr Roshan Lal Sharma, was a non-resident Indian who had taken extended leave to be in India so that he could sell his plot.

Before going to Mr Sharma, Rakesh wanted to obtain more information about the owner of the plot to strengthen his bargaining power. Mr Sharma was an engineer, and had been abroad for more than 15 years. He had a house in Delhi. Rakesh believed that it would be easy for him to negotiate the deal with Mr Sharma if they could meet in Faridabad. However, Mr Sharma conveyed his inability to come down to Faridabad because of other commitments that day. The property dealer suggested that Rakesh go to Delhi and finalize the deal. Rakesh was very keen to close the deal the same day.

Rakesh, along with his two sons, the property dealer, and Mr Sharma's dealer, went to Mr Sharma's house in Delhi to meet him. Rakesh's dealer introduced him and his sons to Mr Sharma. After the introductions, Mr Sharma excused himself and went into the adjoining room with Rakesh's dealer, while Rakesh, his sons, and Mr Sharma's dealer waited in the living room. Mr Sharma enquired about Rakesh and his family and his interest in Faridabad. They spoke within hearing range of the others.

On returning to the room, Mr Sharma kept silent and seemed to want Rakesh to begin the discussion. Rakesh began by praising the plot, especially the location. He told Mr Sharma that he had decided on this plot after taking a look at many different properties. He also explained that he was leaving for Jamshedpur the same night and, therefore, would like to finalize the deal before that. Mr. Sharma was happy to hear this.

When Rakesh asked Mr Sharma about the price, he did not give Rakesh a straight answer; rather, he put forth a counter-question and asked Rakesh about the prevailing rates and what price he had in mind. Rakesh evaded the question by saying that the rates varied from sector to sector, size to size, and location to location. Mr Sharma said his dealer knew the price of the plot and should have informed him about it. Rakesh said that the dealer had indeed informed him about the price, but that was higher than the rate prevailing in Sector 9. Mr Sharma said that he would like to know what Rakesh's offer was. Rakesh consulted his dealer and quoted the price suggested by him. Mr Sharma, again, did not accept the price. Rakesh raised his offer by Rs 500 per square yard, and, this time, Mr Sharma readily accepted the offer. Rakesh believed that the deal was completed.

However, while Rakesh was turned towards his dealer, Mr Sharma, rather suddenly, raised the issue of payment of the penalty charges for not constructing the mandatory percentage of the approved plan of construction within the stipulated time as prescribed by the Faridabad Municipal Corporation. He insisted that the buyer should bear the penalty charges on the plot. The penalty amount was for three years. Rakesh found the demand rather unreasonable. He tried to convince Mr Sharma that the demand was not logical. He failed to understand why he, as the buyer, should bear the penalty cost. Mr Sharma, however, kept repeating that this was his personal decision and his decisions were not subject to the questions of logic or correctness. Rakesh's sons also felt that they should not give in to this demand. The two dealers strongly objected to the demand and thought that Mr Sharma was behaving arrogantly and unreasonably. They suggested that Rakesh drop the proposal and said they would help him buy another plot. At this point, Rakesh excused himself and asked the two dealers to step out with him for a discussion. Mr Sharma also left the room.

Rakesh came back to the room with a smile and, to everybody's surprise, offered the amount he had brought with him to Mr Sharma as advance money, conveyed his decision to accept the penalty cost, and asked Mr Sharma to finalize the deal. Both his sons were surprised at the sudden change in his perspective. However, everyone was relieved that the deal was finally sealed.

Within three months of Rakesh's purchase, his plot's price rose to three times what he had paid for it. By considering the long-term advantages of buying the plot, Rakesh had made a smart decision when he accepted Mr Sharma's offer. Within a year, the house was ready on the same plot. Rakesh and his wife celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary with their family, relations, and friends in their new house that year.

Questions to Answer

1. Discuss the strategy employed by Mr Roshan Lal Sharma to strengthen his position as the negotiator.
2. Was it impulsive of Rakesh to accept Mr Sharma's terms against the advice of the two dealers and his sons? Discuss.
3. What do you learn about negotiation strategies from this case?

REVIEW YOUR LEARNING

1. Is negotiation basically meant for resolving conflicts in the workplace? Does it have any place in our personal lives?
2. Discuss the subjective factors that influence the outcome of a negotiation.
3. Analyse the different stages of the negotiation process.
4. Comment on the role of a third party in the case of negotiation deadlock.
5. What is a win–win situation?
6. Is it wise to accept what you get, instead of rejecting it in the hope of what you may get? Give your own reasons for your choice in light of what you have learnt in this chapter.
7. "In a fundamental sense, every negotiation is for the satisfaction of needs." Discuss.
8. What is the correct approach and goal of negotiation?
9. "Negotiation is a way of behaving that can develop understanding and acceptance for achieving a shared purpose." Discuss.
10. "While negotiating, you listen more than you talk if you would like to have the final say." Explain how this maxim leads to a successful negotiation.

REFLECT ON YOUR LEARNING

1. Consider the role of psychology in achieving success in negotiations.
2. Do you believe that you can negotiate anything? Point out any exceptions to this claim.
3. Analyse the power of legitimacy (authority) in garnering compliance with a request. Think of some examples from your personal experience.
4. "Never be judgmental about the intentions and behaviours of your opponents in a negotiation." Why?
5. To what extent should our negotiations be planned beforehand? What examples come to mind?

APPLY YOUR LEARNING

1. A is eating in a restaurant and B is a waiter.

   A: Waiter!
   B: Yes, sir?
   A: Look, I've been sitting here for ten minutes and you still haven't even given me the menu.
   B: I can't help that. We're very busy. You'll have to wait.
   A: I'm damned if I'll wait any longer. Bring me the menu immediately.
   B: I'm sorry, sir. I've got those people over there to serve first.
   A: Right. I'm going then and I won't come to your blasted restaurant again.
   B: I'm afraid I can't help it if you are unwilling to wait for your turn!

A and B do not seem to get along too well! What goes wrong? If you were A, how would you handle the situation?

2. A young man, Anoop, is trying to persuade his brother, Bala, to lend him his scooter.

Anoop: I was just wondering if you were using your scooter this afternoon.
Bala: Why?
Anoop: Well, I promised Ravi I'd pop over and see him before he went to Delhi.
Bala: How about going by bus?
Anoop: It's more expensive than using a scooter and it takes longer.
Bala: Oh, yes! It's more expensive than using my scooter, my petrol, my insurance, my road tax—much more expensive. Why not go by train? Oh yes! Too expensive!
Anoop: If you're not using it, you could lend it to me. Why not? I'll put some petrol in it for you.
Bala: Okay, I can't see any reason why you shouldn't have the scooter, then. Don't forget the petrol.
Anoop: Thanks.

How does Anoop induce Bala to lend him the scooter? He makes suggestions and proposals. List these and also Bala's counter-arguments.

SELF-CHECK YOUR LEARNING

From the given options, please choose the most appropriate answer:*

1. As compared to unannounced negotiation, formal negotiation:
   (a) is simpler
   (b) is more difficult
   (c) requires less preparation
   (d) is more time consuming
2. Informal negotiation involves:
   (a) three people
   (b) four people
   (c) two people
   (d) any number of people
3. Persuasion is an essential element of effective negotiation because it helps in:
   (a) resolving disputes among people
   (b) settling issues between two parties
   (c) effecting agreements and solutions in the interest of all
   (d) achieving one's own interests
4. The final aim of negotiation is to:
   (a) reach an agreement
   (b) implement an agreement between two parties
   (c) win at all cost
   (d) end a dispute
5. A negotiation is discussed in a tone that focuses attention on the need to reach a satisfactory solution by:
   (a) force
   (b) joint problem-solving
   (c) setting conditions
   (d) making proposals
6. Negotiation strategy is partly concerned with:
   (a) ending the discussion
   (b) avoiding failure
   (c) prolonging the length of the negotiation
   (d) searching for a common goal
7. Negotiation implies that both parties accept that the agreement between them is:
   (a) conditional
   (b) final and binding
   (c) subject to further dispute
   (d) necessary
8. One's negotiation objective should be:
   (a) ideal
   (b) realistic
   (c) personal
   (d) social
9. In order to persuade others, facts should be discussed from the point of view of a:
   (a) third party
   (b) first party
   (c) second party
   (d) fourth party
10. In negotiations, the interpretation of a cue requires skill because it may be:
    (a) ambiguous
    (b) verbal
    (c) intentional
    (d) behavioural

*For answers and self-evaluation, visit www.pearsoned.co.in/PDChaturvedi

ENDNOTES

1 Alan Fowler, *Negotiation Skills and Strategies* (Hyderabad: University Press, 1990), p. 3.

2 Bill Scott, *The Skills of Negotiating* (Bombay: Jaico Publishing House, 1995), p. 3.

3 Tim Hindle, *Negotiating Skills* (London: Dorling Kindersley, 1998), p. 6.

13

Business Etiquette

> *Etiquette means behaving yourself a little better than is absolutely essential.*
>
> —Will Cuppy

Upon completion of this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Understand the general rules of business etiquette.
2. Learn ways of introducing yourself and others.
3. Know how to handle telephone and cell phone calls.
4. Learn the rules of appropriate behaviour at business dinners and lunches.
5. Learn how to interact with international clients.
6. Know the norms of behaviour for business-to-business interactions.

COMMUNICATION AT WORK

Ramalingam is a vice-president in a multinational company in Noida. He is a Harvard graduate and lived in the United States for more than five years. He understands how Americans behave and expect to be treated abroad. He knows that they follow schedules punctually, dislike delays, and hate to be kept waiting or to keep someone waiting. Therefore, Ramalingam was very uneasy when Mr Rai, the CEO of his company, was late for their meeting with the American delegation visiting the company that morning.

Ramalingam kept the visitors busy by making small talk, but their restlessness was visible in the repeated glances at their wristwatches. Mr Rai arrived after about 20 minutes and was apologetic for the delay, which was caused by a huge traffic jam. Ramalingam introduced the visiting American group to him and without any further delay, Mr Rai took everyone to the boardroom for a presentation on the company—the past, the present, and the future—before holding a discussion on the proposed trade between the two companies.

Mr James Wright, the head of the visiting delegation, listened to the presentation with full attention. He noted down some points and clarified these with Mr Rai; however, he declined to stay for lunch, saying that they had to catch a 3 p.m. flight to Mumbai and did not have time. When leaving, Mr Wright said that he would get back to them. Ramalingam wished Mr Rai had not been late to the meeting, as they had lost valuable time that could have been used for discussing business opportunities.

WHAT IS BUSINESS ETIQUETTE?

Etiquette refers to conventional rules of social behaviour or professional conduct. These rules are unwritten and act as norms to be observed by all professionals who work as a team in a particular company or department. They help individuals identify what sort of behaviour is appropriate or inappropriate in a business environment.

Professional etiquette affects business deals. An intelligent business executive knows that visitors assess the status of a company not just from its balance sheets and inventory books but also from the manner in which they are received, addressed, taken around, and briefed in the boardroom. In business, as in life, etiquette is a self-rewarding trait. Successful professionals know how to conduct themselves at company meetings, parties, and dinners. They are aware of their company's culture and etiquette. Further, business etiquette means more than just being nice. It is fundamental to conducting business successfully. Those who ignore norms run the risk of being labelled as "unfriendly" or "inflexible". This may disrupt the smooth working of the team by causing misunderstandings or tension among fellow workers.

Choosing to be habitually late for meetings, ignoring deadlines, indulging in character assassination during coffee breaks, or demanding (as a right) instead of requesting (as a favour) help are examples of ignoring, knowingly or unknowingly, the rules of good professional conduct, behaviour, and etiquette.

Every workplace evolves its own norms of behaviour and attitude. For example, if one were to undertake a survey of banks or hospitals during lunch breaks, one would notice that in some companies everyone resumes working without even a minute's delay after lunch, while in others taking an extra 10 to 15 minutes for lunch may be a general practice. In such cases, the etiquette is not governed by rules written down anywhere.

1

Understand the general rules of business etiquette.

The business etiquette rules discussed in this chapter relate to the following:

- Introductions
- Telephone/cell phone calls
- Business dining
- Interaction with foreign clients
- Business-to-business etiquette

Successful professionals know how to conduct themselves at company meetings, parties, and dinners.

This chapter describes the behaviour and customs that would be considered appropriate and acceptable in most business organizations in modern, mostly westernized workplaces.

This approach to business etiquette assumes that each business setting has its own business protocols that an employee learns by working in that environment and observing others. But there are general rules of business etiquette that are based on the fundamental principles of organizational behaviour. In an organization, the basic concern is to create a comfortable and effective work environment where each person helps others work with ease. This is made possible by empathizing with others' concerns and priorities. Identifying with others is the best form of business etiquette.

In an organization, the basic concern is to create a comfortable and productive work environment where each person helps others work with ease.

Learning the rules of business etiquette helps professionals be comfortable in any business setting. Let us, therefore, consider some common situations in business and find out how to act appropriately.

2

Learn ways of introducing yourself and others.

INTRODUCTIONS

First impressions and meetings play a significant role in facilitating a business relationship. It is important, therefore, to make a positive impression when meeting someone for the first time.

Self-introductions

A confident self-introduction always makes a positive first impression, but many people are reluctant to introduce themselves. This may be because they think it too bold an act or they feel too shy to do so. But when two people meet for the first time, they are bound to want to know each other's identity, affiliation, and purpose. Even when people meet the second or third time after a gap of some weeks, there is no harm in repeating introductions by saying something simple like, "Good morning, I'm Smita Sharma".

As a norm of business etiquette and the first step towards cordial business transactions, people greet each other by stating their full names and positions (in office) at the very outset.

Suppose two applicants are waiting for an interview with the general manager of marketing of a company. They are sitting in the waiting lounge across the corridor leading to the general manager's office. A smart-looking middle-aged executive walks into the corridor moving towards the general manager's office. The candidates are not sure whether he is the person for whom they have been waiting. Now, suppose one of them stands up, walks up to him, and says, "Good morning, I am Reena Seth. I am here for an interview with Mr S. K. Nair". Hopefully, the person would respond, "Good morning! I am Mr Nair. Pleased to meet you. We shall have the interview shortly". Reena Seth's bold introduction to Mr Nair would give her an edge over the other candidate, who remained silent. Most likely, Mr Nair would have a positive and favourable impression of Reena Seth as a confident, assertive, and enterprising young individual.

If there is an advantage in introducing oneself at the first opportunity, why do people shy away from doing so? Some cultures, such as British culture, have a sense of reserve. Americans are more outgoing in general. Indians are traditionally more shy and, generally, would still consider it impolite to go up to someone and say "Hi, I am Amit Misra" (though this is now changing).

Introductions are standard protocol when two or more persons meet formally. Each person should introduce himself or herself in a clear manner, pronouncing their first names and surnames as well as stating their positions, which helps establish the purpose and direction of the conversation. For instance, one should say something like "Prafulla Misra, CEO, Sterling Gold Informatics", instead of just "Misra" or "Prafulla". Americans prefer to introduce themselves by their first names only, like "John" or "William". But the British use the first name and surname: "WB Yeats" or "Tony Blair". Names, specially foreign or unfamiliar ones, are generally only partially understood unless spoken distinctly. For instance, the name "Kanwal Jeet Singh Sidhu" has to be uttered slowly, so that the other person follows it fully.

During a conversation, one party may have forgotten the other's name or may not remember how to pronounce it. At such moments the other person should help them immediately by politely repeating their name — "I am Irfan Mohammad, I am sorry, I should have told you". Business etiquette seeks to make all concerned parties comfortable. This is why it is polite to apologize for forgetting to introduce oneself. If one simply says, "I am Irfan Mohammad", it suggests that the other person is at fault for forgetting the name.

Here are some rules for making introductions correctly:

1. In the case of a pre-arranged business meeting, if you are an expected visitor, you should introduce yourself by stating your name and the purpose of the visit: "I am Ramesh Bose and I have come here to meet Ms Divya Lahari in the marketing department". Only after introducing yourself should you ask for the name and position of the other party.
2. Do not use honorifics such as Sri, Mrs, Mr, Ms, or any other titles before your name while introducing or referring to yourself. Others can call you "Mr Chandra", but you should refer to yourself as just "Rajan Chandra" or "Chandra" or "Rajan". If you have a PhD, you may use "doctor" before your name and refer to yourself as "Dr Sharma". Surgeons and physicians usually do not add the salutation before their names when introducing themselves. Saying something like "I am Roopa Salwan, cardiologist from Escorts Heart Institute in New Delhi, India, I am here to attend the International Summit of Cardiologists as an Indian delegate" is a universally appropriate self-announcement. The point is that others may add titles or professional descriptions (such as "professor"), but the individuals themselves should not.
3. Speak your name slowly and clearly. As mentioned earlier, the listener may not catch an unusual or unfamiliar name. Therefore, articulate your name as distinctly as possible, and if required, help others by spelling it.

> Speak your name slowly and clearly. The listener may not catch an unusual or unfamiliar name. Therefore, articulate your name as distinctly as possible, and if required, help others by spelling it.

In business, one encounters a variety of people, and it may be difficult to recognize or place someone one has previously met in a different context such as a seminar or conference. Before the other person detects this, you should ask for his or her business card by simply saying, "Could I have your latest business card for your telephone number and e-mail address?"

To be tactful in such situations is also good business etiquette. If you let the other person know that you have forgotten his or her name, it may make the person feel that he or she is not important enough to be remembered. Try to act as if you know the name but wish to have more details about the person.

Introducing Others

It is common to have to introduce others at business meetings. A clear and complete introduction of each person, both members of the visiting party and the host party, makes everyone feel relaxed and creates a congenial atmosphere for the meeting. In such situations, the person who is making the introductions should know the names and professional statuses of both parties before the meeting. The professional status refers to the role the person plays in the business transaction.

> A clear and complete introduction of each person, both members of the visiting party and the host party, makes everyone feel relaxed and creates a congenial atmosphere for the meeting.

Normally, the senior-most person among the visitors or the host team introduces the other members of his or her group. The practice is that visitors are first introduced to the hosts. Then members of the host group are introduced. Usually a senior is not introduced to a junior, but instead, the lowest-ranked person is introduced to the highest-ranked person. Accordingly, avoid saying to the CEO of a company: "Mr Chopra, may I introduce you to Payal Muttoo? Payal is this year's first position holder and a gold medalist, working in our placement department". Instead, say "Mr Chopra, may I introduce Payal Muttoo to you? Payal is this year's university topper and gold medalist, working in our placement department".

Notice two things here. One, the polite form "May I introduce…" is appropriate and formal when speaking to a superior. But when introducing someone to others it is okay to just say, "This is Neelam Gulati. Neelam is a senior lecturer in finance". Also note that this introduction repeats the name so that it is duly received and remembered by the other person. To repeat the name naturally, the person who is making the introductions has to create a context by mentioning a significant detail about the person concerned—such as what work they do.

After introducing the junior person to the senior, introduce the senior person to the junior, for instance by saying something like: "Payal, as you know, Mr Chopra is our President. Mr Chopra will discuss our placement status and strategies with you".

Here, it may be important to point out that in India, and perhaps in other Asian countries, it is a usual practice to use *President* or *Chairman* as a title before the name, such as "President G. P. Chopra" or "Chairman Chopra-ji", or even "Chairman Mr Chopra". In the United States and other western cultures, this may sound a little odd. Americans refer to one another just by using "first name, last name", even in the case of very senior persons. However, in Asian countries, people observe social courtesies out of respect for age and position, even in the context of business.

Handshakes and Non-verbal Gestures

Most business meetings begin and end with a handshake. Shake hands after the introduction by extending your right hand and firmly holding the other person's right hand very briefly. In modern business, a handshake is a non-verbal clue of friendliness.

The handshake is so spontaneous that usually both parties simultaneously put forward their right hands to make the gesture. Nowadays, in business, as in society, there is no gender distinction and women shake hands in business situations too. Sometimes, while parting, people shake hands again or put their arm on the back or shoulder of the other person to communicate warmth.

> As a winning form of non-verbal communication, handshakes must be accompanied by eye contact and a gentle smile.

As a winning form of non-verbal communication, handshakes must be accompanied by eye contact and a gentle smile. In some situations, you may express your feelings by saying, "Pleased to meet you". The other party would generally respond by saying, "my pleasure". These words are just pleasantries. They do not mean much as verbal communication.

As already indicated while discussing non-verbal forms of communication, there are, besides handshakes, other gestures that are culture-specific. For instance, even in business situations, Arabs often shake hands, embrace, and also kiss to communicate their warmth and respect for the other person. East Asians often bow to one another.

If you are not sure of the cultural and personal sensitivities of your visitor or host, it is best to shake hands, as this is the general norm across the world. However, in some culture-specific countries, such as India, many senior business heads, executives, and officers still prefer to receive or bid adieu to highly placed guests in the traditional form—with folded hands, slightly bowed head, and eye contact. As a visitor, follow your host's cue and greet accordingly.

> 3
>
> Know how to handle telephone and cell phone calls.

TELEPHONE/CELL PHONE ETIQUETTE

In telephone conversations, the way we listen, respond, speak, or hang up is often as important as what is communicated.

Making a Call

Before initiating a call, be clear about the *why* (purpose) and *what* (content) of the call, how to begin the call, and what to do if the call is cut off.

Prepare Before Calling

For business calls, you must know exactly who you want to speak to and choose the most convenient time to make the call. You should also know whether you are calling to follow up on earlier communication or if it is the first step in the interaction.

- To be brief and concise, jot down the points you want to discuss and think about the order in which to discuss them. Always keep these notes at hand when making the call.
- Keep a notepad and pen ready to write down any information worth recording.
- Consider whether the call is important from your point of view or from the receiver's point of view. In the latter case, structure your information from the receiver's point of interest. Begin first with what is important for the receiver. Talk about your interests later.
- Keep the conversation as short as possible. The other person may not be able to spare much time for your call. During the office hours, call the landline number first, directly or through the assistant, depending on your familiarity with the person. Cell phones should be used in case of urgent matters or when the relationship is of a personal nature.
- Calling a cell phone from a landline number should be avoided as it may give the impression to the receiver that you are taking their availability for granted. In addition, the receiver may not recognize the number if it is not in their cell phone directory.
- Avoid calling a cell phone number through an administrative assistant. It might give an impression of discourtesy.
- Avoid the use of cell phones in movie halls, crowded restaurants, hospitals, fuel stations, and so on. Cell phones should be switched off or kept in the silent mode during meetings and important discussions. People whose calls you have missed in such a situation should be called back later.

How to Begin or Receive a Call

The first few words spoken by the caller or receiver are important for establishing identities and the purpose of the call. They create the context for further conversation.

> The first few words spoken by the caller or receiver are important for establishing identities and the purpose of the call. They create the context for further conversation.

As a caller, you may not be personally known to the receiver. The receiver may be familiar with your purpose and your company, but may not exactly know you unless you have met in person or spoken to each other earlier. Therefore, begin by introducing yourself—state your name, company, and purpose.

In organizations, calls are generally routed through a receptionist. The usual practice at the reception is to attend to the call within five rings; if you have been kept waiting longer than that, the receptionist will usually greet you with an apology. If your call is not answered even after ten rings, it is advisable to disconnect and try calling later, or try another number, if any.

Greet the receptionist ("Good morning"); tell him or her your name and your organization's name, and then mention whom you want to speak with. When speaking with a personal assistant, use the same introduction and tell him or her the purpose of the call. He or she will connect you to the desired person only after checking whether he or she is free to talk to you at that moment. Remember to be patient and pleasant while dealing with the assistant, who is an important link between the caller and the desired contact person.

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If the receiver does not know you, you should first introduce yourself, for instance by saying something like "Good morning Mr Chaturvedi, I am Pallavi Mehta, marketing manager of Ferns n Petals. I want to know the details of your company's order for floral decoration…". As a caller, you should use the opportunity to make the receiver feel that the information you want can be acquired only from him or her and that it is required immediately. In other words, involve the receiver in a dialogue, instead of questions that can be answered just by saying "yes" or "no". Suppose you say, "Can I have the details of…", the receiver can respond by saying, "No, not now" and may hang up. Hence, use your conversational skills to establish a good relationship with the other person so that the call ends on a positive note.

In the case of a cell phone conversation, it is always better to check if you are clearly audible. You may be able to hear the other side clearly, but it is possible that the other side is not able to hear you completely because of a poor signal. During official meetings, it is always better to keep the cell phone on silent mode. If you are expecting an important call, you may like to inform the chair about it before the meeting begins and step outside after excusing yourself. It is also necessary to keep all such calls short.

The ring tone expresses a person's style. However, it should be in sync with the environment of the workplace. The volume of the phone's ring should not be too loud. Similarly, the volume of the person should also not be very loud. Sometimes, people discuss even confidential matters so loudly that the entire floor can hear them.

If the Call Is Disconnected

Sometimes, the call may be suddenly disconnected or dropped. In such situations, courtesy demands that the person who originally initiated the call should redial immediately and say, "Sorry, the call got disconnected". In case the receiver has to suspend the call to attend to some other more important call, it is the duty of the receiver to resume the call and give a satisfactory explanation to ensure that the caller does not feel slighted.

Common Telephone Courtesies

Always use the interrogative form for making a request, such as "Could I…?" or "May I…?" as Direct categorical statements may seem like an order. "I want to talk to…" is not a polite request. Instead "May I talk to…" is more polite. Even the statement, "I request you to connect me to so and so number/person" is not quite appropriate when ones does not know the other party well. Instead, say, "May I request you to…".

Telephone Etiquette Observed by Administrative Assistants

In business, telephone calls are mostly received by personal assistants. Sometimes, the assistant has to act quickly to find out whether his or her supervisor is free to talk. So they may say, "Please hold on" while they check. If their supervisor is present but does not want to speak to the caller for some reason, the assistant will choose any one of the following polite excuses:

"Sorry, she is busy in a meeting. May I have your number? She will call you back".

"He is busy with a foreign delegation. May I ask him to call you back as soon as he is free?"

These statements may not necessarily be true. However, they are intended to keep the caller satisfied even when the call is not successful. Personal assistants should never try to overhear the conversation between the caller and the receiver. After putting through the call to their supervisor, they should hang up.

Telephone Precautions

As a caller you do not know whether the person receiving your call is alone. Therefore, confidential matters should never be discussed over the phone. They can be overheard/tapped in transmission. However, if you have to discuss something personal that you do not want others to know, you should check with the person you are calling in a polite manner. For example, you may say, "Can we talk about the tender for the Golden Highway project?" or simply, "Are you free? Can we talk about the tender?" This would save you from causing any embarrassment to the receiver or risk being overheard.

> Communication over the phone requires the use of non-verbal skills, such as pleasant tone, proper intonation, and clear articulation of words.

Communication over the phone requires the use of non-verbal skills, such as pleasant tone, proper intonation, and clear articulation of words. You should be able to convey a large part of the message through your way of speaking rather than the meaning of the words alone.

> **4**
> Learn the rules of appropriate behaviour at business dinners and lunches.

BUSINESS DINING

Business meetings with colleagues or clients can be before or after office hours and can be for formal occasions such as lunch or dinner parties or informal occasions such as social functions and festivals, religious ceremonies, weddings, or birthday parties. At such occasions, one should follow the cultural norms of the company, group, or organization. For instance, meals with colleagues, clients, or consultants have their own protocol and code of behaviour that must be followed for negotiating business deals. Keep in mind that such occasions are, in fact, business activities; therefore, act with a sense of responsibility. Do not consider these merely occasions for socializing. Some established norms regarding business meals are discussed in the following sections.

The Host

The host should invite the guests personally and confirm the date, time, and place in writing if possible. If the venue is new for the guest, the host should help him or her by giving directions. The invitation could also give information on who else is invited—for instance one can say: "My colleague Abhishek, who is looking after management trainees, will also be joining us". It is a good practice to confirm the scheduled meeting a day prior to the event. The host should plan to reach the venue a little ahead of the given time and personally check the seating arrangements. The host should also receive the guests personally outside the dining hall and move inside together. It is courteous to ask the guest to order his or her choice of dishes and drinks and it is only proper for the host to pay the bill. Similarly, the host should also arrange for taxis to take the guest back to his or her place of work or stay.

Business conversations are conducted in an informal manner that is free and relaxed. After some initial pleasantries, the host opens the meeting, starting with the background that provides the context for the specific matter to be discussed. If necessary, some points or conclusions can be noted down.

Business conversations are conducted in an informal manner that is free and relaxed. After some initial pleasantries, the host opens the meeting, starting with the background that provides the context for the specific matter to be discussed.

Business meals provide opportunities for easy give-and-take and negotiation. They bring together two complementary parties, such as employers and prospective employees, companies and clients, interviewers and interviewees, as equals at a social occasion.

The Guest

Guests should stick to their personal dietary preferences. If for religious or personal reasons a guest cannot eat something specific, he or should be able to refuse politely. Similarly, teetotalers can decline the offer to drink alcohol. The guest should not talk about the harmful effects of others' dietary choices, but instead, should just say something like "Thanks, I would like to have some lime cordial or fresh lime soda".

It is considered best to avoid drinking at business dinners, but if a guest does accept a drink, he or she should avoid drinking too much. A good way to excuse oneself is by saying "I have an early morning flight" or "I have to drive back".

It is best to avoid drinking alcohol at business dinners.

Table Manners

Business dinners are formal occasions and forks, knives, and spoons are often used. Indian food is generally eaten with one's hands, which is also acceptable. But, one should know how to use a knife and fork. Some general rules of correct use of cutlery are given in Exhibit 13.1.

INTERACTION WITH FOREIGN VISITORS

5

Learn how to interact with international clients.

It is important to respect foreign clients' religious beliefs and cultural needs. In business, foreign visitors should not be allowed to feel like strangers in other countries. We generally believe that when we visit another country, we should behave according to the business norms and etiquette of the country we are in. Accordingly, we can assume that foreign visitors would observe our business norms such as trade practices, working hours, office culture, and so on. But there may be some social and religious beliefs that we should try to respect. It is the primary duty of the hosts to make the guests feel comfortable in every way. Respecting cultural needs, religious beliefs, and the attitudes of foreign visitors will go a long way in developing good business relations. Some tips for doing so are:

Respecting cultural needs, religious beliefs, and the attitudes of foreign visitors will go a long way in developing good business relations.

1. People can be easily put at ease by speaking to them in their native language. English is a global link language today. Yet many people prefer to conduct business in their own

Exhibit 13.1
Cutlery Set for a Formal European Style Serving

Placed from Left to Right Away from the Diner

- A blunt butter knife placed on bread and butter plate
- Dessert spoon together with dessert fork
- Water glass, red wine glass or white wine glass
- Coffee cup and saucer

Placed from Right to Left Near the Diner

- Cocktail fork
- Soup spoon
- Tea spoon
- Dinner knife
- Dinner plate
- Dinner fork
- Salad fork
- Dinner napkin

How to Use a Knife and Fork

The rule for using a knife and a fork is quite simple — the knife cuts the food and the fork places it into the mouth. The knife is only for cutting food into small pieces be it vegetables, meat, or any other food. It should never be placed in the mouth. The knife is always held in the right hand. The fork is first held in the left hand with the knife in the right hand, to cut the food into small pieces. Then the knife is kept on the plate and in its place the fork is held in the right hand and used to place the food in the mouth. When not in use, both knife and fork rest on a side plate, never on the table.

The basic difference between Asian and European styles of eating is that in Asia, specially India and Pakistan, people often pick up a large piece of food with their hands instead of using a fork and knife. This is not done by Americans or Europeans who cut their food into small pieces. Generally, westerners eat with their mouths closed, whereas Asians may have their mouths partially open. These differences in styles of eating are only cultural. They are based on convenience and habits.

The best rule is to eat the way one is accustomed to eating. Use whatever cutlery you regularly use with elegance at formal business meals. If you are comfortable eating with hands, use your hand. If you need a spoon, ask for it.

How to Get the Server's Attention

Usually, waiters are watchful. A little signal from the diners catches their attention immediately. However, if someone needs to call the waiter, the best way is to establish eye contact and if necessary turn a little towards him or her. The best thing to say is "excuse me".

language. A foreign visitor may not know English, so use an interpreter, if necessary, for important business occasions.

2. Prepare documents in both languages, English and the foreign visitor's language.
3. Try to learn and use some words of greeting in the visitor's language as a gesture of friendliness.

BUSINESS MANNERS IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

To be successful in business transactions one should know the chief differences in the business manners of people of different countries. When we are in a foreign country, or are hosts to a foreigner in our country, we should bear in mind the business norms of that country. The norms for business meetings and personal style followed by people in some countries are discussed here.

Americans

- Shaking hands during introductions is common.
- Business cards are exchanged only when there is a need to do so.
- Punctuality is an important form of courtesy.
- Americans prefer breakfast meetings to develop close business relations. They also have meetings over lunch.
- Americans prefer to refer to people by their first names. It is a common business practice and should not be considered offensive.
- Giving gifts as a memento is a personal act to be done only after considering the provisions of the respective laws with regard to the value of the gift given.

Europeans

- *British:* British businessmen share most of their culture and business manners with other Europeans. They are formal in meetings and personal style.
- *French:* French businessmen usually choose to speak in French with businessmen from other countries. They are very cordial and greet each other by shaking hands. Businessman and businesswoman may embrace and kiss each other on meeting and parting.
- *Germans:* German business meetings are highly formal and scheduled much in advance. Punctuality is of utmost importance. Germans can explain themselves in English too, if required. People are addressed by their surnames. Senior businessmen are shown respect by sometimes being referred to as "Herr Doktor". Similarly, businesswomen are always addressed as "Frau".
- *Italian and Spanish:* Both Italians and Spanish take business occasions as part of social life and may be less formal than other Europeans. Meetings are more informal, so discussion about personal welfare may precede the discussion.
- *Dutch:* Dutch businessmen speak English fluently. Most of them are polyglots (speaking or writing several languages). They can, therefore, conduct business in several languages. They are relaxed in their approach to business meetings and personal relations.

The Japanese

- Japanese business people generally greet others by shaking hands, and not with a bow.
- It is polite to offer and accept the business card with both hands.
- The Japanese always like to maintain personal space, so physical contact is not desirable.
- Japanese business people should be addressed by using Mr or Ms, never by the first name.
- In Japan, saying "no" is considered impolite. Hence, one should not embarrass a Japanese business person by insisting on a point to the extent that he or she has to say no to the point/offer.
- The Japanese consider giving gifts to be an important part of business. A gift has to be in keeping with the status of the person. Gifts in pairs (like a pen and pencil set or cufflinks) are considered lucky, but not gifts in fours.
- Red cards in Japan are funeral notices, so red greeting cards are not used for business.

Arabs

Arab businessmen are known for their warm-hearted greetings. They stick to their traditional way of greeting, both as hosts and visitors, by saying "Salaam alaikum" (peace be upon you), accompanied by a firm handshake. To show greater warmth and closeness, Arab business-people may embrace each other while placing the right hand on the heart and the other hand on each other's right shoulders. They may also kiss on both cheeks. Do not reciprocate, unless you are also an Arab.

Arab business people are rarely under pressure of time. Meetings for business are preceded by social pleasantries. Discussions on religious and political matters are strictly avoided. Business meetings are conducted in a leisurely style. Therefore, the business session may get extended beyond your expectation. Arabs extend lavish hospitality as hosts. As visitors, they expect similar hospitality in other countries. To an Arab business-person, giving gifts is a part of hospitality. Therefore at dinners, small gifts are offered as a token of friendship. As tokens of gratitude for favours received, expensive gifts are presented, which are received as a part of the business culture. It is not looked upon as bribe. It is an accepted form of giving thanks. However, never give handkerchiefs as gifts, as they symbolize tears and parting. Arabs, like most Asians, eat their meals with their hand and do not drink alcohol.

Indians

As Indian businesses go global, business-people in India are realizing the need to prepare themselves to be good hosts to international visitors and considerate visitors in other countries via a judicious mix of modernity and tradition. Indian business culture is eclectic. Shaking hands at a meeting or parting is a common practice. Indians have always been known for their hospitality. Visitors are always treated with utmost attention and respect.

Business meetings are punctual, well-planned, and formally conducted, and protocol of seniority is observed. In matters of business discussion, juniors always give precedence to their seniors. Many times, juniors wait for a signal from their senior to contribute to the discussion. Business cards are exchanged while parting generally to indicate further contacts. Presentation of small gifts at the end of the meeting is considered to be a gesture of goodwill. Very important persons are received at the threshold of the meeting venue by senior executives and are usually presented with bouquets. They are also normally accompanied back to their vehicles and duly seen off.

6

Know the norms of behaviour for business-to-business interactions.

INTER-ORGANIZATIONAL ETIQUETTE

Individuals represent companies. Therefore, the norms for interpersonal behaviour apply to organization-to-organization communication as well. Each individual contributes to the organization's image and should know how to conduct himself or herself as a representative of the organization. Good business behaviour includes the following:

Individuals represent companies. The norms for interpersonal behaviour apply also to company-to-company behaviour.

Feel proud of your organization's achievements. Keep yourself fully informed of the new developments and better prospects for the company.

1. Be loyal to your organization
   - Do not criticize your organization before colleagues from other companies.
   - Defend your colleagues' actions without offending the complainant. Promise corrective action on your colleagues'/company's behalf.
   - Always speak well of your company. You are a part of your company's activities.
   - Feel proud of your organization's achievements. Keep yourself fully informed of new developments and better prospects for the company. No company can be free from problems and setbacks, but highlight the positive gains and not the losses.
2. Be careful about confidential matters
   - Keep confidential material in as few hands as possible. It can be used against the interests of your company.
   - Secure records and use code names if the information involves protecting the concerned persons.
   - Help others develop trust in you. Confidentiality requires mutual trust. Do not leak others' secrets to protect your own.
3. Maintain good relationships with customers

   A company's business sense and manners are best seen in how employees deal with their buyers or suppliers. To maintain good relationships with your customers and clients observe the following:

   - Handle the smallest of customers well. You cannot afford to ignore the biggest customers, but your company's reputation is built on how you treat small customers and clients.
   - Be prompt in your service to the customer. Respond to complaints and e-mails on time.

- Keep track of the following:
- Number of complaints received and responded to.
- Number of clients revisiting your company.
- Number of walk-ins every day.
- Commitment of your suppliers to help in emergencies.

4. When you take a decision that will affect the interests of many people, look for mutual benefits for both parties and all stakeholders.
5. Good manners breed good understanding and the mutual respect necessary for good business relations. Treat all colleagues with respect and recognize that others have positions above you. Similarly, when dealing with persons from other companies, inform them of your position through your business card and try to learn the other person's position in his or her company. Extend due respect to the person you are visiting.

Good manners breed good understanding and the mutual respect necessary for good business relations.

SUMMARY

- This chapter explains why successful businessmen should understand the unwritten rules of business etiquette and that each workplace differs in terms of appropriate behaviour.
- There are general rules for introducing oneself and others, handling telephone calls, and attending business dinners as a host or a guest.
- One must follow the guidelines for courteous interaction with those from different countries and cultures.
- An employee should represent his or her company to other businesses with care.

CASE: CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

At UP Institute of Technology & Science (UPITS), a number of professors in the engineering and science departments and a chief librarian from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the United States worked as visiting faculty under the MIT–Ford Foundation–UPITS collaboration for two years. The Indian faculty and their families were happy to have the guests on campus. There were frequent parties and family get-togethers, which resulted in many friendships among the hosts and the visitors.

One day, professor and head of the mechanical engineering department, Dr Mathur, went to the central library to discuss the possibility of procuring certain international books and journals for UPITS with the visiting German library chief, James Wandel. Dr Mathur reached about a half hour later than the pre-arranged time. The door was shut, but he opened it and walked in, pulled up a chair to move it closer, sat down, leaned over the desk, extended his hand, and said, "Hi! How are you this morning, Wandel?"

Dr Mathur was surprised to see a frown on Mr Wandel's face and felt further confused to hear the question, "By the way, are you my boss?"

"No", said Dr Mathur.

"Then, please know my name is James Wandel."

"I am sorry, I didn't mean to be impolite or rude to you. I just wanted to address you in a more friendly way. I am indeed very sorry Mr James."

Mr Wandel was visibly annoyed. "Yes, what do you want?" he asked curtly.

"No, nothing. I am sorry", said Dr Mathur and left Mr Wandel's office completely puzzled and disappointed.

Questions to Answer

1. What went wrong in this exchange?
2. Was Mr James Wandel right in his reaction?
3. What can one learn from this case about business and professional interactions?

REVIEW YOUR LEARNING

1. At a business lunch your host keeps you waiting for 50 minutes and you are getting very late for your next meeting. When your host arrives, do you:
   (a) Suggest rearranging the meeting for another day?
   (b) Try to postpone your next appointment?
   (c) Excuse yourself from lunch?
2. While introducing yourself to an American host and trying to shake hands you notice he is embarrassed because he cannot move his right arm—it is an artificial arm. Do you:
   (a) Apologize and say "sorry"?
   (b) Greet him by shaking his left hand?
   (c) Give up the idea of shaking hands?
3. Why should the host always be at the venue of the business dinner 10 minutes before the meeting?
4. Discuss the attitude of the following cultures to the practice of giving gifts as mementos:
   (a) Indians (b) Japanese
   (c) Germans (d) Americans

5. Why are business etiquette rules unwritten?
6. What key cultural differences should you keep in mind while dealing with foreign businessmen and businesswomen?
7. Why are good manners necessary for good business?
8. Show how individual employees' manners reflect an organization's culture and etiquette.
9. Discuss some factors that may contribute to communication breakdowns in international business.
10. "Social behaviour and manners in one country may be considered rude in another". Explain with suitable examples.

REFLECT ON YOUR LEARNING

1. What does the term "business etiquette" mean to you?
2. How far is it correct to view the manners and attitudes of people from other cultures in terms of our own culture? Why do we do so?
3. "Each individual contributes to the company's image". Reflect on the significance of this statement for a company's customer care management.
4. Like individuals, companies too have business etiquette rules. Give examples of some of these.
5. A handshake is a globally recognized form of greeting. How does one communicate feelings through a handshake?

APPLY YOUR LEARNING

1. As a token of goodwill, you want to present your Chinese host an expensive Titan watch from India. When should you present it: on meeting, on parting, or never?
2. In India, the gift is usually presented to the lady of the house. What is the normal etiquette of presenting gifts in the Middle East?
3. It is acceptable in the United States to address a casual acquaintance by the first name. It communicates a sense of familiarity. How might those of other nationalities, such as Germans, respond to being addressed by the first name after a brief, first meeting?

SELF-CHECK YOUR LEARNING

From among the given options, choose the most appropriate answer:*

1. The set of norms of behaviour and attitude in every workplace is:
   (a) internationally prescribed
   (b) nationally laid down
   (c) self-evolved
   (d) dictated by the board
2. When introducing ourselves, we should use:
   (a) only our first name
   (b) only the surname
   (c) only our designation
   (d) both the first name and the surname
3. In business, when you fail to recall the name of a person met earlier, you can ask him or her:
   (a) for his or her surname
   (b) for his or her initials
   (c) for his or her business card
   (d) to excuse you for forgetting his or her name
4. In business telephone calls, when making a request always use:
   (a) the interrogative form
   (b) direct categorical statements
   (c) the passive form
   (d) the imperative form
5. As a host, you would invite visiting foreign guests to a business dinner:
   (a) by writing an invitation letter
   (b) personally, face-to face
   (c) through a messenger
   (d) by announcing the dinner at a meeting
6. At an Arab business party, alcohol is:
   (a) served first
   (b) served last
   (c) served continuously
   (d) not served at all
7. In many parts of the world, such as Latin America and India, keeping the eyes lowered is a sign of:
   (a) respect (b) dishonesty
   (c) evasiveness (d) timidity
8. In different cultures, colors represent:
   (a) different things
   (b) the same thing
   (c) insignificant things
   (d) arbitrary things
9. In business, keep telephone calls very short because the other person may not be:
   (a) interested in talking to you
   (b) free to talk to you
   (c) paying attention to you
   (d) noting down what you say
10. People from other countries can be easily put at ease by speaking to them in:
   (a) English (b) your own language
   (c) their language (d) sign language

*For answers and self-evaluation, visit www.pearsoned.co.in/PDChaturvedi

14

CVs, Personal Interviews, and Group Discussions

What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.

—Oliver Wendell Holmes

Upon completion of this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Write an effective CV.
2. Write job applications/cover letters properly.
3. Learn the art of handling interviews well.
4. Be an effective participant in group discussions.

Communication at Work

Manisha is a brilliant MBA student with an outstanding academic record. She is specializing in international marketing and completed a three-month internship in Rouen, France, after her first year. She believes that she should take the initiative of searching for a suitable job with a reputed national or multinational company on her own rather than waiting for a job offer through campus placement.

Manisha prepares her résumé and decides to write the application (cover) letter only after she has chosen a particular company to apply to. She studies the profiles of various companies of interest on the Internet. She also gathers information on these companies from seniors who are currently working for them. After a thorough analysis of the data, Manisha decides to write to five companies that she is interested in. She writes a separate application letter to each of the companies emphasizing the reasons she is interested in that company. Also, she asks for an opportunity to visit the company. Manisha expects to receive an interview call from each of the five employers she has approached.

APPLYING FOR JOBS

There are several steps an individual needs to take to get his or her dream job. The process starts with preparing a good résumé or curriculum vitae (CV). After identifying potential employers and job openings, the applicant must prepare and submit his or her CV and an application or cover letter. Ideally, this will result in an invitation to an interview and/or a group discussion, upon which the final hiring decisions are based. Since there are multiple complex steps to the job application process, it is important to adopt good communications skills to be successful.

WRITING A CV

The *curriculum vitae* is known by several names such as résumé, personal profile, bio-data, personal data sheet, qualification sheet, and summary. In practice, it is a written statement of the job applicant's personal history, including biographical details, educational qualifications, work experience, achievements, and other strengths. In short, a CV is a self-introduction that promotes its author.

A résumé is usually attached to an application letter. It is, therefore, read after the application letter, but should be prepared first. It is common practice for job seekers to have their résumés written in advance, so they can then just mail a copy of their CV along with the application letter. This is not always the best practice because the secret of a good résumé is its ability to project its author as the most suitable candidate for a particular job; thus, it should be tailored for each individual application.

The first thing to keep in mind when writing a CV is that it should be written specifically in terms of the job's requirements. The basic question to consider

1

Write an effective CV.

A résumé is usually attached to an application letter. It is, therefore, read after the application letter, but should be prepared first.

The first thing to keep in mind when writing a CV is that it should be written specifically in terms of the job's requirements. The basic question to consider is what qualifications, experiences, or achievements should be highlighted for a particular position.

is what qualifications, experiences, or achievements should be highlighted for a particular position. For example, if an applicant has experience working as an HR executive and a marketing manager, and if he or she wants to apply for a position in HR, then it is better to highlight his or her HR experiences while showing marketing experiences under additional skills.

The arrangement of a CV should emphasize its author's strengths. There is no fixed order in which a résumé should be written. All résumés, whether short or long, cover the same points regarding an individual's background, achievements, and experiences. In longer résumés, the details regarding each point increase significantly, but the basic points remain the same in all résumés.

Before we discuss the techniques of writing a résumé, we should understand the relationship between a résumé and an *application letter* (also known as a *cover letter*).

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A RÉSUMÉ AND AN APPLICATION LETTER

The résumé and application letter perform two separate functions. The résumé briefly communicates all relevant and important biographical information about an applicant. The application letter interprets the information. For the application letter, the job applicant selects the most important and relevant facts from his or her résumé and discuss those in the context of the job's requirements.

The résumé and application letter cannot be combined into a single document. No applicant can ignored the résumé and just write a long and detailed application letter giving personal details, as prospective employers find it too time-consuming to locate specific information in such a format. A résumé is formatted for easy access to important points. The reader finds it easy to relate to details placed in a matrix format. In addition, a résumé is brief as it does not use complete sentences. For instance, one does not write: "My name is XYZ" or "My age is 24 years". Instead this information is formatted in a simple, clear, and attractive way. Exhibit 14.1 illustrates how this can be done.

The résumé briefly communicates all relevant and important biographical information about an applicant. The application letter interprets the information.

THE RÉSUMÉ OF A RECENT GRADUATE

A résumé of a recent graduate lists:

- Personal/biographical details
- His or her educational background
- Details of his or her work experience
- References

A new college graduate's résumé is generally just one-page long. It includes the applicant's career objectives, education details, work experience, and school/college activities. It is attached with the application letter. Because it is a fresh graduate's résumé, educational qualifications are placed first and have a position of prominence. All information in the CV should be under bold, clear headings, so that the reader can easily find the desired information. Headings given in upper and lower case are easier to read than those entirely in capital letters.

There are several styles for writing a student résumé. For an example of a CV in the commonly used chronological format, refer to Exhibit 14.3.

Exhibit 14.1
Sample Format for Presenting Information

1. Name: Sita Mathur
2. Age: 22 years
3. Nationality: Indian

Exhibit 14.2
Examples of Effectively Revised Objectives

Vague Objectives	*Effective Objectives*
To seek a management position in the tourism industry.	To obtain a junior-level management position in a tourism company that gainfully uses my summer training and internship experience.
A sales position in a reputed and growing publishing organization, which uses my education.	Textbook sales requiring an academic background in marketing.
A challenging career in the field of event management that offers growth and advancement opportunities.	A position as an event manager for cultural and social programmes that incorporates my fluency in both English and Hindi.

Heading

The heading should include the applicant's name, address, date of birth (if age limit is mentioned), telephone number, and e-mail address.

Objective

In this section, the applicant should mention the specific, desired position that suits his or her educational qualifications and experience. The objective should be stated in practical terms, not in a vague manner such as "I am anxious to join a challenging position in a renowned organization where I can prove my ability." Employers want to know practical objectives, not the ambitions of the applicant. Exhibit 14.2 shows how vague objectives can be rewritten for specificity.

Education

Should the list of educational qualifications begin from the school level and end with graduate and postgraduate qualifications, or should the more recent degrees be mentioned first? The chronological order may not be very impressive, and the highest qualification is generally the most important and relevant. It should therefore be emphasized by placing it first and listing the degrees in reverse chronological order.

It is not necessary to include school certificates, but the résumé should mention any short-term training or special certificate programmes taken in addition to coursework if they are relevant. It is especially important to specifically mention those courses or skills that are particularly important for the kind of position the applicant is applying for. Overall grades, along with grade points in different courses, should be listed if they are significant. The applicant should also list any specializations or majors with the grade point average. Any honours or distinctions should also be listed under a separate heading, along with other details of educational degrees, such as year of graduation, name of university or college, and subjects taken.

Work Experience

Relevant work experience should be listed in reverse chronological order. This category can include all experience, part-time as well as full-time, if the applicant's experience is not very extensive. However, someone who has worked in their field for several years need not list part-time positions.

For each position listed, the following details should be provided: the job title, the company's name, the location, and the duration of employment. There should be a brief description of the applicant's role, responsibilities, and accomplishments, particularly at those jobs that are most closely related to the applicant's career goals. It is important to remember that descriptions of responsibilities become more powerful with the use of action words such as *designed*, *prepared*, *developed*, *coordinated*, *supervised*, *directed*, and so on. When mentioning the duration of employment, the exact day, dates, or months need not be given. The names of terms and vacations, with relevant years, are sufficient.

There should be a brief description of the applicant's role, responsibilities, and accomplishments, particularly at those jobs that are most closely related to the applicant's career goals.

Applicants should remember that potential employers are not interested in simply reading a list of positions they have held. They want to know the specific methods, techniques, and processes used in different positions as well as any concrete accomplishments. Applicants should never write that they have no work experience. Fresh graduates may have had little opportunity to acquire professional work experience, but graduate students can gain some experience organizing functions, running student clubs, associations, and societies, managing events, undertaking industry visits, and so on. Graduates at management or technical institutes undertake summer projects or term/semester-long industrial training. In addition, some students earn money working part-time job(s) in their institutions. All such exposure

Exhibit 14.3
Sample Résumé of a Recent Graduate

The objective should not be vague.

All scholarships, prizes, and awards won in college are mentioned here.

Highlight strengths that will help you in the job that you are applying for.

Instead of writing "no experience", mention all activities with which you have been associated as a student.

AKSHITA MEHRA
21/A, Amrita Shergil Marg, New Delhi 110 003
Phone: (011) 24620980, 9810455654
E-mail: akshita81@yahoo.com

JOB OBJECTIVE

To work as a management trainee in an industry that uses my education in management and marketing, with the opportunity to eventually be a senior executive in marketing.

SPECIALIZATION

- Marketing and sales
- Human resource management

EDUCATION

- Post-Graduate Diploma in Business Management from **Amity Business School, Noida:** 2004
- Bachelor of Arts, Sociology (Hons.), **Lady Shri Ram College** (LSR), New Delhi: 2002
- Senior Secondary (XII), CBSE Humanities, Sardar Patel Vidyalaya, New Delhi: 1999
- Higher Secondary (X), CBSE, Sardar Patel Vidyalaya, New Delhi: 1997

SCHOLARSHIPS/AWARDS

- Shri Ram Swaroop Ahuja Award for Outstanding Performance in Sports (1998).
- Shri Jaswant S. Pandaya Award for Outstanding Performance in Athletics (1996).
- Govt. of India Sports Talent Search Scholarship Scheme (1994–95).

ACHIEVEMENTS

- President of National Sports Organization 2001–02 at Lady Shri Ram (LSR) College.
- Awarded Certificate of Merit for contribution to sports.
- First-degree international black belt in Tae-Kwon-Do: 62 gold medals in domestic championships and 4 bronze medals as an international player.
- Organized sponsorships worth Rs 1 lakh for LSR Sports Festival, 2001.
- Organized a cross-country run for "Green & Clean Delhi" on 24th August 2001, and other events at LSR as the president of the National Sports Organization.
- Master of Ceremonies for the following events organized by Amity Business School: Alumni Meet, Mentor Meet, Corporate Meet, Acumen 2003 (organized by *Business Today*).

STRENGTHS

- Team player
- Self-confident and goal-oriented
- Fast learner with an ability to excel

WORK EXPERIENCE

- Worked as a Trainee in Enterprise Nexus Ad Agency in the Research and Planning department.
- Conducted research for General Motors as part of Enterprise Nexus.

REFRENCES

Available on request.

Dr M.N. Rao, ECE Chair Professor in Marketing and Dean, International Business School, has over twenty years' experience in teaching and consulting. He has been associated with IIM Kozhikode, Amity Business School and Birla Institute of Technology and Science, Pilani.

Dr Rao studied marketing and went on to receive his Ph.D. from Birla Institute of Technology and Science, Pilani. His academic interests and areas of expertise include integrated marketing communications, direct marketing, sales management, marketing strategy, and customer relationship management in India. He has rendered training and consulting services to organizations such as NTPC, ICICI Bank, Excel Telecommunications and Godrej Consumer Products.

In 2005, Dr Rao received International Business School's coveted Award for Excellence in Teaching. He has written over 50 articles in leading journals, and is the author of *Essentials of Marketing, Customer Relationship Management: An Indian Perspective, Direct Marketing,* and *Managing Global Business.*

Exhibit 14.4
Example of a Summary Accompanying a CV

forms a fresh graduate's "experience". Instead of writing that they have no experience, it is better for recent graduates to mention all activities in which they have been involved as students. And while explaining their student experiences, they should emphasize how these experiences qualify them for the job.

Awards and Honours

The résumé should include a mention of all scholarships, prizes, and awards won in college. School awards show that the applicant has been consistently meritorious. Professional prizes can also be mentioned.

Activities

In this section, the applicant should mention his or her college activities. For instance, he or she can highlight a position as president, secretary, or coordinator in a student organization. The applicant can also mention any significant hobbies such as playing a musical instrument or being an accomplished athlete.

References

Under references, the applicant should list the names of two or three persons who know that they are being listed as references. The full name, business address, e-mail address, and telephone number should be provided for each reference. References are expected to honestly speak about the applicant to the employer confidentially. Thus they should be familiar with the applicant and his or her work and are usually professors or previous employers. They should not be related to the applicant. Sometimes, under references, one can write: "references available on request". Exhibit 14.3 shows a sample résumé of a recent graduate in the chronological format.

Summary

Individuals with a lot of experience sometimes begin with a summary of their qualifications in place of a job objective. The recent practice is to place a summary of all major achievements and specializations below the name. The summary is supposed to help the reader of the résumé find the most relevant and important information about the applicant immediately. For the candidate, it acts as a strong preface or foreword to his or her experiences. For an example of a summary that accompanies a CV, see Exhibit 14.4.

Individuals with a lot of experience sometimes begin with a summary of their qualifications in place of a job objective.

GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING A GOOD CV

A good CV provides basic information to the recruiter in a systematic form. It enables the employer to evaluate the applicant's qualifications and strengths in just a few minutes and shortlist or reject the applicant based on this initial review. A good CV, by opening the door to an interview, can therefore mean a lot for one's career.

General “Do’s” for writing a good CV include:

- Indicate a specific job objective or a summary of your qualifications.
- Highlight your accomplishments.
- Emphasize education/training/experience related to your job objective.
- Give details of professional activities that are supportive of your career objective.
- Proofread your CV and, ideally, also have someone else check it for typing errors.
- Ensure that all contact information is current and correct.

General “Don’ts” for writing a good CV include:

A CV should begin with the category that the applicant wishes to emphasize. If an applicant has little work experience but a good education profile, then he or she should begin with education.

- Do not use first person or second person pronouns in the résumé.
- Do not use an uncommon format.
- Do not mention the expected salary.
- Do not leave any unexplained gaps in your experience.
- Do not give reasons for leaving earlier jobs.
- Do not use coloured paper.
- Do not send a handwritten résumé.
- Do not mention personal details such as the number of children, marital status, or other details that are not relevant to the job.
- Do not be too brief or too lengthy.

Suitable Organization

Employers are more interested in an applicant’s qualifications and work experiences than in his or her biographical details.

The conventional method is to begin with personal details and end with references. But a more practical method is to begin with the category that needs to be emphasized. For instance, if an applicant has little work experience but a good education profile, then he or she should begin with education. Conversely, if an applicant has extensive work experience, then he or she should begin with work experience and bring up educational qualifications afterwards. Personal details can then appear as the last category, to be placed before references. Employers will be more interested in an applicant’s qualifications and work experience than in his or her biographical details.

Appropriate Length

The CV of a fresh graduate should be neither too brief nor too long. One page is the ideal length. Experienced candidates have more information under each category. Hence, their CVs can be two to three pages in length. After several years of work experience, people do not list college activities and, instead, emphasize memberships in professional bodies and related professional activities. The résumés of highly experienced individuals may run into several pages, even up to 15 to 20 pages. There is no prescribed length; the length of such CVs is based on the needs of each individual candidate and job. These résumés may have more categories of information such as:

An application letter is planned like a sales letter; it gains attention and interest and asks for action.

- Major qualifications
- Major achievements
- Activities and professional memberships

DRAFTING AN APPLICATION LETTER

2

Write job applications/ cover letters properly.

An application letter is planned like a sales letter: it gains attention and interest and asks for action. The application letter demonstrates the applicant’s communication skills and functions as an interview request when it impresses the potential employer with the applicant’s abilities and education. It needs to be written very skillfully.

The First Paragraph

The first paragraph identifies the objective exactly. In the first paragraph, the applicant should specifically state the position/job he or she is applying for and how he or she came to know about it—usually through an advertisement or a contact. Sometimes, an applicant may apply without knowing that a position exists or is available. He or she can use the opening paragraph to show what kind of position he or she is qualified for and also state the reasons for his or her interest in that particular company.

The Second Paragraph

The second paragraph gives evidence of the applicant's ability/qualifications. In the second paragraph, the applicant should explain he or she is qualified for the position/job. It is important not to repeat has been written in the résumé. Instead, the application letter points out the particular facts relevant to the position applied for. It can highlight important courses or special projects that have enriched the applicant's preparation and enhanced his or her suitability for the position. It can also describe any extracurricular activities that show leadership or the ability to organize and coordinate. Lastly, it can also show how the various projects, industrial visits, and work experiences listed in the CV are related to the position.

It is important not to repeat has been written in the résumé. Instead, the application letter points out the particular facts relevant to the position applied for. It can highlight important courses or special projects that have enriched the applicant's preparation and enhanced his or her suitability for the position.

The Third Paragraph

The third paragraph asks for an interview. At the end of the letter, the applicant can suggest that he or she come in for an interview at the employer's convenience. The purpose of the letter is to convince the prospective employer to interview the applicant.

General Tips

While writing an application letter, the applicant should remember that he or she is selling those merits which the employer needs. The following principles are key to writing an effective application letter:

While writing an application letter, the applicant should remember that he or she is selling those merits which the employer needs.

- Coherence
- Concreteness
- Simplicity
- Emphasis
- Originality
- Sincerity
- Empathy
- Convention

Application letters should be brief. Like the résumé, they should be spotless, free of errors, typed, and well formatted on a standard white sheet. As far as possible, the application letter should be addressed to a specific person. Also, the applicant should sign the letter before mailing it. Exhibit 14.5 shows a sample application letter, and Exhibit 14.6 lists some pitfalls to avoid when writing an application letter.

INTERVIEWS

An interview can be defined as an oral tool used to test a candidate's suitability for employment or admission to an institute of learning. As it is an oral test, it calls for the skills of oral and non-verbal communication, which are necessary to impress the interviewers. There are different types of interviews, such as panel interviews, sequential interviews, academic interviews, personality interviews, and so on. Each type requires the careful application of a particular set of communication skills.

3

Learn the art of handling interviews well.

Exhibit 14.5
Example of an Application Letter

Shri N. K. Varma Sales and Marketing LG Electronics India Pvt. Ltd. Surajpur–Kasna Road Greater Noida (U.P.)	6/102 East End Apts Mayur Vihar Phase I Delhi 110096 April 6, 2009

Dear Mr Varma,

Please consider me as a candidate for the position of Assistant Marketing Manager, advertised in the *Times of India* on 1 April 2009. The position is especially attractive to me because I feel that my education and work experience have prepared me to work with a company like LG, which offers a wide variety of household durables.

As my résumé shows, I received my MBA with a major in marketing from Bombay University in 2008. During my summer and final terms, I performed various duties in the marketing department of Samsung, including consumer research for new products.

In June 2007, I joined Samsung as a management trainee. While at Samsung, I gained a great deal of experience in marketing research and product design under excellent supervision.

I am a hardworking person who enjoys the challenges of marketing. I love travelling. Enclosed is my résumé for your consideration. I do hope that I shall have an opportunity to appear for an interview for the position of Assistant Manager Marketing at LG Electronics India.

Yours truly,

Arunav Chandra

Enclosure: CV

Exhibit 14.6
Some Don'ts for Writing Application Letters

- Don't use your present employer's stationery.
- Don't beg or ask for a favour.
- Don't be unduly humble, and avoid phrases like "I beg to state that…".
- Don't overuse the words *I*, *me*, and *my*.
- Don't sound casual.
- Don't boast about yourself.
- Don't criticize your present employer.
- Don't repeat information that is already in the résumé.
- Don't use vague or general terms.
- Don't just say you are qualified for the job/position; instead give evidence.
- Don't use hackneyed and worn-out expressions.
- Don't copy a letter written by another applicant.
- Don't forget to check the following before sending the letter:
  - The letter should be addressed to the appropriate person and, in the case of e-mails, the e-mail address should be correct. In case of multiple submissions, no other e-mail addresses should be visible.
  - There should be a proper subject line.
  - The letter should be precise and well formatted.
  - There should be no spelling or grammatical errors in the CV and the cover letter.
  - It should be signed with the applicant's full name and complete contact address.

Types of Interviews

The types of interviews frequently encountered by job applicants are:

- *Panel interviews:* In a panel interview, each member of the panel is closely observing the interviewee. Hence, the interviewee's body language and eye contact are especially important. The interviewee should give the impression of speaking to all the members of the panel, not just a single individual, by making eye contact with all panel members.
- *Telephone interviews:* The interviewee should consider this a face-to-face interview and use proper modulation of voice to reflect his or her thoughts. The interviewee's voice should be clear, steady, and audible.
- *Lunch/dinner interviews:* This type of interview is conducted in an informal environment, but still requires that the interviewee be careful about his or her body language and manners. The interviewee should never drink alcohol at an interview, even if the interviewer does.
- *Preliminary interviews:* As a preliminary interview is a first-stage screening test, the interviewee should pay full attention to it. This stage must be cleared before moving to the final interview. The interviewee's communication skills express his or her confidence and ease.
- *Sequential interviews:* In this form of interview, the interviewee has to report to several people successively. He or she should be very careful about his or her behaviour, speech, and manners in each interview, as each interviewer is a prospective employer.
- *Skill-based interviews:* Such interviews require the interviewee to demonstrate skills that are relevant to the job. For instance, someone seeking to be an actor or a salesperson can be asked to act or read a script or demonstrate his or her pitch and skills of persuasive oral communication.
- *Academic interviews:* An academic interview is conducted in a question-and-answer format. The interviewee should be able to demonstrate attentive listening, eye contact, clarity of ideas, and depth of knowledge.
- *Personality interviews:* This form of interview evaluates the interviewee as an individual in terms of his or her response to certain situations. The emphasis is not on the answers themselves, but on *how* they are delivered. The entire range of non-verbal communication skills are brought into play to demonstrate a "well-rounded personality."

What Does a Job Interview Assess?

According to the employer's needs, interviewers look for the following attributes in candidates:

- *Clarity:* This refers to the candidate's clarity on academic subjects, his or her career objectives, the reasons for these objectives, long-term goals, national and global issues, and so on.
- *Depth:* Depth of knowledge and understanding across a wide range of subjects and issues, along with clarity, demonstrate the candidate's academic excellence.
- *Personality:* A candidate's attitude, honesty, and professionalism reflect his or her ability to work in an organization and with other people. In addition, the candidate's self-awareness and analysis of personal strengths and weaknesses are important.
- *General awareness:* This refers to the interviewee's level of general awareness about current issues of national and international concern.
- *Application of concepts to real-life problems:* The interviewee's initiative and capacity for independent thought are judged by responses to application-based questions, which asses how far he or she has moved beyond classroom learning.
- *Communication skills:* The candidate's ability to express his or her thoughts clearly and concisely is evaluated along with his or her listening and comprehension skills. In addition, his or her verbal and non-verbal communication and body language exhibit his or

Assessment of individuals in a job interview is basically an effort to predict their behaviour in a particular job and in the environment of that job.

Employers look for consistency in what is written in the CV and the interviewee's responses to questions during the interview. It is therefore extremely important to be honest when drafting the CV.

Since the résumé is the starting point of the interview, applicants should know their résumés thoroughly and be prepared to discuss and explain anything on them.

her personality as an individual. Assessment of individuals in a job interview is basically an effort to predict their behaviour in a particular job and in the environment of that job.

- *Integrity:* The candidate's integrity is important to prospective employers. Employers look for consistency in what is written in the CV and the interviewee's responses to questions during the interview. Since the résumé is the starting point of the interview, applicants should know their résumés thoroughly and be prepared to discuss and explain anything on them. It is therefore extremely important to be honest when drafting the CV.

Focus of Job Interviews

Though each job has its own specific requirements, there are some elements that are common. Most interviews focus on three issues:

- Technical competence
- Motivation
- The candidate's ability to handle situations where he or she does not know the answer

Technical Competence

Technical competence is assessed by examining the candidate's academic background and previous job profiles. For instance, if someone is applying to be a salesperson, his or her knowledge of marketing and sales management and logistics will be tested. The questions asked are related to the candidate's specialization, but are usually of a general nature. They are generally application-based questions.

Suppose you are an applicant for a sales position at Godrej. The interviewers can assess your technical competence by asking questions such as: "What features of our Godrej mini-fridge would you highlight to promote its sale in rural markets?" Your answer would demonstrate your knowledge of the principles of selling in general as well as your ability to apply those principles to a specific, targeted group.

Motivation

All employers want to evaluate a prospective employee's level of interest in a job and how strongly he or she wants to fulfill his or her goals. For instance, in an interview for a sales job, the candidate's motivation can be judged by posing a complex situation (for instance, a transportation strike at the same time as an important meeting with a dealer) and then asking how the candidate would react to it.

Sometimes interviewers may deliberately ask stressful questions, such as "what would you do if you are not selected for this position?". The actual responses to such questions are not as important as how the candidate handles them.

Handling Difficult Questions

When an interviewee does not know the answer to a question, there are several ways to approach it:

- Admit it. He or she can say, "Sorry, I do not know the answer to that."
- Make an educated guess. The candidate can guess and preface the answer with, "I guess/I think/Perhaps it could mean…".
- The interviewee should not get flustered. Instead, he or should continue to communicate a positive state of mind by making eye contact and using positive facial expressions, tone, and volume of speech.

Interviewees should continuously reflect upon various aspects of their personality and goals in order to respond to different questions at job interviews with clarity and confidence. Since one's style of thinking determines behaviour and personality to a great extent, it helps to consider, in some detail, how one thinks.

Strategies for Success at Interviews

A candidate's success in converting an interview opportunity into a job offer depends on how well he or she has prepared for the interview. Most candidates falter during an interview only because they do not know enough about themselves, the company they are applying for, or the job profile. The secret of clearing the interview stage lies in preparing a game plan and developing a strategy to target what the specific organization is seeking. First, the candidate's personality traits matter: is he or she motivated, mature, ambitious, and trustworthy? Second, the candidate's level of competence and realism regarding job expectations matter: a candidate can impress prospective employers only when he or she demonstrates solid knowledge of the industry and the job.

As a practical step, job applicants can equip themselves with the following information and knowledge before an interview:

(i) Know yourself
(ii) Know the company
(iii) Know the job profile

Know Yourself

The candidate should ask himself or herself: "Who am I? What are my achievements? What are my skills and strengths? What do I plan to do five years from now?" He or she must be clear about his or her goals and consistent regarding past achievements and future career plans. In addition, he or she should be realistic—if his or her skills, career plans, and objectives align closely with the job's requirements, chances are that he or she will be offered the job. Most interviews begin with a question like "Can you tell us something about yourself?" so it is important to have a clear response ready.

The candidate should ask himself or herself: "Who am I? What are my achievements? What are my skills and strengths? What do I plan to do five years from now?" He or she must be clear about his or her goals and consistent regarding past achievements and future career plans.

Some ways to know yourself better are to:

- Identify your skills—concentrate on what you can do well.
- Determine what you value—things that are important to you and influence your behaviour.
- Be clear about what motivates you and what you are looking for—whether it is status, security, power, expertise, material rewards, creativity, autonomy.
- Describe your personality—your behaviour and mental characteristics.
- Find out how you think—if you are especially logical, intuitive, or creative, for instance.

An employer does not look for a set of ready-made answers to a volley of questions. Answers do count. But there is something else that matters a great deal: the personality that accompanies the answers. Employers want to hire a good person, a competent worker, and someone with a well-informed and well-rounded personality.

Employers want to hire a good person, a competent worker, and someone with a well-informed and well-rounded personality.

Know the Company

Job applicants must gather information and research the company they are applying to before the interview. They can learn about the work culture and norms of the company and read up on the company's products and other details through the company's reports and Web site. If possible, they should try to interact with company employees to learn more about the work environment. Then, they should assess the size and systems of the company in accordance with their own ambitions and career plan, and consider how far the company will offer growth opportunities. Reflecting on these aspects of the company prior to the interview will prepare a candidate for the employer's questions.

Know the Job Profile

At the interview, one should never be carried away by the salary or designation of the job; rather, the job should be considered in terms of its profile, scope for growth, and one's professional goals and ambitions. This also means that one should not accept a job, however lucrative, in a company that does not suit one's personal goals.

At the interview, one should never be carried away by the salary or designation of the job; rather, the job should be considered in terms of its profile, scope for growth, and one's professional goals and ambitions.

Answers to Some Common Interview Questions

Usually, the interviewers move from simple, personal questions to general and then technical questions. The questions put to new graduates focus more on their education and work experiences, current issues, and hobbies. The focus is on education and personality. In the

Exhibit 14.7
Model Questions and Answers

Q: Tell us about yourself.
(Provide a brief answer describing your educational background and relevant work experience. A sample response follows.)

A: I was born in Pilani and completed my education there. After graduating from Birla Public School, I attended Birla Institute of Technology and Science and obtained a dual degree in MMS and Mathematics. I did my summer project at DCM Kota and six months' industry internships at USHA International Delhi in the marketing division, promoting a product line similar to your household durables. I believe I am motivated and capable of doing hard work.

Q: What are your strengths?
(Focus on your positive side.)

A: I think I am an intelligent, hard-working person who likes to take initiative and shoulder responsibility and complete my assigned tasks to everyone's satisfaction.

Q: What are your weaknesses?
(Avoid suggesting anything that could be perceived as detrimental to your working effectively and efficiently. You could talk about a weakness that's not central to the job you are applying for and then indicate how you are working on trying to overcome the weakness.)

Undesirable response:

A: "My greatest weakness is that I am a workaholic." (Most interviewers would say that this is not really a weakness, and this is probably the most common response they have heard.)

Desirable response:

A: "I find public speaking stressful, so I have been attending a short course on public speaking for the past three weeks." (Make sure that the job does not require public speaking.)

Q: Why do you wish to work in our organization?
(Be objective, realistic, and rational.)

A: I know a number of persons working in this organization. I appreciate its work culture and concern for each individual employee. I like the flexibility that allows employees to move from one area to another within the organization.

Q: Why have you been changing jobs?
(Discuss how your past experience has helped you in developing skills that will be useful in your new job; it would be better not to answer as follows: "It is generally believed that if you want to grow vertically, you should not work at one position or place for more than four years.)

Q: Tell us how you can contribute to our company.
(Without claiming too much, state in specific terms what you are capable of doing for the company.)

A: Besides working to improve the sales figures of the division, I would develop the market for mobile editions of our publications.

Q: If the company could secure the National Highway Golden Triangle Project by bribing the concerned CEO, would you do it?
(Such questions are asked to judge your sense of morality. Always say no, and give your reasons by praising the organization's reputation for upholding ethical values and moral practices in all spheres.)

A: Keeping in view the reputation of the company, one should not even consider it.

Q: Could you tell us something about your current responsibilities?
(Describe those areas of work that show your initiative and organizing ability. Be factual, but project your own skills in handling your present duties.)

A: Presently, I am the business development manager at Shop-n-Shop. I am responsible for developing the retail business of the company's writing instruments division. This calls for opening company-owned retail outlets in organized setups like malls.

Q: What are your salary expectations?
(Justify your expectations in terms of your present package. The challenges of the new job are the reasons for your interest in it, not a better salary alone.)

A: My present package is Rs 9.6 lakh per year. Keeping in view my desire to work for a professional organization like this, I would expect the protection of my current salary, at the least, and would like a raise of about 15 to 20 per cent.

case of candidates with more experience, the focus is on their recent projects, achievements, and what new thing they can do for the organization.

Exhibit 14.7 provides some common questions faced in interviews and explains how a candidate can tackle these questions.

The questions given here are representative of the types of questions you can expect at an interview, though of course the list is not exhaustive. The secret of facing interviews successfully lies in thorough preparation so that one can display a full understanding of content and a well-rounded personality in the interview. Aim at making a good first impression and remember that one has just three to five seconds to do so. Ninety per cent of people form a judgment regarding someone at a job interview in just that time. In 70 per cent of cases, these first impressions prove to be right. Decisive factors in making an impression are body language, clothes, status symbols, scent, and the person's voice.

PARTICIPATING IN A GROUP DISCUSSION

4

Be an effective participant in group discussions.

The group discussion (GD) tests inter-personal skills. It is most popular with public/private sector undertakings, government departments, commercial firms, and universities and other educational organizations, which use it to screen candidates after a written test. What does a group discussion evaluate? A group discussion primarily evaluates participants' ability to interact in a group that is discussing a given topic. An individual's behaviour in a group means much for his or her success as a manager or an executive responsible for coordinating and organizing activities. The evaluators, therefore, focus on group dynamics rather than the content of each participant's views.

The group usually consists of 8 to 10 candidates. No one is nominated as a leader, coordinator, or chairman. Normally, 20 to 30 minutes are given to complete the discussion. Each candidate has a roll number by which he or she is to be addressed. For easy recognition, the roll number is prominently displayed on a tag worn by each candidate. The candidates are seated in ascending order of roll numbers, usually in a circle.

In a group discussion, all participants are supposed to be equal. No one is officially chosen as the leader. However, a candidate, by his or her initiative, ability to direct the discussion, maturity, clarity of ideas, and understanding of group dynamics, might gradually begin to direct the course of the discussion and mediate between opposing views to evolve a comprehensive view.

Leadership

As group discussions start without an official leader, the atmosphere allows all participants free and equal opportunity to express their views. During the course of the discussion, a leader often emerges. No candidate should try to dominate the group to become the leader. Such an attempt is self-defeating, because in a group discussion all participants are supposed to be equal. However, a candidate, by his or her initiative, ability to direct the discussion, maturity, clarity of ideas, and understanding of group dynamics, might gradually begin to direct the course of the discussion and mediate between opposing views to evolve a comprehensive view. Such a candidate is implicitly recognized by all other candidates as the leader of the discussion group.

GD Protocol

Group discussions are "formally informal". There are rules of conduct to be observed by the participants. Some of these rules are discussed in Exhibit 14.8.

A group discussion is not a debate in which each participant either opposes or supports the topic. There are no clear-cut positions or stands required.

Discussion Techniques

A group discussion is not a debate in which each participant either opposes or supports the topic. There are no clear-cut positions or stands required. A group discussion is a continuous discussion, an ongoing interaction in which participants examine a subject or problem from

Exhibit 14.8
GD Protocol

- Ways of addressing other members of the group:

  "Sir/Madam": too formal

  "Mr/Ms": too colloquial

  "Excuse me": a bit rude

  By their roll numbers: a bit odd

  First name: ideal

  The problem is it may be difficult to remember the names of fellow participants in a short time. In this case, the best way is to address the whole group instead of an individual.
- Do not create sub-groups by referring to individual members. The tendency is to speak to one's neighbour, but this creates sub-groups and acts against the cohesive team spirit of the group.
- Gaining the entire group's attention:
  - To begin, speak to the person sitting diagonally opposite you. Alternatively, address the person who has just finished talking.
  - When you have the group's attention, use the opportunity to take the discussion forward. Do not let an opportunity pass by if you want to participate in the discussion.
  - Make friends by speaking to those who have been left alone by the rest of the group.
  - Do not invite somebody who has been keeping quiet to share his or her views unless you have the formal authority to do so; everyone is equal in a group discussion.
- It is best to use language that is formal, simple, and correct. It should not be colloquial or flowery.
- One should dress formally for a group discussion. Men should wear business suits and women should be in sarees, *salwar kameezes*, or formal trousers and shirts.
- Body language is important:
  - Posture should be formal and must reflect enthusiasm (straight back; hands in front/on the edge of the table).
  - Gestures and body movements should not be threatening or restrictive to other participants.
  - Excessive hand movements should be avoided.
  - Body language should be natural.
  - One should establish eye contact with as many people as possible.
- No one should attempt to be a leader by trying to sum up or conclude when the group has not clearly reached any conclusion.

different angles and viewpoints. Participants may disagree with or support others' points of view, or bring up a new point of view. But it is essential for all participants to always show respect for others, even if they disagree with each other. Courtesy in discussions indicates a level of politeness and maturity.

> Good analytical abilities, critical assessment of arguments, and strong verbal and non-verbal skills of communication can give one a competitive edge over others.

Good analytical abilities, critical assessment of arguments, and strong verbal and non-verbal skills of communication can give one a competitive edge over others. Exhibit 14.9 presents some guidelines for GD participants.

Listening

In a group discussion, listening too is a participative act. Participants should listen thoughtfully to what others have to say, with the goal of assimilating and analysing rather

Exhibit 14.9
Guidelines for GD Participants

- To join in the discussion, the following phrases can be used:

  I'd like to raise the subject of …
  What I think is …
  I think it's important to consider the question of …
  If I could say a word about …
  May I make a point about …

- When supporting what another participant has said, remember that you should not say, "I agree with him/her". Instead, you should say that you support their *views*—not the person.) Phrases that can be used are:

  I'd like to support Renuka's point about …
  That is what I think too.
  I agree fully with what Rahul has just said.

- When voicing disagreement, again remember that you are opposed to someone's *ideas* and not the person. You can disagree by using polite expressions instead of saying something curt such as "You are wrong". For instance, you can say:

  Please allow me to differ.
  I beg to differ.
  I think differently on this issue.
  I do not agree; in my opinion …

- To emphasize a point, one can say:

  I am convinced that …
  You can't deny that …
  It is quite clear to me that …

- To bring the discussion back on track, one can say:

  That's very interesting, but I don't think it is relevant to the point.
  Perhaps we could go back to …
  Could we stick to the subject please?
  I am afraid we are drifting from the original point.

than contradicting or refuting others. Instead of interrupting others, it is better to try to join the discussion tactfully and use words that demonstrate that you have been listening to others.

SUMMARY

- This chapter has demonstrated the application of written communication skills to prepare résumés; and the application of oral and non-verbal skills to attend interviews and participate in group discussions. The CV, interview, and group discussion constitute three major steps towards employment.
- A résumé is a self-introduction that highlights an applicant's strengths and experiences. It summarizes the applicant's education, abilities, experience, accomplishments, and personal details for the employer's consideration in an impressive, easy-to-read format. Its structure can vary to suit the professional status and experience of individual candidates, though the common elements of all CVs are generally: personal details, education, work experience, references, job objective/summary.
- The CV is attached to an application letter/cover letter, which acts as a preface for the CV. The letter generally ends by asking for an interview opportunity.

- A job interview is essentially a face-to-face communication activity requiring the use of good oral and non-verbal skills.
- Applicants need to prepare thoroughly before the interview to (a) know themselves better, (b) know about the company, and (c) understand the job profile. The secret of success in interviews often lies in the applicant's ability to create a positive first impression by dressing and behaving professionally.
- A group discussion primarily evaluates participants' ability to interact in a group that is discussing a given topic. An individual's behaviour in a group means much for his or her success as a manager. The evaluators assess the following traits of GD participants: initiative, group dynamics, analytical ability, ability to think on their feet, communication skills, attitude, and personality.

CASE: AN EMPLOYMENT INTERVIEW

Mr Sinha has an MBA. He is being interviewed for the position of management trainee at a reputed company. The selection committee is chaired by the vice-president. Mr Sinha's interview was as follows:

Committee: Good morning.
Mr Sinha: Good morning.
Chairperson: Please take a seat.
Mr Sinha: Thank you [Sits down at the edge of the chair. Keeps his portfolio on the table.]
Chairperson: So, Mr Sinha, I can see that you have finished your MBA with a first division.
Mr Sinha: Yes, madam.
Chairperson: Why do you want to work in our organization?
Mr Sinha: Your company has a very good reputation in the industry.
Committee member: This job is considered to be quite stressful. Do you think you can manage the stress involved?
Mr Sinha: Yes, I think there is too much talk about stress these days. Sir, would you tell me more clearly what you mean by stress?
Committee member: What do you think are your strengths?
Mr Sinha: Sir, who am I to boast about my strengths? You should tell me my strengths.
Committee member: What are your weaknesses?
Mr Sinha: I become angry too quickly.
Committee member: Do you want to ask us any questions?
Mr Sinha: Yes, sir. I was wondering what future opportunities there are for someone who starts as a management trainee.

The committee member tells Mr Sinha the typical career path for those starting as management trainees. The chairperson then thanks Mr Sinha. Mr Sinha promptly says in response, “You are welcome”, and then exits the room.

Questions to Answer

1. Do you find Mr Sinha's responses to the questions effective? Give reasons for your view on each answer given by Mr Sinha.
2. Write out the responses that you consider most effective to these questions.
3. Mr Sinha has observed the norms of respectful and polite behaviour, but do you think something went wrong in his case? Account for your general impression of Mr Sinha's performance at the interview.

REVIEW YOUR LEARNING

1. Is it necessary to write an application letter (cover letter) with a CV? Why?
2. What is the function of the summary placed at the beginning of a CV?
3. Discuss at least three characteristics of a good résumé.
4. It is said that for converting an interview into an employment opportunity you have to do only one thing—prepare, prepare, and prepare. What should you prepare before the interview?
5. Comment on the importance of body language for success at an interview.
6. Do you think that the first impression is usually accurate?
7. What traits are evaluated by the panelists of an interview board? Elaborate with examples.
8. How does someone become the leader of a group discussion?
9. Does the résumé have to have an *Objectives* section in the beginning? How is this section written?
10. What does the group discussion test?

REFLECT ON YOUR LEARNING

1. List your strengths and identify one main strength that can be used as your "selling strength".
2. At an interview, the chairman of the selection committee tells you that they will get back to you. What does this communicate to you?
3. If you are preparing for an interview, what should you consider necessary with regards to grooming?
4. What is the advantage of including a summary in your résumé?
5. The process of job hunting requires three steps: writing and sending a résumé to the target company, participating in the group discussion, and attending a personal interview. How would you prepare yourself for each of these?

APPLY YOUR LEARNING

(i) Prepare a set of arguments on the following group discussion topics:
   (a) Politics and professional education
   (b) India—vision 2020
   (c) Promises and eggs are meant to be broken
   (d) India as a cricket superpower
   (e) Power of bullet or ballot
   (f) The phenomenon of outsourcing

(ii) Write an *Objectives* section for your résumé.

SELF-CHECK YOUR LEARNING

From among the given options, choose the most appropriate answer:*

1. The best way to apply for a job is to submit a résumé that is:
   (a) suitable for any job
   (b) specifically written for that particular job
   (c) full of personal information
   (d) self-recommending
2. The application letter and the résumé perform:
   (a) the same task
   (b) two different tasks
   (c) two opposite tasks
   (d) overlapping tasks
3. The résumé of a fresh graduate is generally:
   (a) one page long
   (b) three pages long
   (c) two pages long
   (d) half a page
4. The application letter is:
   (a) a summary of your qualifications and experiences
   (b) a statement of your job objective
   (c) a foreword
   (d) a description of your core strengths and suitability for the job
5. A summary placed at the beginning of the CV acts as a:
   (a) synopsis
   (b) preface
   (c) letter of recommendation
   (d) statement of objectives
6. Tease or stress questions are intended to judge:
   (a) the candidate's stress level
   (b) the candidate's intelligence quotient
   (c) how the candidate handles them
   (d) the candidate's technical skill
7. In an interview when you do not know an answer, you should:
   (a) bluff
   (b) remain quiet
   (c) admit you do not know the answer
   (d) keep guessing
8. The left part of our brain controls:
   (a) imagination
   (b) emotions
   (c) creativity
   (d) logic and reasoning

*For answers and self-evaluation, visit www.pearsoned.co.in/PDChaturvedi

9. The group discussion evaluates the candidate's ability to:
   (a) control others
   (b) argue with others
   (c) lead others
   (d) confer with others on a given subject

10. The first objective in a group discussion is to:
    (a) catch the group's attention
    (b) prove your superiority
    (c) create sub-groups
    (d) act as a self-appointed leader of the group

15 Written Analysis of Cases

"A single, well-designed case study can provide a major challenge to a theory and provide a source of new hypotheses and constructs simultaneously."

—Donald R. Cooper and Pamela S. Schindler

Upon completion of this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Know the nature and types of case studies.
2. Understand the process of case analysis.
3. Identify major problems/questions involved in a case study.
4. Know how to consider alternative solutions to the questions raised.
5. Write out the findings of the analysis—a statement of the problem, the logical framework, consideration of the alternative solutions, and final decisions.

COMMUNICATION AT WORK

The case study method of teaching management issues and solutions is a crucial component of the modern pedagogy of business schools. Students and faculty spend a lot of time finding the perfect answers to the issues raised in a case. Their concern for reaching a logically satisfying solution is genuine, but they should all be informed by Amartya Sen's description of a hypothetical situation in his book, *The Idea of Justice*. In his book, Sen describes three children's demands for a flute. One child claims that she deserves the flute because she made it; the second says she deserves it because she has no toys (while the others do); and the third claims she deserves it because she can play it best. The question of who should get the toy remains: its maker, its player, or the child who has no other toy? The decision-makers could decide to give the flute to any one of the children, but who can tell what the right solution to this problem is?

WHAT IS A CASE?

A case is a written account of real or simulated managerial problems, dilemmas, and situations calling for solutions. Case analysis is an exercise in critical thinking and understanding of concepts and causes of problems and events. Broadly speaking, a case can be divided into theoretical and factual cases.

1. *Theoretical cases:* Case studies that are meant for reading and clarifying theoretical concepts in a discipline such as management, marketing, human relations, communication, and so on are academic case studies. They are used as examples to concretize abstract concepts. The interplay of ideas is presented in the form of action, interaction, and conflict among persons involved in a life-like situation described by the case. The case study on the profile of an effective communicator discussed at the beginning of this book is an example of a theoretical case. It uses the principles of oral, non-verbal, and written communication to demonstrate the dynamics of effective communication.
2. *Factual cases:* Case studies that describe and illustrate an organization's experience and efforts to overcome different problems and situations are real cases. These cases are based on facts. They present critical management issues with full details of facts and figures. Their analysis requires a systematic approach to identification of the main problem, alternative solutions, and, finally, the best solution. Such factual case studies highlight corporate problems belonging to any functional area of management, such as marketing, production, or human relations. But the technique of analysing different cases does not vary. Analysis of factual cases follows the same technique of identification and evaluation of alternatives for documenting the strategic process of decision-making.

1

Know the nature and types of case studies.

An important characteristic of a factual case study is that it presents a problem/event in its entirety, explaining all relevant causal relationships. In life, nothing happens in isolation. Interlinked events offer a kind of intersection between causes. The case study requires the application of analytical reasoning to the main problem and its best solution. The case of communication breakdown at City Hospital discussed in Chapter 2 illustrates a problem of managerial protocol.

CHARACTERSTICS OF A CASE AND ITS ANALYSIS

Before we go into the actual process of case analysis, it is necessary to understand some characteristics of cases and their analysis.

1. A good case study is based on critical management issues faced by organizations. It does not focus on personal dilemmas.
2. The subject matter of a case can focus on different aspects of management. For instance, a case can illustrate the principles of effective communication and it can also demonstrate techniques in sales and marketing. The Devox case at the beginning of this book is an example of such a case.
3. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions raised by a case study. The proposed answers or solutions to the problem should be logical. The decision that is finally recommended should keep with the logical framework that is established at the outset of the analysis.

2

Understand the process of case analysis.

THE PROCESS OF CASE ANALYSIS

The process of case analysis requires methodical study. This section describes the various stages of case analysis.

Step 1: Study the Case

First, a case analysis requires an understanding of the case and its context. This involves a comprehensive study of all factors at the organizational level that may be responsible for affecting working conditions and performance levels. Therefore, the first step is to know the goals, objectives, and structure of the organization. One can start by quickly reading the important points of the case and understanding the general drift. This should be followed by re-reading all the material and slowly taking note of important issues, facts, and ideas.

3

Identify major problems/questions involved in a case study.

Step 2: Identify the Problem

After reading over the case, the next step is to identify the main problem and discover the relationships between the problem and the factors responsible for it. Critical analysis and insight should help the analyst distinguish between the problem and its symptoms. For example, frequent strikes in a company can be viewed as a problem, as they cause dislocation in so many ways. But strikes are actually symptoms of a deeper problem in the organization: its work culture, system of promotions and rewards, and its goals and objectives. Hence, the analyst should identify the real problem, as distinguished from its symptoms.

Step 3: Define the Problem

The problem should be formulated in precise words. For example, in the aforesaid case, the problem could be defined as, "Low productivity owing to frequent labour strikes in the factory".

In linking facts in causal relationships, any assumptions that have been made must be stated clearly. These assumptions form a part of the hypothesis that will be tested for validity.

Step 4: Identify the Causes of the Problem

The next step is to state the relevant facts of the case and establish logical links between them. Here one should remember that facts are not opinions. Facts are the basic data obtained through investigation and study of the work environment and other industry-related factors affecting the problem to be resolved. For example, in the aforesaid case, the facts could be that in the second quarter of the year, production was lower by 40 per cent, meaning it came down by 8,000 units when compared to the previous year, in which there were no strikes. This year, there were two major strikes in the second quarter alone. When linking facts in causal relationships, any assumptions that have been made must be stated clearly. These assumptions form a part of the hypothesis that will be tested for validity.

Step 5: Develop Alternative Solutions

The next step is to suggest various possible answers and solutions to the problem or questions raised in the case. According to experts, at least three to five alternatives should be generated, ranging from "most viable" to "least viable".

4

Know how to consider alternative solutions to the questions raised.

Step 6: Evaluate the Alternatives

Next, each solution must be evaluated in terms of its relevance to the organization's objectives and the decision to be taken. The analyst should compare the various alternatives and decide on the best course of action to recommend. The alternatives can also be scrutinized in terms of their utility over time, that is, in the immediate term, intermediate term, or long term.

Step 7: Develop a Plan of Action

Lastly, the analyst works out a plan to implement the recommended course of action. It is only when a plan of action is developed that one can check whether all the aspects of the problem have been addressed.

REQUIREMENTS FOR A CASE ANALYSIS

5

Write out the findings of the analysis—a statement of the problem, the logical framework, consideration of the alternative solutions, and final decisions.

To understand the requirements for a case analysis, let us go back to the Devox case: *The Profile of an Effective Communicator*. This case analysis has been deliberately placed at the beginning of the book because it introduces all the essential principles and characteristics of effective oral, non-verbal, and written communication—it is almost like a summary of the book. We can use this case to examine the requirements necessary for a thorough and insightful case analysis.

The following are the key requirements of a case analysis:

1. *Thorough knowledge of the concerned subject:* The first requirement for being able to write an analysis of a theoretical case is thorough knowledge of the subject. Since the Devox case is considered a communications case, its analysis needs application of the concepts of effective communication. If we take the same case as an illustrative situation in consumer behaviour, its analysis will require a thorough knowledge of consumer behaviour concepts.
2. *Analytical ability:* When attempting a case analysis, one has to go deeper into the situation described in the case. For example, in the Devox case, questions such as the following must be considered:

- Why does Mr Oberoi want to return the pair of shoes?
- How did this situation arise?
- Does Mr Oberoi leave the show room satisfied? If yes, why? If not, why not?
- How are the different aspects of this case related to one another?
- Can we explain the situation in terms of our assumptions and observations?
- Who is the most effective communicator in this case: Rahul, Mr Oberoi, Mr Sharma, or Mr Khare?
- Why does Mrs Oberoi keep away from the discussion?

To analyse means to break something down into its constituent parts. It involves more than just describing something. When ideas are taken apart, each component can be discussed separately. This results in connections being made among the components and new relationships and interactions being established. This allows us to examine the validity of the logic used to establish these relationships.

When ideas are taken apart, each component can be discussed separately. This results in connections being made among the components and new relationships and interactions being established.

3. *Ability to think critically:* The ability to think critically requires going beyond the obvious and looking for the truth underlying conflicts. It requires looking beyond what meets the eye and having a questioning approach in which one accepts an idea only after examining its basis.
4. *Ability to evaluate:* The ability to evaluate ideas and reasons is part of critical thinking. When evaluating, it is important to know the reasons for a particular judgement. For example, it is not enough to say "Rahul is the most effective communicator". One must also explain why and how Rahul is an effective communicator, for instance by comparing him to others and pointing out examples in which he demonstrates effective communication.
5. *Ability to infer*: From the given analysis of the Devox case, you should have noticed that the analysis is centrally related not to Mr Oberoi's purpose of returning the shoes, but to the way his skills to convince and persuade are outdone by Rahul's competence in communicating. You should be able to finally view the whole problem from a certain perspective. Here, the analysis takes the position that effective communication is an act of the total personality of the communicator.

Analysis of *Communication Breakdown at City Hospital*

Another example of written analysis of a factual case is *Communication Breakdown at City Hospital*, which is given in Chapter 2. This case was discussed by nearly 300 groups of executives at several executive development programmes. The candidates were given enough lead time to understand the case thoroughly and answer the following questions:

1. Why did the situation worsen with the widespread rumours of layoffs?
2. Was it correct to include Lily Joe in the initial discussion meeting?
3. Ideally, how should the situation have been handled?

Why Did the Situation Worsen?

Answers to the first question ("Why did the situation worsen with the rumours of layoffs?") include the following common points:

- Slow decision-making and poor coordination by the management.
- Lack of initiative by the management—it did not anticipate the confusion and protests.
- Excess attendees and too many meetings regarding layoffs.
- Inability of management to take the staff into confidence from the very beginning.
- Lack of proper planning and inept execution of the retrenchment process.
- Presence of a clear communication gap and increasing anxiety of concerned staff.
- Fear of the fifth-floor staff.
- Inclusion of Lily Joe in the initial meetings.
- Popular belief that management was behind the rumours.

Here are some examples of answers to the first question.

Example 1: Prima facie it seems that the inclusion of Lily Joe in the meetings was the primary reason for the spread of rumours. However, it cannot be said with certainty that other members in the meeting would not have spread the news, since the decision would affect a number of fifth-floor employees. The very fact that members were sworn to secrecy would be enough to fan the flames.

Example 2: The reasons for the worsening of the situation due to widespread rumours could be:

(a) Rumours were spread with the intent of generating fear and agitation among employees, in the hopes that they would do something illegal or untoward, which would help the management justify closure of the fifth floor.

(b) The hospital had a policy of reassignment, but talk of the layoffs must have been leaked. The crux of the matter is that the management did not involve the staff in the decision-making process and the staff was resistant to changes.

Example 3: The reasons for the rumours regarding layoffs of the observation ward employees could be:

(a) The series of meetings involved too many people and led to the rumours.

(b) There were differences among management regarding the process and procedure of decision-making. There were last minute objections put forth by the chief medical officer (CMO) and the chief accounts officer (CEO). Both demanded specific numbers and significant changes in the announcement letter drafted by the group before they would allow the plan to move forward.

(c) Negative news spreads very quickly via the grapevine.

(d) Lily Joe refused to accept the decision.

(e) The execution of plans was delayed, which led to the spreading of rumours.

The spreading of rumours via the grapevine suggests that the management missed an opportunity to share information that was of interest to employees. This poses a challenge to the management's effectiveness and the organization's human resource management system. Normally, management views the grapevine negatively because it tends to breach confidentiality and secrecy, and often results in the spreading of false rumours and negative information. However, sometimes the management itself may want to take advantage of rumours to gauge the likely reactions of the concerned employees to a proposed change or scheme. In this case, the communication gap happens because the decision was taken at the "top" and the implementation was desired from the "bottom".

Normally, management views the grapevine negatively because it tends to breach confidentiality and secrecy, and often results in the spreading of false rumours and negative information.

Was it Correct to Include Lily Joe in the Meeting?

Answers to the second question, "Was it correct to include Lily Joe in the initial discussion meetings?", can follow two directions. One view is that it was right to include Lily Joe in the initial meeting because the management was taking a decision affecting the staff of the fifth floor, so involving those whom the decision affected was crucial. Lily Joe, being their head, could contribute to the decision. Protocol demanded that she be involved in the meetings. In addition, including her would send her the message that her opinion was still valuable. According to this view, her attending the meeting is a perfect example of participative management, where employees are called to put forward their views. This approach helps the management obtain a holistic view of the situation.

However, an opposing view is that it was incorrect to include Lily Joe in the layoff meetings, even at the initial stage, because she was directly affected by the layoff plan. She did not contribute to the discussion. In fact, her participation created further problems because she herself was part of the problem, but made no contribution to the discussion.

How Should the Situation Have Been Handled?

A case study does not illustrate the dilemmas of an individual. It presents problems that an organization faces because of the failure of its systems.

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The closure of the observation ward seems to be an easy solution to the problem, but it is misdirected. The executive director should have first prepared a plan to reduce staff across the hospital, instead of abolishing the fifth-floor unit. And after deciding on the number of employees to be dropped, after "reassignments" at the hospital level, general options should have been asked for from all the employees of the hospital and not of "observation ward" employees only.

The executive director should also have kept in mind that the hospital had a policy of reassignment rather than layoff, and thus had a commitment to placing the fifth-floor staff in other positions for which they were qualified. Just as fifth-floor patients were to be reassigned to other units, the staff of the fifth floor should have been reassigned too. In addition, new recruitment should have been stopped for some time. The action plan should have involved the following steps:

(a) The executive director should have appointed a committee made up of the director of personnel, the director of public relations, the head of nursing, and the labour relations consultant to discuss the retrenchment plan. When the hospital management decided that, since her floor was being closed entirely, Lily Joe would no longer be needed, the management should not have included her in the planning process.

(b) This committee should have developed a report on the reassignment and layoff of the fifth-floor staff.

(c) Then, the plan of action should have been placed before the CMO and CAO for their approval.

(d) After its approval, the plan should have been shared with the nursing heads in a formal meeting.

(e) Finally, the heads of nursing should have met the staff of the fifth floor to announce the plan for reassignment and layoff; after this, the press should have been informed.

The two examples of case analysis discussed here are only suggestions of how cases analyses can be carried out and are not prescriptive. A case analysis should be a well-organized piece of analytical and evaluative writing that reflects the analyst's critical thinking on the relevant information and ideas.

THE STRUCTURE OF A WRITTEN CASE ANALYSIS

The writing of a case analysis follows a sequence of steps. Like a project report or an investigative report, a case report presents the process, findings, and recommendations of the analysis in an organized form, under distinct headings and sub-headings.

The main parts of the written analysis are:

1. *The title of the case:* The title reflects the central problem of the case.
2. *The statement of the problem:* The statement of the problem describes the objective of the case and what is to be achieved through the proposed solution.
3. *The case:* The case is a brief narration of the situation or problem. It provides the context for the various issues to be investigated.
4. *The scope of the analysis:* The scope defines the limits of the analytical study of the case clearly. It also describes the assumptions that have been made for the purpose of the analysis.
5. *The alternative solutions and their evaluation:* Each possible solution is an alternative answer to the problem and should be fully considered in relation to the company's objectives and goals and evaluated in terms of its merits and demerits. Sub-sections can be created for each solution, listing its merits and demerits. Here is an example:

   Solution 1: Fire the employees who engaged in violence during the strike.

   Merits: The company will be justifiably free of trouble-makers.

   Demerits/limitations: They might be some of the most productive workers otherwise; this might also further escalate the situation.

6. *The recommended solution:* The recommended solution is the final suggestion for action. It is backed by the principles of management that are relevant to the case under consideration. At this stage, the logical framework developed to interpret the case helps justify the decision to recommend a particular solution.
7. *The conclusion:* The conclusion gives a plan of action to overcome the problem by implementing the solution. The recommended action is fully analysed in terms of its viability, feasibility, cost, and benefit to the company. Any other inherent limitation or weakness in implementing the plan is also clearly discussed and indicated as a point for caution and further consideration.
8. *The executive summary:* The executive summary briefly includes the following:
   - A brief description of the background of the problem
   - The problem
   - The possible solutions
   - The best solution

- The recommended plan of action
- The benefits of the recommended solution to the company

The executive summary is for helping decision-makers understand the problem and its possible solutions without going through the entire case analysis. It is, therefore, placed at the beginning of the written analysis.

SUMMARY

- Case analysis is an exercise in critical thinking and understanding of concepts and causes of problems and events. This chapter discusses the nature of theoretical and factual case studies.
- There are no right or wrong answers to the questions raised by a case. An analyst's answer or solution should be logical and convincing and based on facts presented.
- The various steps involved in a case analysis are: studying the background of the case, identifying and stating the problem, analysing the various possible solutions, evaluating the options, and developing a plan of action based on the recommended solution.

CASE: ACCEPTING A CONTRACT

A computer services company was negotiating a very large order with a major corporation. They had a very good track record with this client. Five different departments in the corporation had pooled their requirements and budgets, and a committee that had representation from all the departments was formed. The corporation wanted the necessary equipment on a long lease and did not want to make an outright purchase. Further, they wanted all the hardware and software from one supplier. This meant that their supplier would need bought-out items from other suppliers, since no one supplier could meet all the requirements from its range of products.

The corporation provided an exhaustive list of complex terms and conditions and pressured the vendors to accept their terms. The computer company that was finally awarded the contract had agreed to the overall terms as far as their own products were concerned, but had also accepted the same terms for the bought-out items. In this case, the bought-out items were to be imported through a letter of credit. The percentage of bought-out items vis-à-vis the company's own products was also very high. One of the terms accepted was that the "system" would be accepted over a period of 10 days after all the hardware had been linked up and the software loaded.

The computer company started encountering supply troubles immediately. There were over a hundred computers connected with one another through software. For the acceptance tests, it had been agreed that the computer company would demonstrate, as a prerequisite, the features they had promised during technical discussions.

Now, when a Hero Honda motorcycle claims 80 km to a litre of petrol, it is under ideal test conditions, and if a motorcycle from the showroom were to be tested for this mileage before being accepted, it would never pass the test. In the corporation's case, due to internal politics, the representatives from one department—who insisted on going exactly by the contract—did not sign their acceptance since the system could not meet the ideal test conditions.

Further, in a classic case of "for want of a horseshoe, payment for the horse was held up", when the computer company tried to get the system accepted and payment released, they could not. The system was so large that at some point over a period of 10 days, something or the other always had problems. But the corporation took the stand that as far as they were concerned, the contract clearly mentioned that the system had to be tested as a whole and not module by module.

Questions to Answer

1. Comment on the terms and conditions put forth by the corporation.
2. What factors influenced the computer company's decision to accept the contract?
3. Was it a win–win agreement? Discuss.

REVIEW YOUR LEARNING

1. What are the academic benefits of a case study?
2. What abilities are required when analysing a case?
3. Discuss the process of developing a written case analysis.
4. What according to you is the most important characteristic of a good case study?
5. Do you agree that a case can be used to illustrate several different concepts? Give some examples of cases you have studied.
6. To what extent is a case study a problem-solving project seeking a correct solution?
7. "A written analysis of a case is an analytical and evaluative piece of writing". Discuss.
8. Discuss the main characteristics of theoretical cases. Illustrate your answer with suitable examples.
9. Define a factual case and show how it differs from a theoretical case.
10. How do you arrive at the "best course of action"? Discuss.

REFLECT ON YOUR LEARNING

1. What is the essential difference you have found between your approach to real-life business problems and the approach of a working manager actually confronting these problems?
2. If there are no right or wrong answers to the questions raised by a case, then how do we evaluate the quality of a case analysis?
3. How would one distinguish a problem from its symptoms when analysing a case?
4. Reflect on the central importance of hypotheses in a case.
5. What do you understand by the phrase "analytical ability"?

APPLY YOUR LEARNING

Revisit the Devox Sports Shoes & Sportswear case and discuss what, according to you, would be the best way to satisfy Mr Oberoi as well as guard the company's policy. Give a strategic analysis of your solution.

SELF-CHECK YOUR LEARNING

From the given options, please choose the most appropriate answer:*

1. A case, in management studies, gives an account of:
   (a) a manager's personal problems
   (b) a manager's interpersonal problems
   (c) management problems
   (d) social events in the company
2. Cases dealing with an organization's experiences and efforts to solve problems are described as:
   (a) organizational cases
   (b) theoretical cases
   (c) functional cases
   (d) factual cases
3. All case studies involve documentation of the process of:
   (a) strategic decision-making
   (b) exploring alternative choices
   (c) storytelling
   (d) evaluating a problem
4. Logical links between two events/facts are established by discovering:
   (a) casual links
   (b) causal links
   (c) hypothetical links
   (d) traditional links
5. In the scientific study of a problem, opinions are not allowed because they are not:
   (a) facts
   (b) widely known
   (c) written
   (d) subjective
6. The executive summary helps the decision-maker:
   (a) avoid reading the case fully
   (b) learn about the problem
   (c) learn about various solutions to the problem
   (d) Both (b) and (c)
7. In a case study, the executive summary is placed:
   (a) at the end
   (b) at the beginning
   (c) with the recommendations
   (d) as part of the introduction
8. The first requirement for being able to write an analysis of a theoretical case is thorough knowledge of the concerned:
   (a) case
   (b) subject
   (c) objective
   (d) methodology
9. The ability to think critically reflects a:
   (a) questioning mind
   (b) thoughtfulness
   (c) sharp business sense
   (d) holistic personality
10. In the conclusions section of an industry-based case study, the recommended action plan is fully analysed in terms of its:
    (a) viability
    (b) feasibility
    (c) benefit to the company
    (d) all of the above

*For answers and self-evaluation, visit www.pearsoned.co.in/PDChaturvedi

Model Question Paper I

MBA Degree Examination

Business Communication

Time: 3 hrs Max. Marks: 100

Note: **1.** ***Answer any FOUR full questions from the Q. No. 1 to 7.***
2. ***Question No. 8 is compulsory.***

1 a. What is the purpose of a report? **(03 Marks)**
b. Describe communication as a two way process to exchange information. **(07 Marks)**
c. Godrej Cosmetics Ltd., has advertised for the post of "management trainees". Draft a covering letter and CV, assuming you are Mr.Arun. **(10 Marks)**

2 a. What is the purpose of communication? **(03Marks)**
b. Explain the 3 × 3 writing process in business communication. **(07 Marks)**
c. Discuss the qualities looked for, in candidates, participating in group discussion. **(10 Marks)**

3 a. What is business etiquette? **(03 Marks**
b. Explain the concept of coherence. **(07 Marks)**
c. Discuss the importance of communication in the business world. **(10 Marks)**

4 a. What is employment interview? **(03 Marks)**
b. Explain the different approaches to case analysis. **(07 Marks)**
c. Describe the different categories of non-verbal communication. **(10 Marks)**

5 a. What is complimentary close in a business letter? **(03 Marks)**
b. Explain the most common reasons for holding a meeting. **(07 Marks)**c.
Imagine you are the sales manager of Fashion Shoe Company, supplying footwear to various department stores. A regular customer of your company enquires about a particular model of shoes, which, you do not have in stock. You are required to write a persuasive letter (business reply letter) offering an alternative model. Your objective is not to lose a good customer. **(10 Marks)**

6 a. What are the basic requirements to analyze a case? **(03 Marks)**
b. Explain the factors that can influence a negotiation process. **(07 Marks)**
c. Discuss the barriers in the communication process. **(10 Marks)**

7 a. What is a "deadlock" in negotiation? **(03 Marks)**
b. Explain the different terms of internal communication in an organization. **(07 Marks)**
c. Discuss the rules to be followed in preparing press releases. **(10 Marks)**

8 Case study: (Compulsory)

Sparrow Garments Ltd.

Sparrow Garments Ltd., a medium sized family concern, started as a small company in Bangalore. In a span of ten years, the company had recorded an annual sales turnover of over Rs.200 crores, with over 4000 employees, in three different manufacturing locations in Karnataka, with a wide dealer network. However, as the company grew from a small to a large one, the company's CEO, Mr. Vinay, felt that the communication was suffering. This feeling was justified when Mr. Vinay had observed a decline in productivity and an increase in rejection rate. Mr. Vinay thought that the company was losing its "small company" spirit where, it had more control over its production and marketing operations.

Upset by his inability to meet the requirements on time, he had shot off letters to his GM – production, manager –supplies and marketing manager, asking them to work as a team, put in greater effort and plan their work. The recipients of these letters, in turn, sent somewhat similar letters to their supervisory and marketing field staff, stationed at various locations. However, the situation did not improve. Mr. Vinay felt that he had lost touch with the employees, down the line. Therefore, he hired the services of a management consultancy firm, to study the situation and report to him.

Questions:

a. What do you think are the company's real communication problems? **(05 Marks)**

b. What are the alternative ways in which communication can be established in the company? **(05 Marks)**

c. How can the company get better commitment from its employees to improve the situation? **(05 Marks)**

d. If you are hired as a consultant, what will be your suggestions to Mr. Vinay to improve the communication? **(05 Marks)**

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Model Question Paper II

MBA Degree Examination

Business Communication

Time: 3 hrs Max. Marks: 100

Note: 1. ***Answer any FOUR full questions from the Q. No. 1 to 7.***
2. ***Question No. 8 is compulsory.***

1 a. State the basic requirements for a case analysis, with a short explanation. **(03 Marks)**
b. Explain the 3 × 3 writing process for business communication. **(07 Marks)**
c. Write short notes giving suitable examples: **(10 Marks)**
i) Stage fright ii) Empathy iii) Agenda iv) Grapevine v) Deadlock

2 a. What is business etiquette? **(03 Marks)**
b. Explain the factors that can influence a negotiation process. **(07 Marks)**
c. As manager-student welfare, you have been asked by your college principal to visit the canteen and present your findings regarding hygiene and safety being maintained in the kitchen and service areas. You are required to write your report as a memorandum to your principal consisting of about 250 words. Assume the name M. Suresh for this purpose. **(10 Marks)**

3 a. What are the essential characteristics that you would include in a presentation in order to make it interesting? **(03 Marks)**
b. Explain the most common reasons for holding a meeting. **(07 Marks)**
c. Hindustan Plastics Ltd. Bangalore has advertised in Times of India, Bangalore edition dated Wednesday September 30, 2009, for management trainees with an MBA degree. Prepare a covering letter and resume to apply for this position. Assume you are Aravind s/o Ganapathy for this purpose. Address the covering letter to Mr. Govind Prakash, Manager, Human Resource of the company. **(10 Marks)**

4 a. What are the different purposes of a business report? **(03 Marks)**
b. Explain how coherence can be employed to improve effectiveness in writing a report. **(07 Marks)**
c. Discuss the barriers that hinder the communication process. **(10 Marks)**

5 a. What does a job interview assess? **(03 Marks)**
b. Explain the steps to improve effective listening. **(07 Marks)**
c. Describe the different forms of communication in an organization and relate it to the organizational hierarchy. **(10 Marks)**

6 a. What is conversation control? **(03 Marks)**
b. Easy Life Electronics Ltd. (ELEL) is an MNC that has just released a new model of microwave oven in the Indian market. As PR manager of ELEL, write a press release to the Economic Times, Bangalore announcing this event. **(07 Marks)**
c. Discuss the importance of communication in the new millennium. **(10 Marks)**

7 a. What qualities of a candidate are keenly observed in a group discussion? **(03 Marks)**
b. Explain the characteristics of successful communication. **(07 Marks)**
c. Describe the different categories of non-verbal communication. **(10 Marks)**

8 Case study: (Compulsory)

Tragedy at Varsha Auto Components Ltd.

Varsha Auto Components Ltd (VACL) was an original equipment supplier to many automobile manufacturing companies in India. Recession drastically reduced the activities of the company. As a result, many of the regular skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers of the company were laid-off.

After a three year slump, the market was suddenly booming again and the company order book was once again overflowing. It was now time to employ more people to man the three shifts that needed to be run round the clock to meet the orders. It was difficult to find trained personnel for all jobs. Casual labor was employed for tasks that required semi-skilled and unskilled personnel.

The paint shop needed more people because it was the last link in the production chain. They were under tremendous pressure to paint the components and pack them soon after drying of the paint. The backlog of work required them to employ additional casual workers from neighbouring states, who were illiterate and did not even speak the local language.

On that fateful day, the night shift was in progress. In the paint shop, there was a supervisor and some casual workers who had been employed a couple of days ago. Fully finished and quality certified components were being readied for dispatch. Power supply was erratic and suddenly the paint shop plunged into darkness. The supervisor slipped out to look for the generator set operator.

One of the casual workers found a candle and placed it on a drum full of paint thinner and lit the candle. The packing resumed. The supervisor after getting the generator started was walking back to the paint shop.

There was a big explosion that shook the entire factory. The thinner in the drum, naturally highly volatile, had caused the explosion, and a major fire in the factory. Two workers near the thinner drum died of burn injuries.

The police arrived and arrested the supervisor and the shift manager. The inspector of factories lodged a case of negligence and breach of safety norms against the factory management. They found workers being made to work in a hazardous place without being trained in safety procedures. The safety instructions were displayed on the shop floor in English which none of the workers could read nor understand. Also, all safety norms and procedures were not properly conveyed to the workers.

Questions:

a. What were the essential things in communication that were missed in the case? **(05 Marks)**

b. As PR manager of the company, how would you handle communication in the crisis situation stated in the case? **(05 Marks)**

c. As HR manager of the company, what would you have done differently to avoid this crisis? **(05 Marks)**

d. What would be your role as CEO of the company in handling this crisis? **(05 Marks)**

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Model Question Paper III

MBA Degree Examination

Business Communication

Time: 3 hrs | Max. Marks: 100

Note: 1. ***Answer any FOUR full questions from the Q. No 1 to Q7.***
2. ***Question No. 8 is compulsory.***

1 a. What is the purpose of communication? **(03 Marks)**
b. Discuss the principles of effective communication. **(07 Marks)**
c. Discuss the barriers to effective communication. **(10 Marks)**

2 a. What is kinesis? **(03 Marks)**
b. Discuss communication as a two way process of exchange of information. **(07 Marks)**
c. List the various methods of presentation and explain the steps involved in preparing for a oral presentation. **(10 Marks)**

3 a. Why should you include an executive summary in your report? **(03 Marks)**
b. Discuss the different types of reports. **(07 Marks)**
c. What do you understand by grapevine? How is it important to the organization? How can its harmful effects be controlled? **(10 Marks)**

4 a. What is justification report? **(03 Marks)**
b. Explain the layout of a business letter. **(07 Marks)**
c. Thomson and Co., has advertised for the position of an HR manager. Draft an application letter and prepare your resume to serve the purpose. **(10 Marks)**

5 a. What is teleconference? **(03 Marks)**
b. "The development and evolution of technology is changing business communication and its effects are both positive and negative". Explain. **(07 Marks)**
c. Write an office memorandum warning an employee against his habit of reading the newspapers and magazines during office hours. **(10 Marks)**

6 a. What is win-win situation? **(03 Marks)**
b. What are the steps involved when preparing for an interview by an interviewee. **(07 Marks)**
c. Explain about components of non-verbal communication. **(10 Marks)**

7 a. What is the purpose of a memo? **(03 Marks)**
b. Analyse the various stages of a negotiation process. **(07 Marks)**
c. What are the graphics commonly used in reports? Discuss their usage. **(10 Marks)**

Case Study: Anitha Sharma sells computer systems. One client, Jatin, specifically tells her that he knows little about computers and that he needs a system for his office. Anitha knows exactly the right computer for Jatin, one that is currently on sale at a good price. She immediately steers Jatin to the system she has in mind, saying, "I think you'll like this system, Jatin, it's very popular! It has a 60 MHz, 486 microprocessor, 8 MB of RAM, all you'll ever need. It comes loaded with software, even has a math coprocessor. Of course, if you like, you could start with a 4 MB system that's fully expandable.......
'Wow, Anitha, "Jatin replied, "May be I need to think about this some more. To himself, he thought, " I think I'll call Srinivas and ask him where he bought his computer."

Questions:

a. Why couldn't Anitha make the sale? **(05 Marks)**
b. How were Anitha and her company affected? **(05 Marks)**
c. How could she have done differently? **(05 Marks)**
d. Why did Anitha's marketing style affect Jatin's decision? **(05 Marks)**

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Model Question Paper IV

MBA Degree Examination

Business Communication

Time: 3 hrs Max. Marks: 100

Note: **1.** ***Answer any FOUR full questions from the Q. No. 1 to 7.***
2. ***Question No. 8 is compulsory.***

1 a. What is the purpose of communication in business? **(03 Marks)**
b. What is empathy and how does it contribute to effectiveness of communication? **(07 Marks)**
c. What are the characteristics of successful communication? Explain. **(10 Marks)**

2 a. Explain what is noise in communication. **(03 Marks)**
b. How is listening different from hearing? Discuss various types of listening. **(07 Marks)**
c. Write short notes on: i) Kinesic communication ii) Meta communication iii) Para language iv) Proxemics. **(10 Marks)**

3 a. What is oral communication? Mention different tasks employing oral communication in business. **(03 Marks)**
b. What are the barriers of effective oral communication? **(07 Marks)**
c. How do you effectively apply conversation control in meetings? **(10 Marks)**

4 a. Briefly explain the principles of effective writing. **(03 Marks)**
b. What is a memo and how it is different from a letter? **(07 Marks)**
c. You are the service manager of XYZ Co, in Bangalore, manufacturers of washing machines.Your name is 'Vivek'. One of your customers 'Chandran' complained against the machine for poor performance within 3 months of purchase. Your technician, on inspection of the machine, has reported to you that the machine was overloaded and also water used was hard. This situation does not qualify for extending free service and supply of spares during warranty. Write a letter to the customer regretting to provide free service and spares to set right the defect. **(10 Marks)**

5 a. What are the distinct objectives of an application letter and a resume? **(03 Marks)**
b. What is an interview? Write down the types of interviews and the required communication skills for each. **(07 Marks)**
c. You are seeking an employment in a leading MNC in Bangalore as a management trainee in HR/Finance/Marketing (choose any one) discipline. Your name is 'Vivek'. Write an application for employment along with a resume. **(10 Marks)**

6 a. Define negotiations. **(03 Marks)**
b. What negotiation strategies, you would adopt from the beginning to the conclusion of a commercial deal? **(07 Marks)**
c. i) What strategy you would adopt in case of a deadlock?
ii) Explain various factors which affect negotiations. **(10 Marks)**

7 a. What is meant by corporate communication? **(03 Marks)**
b. What is a report? Write down various elements of a report and explain. **(07 Marks)**
c. Prepare a press release for an automobile manufacturing company highlighting its annual performance. **(10 Marks)**

8 **Case study:**

Employment Interview of RP Sinha

Mr. R.P. Sinha is an MBA. He is being interviewed for the position of Management Trainee at a reputed company. The selection committee is chaired by a lady Vice President. Mr Sinha's interview was as follows :

Committee	:	Good Morning!
Mr. Sinha	:	Good Morning, Sirs and Madam!
Chairperson	:	Please, sit down.
Mr. Sinha	:	Thank you (sits down at the edge of the chair, keeps his portfolio on the table)
Q. Chairperson	:	You are Mr. R.P. Sinha?
A. Mr. Sinha	:	Yes, Madam. This is how I am called.
Q. Chairperson	:	You have passed MBA with 1st Division.
A. Mr. Sinha	:	Yes, Madam.
Q. Chairperson	:	Why do you want to work in our organization?
A. Mr. Sinha	:	It is just like that. Also because it has a good reputation.
Q. Member A	:	This job is considered to be quite stressful. Do you think you can manage the stress involved?
A. Mr. Sinha	:	I think there is too much talk about stress these days. Sir, would you tell clearly what you mean by stress? I am very strong for any stress.
Q. Member B	:	What are your strengths?
A. Mr. Sinha	:	Sir, who am I to take boastfully about my strengths? You should tell me my strengths.
Q. Member C	:	What are your weaknesses?
A. Mr. Sinha	:	I become angry very fast.
Q. Member A	:	Do you want to ask us any questions?
A. Mr. Sinha	:	Yes, Sir! What are the future chances for one, who starts as a Management Trainee?

The member tells Mr. Sinha the typical career path for those starting as Management Trainee. The chairperson thanks Mr. Sinha. Mr. Sinha promptly says in reply, "you are welcome" and comes out.

Questions:

a. Do you find Mr. Sinha's responses to various questions effective? Give reasons for your views. **(05 Marks)**

b. Rewrite the response that you consider more effective to the questions in the interview. **(05 Marks)**

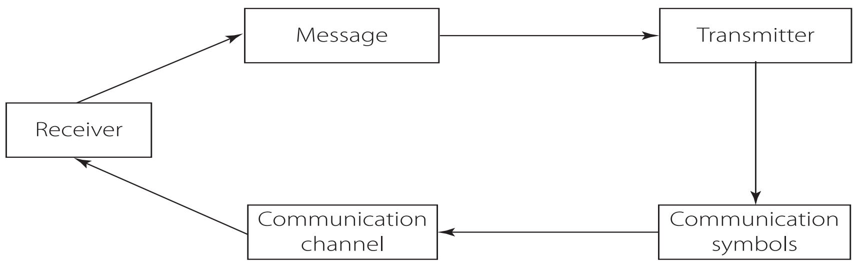
c. Analyse Mr. Sinha's behavoiur and politeness during conversation. **(05 Marks)**

d. What is your general impression of Mr. Sinha's performance at the interview? Should he be considered for the post? **(10 Marks)**

Solutions to Model Question Paper I

1. (a) While collecting data, the investigator should remember that the report is not a descriptive statement of facts, events, or future possibilities. For example, the purpose of a report is not fulfilled if it speaks about "the possibility of change of work site". Instead, the report should explain the reasons for changing the workplace, discuss the need for doing so, compare the relative advantages of different choices available, and choose and recommend the best option. The basic purpose of a report is to help the management identify the reasons underlying a specific situation. The factors responsible for the problem, the alternatives available for solving it, and the best course of action to take emerge from a thorough study of all relevant facts and factors. The main purpose of report is to present specific conclusions regarding the problem's existence and solution.

1. (b)



The Two-way Communication Process

More recent conceptualizations of the communication process look at communication as a two-way process. A group of people are involved in completing the cycle of communication, in which the receiver also acts as the sender of feedback to the original transmitter (sender). Thus, both the sender and receiver play reciprocal and reversible roles, as in telemarketing or call-centre communications.

The two-way concept of communication is more contemporary. It considers communication essentially to be a reciprocal process and a mutual exchange of messages. It makes no sharp distinction between the roles of the sender (source) and the receiver, because the same person plays both roles, often simultaneously.

The earlier linear view treated the sender as the determiner of the message and its meaning. The two-way concept involves the receiver as an active agent in constructing the meaning of the message. The meaning of the message is perceived in the context of the receiver's experiences, beliefs, and feelings. The intended and received meanings may result in common interpretations of situations, ideas, schemes, and events to the extent that people live and work together and develop common attitudes and viewpoints with regards to their organization or society. The two-way communication process is also known as *transactional communication,*

Communication is purposive in nature. It achieves success by manipulating the target audience through information and persuasion to effect the intended action.

1. (c) **COVERING LETTER AND CV OF MR. ARUN**

Mr. Arun, K.J.
No:11/6, 19th Street, Jai Nagar
Kattupakkam
Chennai – 600 116
clinton@1jobboard.com
March 24th, 2011

To,
Human Resources & Development Manager
Godrej Cosmetics
MG Road
Bengaluru – 560001

Dear Sir,

I was excited to read about Management Trainee job opening at Godrej Cosmetics. I have completed a Master's degree in business. I have 1.5 years of work experience. In addition to my experience, I have good HR skills, flexibility, oral and written communication. My background makes me an excellent candidate for Management Trainee position. Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you to arrange an interview. I am enclosing my CV for your kind consideration.

Yours sincerely,
Arun

RESUME

Mr. Arun, K.J.
No:11/6, 19th Street, Jai Nagar
Kattupakkam
Chennai – 600 116
clinton@1jobboard.com

Objective:

To obtain a good management trainee position in an organization by showcasing my leadership and project management skills.

Summary:

- Good functional and technical knowledge of sales and marketing
- Experience of working on Management Information Systems (MIS)
- Excellent employee management experience
- Knowledge of ERP, CRM and SCM

Skills:

- Good written and verbal communication skills
- Computer knowledge of Ms Word and Ms Outlook
- Excellent customer oriented business approach
- Problem solving and reasoning skills
- Ability to work in cross functional areas
- Strong presentation and interpersonal skills
- Decision making and planning

Education:

Master of Business Administration–Marketing, LIBA, Chennai (2007–2009)
Bachelor of Engineering, SSN College, Chennai (2003–2007)

Experience and Current Position:

Aerotek Management Solutions, T. Nagar
Designation: Management Trainee

Responsibilities:

- Achieved the sales and customer service objectives
- Sold high-price products and services and increased the profit margin
- Managed the sales and marketing departments for planning sales strategies
- Performed all administrative tasks as per guidelines
- Worked as a liaison between management and employees
- Played an important role in defining key market segments

Hobbies:

Playing Cricket, Volleyball and listening to music

References:

M. William Darwin
GM–HR
Wheels India
Chennai – 600050
email: Williams@Yahoo.com

K. Pallavi Raju
Head–Marketing
LIBA
Chennai – 600 034
Email: palluraj@gmail.com

2. (a) Broadly speaking, in business, we communicate to: (a) inform and (b) persuade. These two goals are usually present in the mind of the person initiating the communication, as is seen in sales letters and advertisements. However, he or she may at times seek only to inform—as scientific writings do. Conversely, the person initiating the communication may aim more to persuade the reader, as journalistic writings and opinion editorials do.

2. (b) Writing Process in Business Communication

Phase 1: Prewriting
Analysing, anticipating, adapting

Phase 2: Writing
Researching, organising, composing

Phase 3: Revising
Revising, proofreading, evaluating

2. (c) PARTICIPATING IN A GROUP DISCUSSION

The group discussion (GD) tests inter-personal skills. It is most popular with public/private sector undertakings, government departments, commercial firms, and universities and other educational organizations, which use it to screen candidates after a written test. What does a group discussion evaluate? A group discussion primarily evaluates participants' ability to interact in a group that is discussing a given topic. An individual's behaviour in a group means much for his or her success as a manager or an executive responsible for coordinating and organizing activities. The evaluators, therefore, focus on group dynamics rather than the content of each participant's views.

The group usually consists of 8 to 10 candidates. No one is nominated as a leader, coordinator, or chairman. Normally, 20 to 30 minutes are given to complete the discussion. Each candidate has a roll number by which he or she is to be addressed. For easy recognition, the roll number is prominently displayed on a tag worn by each candidate. The candidates are seated in ascending order of roll numbers, usually in a circle.

Leadership

As group discussions start without an official leader, the atmosphere allows all participants free and equal opportunity to express their views. During the course of the discussion, a leader often emerges. No candidate should try to dominate the group to become the leader. Such an attempt is self-defeating, because in a group discussion all participants are supposed to be equal. However, a candidate, by his or her initiative, ability to direct the discussion, maturity, clarity of ideas, and understanding of group dynamics, might gradually begin to direct the course of the discussion and mediate between opposing views to evolve a comprehensive view. Such a candidate is implicitly recognized by all other candidates as the leader of the discussion group.

GD Protocol

Group discussions are "formally informal". There are rules of conduct to be observed by the participants. Some of these rules are discussed in Exhibit 14.8.

Discussion Techniques

A group discussion is not a debate in which each participant either opposes or supports the topic. There are no clear-cut positions or stands required. A group discussion is a continuous discussion, an ongoing interaction in which participants examine a subject or problem from different angles and viewpoints. Participants may disagree with or support others' points of view, or bring up a new point of view. But it is essential for all participants to always show respect for others, even if they disagree with each other. Courtesy in discussions indicates a level of politeness and maturity.

Good analytical abilities, critical assessment of arguments, and strong verbal and non-verbal skills of communication can give one a competitive edge over others.

Listening

In a group discussion, listening too is a participative act. Participants should listen thoughtfully to what others have to say, with the goal of assimilating and analysing rather than contradicting or refuting others. Instead of interrupting others, it is better to try to join the discussion tactfully and use words that demonstrate that you have been listening to others.

3. (a) Etiquette refers to conventional rules of social behaviour or professional conduct. These rules are unwritten and act as norms to be observed by all professionals who work as a team in a particular company or department. They help individuals identify what sort of behaviour is appropriate or inappropriate in a business environment.

   Professional etiquette affects business deals. An intelligent business executive knows that visitors assess the status of a company not just from its balance sheets and inventory books but also from the manner in which they are received, addressed, taken around, and briefed in the boardroom.

3. (b) Concept of Coherence

   Coherence is product of many different factors, which combine to make every paragraph, every sentence, and every phrase contribute to the meaning of the whole piece. Coherence in writing is much more difficult to sustain than coherent speech simply because writers have no nonverbal clues to inform them if their message is clear or not. Therefore, writers must make their patterns of coherence much more explicit and much more carefully planned. Coherence itself is the product of two factors.

To achieve paragraph unity, a writer must ensure two things only. First, the paragraph must have a single generalization that serves as the focus of attention, that is, a topic sentence. Secondly, a writer must control the content of every other sentence in the paragraph's body such that (a) it contains more specific information than the topic sentence and (b) it maintains the same focus of attention as the topic sentence.

This generalization about paragraph structure holds true for the essay in particular. The two major exceptions to this formula for paragraph unity are found in fiction (where paragraph boundaries serve other functions, such as indicating when a new speaker is talking in a story) and in journalism (where paragraphs are especially short to promote 'visual' ease by creating white space).

To achieve cohesion, the link of one sentence to the next, consider the following techniques:

1. Repetition. In sentence B (the second of any two sentences), repeat a word from sentence A.
2. Synonymy. If direct repetition is too obvious, use a synonym of the word you wish to repeat. This strategy is call 'elegant variation.'
3. Antonymy. Using the 'opposite' word, an antonym, can also create sentence cohesion, since in language antonyms actually share more elements of meaning than you might imagine.
4. Pro-forms. Use a pronoun, pro-verb, or another pro-form to make explicit reference back to a form mentioned earlier.
5. Collocation. Use a commonly paired or expected or highly probable word to connect one sentence to another.
6. Enumeration. Use overt markers of sequence to highlight the connection between ideas. This system has many advantages: (a) it can link ideas that are otherwise completely unconnected, (b) it looks formal and distinctive, and (c) it promotes a second method of sentence cohesion, discussed in (7) below.
7. Parallelism. Repeat a sentence structure. This technique is the oldest, most overlooked, but probably the most elegant method of creating cohesion.
8. Transitions. Use a conjunction or conjunctive adverb to link sentences with particular logical relationships.

3. (c) **Importance of communication in the business world:**

1. Communication **promotes motivation** by informing and clarifying the employees about the task to be done, the manner they are performing the task, and how to improve their performance if it is not up to the mark.
2. Communication is a **source of information** to the organizational members for decision-making process as it helps identifying and assessing alternative course of actions.
3. Communication also plays a crucial role in **altering individual's attitudes**, i.e., a well informed individual will have better attitude than a less-informed individual. Organizational magazines, journals, meetings and various other forms of oral and written communication help in moulding employee's attitudes.
4. Communication also **helps in socializing.** In todays life the only presence of another individual fosters communication. It is also said that one cannot survive without communication.
5. As discussed earlier, communication also assists in **controlling process.** It helps controlling organizational member's behaviour in various ways. There are various levels of hierarchy and certain principles and guidelines that employees must follow in an organization. They must comply with organizational policies, perform their job role efficiently and communicate any work problem and grievance to their superiors. Thus, communication helps in controlling function of management.

4. (a) An interview can be defined as an oral tool used to test a candidate's suitability for employment or admission to an institute of learning. As it is an oral test, it calls for the skills of oral and non-verbal communication, which are necessary to impress the interviewers. There are different types of interviews, such as panel interviews, sequential interviews, academic interviews, personality interviews, and so on. Each type requires the careful application of a particular set of communication skills.

4. (b) 1. A good case study is based on critical management issues faced by organizations. It does not focus on personal dilemmas.

2. The subject matter of a case can focus on different aspects of management. For instance, a case can illustrate the principles of effective communication and it can also demonstrate techniques in sales and marketing. The Devox case at the beginning of this book is an example of such a case.

3. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions raised by a case study. The proposed answers or solutions to the problem should be logical. The decision that is finally recommended should keep with the logical frame work that is established at the outset of the analysis.

4. (c) Non-verbal forms of communication include the following modes—paralanguage, meta-communication, kinesics, grooming, proxemics, and time language. The symbolic meaning associated with different body movements, gestures, and expressions is only suggestive and not specific in its import.

Ekman's Classification of Communicative Movements

Let us consider Ekman's classification[1] of communicative movements into five types:

- *Emblems:* When the movement of body parts represents ideas visually, the communicative act is emblematic, meaning it reflects the meaning non-verbally through a physical image. For instance, a circle made with the thumb and index finger, with the rest of the fingers stretched out straight, acts as an emblem for the "okay" sign in America.
- *Illustrators:* Illustrators are movements of hands and arms for representing the size, shape, frequency, or speed of something. For instance, widely stretched arms show enormity ofsize.
- *Body manipulators:* These are acts of touching one's own body or an object for no reason. Examples include fidgeting with jewellery or touching one's buttons. These are unintentional acts. However, some consider them to be clues of nervousness, anxiety, or boredom.
- *Facial expressions:* The most expressive part of our bodies are our faces. Our faces reflect our thoughts and feelings. Smiling, frowning, blushing, paleness, and so on reveal positive and negative feelings. These are emotional expressions that show on the face. The most fundamental emotions of happiness, sadness, anger, disgust, surprise, and fear are involuntarily marked on our faces.
- *Regulators—eye movements:* Eye movements such as squinting, winking, and staring are called regulators. Eye contact, a smile, or a frown is a strong message of interest, involvement, acceptance, rejection, or annoyance. For example, eye contact shows attentiveness and interest. On the other hand, rolling one's eyes is associated with restlessness and contempt. A favourable impact can be created by using eye contact, natural facial expressions and eye movements, and a smile that reflects a pleasant state of mind.

Face Facts

A smile shows that an interaction has been pleasant for the participant in a conversation. Perhaps, it would not be wrong to say that in most face-to-face communications, the most positive impression is made by a smiling face. The situation may be an interview, a negotiation, or a one-on-one meeting.

By practising positive body language, one can gradually develop positive feelings. Body language can induce a state of mind that can act as a positive shield against negative feelings. One can learn to communicate sincerity and concern in business dealings by using positive body language to support words of greetings, courtesy, and customer care. Avoid negative leakage. Learn to look confident, assertive, and positive. Avoid appearing nervous, aggressive, rude, pompous, indifferent or overbearing, and superior to others.

Positive Gestures

When a person speaks, his or her hands move freely to indicate the meaning of his or her words. Such gestures are natural. They cannot be avoided. They give strength to the speaker's words. But gestures should be seen in terms of whether they have a positive or negative message. Although gestures are spontaneous, we can learn to monitor and use positive gestures and minimize, if not avoid, the negative ones.

Positive gestures are body signals that make the communicator look relaxed, confident, and polite. Positive listening gestures include leaning a little towards the other person, tilting the head, making eye contact, and gently nodding as a sign of agreement or understanding.

When walking, keep your head upright. Hands should swing freely by the sides. Eyes should look straight in front. Steps should be well measured and steady. Many people carry books, files, and documents held against the chest. This makes the person look nervous and defensive. To avoid being perceived as a nervous person, one could carry them on one side. We can use our gestures to politely communicate what we want when we are unable to speak or are interrupting someone.

Negative Gestures

Negative gestures involve certain body movements, postures, gestures, or non-verbal activities such as shaking, tapping one's feet, looking at the watch, and so on. Putting one's hands in the pockets is also a negative gesture. If you put one hand in your pocket, it usually suggests arrogance. If you put both, it might show nervousness. However, if you want to look confident, but not nervous or arrogant, thrust your hands in your pockets, then keep the thumb out, so that you do not fully insert your hands inside the pockets.

Lateral Gestures

Besides non-verbal gestures that convey wordless messages through body language and facial expressions, there are other wordless signs of power, position, taste, and culture such as decoration and size of one's office, dress, grooming, and so on. These are called lateral gestures and include the following broad categories: (a) physical setting, (b) dress—clothes and shoes, and (c) personal space.

Physical Setting

An executive's position of power may be gauged from the size and furnishings of his or her office. The quality of furniture adds to the impression created by the setting of the room.

In an office, the executive's table is usually placed a few steps away from the door. This compels visitors or subordinates to walk up to him or her and feel his or her presence. Space is one of the factors involved in indicating the proximity of a relationship.

Dress

Clothes can define a person. It is one of the first things people notice. A person's clothes—their texture, colour, design, style, and stitching—reveal their taste and aesthetic sense.

In business, it is important to pay attention to one's clothes, especially at an interview or presentation. While one should look impressive, it is important not to be overdressed.

Personal Space

The personal space between two interacting persons indicates the level of formality, informality, intimacy, or distance between them. Business executives should observe the personal territory that each individual wishes to enjoy. Breaking into someone's personal territory is likely to make him or her feel uncomfortable.

According to the nature of relationships, there are four distinct zones: (i) the public zone, (ii) the social zone, (iii) the friendly zone and (iv) the intimate zone.

The *public zone* is the widest territory between the speaker and audience. A public speaker addresses a large gathering of persons. He or she needs to speak from a raised platform at a distance of 10 to 15 feet from the audience. The distance and elevation of the speaker provide visibility and a sense of isolation and superiority for the speaker.

A *social zone* is the space maintained between people who are known to each other in a formal way. All business transactions are to be treated as social interactions. An executive should keep a distance of 4 to 10 feet from his or her audience. This space will ensure the comfort of the listeners, especially if they happen to be seniors, customers, or clients.

The *friendly zone* is the distance observed at business parties, seminars, and other informal business gatherings and get-togethers. In such situations, people remain close to each other, but not close enough to jostle against each other.

The *intimate zone* is the distance between an individual and those he or she loves, such as close relatives and family members. This zone is not appropriate in a professional environment. In this zone, people tend to be near enough to whisper,

Within the intimate zone, there are, according to the level of intimacy, further zones/bands. They are:

- *Near intimate sphere (up to 6 inches):* The zone for lovers, partners, children, family members
- *Distant intimate sphere (6 inches to 18 inches):* The zone for close friends, close colleagues and relatives

5. (a) Complementary close:- is an expression used to say farewell, especially a word or phrase used end a letter of message or the act of saying parting words.

5. (b) Reasons for holding meetings

    * To give in information
    * To get information
    * To develop options
    * To make decisions
    * Warm, magical human contact

5. (c) **PERSUASIVE LETTER**

FASHION SHOES, MG ROAD, NO.123/128, BANGALORE – 560001
Phone Number 9003030190, www.fashioshoes.com

Date: 1.1.2011

To,
M/S. Rakesh Shoe Mart
P. H. Road
Chennai – 600 045

Dear Mr. Rakesh,

It was really nice to know your requirements of “KIDS FLY” shoes to school supply and as per our discussions we had yesterday , since we have come out with a new model with added features name “ KIDS DELIGHT”. We have stopped the production of “KIDS FLY”. I am enclosing herewith our preliminary quotation of the same for your consideration.

I believe this includes all specifications, options and terms we discussed. If not, please let me know the missing part so I may revise the quotation to meet your needs.

If all is in order, let me know how and when you wish to proceed. As discussed earlier, I can offer you an assurance of our policy of best quality and sensible prices with prompt and professional services.

Please note that the prices offered in this quotation are valid for 90 days from the time of receipt. Please call me if you have any questions or require additional information.

Sincerely,

Ali Khan

(For FASHION SHOES)

6. (a) Before we go into the actual process of case analysis, it is necessary to understand some characteristics of cases and their analysis.

   1. A good case study is based on critical management issues faced by organizations. It does not focus on personal dilemmas.

   2. The subject matter of a case can focus on different aspects of management. For instance, a case can illustrate the principles of effective communication and it can also demonstrate techniques in sales and marketing. The Devox case at the beginning of this book is an example of such a case.

   3. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions raised by a case study. The proposed answers or solutions to the problem should be logical. The decision that is finally recommended should keep with the logical framework that is established at the outset of the analysis.

6. (b) **Factors Affecting Negotiation**

The factors discussed in this section usually affect the outcomes of negotiations.

Location

The location of a negotiation can influence the level of confidence of one party. When the location is one party's office, for instance, that party has several advantages. They are on home ground, an area of strength. They can access whatever information or material is needed during the course of the negotiation. They can also extend social courtesies as a token of goodwill; this could move the negotiation towards agreement.

Timing

- The choice of time for holding discussions and the length of the discussion should be fixed according to mutual convenience.
- There should be adequate time for the smooth exchange of ideas through different stages of negotiation. The preparation time and the timeframe for implementing the agreement afterwards should also be carefully fixed.
- To be effective, negotiations should be timely. That means they should be carried out before it is too late to reach an agreement.

Subjective Factors

Often the outcome of a discussion does not depend wholly on objective factors such as logic and the facts of the matter under consideration. The final outcome may also be determined by subjective factors relating to influence and persuasion.

1. *Individual relationships:* The conduct of negotiations is influenced not only by the real situation of the matter but also by the relationship and rapport between the two persons/parties involved in the process of discussion.
2. *Fear of authority:* Often one side's bargaining power is conditioned by fear of authority, higher connections, and the other party's capacity to hurt their professional future.
3. *Future and practical considerations:* When personal relationships are at stake, the negotiators may not wish to win the argument at the cost of the relationship.
4. *Mutual obligations:* The memories of past favours by the other party may also influence the ne gotiation.
5. *Personal considerations:* Self-questioning helps the negotiator identify the factors influencing his or her bargaining position and strengths.

Persuasive Skills and the Use of You-Attitude

Persuasion includes a range of skills for convincing other people of the need to accept or agree to a course of action. It is an essential element of effective business communication. It helps in resolving issues on which there is a difference of opinion, but that need solutions that are in the interest of all. In negotiations, people are gradually persuaded to accept the other party's view to some extent.

As you must have seen yourself, persuasion is not one single thing. It is a mixture of skills—attitude, psychology, language, tone, body language, and so on—used to convince the other party to accept one's view despite their objections or alternate proposals.

6 (c) **BARRIERS TO COMMUNCATION**

In communication, a psycho-semantic process, the word *barrier* implies, mainly, something non-physical that keeps people apart or prevents activity, movement, and so on; examples are social, ethnic, and language barriers or lack of confidence. These negative forces may affect the effectiveness of communication by acting upon any or all of the basic elements of the communication process and the sender/receiver/channel. The more commonly experienced communication barriers are lack of planning, incorrect assumptions, semantic difficulties, and cultural differences. Some other barriers of communication are:

- Socio-psychological barriers
- Emotions
- Selective perception
- Information overload
- Loss by transmission
- Poor retention
- Goal conflicts
- Offensive style
- Abstracting
- Slanting
- Inferring

Broadly speaking, some of these barriers can be attributed to the sender and some to the receiver. Barriers attributable to the sender are:

- Lack of planning
- Vagueness about the purpose of communication and objectives to be achieved
- Poor choice of words, resulting in a badly encoded message
- Unshared or incorrect assumptions
- Different perceptions of reality
- Wrong choice of channel

Barriers attributable to the receiver are:

- Poor listening skills
- Inattention
- Mistrust
- Lack of interest
- Premature evaluation
- Semantic difficulties
- Bias
- Different perceptions of reality
- Lack of trust
- Attitudinal clash with the sender
- Unfit physical state

frame of reference affecting the smooth interpretation of thoughts, feelings, and attitudes from the sender to the receiver in a specific social situation.

Incorrect Assumptions

All communications from one person to another are made under some assumptions, which are not necessarily communicated to the other party. They may turn out to be incorrect and thus result in communication failure.

Psychosocial Barriers

There can be many types of psychosocial barriers to communication. The key barriers are discussed here.

Status

Consciousness of one's status affects the two-way flow of communication. It gives rise to personal barriers caused by the superior–subordinate relationship. A two-way vertical channel is present in most organizations, yet few subordinates choose to communicate with their superiors.

Similarly, superiors may be unwilling to directly listen or write to their subordinates and seldom accept hearing that they are wrong.

7. (a) **Deadlocks**

Reaching a mutually satisfactory end is the basic objective of any negotiation. If there is no final agreement reached, even after a prolonged discussion, It is called deadlock:

7. (b) In an organization, communication counts. It provides the network of sustenance essential for the growth and smooth functioning of the organization. But how should it be implemented? What are the strategies of communicating effectively? How can one learn them? Can communication be taught?

Today, communication has become a buzzword. Accordingly, a great deal of emphasis is being given to training aimed at developing the skills of writing letters, memos, and reports, participating in seminars and group discussions, interviewing, making presentations, and so on. In the world of business, managerial success depends largely on the ability to present one's ideas before others. In fact, verbal (written/oral) and non-verbal (body language) communicative competence is an important aspect of one's personality. In fact, many advanced institutions have incorporated communication in specialized personality development programmes as an additional input for management graduates at all levels of undergraduate and postgraduate education. There are formal courses in business communication, human communication, or organizational communication almost in all universities. In addition, there are training courses and workshops specially designed for executives and bureaucrats at all levels.

These communication courses and training programmes are offered because it is possible to learn and develop interpersonal skills. Of course, there are individuals who are "born communicators", able to think clearly and express themselves effectively with little training. However, others can become successful communicators by learning and practising the strategies of effective communication. All communications courses and programmes are based on simulating real situations in the workplace as well as social situations. Their basic objectives include written and oral/verbal competence and understanding of non-verbal communication/body language. At the end of these courses, students can effectively write letters, memos, reports, proposals, and so on, deliver oral presentations and seminars, and participate in meetings, group discussions, and negotiations.

In business, it is crucial to create and maintain relationships. Effective communicators weigh relationships and develop desirable, long-term ones. One's communication skills help nurture cherished relationships within the organization and outside it.

7. (c) **RULES TO BE FOLLOWED IN A PRESS RELEASE**

Nearly every startup I have worked with has been nervous about writing press releases. Lack of experience is one reason but people also think there are a set of secret rules to writing one "properly." I'm also hearing startups say they believe press releases are irrelevant in an age of social media. I disagree. The majority of press releases really stink but they stink because they are written like we wrote them 15 years ago. A modern press release can be a valuable marketing tool for startups and I believe anyone can create a great one. Here's how:

1. Decide Who and Why Before What – Why are you writing the release? Who do you want to reach? What would the perfect response be? We used to write releases for journalists who then wrote articles about them.

Today releases go directly to news sites, bloggers and customers in addition to journalists. The press release needs to stand on it's own and tell a story. Once you've decided who your audience is, define what you want them to do once they've finished the story. Do you want them to write their own story, click for more information, download something, or make a purchase?

2. Write A Great Headline – Most people never get past the headline. If there is one part of the press release that you really need to nail, this is it. Great headlines are short and grab people's attention. The headline should be easy to share – ideally it should be short enough to Tweet (I'd keep it under 60 characters if you can because a Tweet will also include at lease one ID and a short url) or put in a Facebook status message.

3. Keep it Brief – Get to the point as quickly as you can and stop. Provide some links to deeper content for those that are interested but don't try to say everything in one release. Take out everything that doesn't add to the story, including quotes from an executive that don't say anything more than "We're Great!"

4. Provide Valuable Content – What sort of value can you provide beyond the company news? For example, can you provide guides or templates related to the topic you are covering? Think about the audience you are writing for. What can you give them that makes the release valuable?

5. Include Sharable Content – In my opinion the day of the text-only press release is over. Can you include a downloadable logo, pictures, video? People will share content if you give them something to share.

6. Make it Search Engine Friendly (but don't go crazy) – I generally dislike content that is written specifically for SEO but paying SOME attention to this is important. The title should be short and contain your keywords if you can, just remember that having a title that people want to click on trumps having a title that contains your keywords. Your keywords should come earlier in the release, rather than later and include links.

7. Make it Worth Talking about – Again, think of your press release as a story (rather than the thing reporters write stories about). What makes that story interesting right now? How does it relate to what people are already talking about? The press releases I've done that have gotten the greatest traction have been either explicitly tied to a current trend or timed such that I knew they would be part of a larger conversation that was taking place. If you can't imagine people talking about your release over lunch then it still needs some work

Solutions to Model Question Paper II

1. (a) The following are the key requirements of a case analysis:

   1. *Thorough knowledge of the concerned subject:* The first requirement for being able to write an analysis of a theoretical case is thorough knowledge of the subject.
   2. *Analytical ability:* When attempting a case analysis, one has to go deeper into the situation described in the case.
   3. Ability to think critically: The ability to think critically requires going beyond the obvious and looking for the truth underlying conflicts.
   4. *Ability to evaluate:* The ability to evaluate ideas and reasons is part of critical thinking. When evaluating, it is important to.
   5. *Ability to infer:*

1. (b) 3 × 3 WRITING PROCESS IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

   Phase 1: Prewriting
   Analysing, anticipating, adapting
   Phase 2: Writing
   Researching, organising, composing
   Phase 3: Revising
   Revising, proofreading, evaluating

1. (c) **Stage Fright :** State of nervousness about performing some action in front of a group of people, on or off of a stage; nerves; uncertainty; a lack of self-assurance before an audience.

   Empathy: the power of understanding and imaginatively entering into another person's feelings . the attribution to an object, such as a work of art, of one's own emotional or intellectual feelings about it

   Agenda : ordered sequence of items to be discussed in a formal meeting. The objectives of an agenda include to familiarize participants with the topics to be discussed and issues to be raised, indicate what prior knowledge would be expected from the participants, and indicate what outcome the participants may expect from the meeting.

   Grape Vein: The informal transmission of information, gossip, or rumor from person to person.. A usually unrevealed source of confidential information.

   Dead Lock : A set of processes is deadlocked if each process in the set is waiting for an event that only another process in the set can cause (including itself).

2. (a)Etiquette refers to conventional rules of social behaviour or professional conduct. These rules are unwritten and act as norms to be observed by all professionals who work as a team in a particular company or department. They help individuals identify what sort of behaviour is appropriate or inappropriate in a business environment.

2. (b)**Factors Affecting Negotiation**

   The factors discussed in this section usually affect the outcomes of negotiations.

Location

The location of a negotiation can influence the level of confidence of one party. When the location is one party's office, for instance, that party has several advantages. They are on home ground, an area of strength. They can access whatever information or material is needed during the course of the negotiation. They can also extend social courtesies as a token of goodwill; this could move the negotiation towards agreement.

Timing

- The choice of time for holding discussions and the length of the discussion should be fixed according to mutual convenience.
- There should be adequate time for the smooth exchange of ideas through different stages of negotiation. The preparation time and the timeframe for implementing the agreement afterwards should also be carefully fixed.
- To be effective, negotiations should be timely. That means they should be carried out before it is too late to reach an agreement.

Subjective Factors

Often the outcome of a discussion does not depend wholly on objective factors such as logic and the facts of the matter under consideration. The final outcome may also be determined by subjective factors relating to influence and persuasion.

1. *Individual relationships:* The conduct of negotiations is influenced not only by the real situation of the matter but also by the relationship and rapport between the two persons/parties involved in the process of discussion.
2. *Fear of authority:* Often one side's bargaining power is conditioned by fear of authority, higher connections, and the other party's capacity to hurt their professional future.
3. *Future and practical considerations:* When personal relationships are at stake, the negotiators may not wish to win the argument at the cost of the relationship. Moreover, the fear of losing business in the future is a strong factor in bargaining/negotiation positions, as is the effect on the participants' reputations.
4. *Mutual obligations:* The memories of past favours by the other party may also influence the negotiation.
5. *Personal considerations:* Self-questioning helps the negotiator identify the factors influencing his or her bargaining position and strengths.

Persuasive Skills and the Use of You-Attitude

Persuasion includes a range of skills for convincing other people of the need to accept or agree to a course of action. It is an essential element of effective business communication. It helps in resolving issues on which there is a difference of opinion, but that need solutions that are in the interest of all. In negotiations, people are gradually persuaded to accept the other party's view to some extent.

2. (c)

VLCC COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCE
SALEM
Report by Mr. Suresh, Manager–Welfare Facilities

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To write a report on the existing Canteen facilities, hygiene and maintenance at the VLCC College.

PERIOD: 10.10.2010

TIME: 9.00 AM – 5.00 PM

MEMBERS: Mr. Suresh, Manager–Welfare Facilities

Ms. Deepika, Asst. Manager–Welfare Facilities

- Food items are very tasty
- Canteen staff are cordial
- Garden in front of the canteen is well maintained
- The building is old and very far from the main campus
- The existing canteen facility serves for 2500 students which is not sufficient
- No Chinese food items served

- No proper ventilation in the kitchen
- The wash area of utensils have to be expanded
- Time for breakfast for hostel students is less
- No displays in the canteen to attract the students
- No music is played
- Separate stall for tea and other snacks items to be opened in different point in college
- No canteen day is celebrated

3. (a) A good presentation has the following characteristics:

- There is a clear structure with an introduction, discussion, and conclusion.
- The presenter recognizes and matches the audience's needs, interests, and level of understanding, while discussing his or her ideas.
- Facts and figures are visually represented in tables, graphs, and charts, and different colours are used to make the presentation vivid and interesting.
- Humour and anecdotes may be employed to create a good relationship and connection with the audience.
- The presenter speaks clearly and logically and uses body language effectively.
- Questions are given serious attention and are regarded as an essential part of the presentation.

3. (b) **Reasons for Holding Meetings**

Prepare For The Meeting

o Define the objectives and desired outcomes. Know what you are trying to achieve by having a meeting.

o Determine if a different activity or medium could be used besides a meeting. A lot of wasted meetings are called when a couple of phone calls, email, or one-on-ones would have worked better.

o Determine topics to cover and the best format for the discussion of each one. Know what you want to get accomplished by the end of the meeting.

o Estimate the length of the meeting. People need to know how much time they need to allocate for the meeting.

o Create an agenda that is carefully scripted:

o Give Start and Stop times. Time is money — plan wisely!

o Identify the place of the meeting.

o List participants and guests.

o List what the participants roles are and what is expected from them so they may gather all the relevant data they need to bring to the meeting.

o Prepare a structured discussion to frame the purpose, topics, and direction of the meeting.

o Deliver the agenda in advance so that the participants have time to plan and prepare for the meeting.

o Make every meeting a learning event: incorporate creative and cutting edge education on your particular topic by using books, speakers, or videos. The people attending are giving up their time for you, thus you need to give something back to them.

o Use a variety of tools and activities to make the meeting productive and fun — get them charged up!

3. (c) **Covering Letter and CV of Mr. Aravind**

Mr. G. Aravind
No:11/6, 19th Street, Jai Nagar
Chennai – 600 116
Ara1990@1jobboard.com

March 30, 2009

To,
Mr. Govind Prakash
Human Resources & Development Manager
HINDUSTIAN PLASTICS
MG Road
Bangolare – 560001

Dear Sir,

I was excited to read about Management Trainee job opening at HINDUSTAN PLASTICS (refer your advertisement in Times of India dated September 30th 2009) I have completed a Master's degree in business. I have 1.5 years of work experience. In addition to my experience, I have good HR skills, flexibility, oral and written communication. My background makes me an excellent candidate for Management Trainee position. Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you to arrange an interview. I am enclosing my CV for your kind consideration

Yours sincerely,
Aravind, G.

RESUME

Mr. Aravind, G.
No:11/6 19th Street, Jai Nagar
Chennai – 600 116
Ara1990@1jobboard.com

Objective:

To obtain a good management trainee position in an organization by showcasing my leadership and project management skills

Summary:

- Good functional and technical knowledge of sales and marketing
- Experience of working on Management Information Systems (MIS)
- Excellent employee management experience
- Knowledge of ERP, CRM and SCM

Skills:

- Good written and verbal communication skills
- Computer knowledge of Ms Word and Ms Outlook
- Excellent customer oriented business approach
- Problem solving and reasoning skills
- Ability to work in cross functional areas
- Strong presentation and interpersonal skills
- Decision making and planning

Education:

Master of Business Administration-Marketing, LIBA, Chennai (2007-2009)
Bachelor of Engineering, SSN College, Chennai (2003-2007)
Experience and Current Position:
Syntel Management Solutions, Chennai
Designation: Management Trainee

Responsibilities:

- Achieved the sales and customer service objectives
- Sold high-price products and services and increased the profit margin
- Managed the sales and marketing departments for planning sales strategies
- Performed all administrative tasks as per guidelines
- Worked as a liaison between management and employees
- Played an important role in defining key market segments

Hobbies: Playing Cricket, Volleyball and listening to music

References:

M. Arasu, D.
GM – HR
CCL India
Chennai – 600 050
email: arasu@Yahoo.com

K. Raju
Head – Human Resources
Chennai Business School
Chennai – 600001
Email: rajugg1974@gmail.com

4. (a) Nearly all universities and management institutes require their postgraduate management and engineering students to do an industry-related project during their summer term as part of their curriculum. Institutes generally provide manuals with guidelines, procedures, and rules for the summer project reports. But there are institutions where students do not enjoy the benefit of guidelines, and it is for such students that a sample format for a summer project report is given here, although the principles and tips should be useful to all students.

   Necessary variations can be made to the report format, according to the requirements laid down by the industry and institutions concerned. However, the overall design, form, and style generally remain unchanged.

4. (b) **EMPLOYING COHERENCE IN WRITING A REPORT**

   If a paper is easy to understand, this is mostly due to a coherent presentation of its **contents**. It follows a clear line in presenting facts and arguments and avoids statements which are incomprehensible for the reader. Coherent pieces of writing are **selective** in their presentation of content. They focus on the important issues and cut out what is irrelevant or unintelligible for a reader. This requires that their authors (a) know their subject well, and (b) have an eye on their audience and tailor their writing to what their readers probably know beforehand and are able to understand. Coherent writing creates a comprehensible context for the contents presented. It, too, presents them in a **comprehensible order**.

There are different **strategies** for creating a comprehensible order, and the choice of strategy depends on the aims and purposes of a piece of writing. Most generally we can distinguish *fictional* from *non-fictional* or *factual* writing, and *narrative* from *argumentative* writing. Academic papers are of the factual and argumentative type. They are the ones we are interested in here.

One of the easiest strategies for creating order is a chronological presentation of events. It is similar to a narrative presentation of events in fictional stories but the facts reported in academic papers must represent a true and accurate description of reality. They should not confuse subjective views with a fair and objective presentation of their subject matter. Fictional narratives have a beginning (exposition) and an ending, possibly an ending with an explicit or implied moral; factual writing leads to a logical conclusion. (Note that an emotionally or psychologically or poetically pleasing or plausible ending is not, in a strict sense, the same as a 'logical' conclusion.) A descriptive chronological report of events may serve a useful function in an academic paper, but it generally can be no more than a prelude to a logical conclusion or summary or scientific evaluation of the facts described.

Similar to but not identical with a chronological presentation of events is their ordering in a sequence of cause and effect. This, too, requires a sober description of facts plus their defining circumstances. The descriptive part is complemented by an analysis and possibly explanatory comment on the forces that connect cause and effect. Physical laws of cause and effect are not the same as psychological, sociological, or other constructions of cause and effect; academic publications need to make clear, therefore, which norms or theories or models they refer to when stating or postulating certain cause and effect relations. If there are competing norms or theories, authors need to make clear which authority they rely on, and why.

Frequently academic papers take the form of a critical discussion of certain claims, theories, or models. In this case a useful strategy is to first describe and present the relevant claims, theories or models before moving on to a discussion of arguments 'for' and 'against'. The competing positions must be presented in a fair and accurate form. Their presentation should lead on to a logical conclusion or other type of evaluation. In that context a useful strategy is the comparing and contrasting of competing positions. It prepares the ground for a reasoned conclusion.

Strategically similar to a critical discussion of arguments for and against certain claims or theories of other people is the development of a theory or model. This generally incorporates the need for a critical discussion of facts and/ or other people's position. The development and presentation of one's own theory frequently follows the traditional rhetorical figure of thesis – antithesis – synthesis.

The task of producing a coherent piece of academic writing is often complicated by the fact that it requires the use and combination of more than one of the strategies and types of presentation discussed above. It is important, therefore, to first critically reflect the nature of one's task and clarify the purpose of one's paper. As we pointed out in a previous chapter, this mostly is a heuristic process in which 'things' become clear while trying to get cognitive control over them. It often requires a re-writing of earlier versions of a paper. The final version, however, should formally flag the aim and function of the individual parts of the paper, which may be a description, or analysis, or comparison, or explanation, or evaluation, or conclusion. And this takes us to what is called 'cohesion'.

4. (c) **BARRIERS TO COMMUNCATION**

In communication, a psycho-semantic process, the word *barrier* implies, mainly, something non-physical that keeps people apart or prevents activity, movement, and so on; examples are social, ethnic, and language barriers or lack of confidence. These negative forces may affect the effectiveness of communication by acting upon any or all of the basic elements of the communication process and the sender/receiver/channel. The more commonly experienced communication barriers are lack of planning, incorrect assumptions, semantic difficulties, and cultural differences. Some other barriers of communication are:

- Socio-psychological barriers
- Emotions
- Selective perception
- Information overload
- Loss by transmission

- Poor retention
- Goal conflicts
- Offensive style
- Abstracting
- Slanting
- Inferring

Broadly speaking, some of these barriers can be attributed to the sender and some to the receiver. Barriers attributable to the sender are:

- Lack of planning
- Vagueness about the purpose of communication and objectives to be achieved
- Poor choice of words, resulting in a badly encoded message
- Unshared or incorrect assumptions
- Different perceptions of reality
- Wrong choice of channel
- Barriers attributable to the receiver are:
- Poor listening skills
- Inattention
- Mistrust
- Lack of interest
- Premature evaluation
- Semantic difficulties
- Bias
- Different perceptions of reality
- Lack of trust
- Attitudinal clash with the sender
- Unfit physical state

A common barrier for the sender and the receiver can be created by the absence of a common frame of reference affecting the smooth interpretation of thoughts, feelings, and attitudes from the sender to the receiver in a specific social situation.
Identification of a well-defined social context in which communication takes place helps both the sender and the receiver perceive the content of the communication in a similar way, with similar implications and meaning.
The physical noise and other faults in the surroundings and the instruments of transmission of the message relate mainly to the channel, but they may not necessarily distort the overall meaning of the total message.

5. (a) According to the employer's needs, interviewers look for the following attributes in candidates:

- *Clarity:* This refers to the candidate's clarity on academic subjects, his or her career objectives, the reasons for these objectives, long-term goals, national and global issues, and so on.
- *Depth:* Depth of knowledge and understanding across a wide range of subjects and issues, along with clarity, demonstrate the candidate's academic excellence.
- *Personality:* A candidate's attitude, honesty, and professionalism reflect his or her ability to work in an organization and with other people.
- *General awareness:* This refers to the interviewee's level of general awareness about current issues of national and international concern.
- *Application of concepts to real-life problems:* The interviewee's initiative and capacity for independent thought are judged by responses to application-based questions, which asses how far he or she has moved beyond classroom learning.
- *Communication skills:* The candidate's ability to express his or her thoughts clearly and concisely is evaluated along with his or her listening and comprehension skills.

5. (b) **Guidelines for Improving Listening Skills**

Effective communication is associated with the power of speaking well, but without good listening, successful communication is not possible. The spoken word fulfils its purpose only when it is carefully heard, understood, interpreted, and registered in the listener's memory.

The effectiveness of communication is the function of both effective speaking and effective listening. To communicate successfully, the speaker's words should be well articulated and, at the same time, they must be well received. The guidelines given here should be helpful in improving one's listening skills.
When two people are talking simultaneously, neither can listen to the other. To have a successful dialogue, it is necessary that when one person wants to speak, the other person keeps quiet and listens. No one can talk and listen at the same time. In classrooms, it is common for teachers to ask students to stop talking to ensure that they are able to listen to the lecture. Similarly, the teacher stops talking when a student wants to say something.

1. *Speak less, listen more:* The purpose of listening is to know what the speaker wants to say or to learn from the speaker. Listening is an act of cooperation in the sense that it takes advantage of others' knowledge and experience. Therefore, devoting time to listening rather than speaking is in our self-interest.

2. *Do not be a sponge:* It is not necessary to concentrate on every word of the speaker's. Instead, it is more important to get the main point, theme, or central idea and concentrate on it. Minor details are not as important.

3. *Observe body language:* Effective listeners do not pay attention only to what is being said, but also notice how it is said. They observe the feelings, attitudes, and emotional reactions of the speaker based on his or her body language.

4. *Focus on the speaker:* Facing the speaker and making eye contact make the speaker feel that the listener is interested in what he or she is saying.

5. *Separate the ideas from the speaker:* Good listeners do not allow themselves to be overly awed by the speaker's status, fame, charm, or other physical and personal attributes. They separate the person from his or her ideas. Effective communicators are not conditioned by their personal impressions and prejudices, but are able to focus on the content of what is being spoken.

6. *Listen for what is left unsaid:* Careful attention to what is not said, in addition to what is said, can tell the listener a lot about the speaker's feelings and attitude towards the subject of discussion.

7. *Avoid becoming emotional:* Good listeners remain calm and do not become emotionally charged or excited by the speaker's words. Becoming too angry or excited makes it difficult for the listener to respond or express himself or herself objectively and rationally.

8. *Do not jump to hasty conclusions:* Listeners should allow the speaker to conclude his or her point. Only then should they try to interpret and respond to it. Hasty inferences may not represent what the speaker intended to communicate.

9. *Empathize with the speaker:* Effective listeners keep in mind the speaker's point of view by focusing on the big picture, background constraints/limitations, and special needs and the emotional state of the speaker.

10. *Respect the speaker as a person:* It is important to listen with respect for the other person. Do not allow the speaker to feel hurt, ignored, or insulted.

5. (c) **Forms of communication**

Oral Communication

Effective oral communication is not learned from reading: it takes practice, practice, and more practice. It requires understanding the fundamentals of good grammar. It involves developing a vocabulary that allows you to express your opinions, to state your position during a dialogue relative to reaching a decision, to phrase your questions clearly and concisely, and to make your wishes known on any number of matters.

As previously noted, all forms of communication depend on feedback. Feedback between people who are talking includes not only the content but also observation of physical responses. Since the majority of our communication is oral we need to be sensitive to those hidden messages. There is no one in any organization that does not engage in oral communication of some type on a daily basis. For those who report to you intelligent feedback sets the stage for reaching agreement on all issues related to the work effort. Regardless of the topic under discussion there are misinterpretations and misrepresentations that must be rationalized.

Written Communication

We learn to write by writing and not by reading about writing. Written communication takes on many different forms. It includes general correspondence, reports of different types, project proposals, procedures, record keeping, operating instructions, spreadsheet data, announcements, documentation, and presentations. While the technical community is often viewed as having poor writing skills, I have also found accountants and financial people to be lacking in writing skills. We can add to that list just about every profession at every level. Professional staff members frequently labor over even simple project reports. Unfortunately with the elimination of many secretarial positions, professionals no longer have anyone to correct their grammar or rewrite documents. There are no simple answers to resolving this issue. There are plenty of opportunities for learning how to write clearly and concisely but over my years of experience I have not found very many employees taking up the challenge.

The use of e-mail has only exacerbated the problem. I need not dwell on this issue, but e-mail is a major source of miscommunication. In the early days of telegraphy and telex, every word was counted because we paid by the word. Unfortunately the cost per word for e-mail is insignificant, so it's easier to use more words than to develop concise statements. This does not suggest a case against e-mail, but since it is our major mode of communication we need to recognize the need to write with a modicum of correctness. The intent is not to go back to diagramming sentences but to learn just a few fundamentals of good written communication.

Graphic and Pictorial Communication

Graphics and pictures can often communicate ideas and concepts more effectively than the use of a lot of verbiage. However, graphics and pictures must be presented clearly just like any other form of communication. A presentation graphic that cannot be read from the back row of the room provides little if any benefit. Also, too many professionals in all disciplines assume that their audience is as well versed in their topic as they are. So graphics and pictures provide a means for communicating, but they must be explained when used outside the immediate group of professionals.

As a manager you will most likely be involved in making presentations above your managerial level, so make sure that you are communicating to your audience and not to yourself. That diagram or spreadsheet may have meaning to you but does it make sense for the audience? The adage that a picture is worth a thousand words cannot be disputed, but it must be the right picture.

Listening as Communication

Managers need to develop their listening skills. That involves hearing the message and not jumping to conclusions without a full understanding of the message. There are times when we get impatient when listening to the views of others, and perhaps with justification. It takes patience to listen to a boring presenter. It takes patience to listen to someone who is repeating what has already been presented. There are occasions when someone may have to be told to stop talking. The question has been answered and there's no reason to continue the conversation, just cut it off politely. It takes patience to listen to that ill-prepared speaker. But we need to be careful and make sure we're not missing that hidden kernel of truth that may be of significant value.

Reading as Communication

In my consulting practice and graduate-level university teaching I always question what professionals and managers are reading. I'm usually very disappointed with the responses. Most haven't read a book related to managing in the last two years, even though they are taking advanced degrees in management. Some do not even keep up in their field of interest. They do not keep up with the daily news events related to their organization's competitors. I hear such responses as, I don't have time, I've heard it all before, and the information doesn't help me do my job.

6. (a) *Conversation control* refers to the skills of listening and talking in a positive and meaningful way at an appropriate time. It calls upon the ability to listen with concentration and respond well. It includes:

- the techniques of changing the direction of conversation smoothly, and
- the ability to allow a discussion to develop along key issues in an uninterrupted way towards the desired end.

6. (b) **Press Release on Microwave Oven of Life Electronics Limited – Economic Times Bangalore**

Life Electronics limited introduces a new range of commercial microwave ovens to its catering equipment supplies

16 July 2009, India – life Electronics limited announces the launch of a new range of Microwave oven in their commercial catering equipment product line.

our ovens are one step beyond convection oven. It combines the speed of a microwave oven with the cooking qualities of a convection oven. This commercial microwave can be used as a combined microwave and oven or each mode individually.

These range of microwaves come in a wide range of designs. Also available as combination of conventional ovens, grillers and microwave function they can offer the user much wider cooking options using the same counter top space. It provides three-in-one convenience, an extremely user friendly compact device. Much more powerful than your standard home microwave, these units are capable of reducing cooking times significantly.It also provides wide variety of commercial catering and refrigeration equipments which cater to different industries like hotels, cafes, restaurants, fast food joints etc. If you're looking for opening a café or Restaurant and are tired of dealing with multiple suppliers, It can act as a one stop shop for the majority of your requirements and, at such a stressful, intense time, we are good guys to have on board to help sort out any issues. For more information please contact us at: www.lifeelectronics.com

6. (c) **Importance of communication in the new millennium**

1. Communication **promotes motivation** by informing and clarifying the employees about the task to be done, the manner they are performing the task, and how to improve their performance if it is not up to the mark.
2. Communication is a **source of information** to the organizational members for decision-making process as it helps identifying and assessing alternative course of actions.
3. Communication also plays a crucial role in **altering individual's attitudes**, i.e., a well informed individual will have better attitude than a less-informed individual. Organizational magazines, journals, meetings and various other forms of oral and written communication help in moulding employee's attitudes.
4. Communication also **helps in socializing**. In todays life the only presence of another individual fosters communication. It is also said that one cannot survive without communication.
5. As discussed earlier, communication also assists in **controlling process**. It helps controlling organizational member's behaviour in various ways. There are various levels of hierarchy and certain principles and guidelines that employees must follow in an organization. They must comply with organizational policies, perform their job role efficiently and communicate any work problem and grievance to their superiors. Thus, communication helps in controlling function of management.

7. (a) In a group discussion, all participants are supposed to be equal. No one is officially chosen as the leader. However, a candidate, by his or her initiative, ability to direct the discussion, maturity, clarity of ideas, and understanding of group dynamics, might gradually begin to direct the course of the discussion and mediate between opposing views to evolve a comprehensive view.

7. (b) Essentially, to communicate is to share information in its widest sense with others, in an intelligible, participative form through the medium of words (spoken or written), gestures, or other signs. Two basic things stand out here. One, the message is to be both "known" and "understood" by others. Two, communication is a symbolic act, whether it is verbal or non-verbal. These two aspects—the purpose and nature of communication—act as the two determining influences in the practice of communication in all contexts of speaking or writing.

Herein lies the crucial difference between effective and ineffective communication. If something is communicated and is not fully understood by the receiver, then communication has been ineffective, not fully serving the condition of being understood. If the message has been understood, the response of the receiver—the feedback—indicates this.

Keith Davis[5] lays down the *Rule of Five* to guide the receiver to be an effective element of the communication process. "In the communication process, the role of the receiver is,

I believe, as important as that of the sender. There are five receiver steps in the process of communication—receive, understand, accept, use, and give feedback. Without these steps being followed by the receiver, no communication process would be complete and successful."

Thus, communication can be considered successful when:

- the message is properly understood.
- the purpose of the sender is fulfilled.
- the sender and the receiver of the message remain linked through feedback

7. (c) CLASSIFICATION OF NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Non-verbal forms of communication include the following modes—paralanguage, meta-communication, kinesics, grooming, proxemics, and time language. The symbolic meaning associated with different body movements, gestures, and expressions is only suggestive and not specific in its import.

Ekman's Classification of Communicative Movements

Let us consider Ekman's classification[1] of communicative movements into five types:

- *Emblems:* When the movement of body parts represents ideas visually, the communicative act is emblematic, meaning it reflects the meaning non-verbally through a physical image. For instance, a circle made with the thumb and index finger, with the rest of the fingers stretched out straight, acts as an emblem for the "okay" sign in America. This sign is meaningful for those cultures that use the English alphabet.

- *Illustrators:* Illustrators are movements of hands and arms for representing the size, shape, frequency, or speed of something. For instance, widely stretched arms show enormity of size.

- *Body manipulators:* These are acts of touching one's own body or an object for no reason. Examples include fidgeting with jewellery or touching one's buttons.

- *Facial expressions:* The most expressive part of our bodies are our faces. Our faces reflect our thoughts and feelings. Smiling, frowning, blushing, paleness, and so on reveal positive and negative feelings.

- *Regulators—eye movements:* Eye movements such as squinting, winking, and staring are called regulators. Eye contact, a smile, or a frown is a strong message of interest, involvement, acceptance, rejection, or annoyance. Avoiding eye contact shows nervousness or evasiveness.

A favourable impact can be created by using eye contact, natural facial expressions and eye movements, and a smile that reflects a pleasant state of mind.