



Effective Business Communication

An Introduction

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Textbook references

- Communications for Business: A Practical Approach 4th Edition, 2015 by Shirley Taylor, Pearson Education.
- Excellence in business communication 6th Edition, 2017 by Bovée Courtland L., Keller Wendy I., Moran K. M., Thill John V., Pearson Canada Inc.

Unit Outline

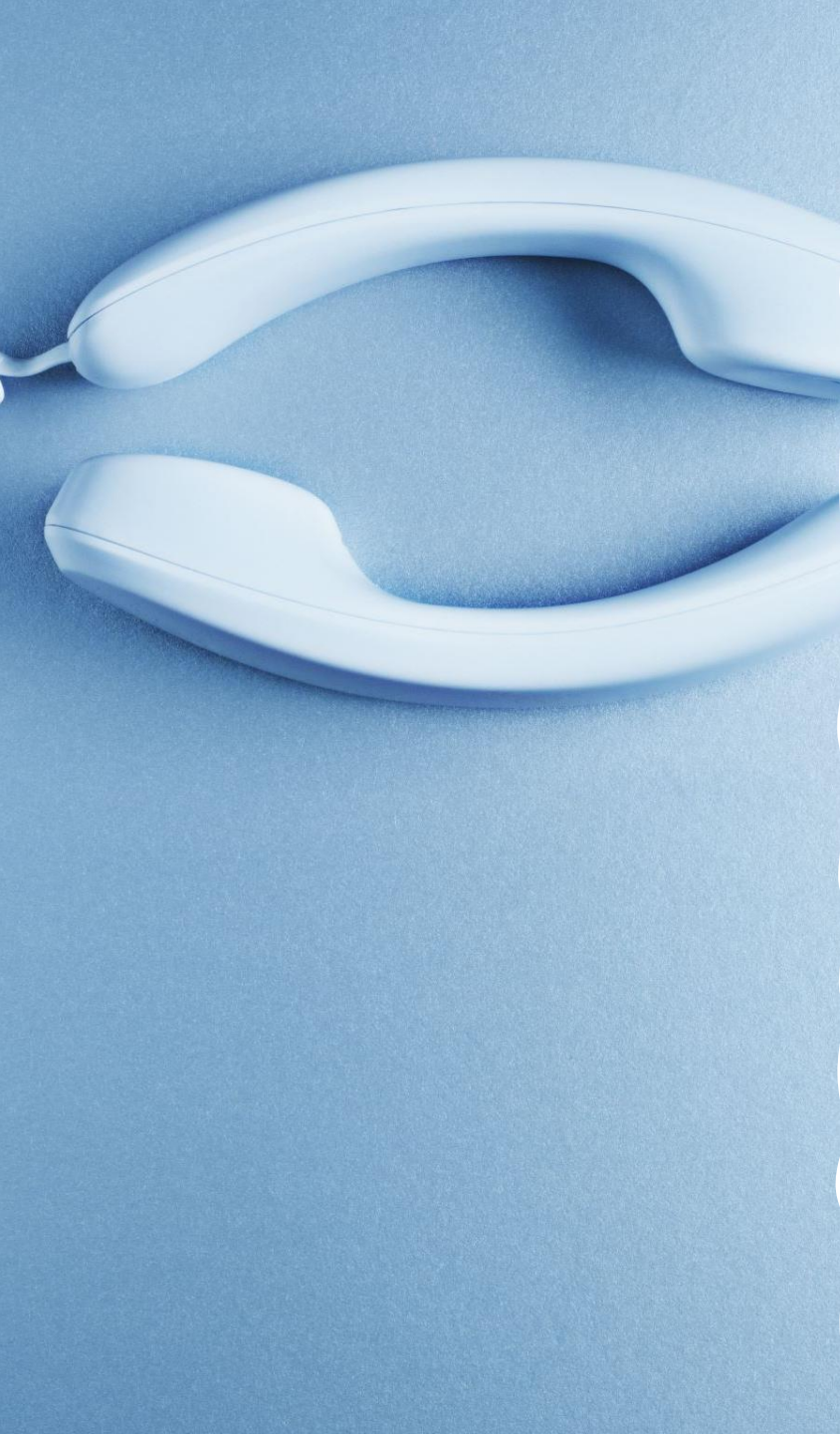
On completion of this unit the learner will be able to:

1. Use spoken and written language appropriately to communicate business information.
2. Understand a range of written, spoken and visual means of communication.
3. Analyse spoken and written text to identify relevant information.
4. Use appropriate presentation techniques to communicate business information.
5. Use promotional techniques to communicate business information.

Hands-on practice on:

CVs; Business Letters; Business Lists; Articles; Reports; Dialogues; Leaflets and Oral Presentations.





What exactly is communication?

All day, every day we are communicating – whether it is talking to people on the telephone or in person, transcribing business correspondence, liaising with colleagues and staff, writing letters, reports and e-mails.

It is essential to learn from our communications, from our successes and our failures, and to develop and enhance our communication skills. The more we write and the more we speak, the more we improve our communication skills.

Communication may be defined as:

‘Giving, receiving or exchanging information, opinions or ideas by writing, speech or visual means, so that the message communicated is completely understood by the recipient(s)’.



Qualities of a good communicator

Think of someone you think is a good communicator...

It could be a friend, a teacher, a family member, a TV/radio/podcast presenter, a religious leader, a politician...

Reflect on the qualities that makes her/him an effective communicator and list them down!



And why should business people aim to communicate effectively?

The key to effective communication is ensuring that your message is understood, stimulating the recipient to take appropriate action, or affecting the way the recipient thinks in some way.



Benefits of effective communication

The most successful organisations understand that if they are to be **successful** in today's business world, good communication at all levels is essential. Here is a useful mnemonic to remember the benefits you and your organisation can achieve from effective communication:

- Stronger decision-making and problem-solving
- Upturn in productivity
- Convincing and compelling messages
- Clearer, more streamlined workflow
- Enhanced professional image
- Sound business relationships
- Successful response ensured

Communication flow – Arrange in the correct order

Interpret the message
Select appropriate channel
Check for understanding
Feedback
Decode the message
Conceive the message
Encode the message



Communication flow

1. Conceive the message
2. Encode the message
3. Select appropriate channel
4. Decode the message
5. Interpret the message
6. Check for understanding
7. Feedback



Communication flow

1 Conceive the message

When you have something to say, consider the best means of putting your message across, and bear in mind that timing is important. Consider your recipient carefully and aim your message to suit their specific needs. Ask yourself, what is the objective of your communication and why do you have to communicate the message?

Are you aiming to give information, to persuade, to request, to reply and to inform?



Communication flow

2 Encode the message

This stage involves putting the information into an appropriate form suitable to both the sender, the recipient and the aim. Think before reaching for your phone or putting fingers to keyboard. Decide first what specific outcomes you want from the communication. This will help you choose whether words will suffice, whether a printed record is necessary and whether graphics are appropriate. It will also help you choose appropriate language and tone. Consider why the communication is happening. Is it urgent, serious, dangerous, emotive, informative?



Communication flow (contd.)

3 Select the appropriate channel

This stage is where the message is actually sent and the information is transferred. The technological revolution has brought about a wide range of telecommunication methods.

You must consider all aspects: speed, cost, quick receipt, printed record, confidentiality, etc., and make an intelligent decision before sending your message.

Time and money can be wasted if the wrong medium is chosen.



Communication flow (contd.)

4 Decode the message

Because so many messages arrive in offices today, it is important to ensure that they are routed promptly and are given the attention they deserve. To achieve success at this stage it is also important to take the trouble to ensure that the recipient will understand the language and vocabulary used.



Communication flow (contd.)

5 Interpret the message

Very often it is necessary to 'read between the lines'. It is always important to consider carefully the tone used in your communication so that the correct message is received. For example, you do not want to risk intimidating a good customer by using a harsh tone.

Distortion of the message may occur if the sender has not carefully encoded the communication, in which case the recipient will interpret the message differently from how it was intended.



Communication flow (contd.)

6 Check for understanding

After sending the message, it is important to check whether the recipient has understood the message as you intended.



Communication flow (contd.)

7 Feedback

The final stage is essential – you must obtain feedback from the recipient so that you know if your communication has been effective. If the message is not understood, rather than blame the recipient, ask yourself why the communication failed and how it could have been improved in order to be effective. Some questions you might ask are:

- Did your expressions or language create confusion or misunderstanding?
- Was your timing poor?
- Was your message too long so that the main points were lost?
- Were your tone and manner appropriate?
- Did you not structure the message logically?



Barriers to communication

Many problems encountered in our business and personal lives result from miscommunication.

What the recipient understands by a message may not always be the message which the sender intended. Several communication barriers exist between sender and recipient, and they may be responsible for a message not being understood correctly, or a message becoming distorted.

Communication may fail for a variety of reasons:

Barriers to communication



Non-verbal signals

Non-verbal signals, often referred to as 'body language', can provide valuable feedback where verbal communication is concerned. Such signals include facial expressions, gestures, movement, eye contact and nodding the head.

Language

Choice of words is vital to the effectiveness of any communication. Many words have different meanings. Our background knowledge and experience affect our understanding. Foreign languages, dialects, regional accents and the use of technical/specialist language should always be considered.

Barriers to communication

Listening

Anyone who has something valid to say deserves attention. Listening, however, is a skill. Careful concentration is demanded if a communication is to be understood.

Success at gaining attention may depend on the words used, the way the communication is expressed, our interest in the speaker, our interest in the communication and various other factors.



Barriers to communication

Pre-judgement

What is understood is often conditioned by what we already know and by our background knowledge and experience.

Often we hear what we want to hear, or what we think we have heard, instead of what has actually been said.



Barriers to communication

Relationships

The effectiveness of any communication may depend on our relationship with the person giving the message.

If relationships between people are not good, communication may fail to be effective or may break down altogether.



Barriers to communication

Emotional responses

Communication cannot succeed if a person is highly emotional about the topic concerned.

Problems may arise from insecurity, fear, anger, etc. If emotions are high on the part of the sender or recipient, then it would be better to wait for a while before trying to put the message across.

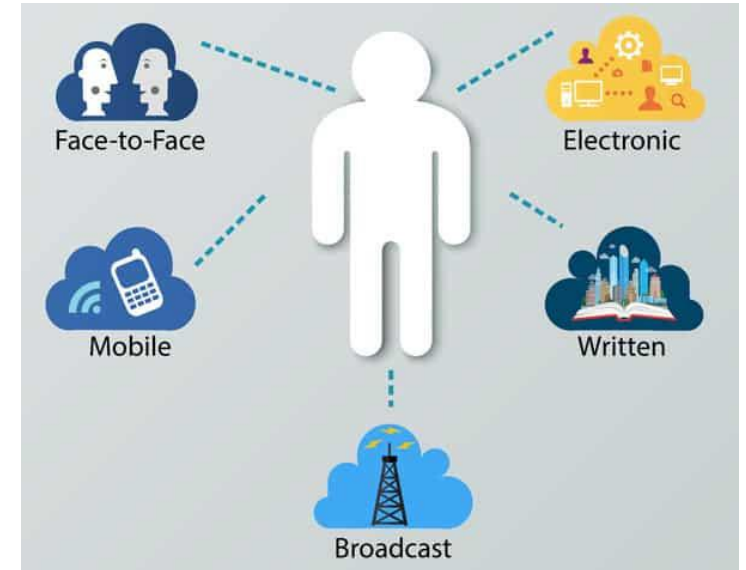


Which channel to use?

The channel (or means) that is chosen to send a message is very important. The channel chosen can influence the message and how it is interpreted by the recipient. Each situation should be judged individually, and will depend on various factors such as:

Cost

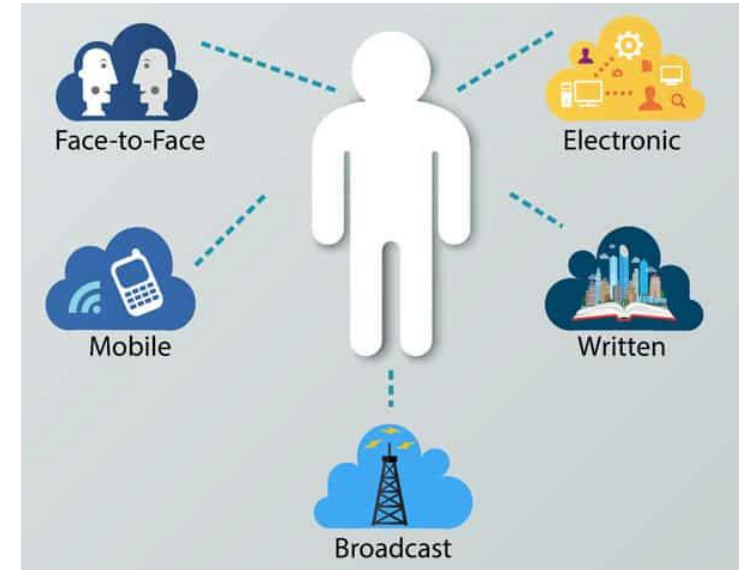
- Consider how much the communication will cost in terms of the results expected.
- Can an internal message be handwritten or is a printed copy important?
- Is the postal service satisfactory, or is e-mail justified?



Which channel to use?

Confidentiality

- E-mail may not be appropriate.
- A telephone call could be overheard.
- An internal memo may need to be enclosed in an envelope.



Which channel to choose?

Safety and security

- Should a special Post Office service be used, e.g. registered or recorded delivery?
- Would a courier service be justified?

Influence

- To convey a certain impression, would a congratulatory telegram or invitation be suitable?
- Multi-coloured letterheads on high quality paper convey a good image of a company.



Which channel to choose?

Urgency

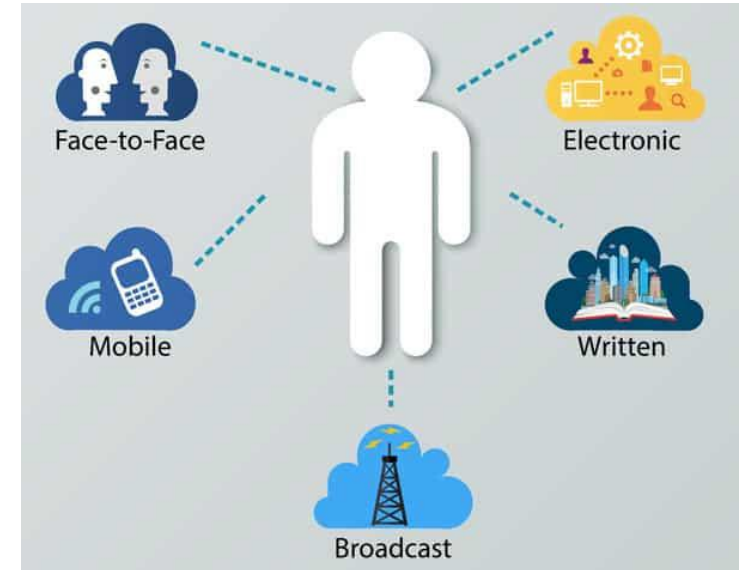
- Choose the method that will produce the desired results in the time available.
- Perhaps the higher cost of a courier will be justified by the results obtained through its speed.

Distance

- Is the communication within the building, in the same town, or the other side of the world?

Time of day

- This is particularly important when communicating with overseas countries.



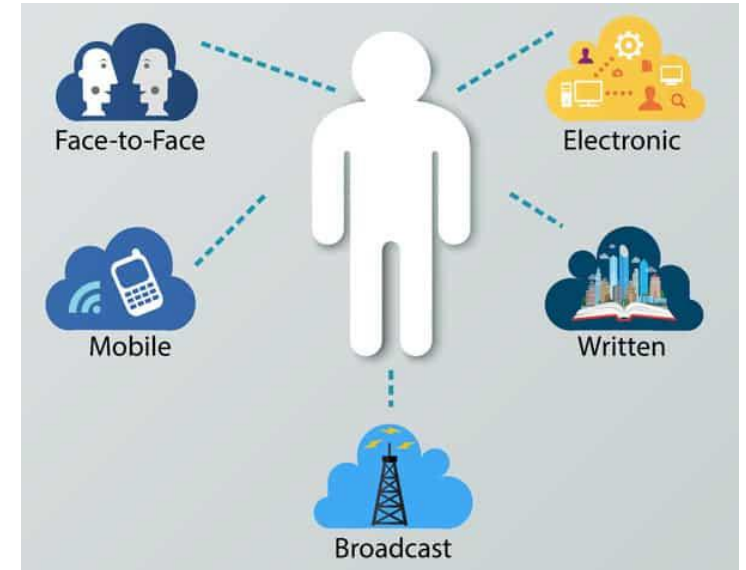
Which channel to choose?

Resources

- Consider the equipment and staff available (sender and recipient).

Written record

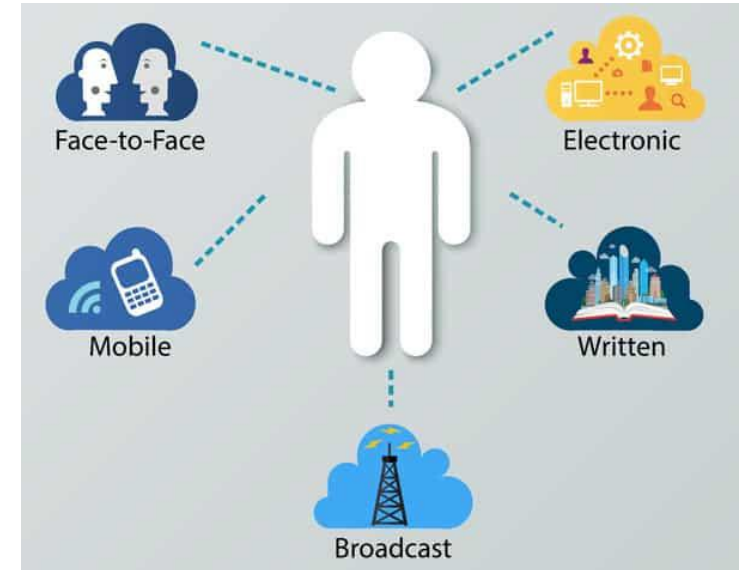
- Written communications carry more authority and are proof of a transaction.



Which channel to choose?

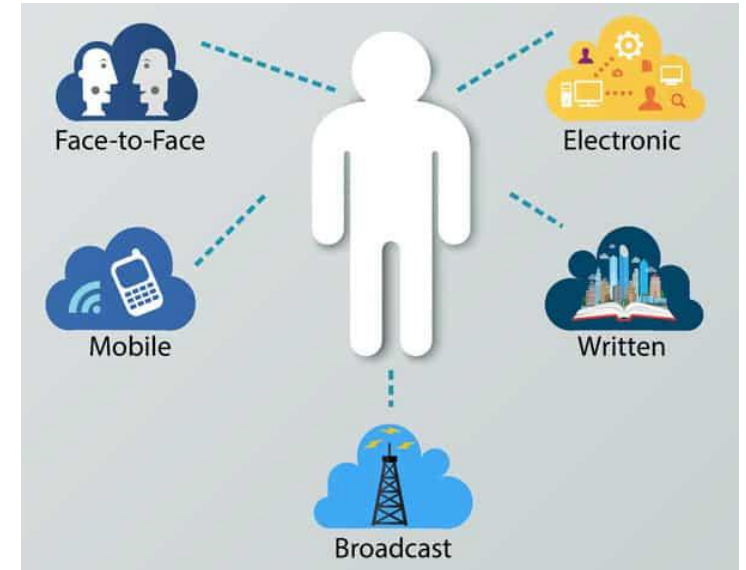
Recipient

- Consider who is sending/receiving the message.
- Personal contact may be appropriate on certain occasions.
- Verbal communication may not be appropriate where complex information or bad news is concerned.
- Choose language appropriately, considering the situation and the relationship between sender/recipient.



State the communication methods you would use to:

- Congratulate an employee on passing an important examination.
- Inform employees about your annual dinner and dance.
- Put a nervous applicant at ease while waiting for an interview.
- Display the past five years' sales figures.
- Confirm a lunch appointment with a client next week.
- Describe the location of a hotel where your company is hosting a seminar next month.
- Remind staff of the security procedures at your company.
- Obtain reactions from staff to a new telephone system recently installed.
- Put forward a proposal for a change in company policy.
- Send an urgent message to an overseas client.



SUCCESSFUL COMMUNICATION – KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

1. *Read.* Extend your knowledge of language by reading.
2. *Listen intelligently.* Remember that communication is a two-way process. Listening is just as important as speaking. Similarly, try reading your written message as if you were the recipient, and consider if it will be effective.
3. *Think and plan.* Think before you speak or write. Plan all your communications carefully, whether oral or written.
4. *Use appropriate language.* Use clear, simple language, and appreciate the same used by others.
5. *Be open-minded.* Consider other people's viewpoints, be willing to adapt and change methods or procedures if necessary.

SUCCESSFUL COMMUNICATION – KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

6 Select appropriate media. Consider carefully the method to be used for communicating your message. It should be appropriate to the desired objective.

7 Time your communication appropriately. Consider the best time for the communication and how long it should be.

8 Use appropriate language. Use words which are relevant to the topic and which will be understood by the recipient.

9 Obtain feedback. Obtain feedback to ensure that the communication was effective.

10 Aim high. Set and maintain high standards in all your methods of communication, both in terms of language and presentation.

Round-up

- What is communication?
- Benefits of communication
- Barriers to communication
- Communication Flow
- Choosing the right channel

Summary



Take away....the most important tip for you becoming a better communicator

- Write 3 tips you will give yourself and others on how to improve your communication skills and to become a good communicator.

