

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

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**DEPARTMENT OF DISTANCE AND CONTINUING EDUCATION
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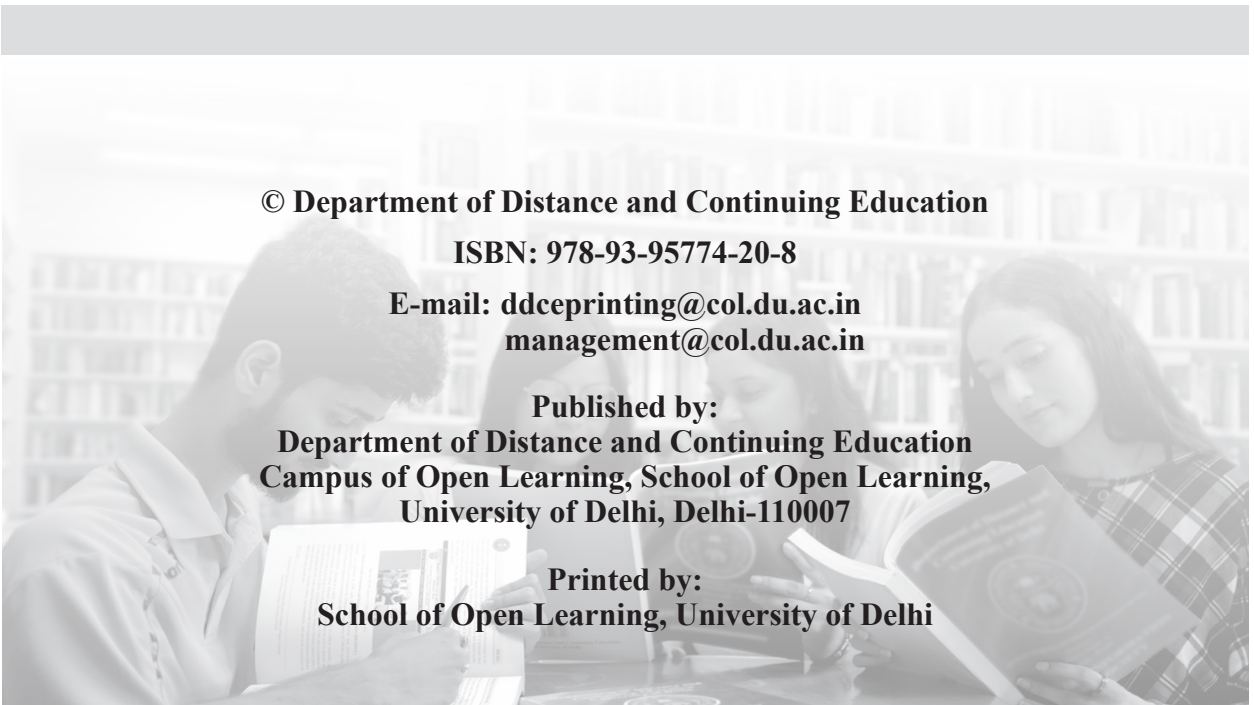
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Communication in Organisations

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STRUCTURE

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1.1 Learning Objectives

- ◆ Understand the importance of communication in business environment.
- ◆ Define communication and describe the process of communication.
- ◆ Understand the seven key characteristics of effective communication, also known as the 7Cs of communication.
- ◆ Appreciate the importance of listening.



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- ◆ Identify and appreciate verbal, non-verbal and presentation skills.
- ◆ Identify and appreciate the key legal issues involved in communication.

1.2 Introduction

Communication is the most frequent activity that we engage in throughout our lives. Even the most challenging tasks can be accomplished with effective communication and therefore, it is an indispensable asset to have irrespective of the domain that one operates in. In this lesson, we will learn about communication and how it is used in the context of a business organisation.

We will start with an understanding of communication in the business environment, the basics of communication and the 7Cs of effective communication. This will be followed by a discussion on the basics of corporate communication and communication skills, including listening, verbal, non-verbal and presentation skills. We will conclude the lesson with a discussion on the legal issues involved in communication.

As you go through the lesson, you will be able to relate to how exactly the communication process takes place in your institution or workplace. You will learn to better comprehend the messages that you receive from business organisations and also critically examine the quality of the content and delivery.

1.3 Introduction to Business Environment and Communication

Business environment refers to the internal and external factors that affect the functioning of an organisation. These internal and external things play out in an organisation on a continuous basis and need to be addressed to maintain smooth operations. Communication is the mechanism which ensures that an organisation keeps functioning smoothly within the business environment. Therefore, communication permeates an organisation.

A business organisation is driven by communication to such an extent that its very success and failure would hinge upon the effectiveness and seamlessness of communication. It is true of both internal communications happening within the organisation, as well as external communication



with its clients, customers, suppliers, competitors, regulatory agencies, business associates, the government, etc.

1.3.1 What is communication?

The word is derived from *communicare* in Latin, which means ‘to share’ or ‘make common’. Communication can be defined in many ways. Some define it as the process of sharing and understanding meaning (Pearson & Nelson, 2000) and others use a more mathematical definition that views communication as a process of coding and decoding messages. Using a blend of the various definitions of communication, the process of communication can be depicted as below.

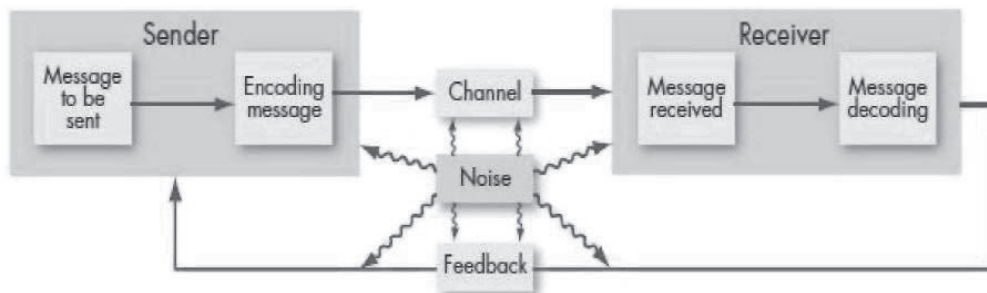


Figure 1.1: The Communication Process

(Source: <https://www.papertyari.com/>)

The definition given by Pearson & Nelson is a practical one and intuitive. Let us try to break it down to have more clarity on the keywords appearing in the definition.

- ◆ **Process:** Communication is a “process” which means that some activities are involved in it, including arranging your thoughts, coding your thoughts into signs, symbols and words, sending out the coded message through a channel and receiving feedback from the receiver. At the other end, the received message is decoded by the receiver who, in turn, encodes the feedback and sends it out. The process of communication is influenced by many factors, including the context, language, audience, age group, etc.
- ◆ **Sharing:** You would agree that it is difficult to share your thoughts and ideas exactly as they originate in your mind. A process of coding



and decoding is required for sharing the same. Language, signs, symbols, sounds, etc. help us in sharing our thoughts, feelings and ideas. You can see that sharing of thoughts, ideas, feelings, etc. is the primary purpose of communication.

- ◆ **Understanding:** Understanding refers to the process of interpreting or decoding the message by relating it to the knowledge possessed by the receiver. If the communication does not lead to understanding for the receiver, it is not communication at all.

Two hunters are out in the woods when one of them collapses. He's not breathing and his eyes are glazed. The other guy whips out his cell phone and calls 911.

"I think my friend is dead!" he yells. "What can I do?" The operator says, "Calm down. First, let's make sure he's dead."

There's a silence, then a shot. Back on the phone, the guy says, "OK, now what?"

Source: Reader's Digest

- ◆ **Meaning:** Meaning refers to what is being shared through communication. As you will see later, context has a lot to do with meaning. The same words may mean different things in different cultures. For instance, bike is a term used for bicycles in the US whereas a bike taken to mean a motorbike in India.

1.3.2 Basics of Communication

From the discussion so far, it is clear that the purpose of communication is to exchange ideas, thoughts and information, express feelings and to influence. Now let us list out the components of communication that will help you develop a deeper understanding of the process. The components can be identified using the mathematical model of communication referred to above and are listed below:

- ◆ **Source or Sender:** Source is where the idea/through/feeling/etc. originates and is coded into a message. So, the sender decides on what to share, how much to share and how to share. How well the message is articulated will depend on many factors, such as the



knowledge/level of intellect, language skills, psychological state, level of preparation, etc. of the sender.

- ◆ **Message:** Message is an embodiment of the idea or thought and the meaning intended to be conveyed to the receiver. The message is codified by using language, signs and symbols, etc. whether spoken, non-verbal or written. The manner in which the message is delivered is also of great importance as it may turn the literal meaning of the message on its head.

For instance, if you tell your boss that you are very enthusiastic about additional work with your head down and avoiding eye contact it would most certainly be taken the other way by him.

- ◆ **Channel/Medium:** The channel or medium of communication refers to the delivery method which is used by the sender. The sender can select the spoken channel or the written channel or the non-verbal channel based on the importance of the message, sensitivity, context, etc.

Some common spoken channels are face-to-face conversations, telephonic conversations, radio and television broadcasts, conference calls over the Internet, etc. Whereas the popular written channels are - letters, emails, memorandums, newspapers, mobile application-based chats, messages sent on social networking sites, press releases, etc.

- ◆ **Receiver:** The receiver is the other party in the communication process who receives and decodes the message. One of the major challenges in communication occurs because the sender has little control on whether the message will be interpreted in the manner intended by him. However, the sender must analyse her audience or the receiver before deciding on the choice of words, language, tone, etc. to increase the probability of the message being received and interpreted in the intended manner.
- ◆ **Feedback:** The response, whether intentional or unintentional, to the sender's message constitutes feedback. The feedback is a message in itself composed by the receiver and sent back to the source. Feedback can be verbal or non-verbal. The feedback tells you how well the meaning of your message was understood by your audience. Therefore, with an increase in feedback the effectiveness



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of communication increases. Due to this, feedback is considered to be one of the most critical aspects of communication.

- ◆ **Environment:** Environment refers to the ambience in which the communication takes place which can be both physical as well as psychological. For instance, if you are in a modern-day café that plays loud music there is no way you can have a serious business negotiation. Therefore, it is important for you as a communicator to decide the place of communication to ensure that it is effective and successful.
- ◆ **Context:** The setting, situation, occasion, culture, timing, nature of relationship between the parties, etc. constitutes the context, which is the turf, so to speak, on which the communication takes place. You must remember that communication does not take place in vacuum, there is always a background and variables involved that complicate things in terms of expectations. For instance, if you meet a business associate at a funeral you will refrain from discussing business in front of the gathering, as the social context is inappropriate for it. We can see that context dominates what people would come to expect from each other and what would be considered appropriate and acceptable behaviour.

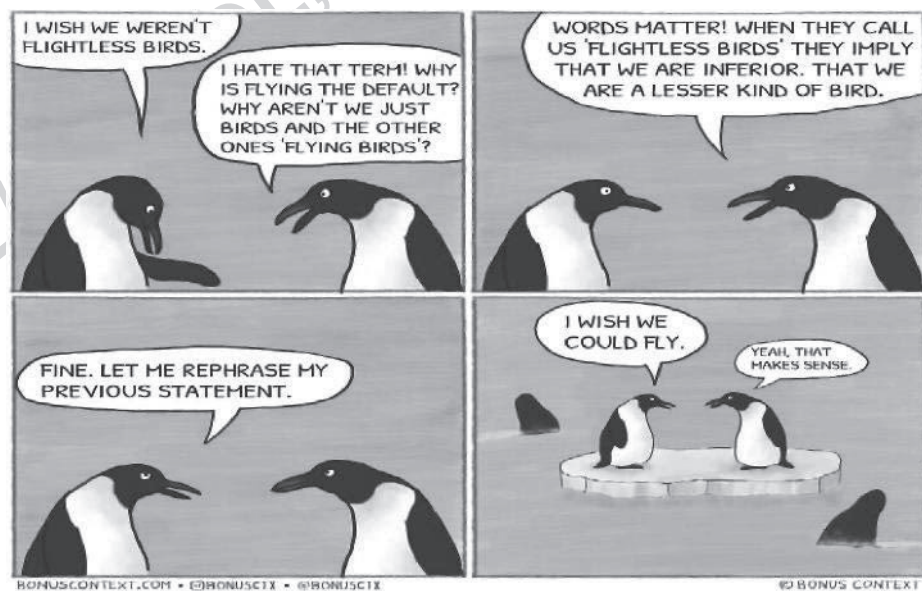


Figure 1.2: Importance of Context in Communication

(Source: <https://www.boredpanda.com/>)



- ◆ **Noise:** Anything that acts as an obstacle to communication, thereby leading to distortion in the understanding of meaning as intended by the sender is called noise. Noise can come from various sources, including the sender's psychological state, the ambient environment and the receiver's perceptive biases, etc.

IN-TEXT QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following is not a key component of the process of communication?
 - (a) Encoding messages
 - (b) Decoding messages
 - (c) Interrupting
 - (d) Feedback
2. The_____ of communication refers to the delivery method which is used by the sender.
 - (a) Sender
 - (b) Receiver
 - (c) Channel/Medium
 - (d) Message
3. Feedback can be both intentional as well as unintentional.

(True/False)

1.4 7Cs of Communication

We communicate with people all the time whether it is with family, friends, colleagues, clients and so on. It can hardly be taken for granted. The 7Cs of communication are a set of seven principles that your communication must follow in order to be effective. You can think of the 7Cs as a checklist of seven characteristics that your communication or message must possess to communicate successfully. Let us get down to each of these 7Cs and study what they mean.

(i) Clear

Your message should be clear without any room for subjective interpretation by the receiver. It means that it should not leave room for your



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audience to read between the lines and misunderstand. No beating about the bush, get straight to the point. The best thing to do is to introduce only the bare minimum number of ideas in a sentence.

Clarity is all the more important in business communication as the same message may be relayed across media. For instance, say, a bank is initiating a drive to update the Know Your Customer (KYC) details of the account holders whose accounts have been lying dormant for more than a year. The following notification is sent out through text messaging:

Dear Account Holder,

Please update your Know Your Customer (KYC) details to avoid temporary suspension of your accounts.

XYZ Bank Ltd.

If the message does not indicate that it is meant only for the account holders whose accounts are dormant, the bank will be flooded with calls and branch visits. Even if the message is sent only to those with dormant accounts, still it may reach the other account holders through word-of-mouth and panic may still set in as the message itself is not clear. It will not only cause great inconvenience to the millions of account holders of the bank but also to the officials of the bank. Therefore, we can see that a lack of clarity in business communication can potentially lead to misunderstanding, unhappy clients, resentment among employees and heavy costs for reversing the damage.

(ii) Concise

The message has to be brief and to the point, however it should not be at the cost of leaving out important information. You can do it by following the strategies given below:

- ◆ Avoid repetition of information. If you have already mentioned something, there is no need to repeat the same as it will not add any value to the message. It will only end up making the message long-winded.
- ◆ Weed-out any unnecessary sentences and “fillers” from the message, the removal of which will not cause any loss of meaning.

(iii) Concrete

The message should be concrete which means that it should have all necessary details presented in a focussed manner readily consumable and



easily understood. In other words, the message should be solid in content without compromising on details. There is no room for embellished, flowery language in a concrete message.

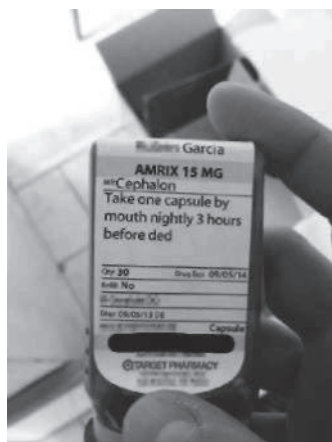


Figure 1.3: Why Correctness Matters in Communication

(Source: From the Internet)

(iv) Correct

The message should be factually correct and free from errors in order to be effective. Correctness implies correct in terms of facts and language. This principle of effective communication is most obvious and self-explanatory and therefore, does not require further elaboration.

(v) Coherent

The message should be composed in a logical fashion to make it easily comprehensible to the receiver. It is important as the receiver may not have any interest whatsoever in putting together the pieces of information in a poorly composed message. In “The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge” by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Sherlock Holmes gives a very interesting advice to John Scott Eccles, his client in the story, which goes like this:

“Come, come, sir,” said Holmes, laughing. “You are like my friend, Dr. Watson, who has a bad habit of telling his stories wrong end foremost. Please arrange your thoughts and let me know, in their due sequence, exactly what those events are which have sent you out unbrushed and unkempt, with dress boots and waistcoat buttoned awry, in search of advice and assistance.”

Extracted from the short story “The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge” by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle



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The above advice is a perfect one as it beautifully addresses the concept of coherence of messages in communication.

(vi) Complete

The message has to be complete in all respects to convey the intended meaning. This characteristic will ensure minimum follow-up questions. It will also help the receiver to immediately swing into required action, if any. For instance, a recruitment notification to be published in newspapers needs to be complete in all respects to enable interested candidates to prepare their applications without the need for any clarifications.

(vii) Courteous

Your message should be polite and positive, giving due consideration to the receiver. It is important, for it impacts the receptivity of your target audience. A courteous message will always be embraced by the receiver as it is open and candid. Therefore, a conscious effort has to be made to avoid a confrontationist tone and adopt an empathetic tone to be effective while communicating.

IN-TEXT QUESTIONS

4. In order to make your message concise, which strategy will you use?
 - (a) Avoid repetition of information
 - (b) Weed-out fillers
 - (c) Both (a) and (b)
 - (d) None
5. Which of the following is not a part of 7Cs of communication?
 - (a) Coordination
 - (b) Courtesy
 - (c) Correctness
 - (d) Coherence

1.5 Corporate Communication

Corporate communication refers to the activity “of an organisation communicating with its internal and external stakeholders. A business organi-



sation functions in a highly dynamic and competitive environment. It has to kindle the interest of its target customers in its products and services and carve-out a space for itself in the market to remain profitable and grow overtime. It should have the ability to outwit your competitors.

On the other hand, an organisation has the rather difficult task of keeping its workforce motivated enough to keep productivity high and attrition low. All this requires continuous engagement with internal and external stakeholders through effective communication. The major internal and external stakeholders are depicted in the image below.

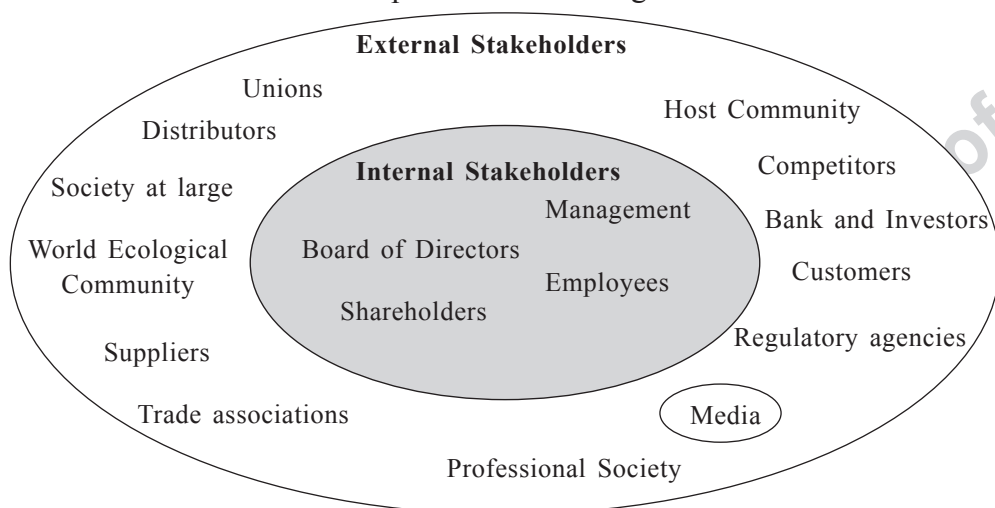


Figure 1.4: A Model of the Internal and External Stakeholders in Corporate Communication

(Source: Mark-Herbert, Cecilia & Carolina, Herbert & Schantz, Von. (2007))

The medium and instrument of corporate communication would vary depending upon the target and the objective which is to be achieved through the communication effort.

1.5.1 Functions of a Corporate Communications Department

There is a wide variety of communication activities for which the corporate communications department is responsible. These activities can be better understood if we group them based on the purpose. Accordingly, the major functions have been classified below:

**◆ Public Relations (PR)**

PR is a broad term that refers to how a business communicates with the public in general, including the media. As a part of the PR function, the communications professionals will be responsible for investor relations, media relations and so on. The activities undertaken by PR professionals include organising press conferences, planning and executing product launch events, drafting and circulating press releases, liaising with the media and other agencies, etc. The PR communication exercise involves regular communication of the major and minor events pertaining to the company through proper channels so as to help generate a favourable public opinion about the brand.

◆ Communication during Crisis

The strategic communication steps that a company takes at the time of a crisis which can potentially damage the reputation and the brand value of the company. Any unanticipated event with the potential to cause damage to the organisation requires swift response to minimize the damage or to prevent the damage from occurring. Such unanticipated events include factory/workplace/accidents, product defects, oil/chemical spills, frauds involving a company, etc.

CASE STUDY**A Case of Duplicate Venue Booking**

A leading exhibition venue provider in India was started to discover that the halls inside the venue had been leased out to two different event organisers, namely A Ltd. and B Ltd., for the same dates. At the time of discovery of this mistake, the event dates were less than four months away. This was a case of duplicate booking and there was no way two events could be held in the same exhibition halls on the same dates.

Both event organisers were given allotment letters around two years earlier for the same dates and they had started with their respective publicity campaigns. They had even finalised the participation and allotment of booths to individual exhibitors.



When this error was discovered by a junior officer of the venue provider, he immediately informed the matter to his reporting manager and quickly the matter was escalated to the senior management. The management of the venue immediately constituted a crisis management team of four seasoned officers to deal with the crisis.

The team convened an internal meeting to deliberate upon the matter and develop a strategy for dealing with the crisis. The very first decision by the team was that the issue had to be communicated to both event organisers without losing any time. This would be followed by negotiations with the organisers to persuade one of them to consider changing the dates of the event. Breaking this development to the organisers was a challenge and the medium of communication for the same had to be chosen carefully. Written communication in the form of email or letter or even communication through telephone was ruled out, as it would have been perceived by the event organisers as an indifferent approach to the crisis by the venue provider. The crisis management team agreed that it would be best to invite the two event organisers separately for in-person meetings to communicate the same.

During the meeting, event organisers were very upset as their events were in serious jeopardy. The venue team acknowledged the error and assured of all support and cooperation to deal with the issue. Both organisers were requested to consider changing the dates of the exhibition. However, none of them agreed and A Ltd. even threatened to take the matter to court.

After the initial meetings, the crisis team realised that since one of the two would get to keep the originally booked dates, it would be best to pursue the matter with B Ltd. as A Ltd. was already thinking of filing a lawsuit. Meanwhile, to prevent the latter from filing a lawsuit, a formal communication was immediately sent by the venue team giving assurance of a swift resolution of the matter. The same day, the crisis team invited B Ltd. for another meeting to understand if there were any circumstances under which they would consider rescheduling the event.



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The crisis team had a series of meetings with B Ltd. at various levels and it got inkling that the event being organised by B' Ltd. did not have enough participation as expected. The crisis team immediately formulated a strategy and went back to the management to consider offering a 25 per cent discount on the venue rentals to B Ltd. and becoming a sponsor of the event in return for rescheduling the event. The sponsorship from the venue provider was much valued in the industry. The management empowered the team to negotiate with B Ltd. on similar lines and to issue a joint statement for rescheduling of the event.

With this leverage, the crisis team again communicated in-person with the management of B Ltd. and made the offer. The crisis team also advised that the change of dates of the event can be jointly announced in a press conference by the Venue provider and the event organiser. With this kind of support from the venue provider and the offer of joint communication, B Ltd. realised that it would be much easier to persuade its stakeholders for change of dates. B Ltd. was reassured with the gesture of the venue provider to take the onus and ownership of the mistake and support it in a crisis situation.

In order to complete the deal and prevent a change of mind by B Ltd., the crisis team immediately engaged the Legal team of the venue and formalised the legal contract. As soon as the contract was signed, A Ltd. was informed that their allotment was unchanged and that their cooperation was appreciated. A press conference was soon arranged and the venue provider and event organiser jointly addressed the media and assured the industry that the event will be strengthened with the on-boarding of the venue as a sponsor and that the event will turn out to be a resounding success.

The venue provider constituted another team from the operations and IT departments to fix the loopholes in the booking system to prevent such instance of duplicate bookings in the future.

Discuss the key learning from the above case.

◆ **Marketing/Customer/Client Communications**

Though marketing communication is considered to be in the realm of marketing department in most companies, corporate communication



function does involve engagement with the customers by means of strategic marketing content developed in collaboration with the marketing departments. Such content includes brochures, flyers, newsletters, posting content on social media platforms and blogs, etc. So, it involves directly communicating with your customers and clients to create a favourable image of your brand and instigate desired behaviour.

◆ **Internal Communication**

The role of the corporate communication department in internal communication is to sensitise the employees with the latest developments and decisions taken in the company, create literature for use by the employees, conduct training sessions and manage the internal publications of a company. Internal communication is a small part of the overall corporate communication function as a majority of the work is focussed on communication with the external stakeholders.

1.5.2 Tools of Corporate Communication

◆ **The Written Mode**

It is the most commonly used corporate communication strategy and can take the form of reports (both internal and external), press releases, emails, advertisements, advertorials, memorandums, notices, website, blogs and promotional materials. The written mode tends to be more formal and requires careful planning and strategizing before it is released to the intended audience.

◆ **Spoken Mode**

It consists of press conferences, conference calls, meetings, seminars, symposiums, interviews, panel discussions, televised messages and television commercials (TVCs), etc. The spoken mode requires a lot more preparation and trained people for execution.

◆ **Non-Verbal Communication**

In the context of corporate communication, non-verbal or non-spoken communication refers to the posting of infographics, photographs and other such illustrations. Such communication is typically



delivered through the digital medium. For instance, an automobile manufacturer posting pictures of its newly launched SUV from an off-roading event is an example of non-spoken communication.

IN-TEXT QUESTIONS

6. In the context of corporate communication, which of the following is not an external stakeholder?
 - (a) Shareholder
 - (b) Customer
 - (c) Supplier
 - (d) Regulator
7. Which of the following is not a function of the corporate communications department?
 - (a) Public Relations
 - (b) Accounting
 - (c) Marketing Communications
 - (d) Internal Communication

1.6 Listening Skills

In the communication process, listening refers to the act of receiving and interpreting messages sent by the source or sender. You must distinguish between listening and hearing before we proceed further. Hearing is just the ability to perceive sound by means of receiving vibrations through the ears and is confined to your sense of receiving the stimulus of sound. Whereas, listening involves being attentive to what is being communicated and to hear with a conscious mind to interpret the message for a complete understanding of the same. You may note that your mind is constantly active when you are listening to something.

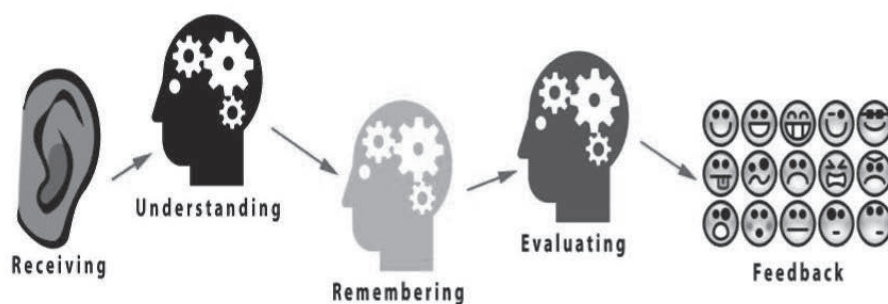


Figure 1.5: Stages of Listening
 (Source: <http://kell.indstate.edu>)

1.6.1 Stages of Listening

- (a) **Receiving:** The first stage involves merely hearing the message of the speaker by focusing on the sounds coming from the source and filtering out the other noises. At this stage, as depicted in the figure above, only your ears are involved.
- (b) **Understanding:** This is the most critical stage of the listening process as there are so many factors involved which can potentially distort understanding of the message. It may be due to language issues, differences in knowledge level, use of jargons, etc.
- (c) **Remembering:** At this stage, you will try to memorise some of the key details mentioned in the message to enable you to engage in the communication process.
- (d) **Evaluating:** The evaluation stage involves making your value judgment as to the message. Different people will evaluate the same message differently due to differences in perception, biases, knowledge levels and so on. In the second, third and fourth stages of listening, the mind is actively involved.
- (e) **Feedback:** Feedback is the final stage of the listening process and involves codifying your response into a message and sending it to the source. Please note that feedback “completes” the listening process and without feedback, listening does not mean much.



1.6.2 Listening Skills/Techniques

The ability of paying attention to what the speaker is saying to effectively interpret and understand the message is known as listening skill. Effective listening skills can be cultivated and learnt over time. Some of the techniques used for effective listening are mentioned below:

- (a) **Prepare:** In case the communication is a planned one with clarity on the agenda, you must prepare yourself for it by reading from various relevant sources to develop a basic understanding of the subject matter. It will equip you to handle the communication better as you will be in a position to quickly grasp the speaker's messages.
- (b) **Pay attention:** Give your full attention to the speaker without being distracted by environmental factors and use non-verbal signals to acknowledge that the message is being received. You can do this by maintaining eye-contact, nodding occasionally and adopting an alert posture.
- (c) **Do not interrupt:** You must not interrupt the speaker as it would be perceived as being rude and can send out the signal that you do not value what the speaker is saying. The best thing to do is to wait for the speaker to complete and then seek whatever clarification is required.
- (d) **Empathize:** An effective listener has the quality of being empathetic and considerate towards the speaker. It simply means that you encourage the speaker to share her perspective and then understand the emotions involved. Empathizing with the speaker would invariably have the effect of turning the situation in the positive direction.
- (e) **Ask Questions:** Asking questions will help the listener to clarify any doubts or gaps in understanding. It will also let the speaker know that you are actually interested in the conversation and act as an encouragement for him.
- (f) **Refrain from making premature judgment:** A good listener would wait and listen patiently before he has enough evidence to make a judgment call. However, jumping to conclusions too early is a characteristic of poor listeners. The issue with jumping to conclusions too early is that the judgment may be completely incorrect. Besides,



it can be potentially risky to jump to conclusions and also unfair to the speaker.

- (g) Feedback:** Feedback does two very important things - (a) It shows the speaker that you were indeed listening genuinely, and (b) It helps improve your understanding of the message in the manner that the speaker intends.

SOME COMMONLY USED PHRASES/STATEMENTS ASSOCIATED WITH ACTIVE LISTENING

“I see what you mean... ” OR simply “I see”.

“I agree with your assessment...” OR simply “I agree”.

“You mentioned that... ”

“It is encouraging to hear from you about... ”

Citing Similar Experiences: *“I had a similar experience while visiting one of the distributors.”*

Paraphrasing: *“So, you think that the increase in interest rates may cause a decline in the credit uptake for the next two quarters”?*

1.6.3 Types of Listening

- (a) Active Listening:** Active listening is the process of listening to the verbal and non-verbal messages and cues of a speaker, asking questions for seeking clarification and providing feedback with the objective of understanding the message by the receiver as intended by the sender. It is the most ideal form of listening.
- (b) Pseudo-Listening:** Pseudo-listening refers to the act of portraying as if one is being attentive in a conversation, whereas in reality he may be completely ignoring what the speaker is saying. It may be because of plain disregard for the topic under discussion or it may be an attempt to deceive the speaker for some vested interest. The mechanism followed in pseudo-listening is to send out non-verbal signals, such as nodding, smiling, etc. to signal that you are attentive.
- (c) Selective Listening:** Selective listening refers to the filtering of the incoming messages to let in only the part that interests the listener.



The listener selects only as much information as he considers relevant for his interests.

- (d) **Insulated Listening:** It is the act of avoiding certain information from the communication is known as insulated listening and hence, it the opposite of selective listening.
- (e) **Stage Hogging:** Some people seem to be interested only in conveying their own feelings, ideas, etc. in order to be the centre of attraction. This is done by planning interruptions every now and then to hog the limelight.

1.7 Verbal, Non-Verbal and Presentation Skills

You must have noticed in your day-to-day life that before you start a conversation with any person, the subconscious mind makes an assessment as to that person's ability or expertise in the matter that you wish to talk about and other aspects, such as cultural background, profession, etc. Accordingly, you will customize and calibrate the message to suit the receiver's capacity to understand the same. Your skill lies in how well you can strategize and customize the message to suit the requirement and ability of the receiver. These skills can be classified into the following three sets.

1.7.1 Verbal Skills

The use of words, whether spoken or written, for the purpose of sharing information, ideas, thoughts, etc. is known as verbal communication. Some of the key verbal communication skills are listed below:

- ◆ **Knowledge about your Audience**

Before you start preparing your message you must think about who your target is. Some of the relevant questions that you need to answer for this purpose are - What is the cultural background of the target? What language does the target speak? What is the level of education of the target?

The answers to these questions will help you design and plan your communication in a much better way. For instance, if you have



been assigned to design a sensitization programme on the vision and mission of your organisation, you will have to develop different modules for, say the executives and the factory workers. It is simply because the two target groups have different level of education and hence require customisation of the content to cater to each group.

◆ **Clarity of Thought**

In order to be an effective communicator, clarity of thought is an attribute that one cannot do without. Before you start speaking or drafting your message, you should be able to clearly recognize the relevant thoughts, understand the importance of each one based on the context and organise them in a logical and interesting fashion to compel the audience to listen or read through the message.

◆ **Articulation**

Closely related to clarity of thought is articulation, which means how clearly the thoughts are expressed in words. Articulate communicators build coherent and concise messages which stand out for their sharpness and focus.

◆ **Intonation and Modulation of Voice**

This particular skill is a great asset for any kind of public speaking, whether it is delivering a speech, speaking in a conference or seminar, delivering a presentation to a potential investor, negotiation meetings and so on. It lends a sort of musical touch to speech and is a treat for the ears. Intonation is a part of pronunciation and includes attributes, such as accent, stress and cadence. Modulation of voice means to control your voice to make it sound louder, emotional, thrilling, dramatic and so on.

◆ **Receptivity**

Receptiveness is a skill that is essential for the communicator to understand the point-of-view of the other party and reorient the messages to improve understanding. It means that you have to listen actively to communicate better with your audience. However, receptivity should not be confined to the verbal responses or feedback. In fact, the non-verbal signals are equally important, if not more. The non-verbal signals help you recalibrate your communication to prevent the audience from losing interest.



◆ Engaging the Audience

Very few communicators have the ability to establish a rapport with their audiences. It is actually a difficult skill to master as every time it will be a different audience and a new setting. Nevertheless, there are many techniques that will help you in connecting with others. Firstly, you have to be genuine and authentic in your communication. Nothing works better than an honest message. Secondly, you must use your body language and gestures to convey that you are open and receptive. You must also read the non-verbal cues of the other party as it is the best feedback you can receive. Thirdly, sharing experiences with your audience helps you connect with them as some of them may have had similar experience and will be able to relate to it.

1.7.2 Non-Verbal Skills

People are quite comfortable when it comes to verbal communication, however, non-verbal communication often takes place at the subconscious level. It is a source of information that tells the observer many important things that even spoken words may not. In this part of the section, we will learn about non-verbal communication skills and how we can interpret them. Let us first look at the types of non-verbal communication.

1.7.2.1 Types and Techniques of Non-Verbal Communication

◆ Proxemics

It refers to the study of how people think the physical space around them influences their behaviour and communication. It should be noted here that people from different cultures perceive and use the space around them differently. Further, there is also marked difference in the way people from different cultures use the space between the persons they communicate with. Other factors that influence “personal space include setting, gender and individual preferences. The space is classified into the following categories.

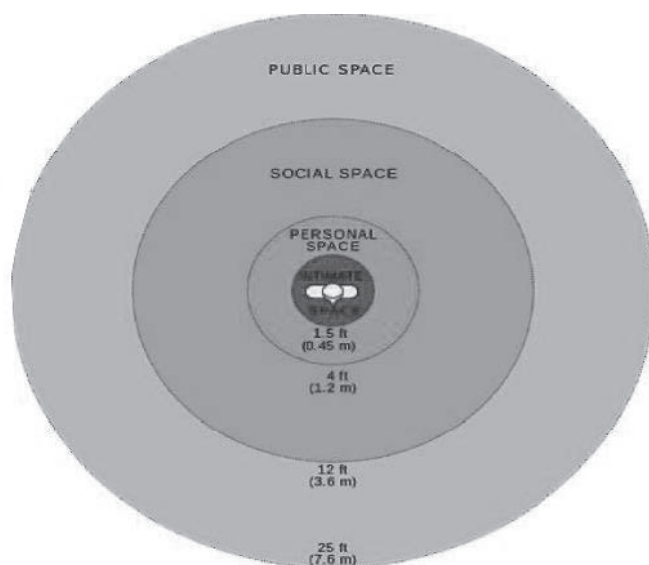


Figure 1.6: Edward T. Hall's Depiction of Interpersonal Distances of Man

(Source: <https://www.researchgate.net>)

- ◆ Intimate - For embracing, touching etc.
- ◆ Personal - For communicating with friends and family.
- ◆ Social - For socialising and communicating with acquaintances.
- ◆ Public - For public meetings, speeches, etc.

◆ **Body Language**

Body language is one of the most important type of non-verbal communication that includes the following:

Kinesics

It refers to the use of body or facial expressions to convey messages. The different types of kinesics are given below:

- ◆ **Facial Expressions:** There are numerous facial expressions that convey some messages or the other. These include smiling, raising eyebrows, winking, etc.
- ◆ **Gestures:** The movements made with hands and other body parts, including head, fingers, arms and legs, etc. are referred to as gestures. Common gestures include the thumbs-up, beckoning gesture, the OK gesture, and so on. You must remember that the same gesture



can mean very different things in different cultures. For instance, the OK gesture which is used in the Western cultures to indicate that something is very good, whereas in the Arab culture it is a very vulgar gesture.

- ◆ **Posture:** It refers to the way the body is positioned by a person while communicating with his counterpart or his audience. Postures also convey some meaning, for example, the arms akimbo posture is considered as a dominant posture.

Oculesics or Eye Contact

In the field of communication, oculusics refers to the study of eye-contact, duration of eye-contact, intensity, and eye movement. Again, eye contact has different connotations in different cultures. For instance, in the western culture, maintaining eye contact is a sign of honesty and showing interest in communication. Whereas, in eastern and oriental cultures, direct eye contact especially with elders is considered a sign of disrespect or rudeness.

Haptics

In some cultures, touching is also a means of expressing one's feelings. For instance, you pat somebody's back to appreciate his/her achievement. However, as is the case with most types of body language, touching can be taken very differently in different cultures. For instance, the American culture is a "no touch" culture, whereas, in Arab culture, touching your friends is common.

Paralanguage

The non-verbal characteristics of spoken messages is known as paralanguage. In other words, the acoustic features of speech that include tone, modulation of voice, pitch, accent, loudness etc. are part of paralanguage. It is also known as prosody.

1.7.2.2 How to Interpret Non-Verbal Signals

People use body language all the time consciously or sub-consciously. Since these non-verbal signals are very useful for understanding the verbal message, knowledge of how non-verbal signals can be interpreted becomes essential. Given below are some of the strategies for interpreting body language.

**◆ Observe**

It is quite obvious that observation is key to interpretation of non-verbal signals. It is being reiterated to emphasise that as a communicator, you must develop a habit of keenly observing the postures, gestures, pitch of voice and so on that will help you get a great deal of insight into the other person's state of mind.

◆ Track the Eye-Movement

Eye-movement and eye contact convey a great deal of information. During a meeting, if your counterpart keeps looking away, it possibly means that the latter may not be interested. Please remember that paying attention to the eye movement should be in a manner that the other person does not feel uncomfortable. Because the other person may perceive your constant tracking of his/her eye movement as intrusive or even threatening.

◆ Observe the Posture

The position in which a person is sitting or standing can tell you something about his interest in what is being said. For instance, if a person is standing in a straight posture it indicates that he is listening and engaged in the conversation.

◆ Pay Attention to Hand Gestures

Gestures can be both voluntary and involuntary. For instance, the open palms gesture suggests that the speaker has nothing to hide. Another example is that of clenched hands which may indicate that the person is under stress or angry. As a skilled reader of body language, you will learn to observe these seemingly unimportant things and utilise them to have a successful engagement.

◆ Pay Attention to Facial Expressions

Facial expressions are the most commonly used and read non-verbal signals simply because faces are in focus during any conversation. You will notice facial expressions changing often during a conversation. For example, when people are focused and listening intently, their eyebrows are lowered and centred.

**◆ Observe the Legs and Feet**

You will notice that when people are feeling bored or restless, they tap their feet on the ground. If you see a person sitting with his legs and arms crossed, it indicates that the person may be creating a barrier with the speaker and may not be very receptive.

1.7.3 Presentation Skills

Making effective presentations is a skill that is essential for survival in the corporate world. Generating great ideas is simply not good enough unless you are able to present it in a manner that is compelling and persuasive to those who matter.

There are two aspects of making great presentations, namely:

- (a) Planning and putting together great presentations
- (b) Delivering the presentation

1.7.3.1 Features of an Effective Presentation**◆ Customised content based on the audience**

The content should be designed based on the understanding level of the audience. In case the content is too difficult, the audience may not understand anything and if it is too simple the audience would not gain anything out of it.

◆ Brevity

The content has to be crisp and to the point. The length and detail of the presentation would depend largely on the purpose for which the presentation is taking place. You must also avoid cluttering the slides with text and instead use keywords and images that you can elaborate upon.

◆ Language to Match the Audience

The selection of language of the presentation has to be in consonance with what the audience would easily understand. The objective is not to make a superfluous masterpiece out of the presentation but to deliver the point across in an impactful manner.



◆ Sequencing of Information

In order to keep alive the interest of the audience, you must design the slides in a sequential manner, revealing little by little. This will help the audience digressing to the next idea or though in the presentation before completing the present one.

◆ Sprinkle it with Appropriate Humour

If used in the right manner, humour can help you establish an instant rapport with the audience. Once a rapport is established, it can be a pretty smooth journey afterwards.

◆ Delivery

The delivery has to be in a clear and audible voice with the presenter's body language conveying confidence. The presenter must use voice modulation and intonation to make it appealing to the audience.

1.7.3.2 How to Put Together an Effective Presentation

In order to prepare a good presentation, you need to find answers to five questions. If you can answer these five questions precisely, you can be sure of making an effective presentation.

These questions have been discussed below:

Who?

The question we start with is - who is the target group for whom the presentation is being planned. There are a few more question that logically follow from this, which are listed below:

- ◆ How many people will be attending?
- ◆ What is their age group?
- ◆ What is their education?
- ◆ How aware is the target group about the topic of presentation?
- ◆ What is the nature of relationship between the speaker and the audience?
- ◆ What language is the audience accustomed to?

The answer to each of the questions above will impact content planning and delivery.



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For example, if the audience is a group of school children who are being given a presentation on inflation, the content will be different and if the audience is a group of economists, the content will be entirely different, though the topic of the presentation is the same.

Why?

The reason for making the presentation is the next key question that needs to be answered before planning the content. Is the presentation merely informational or is to introduce a change in an established system that the audience is accustomed to? Or is it a presentation to raise funds from potential investors? The responses to these questions will shape the content further.

Where?

This question looks at issues, such as - Where is the presentation being planned? Is it going to take place at a client's premises? How large is the venue? What are the facilities and visual aids available at the venue? What is the level of ambient noise? How comfortable is the seating? Is there power back-up available? - and so on. The responses to these questions will help you not only plan the content but also arrange the necessary logistics and support for the presentation.

When?

The question here is when or at what time of the day is the presentation scheduled. Is it a single presentation or one of a series of presentations during the course of the day? Is it immediately preceding or post lunch? Is it the first or the last presentation of the day? You will have to be very tactful in planning the content and delivery based on the responses to such questions.

For instance, it has been seen that if your presentation is in the last slot just before the day is going to be over, the audience will already be drained with all the activity during the day and hence you will have to plan the content carefully to not include too many heavy concepts. You may also use appropriate humour to keep the audience's interest alive.

What?

With this we come to the all-important question of WHAT. It directly addresses the issue of what should the content of the presentation look



like. The series of questions that need to be answered to decide the content are:

- ◆ How much detail is required?
- ◆ What will the audience be interested in?
- ◆ Is there something sensitive about the topic that needs to be avoided?
- ◆ What examples will the audience relate to?
- ◆ Will the audience like more visual content?

Once the above questions are answered, you will know what to include and how much to include. The length of the presentation is a critical aspect which calls for a general strategy of developing and keeping multiple presentations on the same topic at readiness, just in case you have to, say cut-short the presentation. In such scenarios, using the same presentation may not be a good strategy.

Therefore, it is advisable to have at least three separate presentations on the same topic of varying lengths. The shortest will have the core ideas that you cannot do without. The middle length will have a little more detail and the longer version will be a comprehensive one with as much detail as possible.

1.7.3.3 *Effective Delivery of a Presentation*

◆ **Keep Notes**

If it is a lengthy presentation, you will do better with short notes that mention the key ideas that you will be speaking about. Keeping notes handy will help you deliver the presentation in an orderly fashion without having to take long pauses to remember what would come next. You should not feel embarrassed to refer to the notes as generally it is acceptable to use the same. However, it would depend on the situation and the context, on whether your audience would accept you reading from notes. Therefore, if you are expected not to use notes, you should prepare accordingly and speak from memory.

◆ **Eye Contact**

The best way to connect with your audience is to strike eye-contact with the audience. However, the eye-contact should be with the entire audience and not concentrated towards a particular zone or



spot or an individual. It demonstrates your confidence and sincerity with which you are delivering the presentation.

◆ **Dressing for the Occasion**

Your attire will play an important role in how seriously you will be taken by your audience. The best thing to do is to avoid clothes that can potentially distract the attention of the audience. You should also avoid wearing dresses that you do not feel comfortable in, as it may interfere with your focus.

◆ **Voice**

The most important aspect of delivering a presentation is your voice and how you control it. In case there is no public address system or microphones and speakers available, you will have to put in a lot more effort to be loud enough to the entire audience. You must use voice modulation and intonation to your advantage. Intonation and modulation lend a sort of music to your speech which makes it sound much more impressive. You should think of the presentation as a usual conversation that you have with your colleagues. The presenter's job is to convince people and therefore, he must be convinced of himself. Unless you have conviction in what you are saying, you cannot expect the others to get convinced. Another important aspect is the rate of speech. Do not go too fast as your audience may have difficulty in understanding your messages.

◆ **Posture**

Your posture during a presentation should be relaxed and composed. There should not be any stiffness in the body as it would impair your movement and you may not be able to utilise the stage. You should not remain tucked away from the view of your audience behind the lectern. Rather, you should use the space on the stage to your advantage. Moving around the stage, while you deliver the presentation, will make you appear confident and comfortable. It will also help you overcome any nervousness that you may experience.

◆ **Gestures**

Hand gestures, when used properly and naturally, convey confidence and conviction in what you are communicating. However, overdoing



it can often distract the audience and impair understanding. Some things to avoid include keeping your hands inside your trouser pockets, locking them at the back or folding hands as these are closed/defensive gestures and are not considered professionally appropriate.

1.8 Legal Issues in Communication

Organisations communicate with stakeholders on a routine basis. These stakeholders can be internal as well as external as explained earlier in the lesson. The communication that goes out has to be carefully drafted as the image and goodwill of the organisation are at stake. In fact, the actions and statements of the employees of an organisation may have legal implications. Insensitive and incorrect communication can potentially lead to lawsuits against the company. Litigations can mean huge costs in the terms of money and human resources for businesses. Therefore, an organisation must be serious and diligent about the communication that it has with the stakeholders and the public in general. The employees of an organisation must be trained to act in an informed and responsible manner.

Many aspects of business communication are regulated by law. The enactment of the Right to Information (RTI) Act and several initiatives in the area of corporate governance have ushered in an era of greater transparency and accessibility. This means that internal documents and records can be produced in the court of law and other such forums. Therefore, a sound understanding of the legal framework is essential for business communication to ensure that all communication passes the check on the parameter of legal appropriateness.

Let us get down to the various issues involved in different types of communication and how an organisation can prevent or minimize legal trouble.

(a) Marketing Communication

There exist several provisions in the law that cover some aspects of marketing communications. In case of advertising, which is a major medium of marketing communication, there is self-regulation in the form of guidelines for ethical and professional conduct. These guidelines have been codified by self-regulatory organisations, such as the Advertising



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Standards Council of India (ASCI). The guidelines of ASCI are aimed at maintaining legality, decency and truthfulness of advertisements. It ensures that the adverts are in the spirit of fair competitions and not hazardous or malicious in content. Therefore, the crux of the matter is that there should not be any misrepresentation, deception or manipulation of facts in the marketing communications rolled out by a company.

(b) Disclaimers

Companies must develop suitable product/service disclosures warning about the risks and dangers of misuse in order to get sufficient protection in the event of misuse or misunderstanding by clients/customers. These disclaimers need to be prominently displayed in advertisements, product packaging and should ideally be a part of the sales pitch. For instance, all toys for children have indication for the age group that it is intended for. The package clearly displays if it is not safe for children below a certain age. You must have noticed the warning at the end of every advertisement of mutual fund which goes like this:

“Mutual fund investments are subject to market risks, please read the offer document before investing”.

It is an example of a disclaimer used by the mutual fund companies from the Banking and Financial Services Industry (BFSI).

You will also notice that even in the emails that you receive from companies, at the bottom of the email, there is a disclaimer, which goes something like this:

“This Communication is for the exclusive use of the intended recipient(s) and shall not attach any liability on the originator. If you are the addressee, the contents of this email are intended for your use only and it shall not be forwarded to any third party, without first obtaining written authorization from the originator. It may contain information which is confidential and legally privileged and the same shall not be used or dealt with by any third party in any manner whatsoever without the specific consent of the originator ”.

(c) Disclosures

Disclosures are made in order to release all relevant information about a particular aspect of business often as a part of regulatory requirement. Several disclosure requirements are a part of financial reporting



standards. You must be aware of the mandatory conflict-of-interest disclosure requirement for stock market analysts. There are non-disclosure agreements which are often a part of the contracts between two organisations entering into some sort of business relationship in which one or both of them agrees not to share information outside of the contractual relationship.

(d) Financial Reporting

Financial reports are one of the most strictly regulated areas of business communication as it involves presenting of key information about the company to investors, shareholders, regulators and the public in general. Misrepresentation or manipulation of financial information will lead to penalties, criminal proceedings and irreparable damage to the reputation of the company.

(e) Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)

There are many types of intellectual properties, including patents, writings, trademarks, etc. Unauthorised infringement of the intellectual property of others will invite litigation. Organisations have to be very careful in the drafting of their communication material so as not to infringe the intellectual property right of others, whether wilful or innocent.

IN-TEXT QUESTIONS

8. Which of the following refers to the study of eye contact and movement of eyes?
 - (a) Proxemics
 - (b) Haptics
 - (c) Facial Expression
 - (d) Oculesics
9. _____ refers to the study of how people think the physical space around them influences their behaviour and communication.
10. Humour should never be included in presentations as it is unprofessional. (True/False)
11. Which of the following is not a feature of effective presentations?
 - (a) Very comprehensive and detailed
 - (b) Sequenced flow



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- (c) Crisp and to the point
(d) Language to match audience
12. Which of the following will help in effectively delivering a presentation?
- (a) Use of gestures
(b) Maintaining eye contact
(c) Intonation and modulation of voice
(d) All of these
13. You can interpret non-verbal signals by:
- (a) Tracking eye movements
(b) Observing hand gestures
(c) Observing position of legs and feet
(d) All of these
14. _____ gives a musical touch to your speech?
- (a) Clarity of Thought
(b) Articulation
(c) Intonation and modulation of voice
(d) Receptivity
15. Which of the following helps in avoiding particular liability on account of misuse of a product/service?
- (a) Disclosure
(b) Disclaimer
(c) Financial Reporting
(d) None of these

1.9 Summary

- ◆ Communication is the process of sharing and understanding meaning. The purpose of communication in general is to exchange ideas, thoughts and information, express feelings and to influence.



- ◆ The 7Cs of communication are the characteristics that a message should possess in order to be effective. It says that the message should be clear, concise, coherent, concrete, correct, complete and courteous.
- ◆ Corporate communication refers to the activity of an organisation communicating with its internal and external stakeholders. The internal stakeholders include the employees, the management and the Board of Directors. The external stakeholders include customers, suppliers, vendors, governments, regulators, professional bodies, trade associations, etc.
- ◆ The functions of corporate communication include - marketing communication, internal communication, public relations and communication during crisis.
- ◆ Listening is the act of receiving and interpreting messages sent by the sender. Listening is different from hearing. Hearing is the ability to perceive sound and is confined to your sense of receiving the stimulus of sound. On the other hand, listening refers to hearing with a conscious mind to interpret the message for a complete understanding.
- ◆ Many aspects of business communication are regulated by law. The marketing communications and the routine communication that an organisation and its employees have with various stakeholders need to be carefully drafted to avoid legal trouble.

1.10 Answers to In-Text Questions

1. (c) Interrupting
2. (c) Channel/Medium
3. True
4. (c) Both (a) and (b)
5. (a) Coordination
6. (a) Shareholder
7. (b) Accounting
8. (d) Oculistics



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9. Proxemics
10. False
11. (a) Very comprehensive and detailed
12. (d) All of these
13. (d) All of these
14. (c) Intonation and modulation of voice
15. (a) Disclosure

1.11 Self-Assessment Questions

1. Explain the process of communication.
2. What are the 7Cs of effective communication?
3. What is corporate communication? Discuss its functions?
4. How important is communication during a crisis? Discuss with an example from the corporate world.
5. What is the difference between hearing and listening? What are the different types of listening?
6. What are the key questions to answer in order to plan and draft an effective presentation?
7. Discuss some of the legal issues involved in communication.

1.12 References and Suggested Readings

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Written Skills

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STRUCTURE

- 2.1 *Learning Objectives*
- 2.2 *Introduction*
- 2.3 *Writing Communication*
- 2.4 *Writing Reports*
- 2.5 *Improving Personal Writing Skills*
- 2.6 *Writing Composition*
- 2.7 *Summary*
- 2.8 *Answers to In-Text Questions*
- 2.9 *Self-Assessment Questions*
- 2.10 *Suggested Readings*

2.1 Learning Objectives

- ◆ Engage in writing skills after being introduced with the definition and importance of written communication in detail.
- ◆ Learn how to Plan and execute messages even before drafting a written message.
- ◆ Learn about different types of messages.
- ◆ Know the significance of different types of reports in business world.
- ◆ Improve our writing skills.



2.2 Introduction

Enhancing one's communication skills is of utmost importance. They can go a long way in helping to prevent many mistakes that one may end up making in a business world. The clear knowledge and understanding of various concepts such as verbal and non-verbal communication, writing formal documents, and even correcting the basics such as sentence structures and grammatical errors, can help build strong business relationships. Lack of theoretical and practical knowledge of written communication can lead to awkward situations. Therefore, proficiency in these aspects is highly required which is the goal of this chapter to be brought forward to the students.

Communication is an activity which cannot be escaped. It is expected that after going through the contents of this unit and the objectives laid down for the students, the students will feel at ease and highly motivated to write clearly and enjoy the learning process throughout. Not only will the various aspects of written communication make the students confident, but they will also be comfortable with writing different styles of writing by the time they reach the end of this unit.

This unit will make the students highly efficient in terms of producing writings which would be complete in all aspects after gaining full knowledge and understanding of the same. The various elements contained in this chapter will aid the student in learning about written communication in depth.

2.3 Writing Communication

Written communication is a type of verbal communication. It refers to the transfer of messages through the written or printed word. It can be used both formally and informally. Some of the examples of formal written communication are letters, reports, circulars, business proposals and notices. Whereas informal letters, text messages with a friend, and handwritten notes are some of the widely used informal forms of written communication.



2.3.1 Advantages of Written Communication

- ◆ A written document is precise.
- ◆ It is helpful in maintaining records.
- ◆ It is useful for future reference.
- ◆ It holds legal validity.
- ◆ It can be read as many times as the reader wants to gain clarity of thought.
- ◆ Charts and tables can be used in this form of communication.
- ◆ Written documents are used widely by organizations to convey their vision, policies, rules and regulations to the employees.
- ◆ It offers scope for editing and proofreading a message.

2.3.2 Disadvantages of Written Communication

- ◆ It is time consuming. It requires careful planning and execution in order to make the receiver comprehend the message entirely.
- ◆ Immediate feedback is not available.
- ◆ It amounts to a lot owing to the large use of stationery.
- ◆ It involves a lot of paperwork. It becomes challenging to maintain a record of the same.
- ◆ Non-verbal cues of communication are absent.

2.3.3 Planning Message

The transmission of messages from one person to another should be carefully planned in order for the process of communication to be effective. There are some essentials which heighten this effectiveness while creating a message and result in intended feedback from the receiver. Following are the prerequisites for a strong and impactful message to be observed by the sender of a message:

1. **Complete:** The sender must ensure that the message does not lack any relevant information which is required to be sent to its audience. It



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should be complete in all respects. In case a detail is missing from the message, it can lead to misinterpretations. The feedback may not as be intended by the sender. The facts and figures demanded by the subject of the message must be present' entirely in the message.

2. **Clear:** If the writer does not think clearly and plan in advance regarding what s/he wants to convey to the receiver, the message runs the risk of losing its meaning. It will result in bad impression. In other words, the writer must be clear about the purpose of drafting a particular message. The language of the message should also not be ambiguous. It may lead to doubt and confusion in the mind of the receiver.
3. **Correct:** The details provided in a message should be accurate. The statements should not be misleading. The message should be grammatically and syntactically correct. No room should be left for any sort of mistake as they cause inconvenience. Messages such as reports, notices, or letters should be edited and proofread before they are finally sent to the receiver.
4. **Concise:** Brevity is the key to effective communication. A writer with clear thought knows exactly what to write without exaggerating any detail. A message that is short and to-the-point leads to clear transmission of message. Each statement is meaningful and relevant to the topic in a concise message.
5. **Concrete:** Facts and figures should be used to support the message and make it impactful. These details should also be organized in a systematic manner so that its meaning is clearly communicated to the receiver.
6. **Coherent:** A message must flow logically. In many of the written forms of communication, a proper structure is followed which contains the introduction, the body and the conclusion. Within this structure, all the details must be organized in an order depending upon the subject matter and the needs of the readers.
7. **Courteous:** The tone of the message should be polite keeping the audience in mind. The message should be considerate about the feelings, issues, and sensibilities of the audience before choosing



the appropriate words. The message must convey respectful attitude towards the receiver. Offensive words and rude tone should be avoided to have a positive response from the receiver.

2.3.4 *Executive Different Types of Messages*

After careful and successful planning, it is even more challenging to successfully execute a message. There are different types of messages which a sender has to keep in mind that can garner either a positive, neutral or a negative response from the audience. But even before coming to this understanding, the sender must first understand the audience. The sender's knowledge of the audience with reference to their age groups, the culture that they belong to, their economic level, their needs and expectations will help in getting a closer look at their point of view in any given scenario. It is imperative that a "you" or the "reader-centred" approach must be essentially followed in business communication. It is this approach that will provide the sender the experience of dealing with them regularly. Here, a writer-centric or the self-centred approach while preparing messages will not lead to positive feedback from the audience as it will only be focusing on its own needs. However, the reader-oriented approach builds trust and confidence in the creator of the message. It builds a healthy business atmosphere between a seller and a buyer, for instance. The use of courteous tone in the message promotes encouragement and results in desired feedback from the recipient. Simultaneously, a positive impression of the organization gets created. It is therefore highly recommended that the readers' interests should be given the utmost priority.

While planning effective business messages, writers are faced with innumerable questions that they need to first ask themselves before executing them completely:

- ◆ What will be my reaction if I were in the receiver's place?
- ◆ How would I have expected the tone of the letter to be while being explained the issue?
- ◆ Should I have expected more clarity on the matter?
- ◆ Will I be expecting more accuracy in the content?



2.3.5 Different Types of Messages

After having undergone this reflective process, writers execute the messages keeping the expected feedback in mind. Based on the different types of messages, writers' draft statements carefully so that the readers don't get disappointed and maintain a healthy business relationship.

- 1. Request Messages:** They are claim letters which state direct requests in the opening of the letter. They are followed by supporting arguments for the request so that necessary action can be taken at the earliest. These arguments are followed by a brief explanation which further heightens the need for quick action to be undertaken by the company. For instance, an electronics company's response to a claim letter seeking replacement of a defective air conditioner recently bought from the company could be "We understand your concern. Since the product is still within warranty, the issue will be resolved. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to serve you better." Statements like these build trust of the buyer in the company and encourages them to stay connected with them every step of the way.
- 2. Positive Messages:** They are the messages that deliver good news, and the receiver is expected to react in a neutral to pleased manner. Congratulatory messages, messages of appreciation, appraisal messages, or apology messages are some of the examples. Statements like, "We would like to congratulate you for your hard work and your efforts that you showed towards the project which translated into the company achieving a higher ranking", or "We apologize for the inconvenience caused. The matter will be looked into with immediate effect" result in a positive response.
- 3. Negative Messages:** These are the messages where the reader is expected to be annoyed and vexed. Some of the examples giving rise to such a situation can be a company's refusal to issue a refund or its inability to resolve a matter. It is here that drafting a neutral response from the company proves to be useful. They have to ensure that their conclusion is backed by strong arguments that facilitate acceptance by the receiver without hampering their business relationship. Instead of saying direct "No", the company can offer



some positive suggestions in order to direct the receiver to feasible alternatives. For instance, “Thank you for placing an order with us. We appreciate your interest in our products. This is to let you know that due to an unexpected demand of the same product, we would be able to serve you with a slight delay of 5-6 days. Please find a gift utility coupon of Rs. 250/- in the “Coupons” section. The coupon is valid for the next 21 days. We are thankful to you for choosing us to serve you.”

- 4. Persuasive Messages:** These messages are required to persuade an unwilling and disinterested receiver. The language has to be convincing and confident to move the receiver. At the same time, it has to be supported by evidence leading the receiver towards the desired action. For instance, “The new bank portal must be downloaded by the customer because it is more secure than the previous one. It may appear incomprehensible at first, but it has various user-friendly features. The bank assures you that once you start to explore, you’ll be immediately familiarised with it.”

After an understanding of the reader-oriented approach while planning and executing different types of messages, it becomes clear how these stages play a crucial role in the business realm. Communication thus is not a mere transfer of messages from the sender to the receiver. It incorporates various other factors that go into making the whole process of communication effective.

IN-TEXT QUESTIONS

- Examples of Oral communication _____ .
 - Letter
 - E-mail
 - Telephone
 - Fax
- Reports from the subordinates to the superiors take the form of _____.
 - Upward communication
 - Downward Communication
 - Face to face Communication
 - Person to person Communication



2.4 Writing Reports

The term “Report” originates from the Latin word “report are”. It means to bring back or carry back. A report, therefore, is a document which aims to bring back details of an event in an organized manner for a definite receiver. As a form of formal communication, reports play a vital role in communicating crucial information across both intra and inter organizational levels. It is an important document which is required by managers time and again. For instance, within an organisation, a manager relies heavily on his employees for the collection of data, figures, or other specific information with reference to an event which is further organized by them in the format of the report and sent to the manager. The details contained within a report, in turn, can be used for effective decision-making and problem solving. Similarly, sometimes governments form separate departments which oversee a set of events specific to each department. In such cases, the reports get communicated from each department to the government carrying deciding particulars. Through such instances, it thus becomes clear that reports are highly informative and help an organization strengthen professional relationships both within and outside its domain.

2.4.1 Objectives of Reports

While identifying the various objectives of report writing, it is important to keep in mind that the scope of reports is extensive. A report can be prepared for the following purposes:

- ◆ To present information of an event, be it facts or figures, in an organized manner.
- ◆ To disseminate details to a specific audience.
- ◆ To inform the receiver about the progress and the underlying problems of an organization.
- ◆ To provide recommendations or proposed plan or solutions, wherever required, solely based on the data provided in the report.
- ◆ To record the event objectively for future reference.
- ◆ To promote efficacious decision-making.



2.4.2 Types of Reports

Reports serve as efficient business tools. Business reports usually cover the issues related to a company's business. They cover a wide range of topics such as the review of an issue or an event, the assessment of the business acquired over a period of time, or the evaluation of the progress of some work assigned to a team of employees of the company. They are extremely formal in nature. Such reports require inclusion of a lot of factual data. As mentioned, owing to their manner of objective presentation and communication of details, and their vertical and lateral movement in the business world, reports get classified in several forms:

- ◆ **Informational Report:** While drafting informational reports, it is made sure that each and every detail of an event is presented objectively. In other words, no personal opinions, interpretations or suggestions are offered to maintain the nature of these reports. Annual reports are a good example of informational report writing. These reports provide information regarding a company's growth in their respective sector from the previous financial year to the current. Financial reports too serve as a useful tool which inform a company about its business with the help of clearly tracking cash inflows and outflows of a company.
- ◆ **Analytical Report:** These reports provide the analysis of the observations made by the reporter along with the collection and presentation of data. This helps the receiver of this report to understand the actual scenario. The reporter drafts an analytical report with the aim of bringing to the receiver a description and an understanding of the events in depth. As opposed to the informational reports, analytical reports tend to provide interpretations and recommendations based as well in an attempt to solve problems. A report identifying fall in the sales of a company product and analysing its effects on the company and seeking recommendations simultaneously for countering the fall in sales can be classified as an analytical report.
- ◆ **Vertical Report:** This refers to the direction in which a report travel. The reports which follow the upward or downward flow of communication on the corporate ladder are called vertical reports.



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- ◆ **Lateral Report:** Lateral reports, on the other hand, move horizontally at the same hierarchical level. They help in co-ordination across different departments.
- ◆ **Internal Report:** The reports which move either horizontally or vertically within an organization are called internal reports. They are also useful in clearly stating the business objectives to its employees by keeping them updated on several factors such as sales data or company turnover of the company. A report providing performance details of a company's crucial project to its employees with an aim of keeping them informed is a good example of internal report.
- ◆ **External Report:** As opposed to the internal reports, the reports which move outside the organization are called external reports. The purpose of these reports is to keep all the stakeholders of an organization informed. For instance, annual report of a company which clearly states the financial statements move outside the company by being circulated to its various stakeholders.
- ◆ **Progress Report:** These reports are submitted by the employees to their superiors on a weekly or a monthly basis. In other words, progress reports must be submitted at regular intervals by the employees in order to keep a track of the work assigned to them. Descriptive details such as the amount of work completed during a specific period of time or the future course of action of the project at hand are mentioned. Simultaneously, these help to keep in check the performance of the employees as well.
- ◆ **Periodic Report:** These reports are required by the upper echelons of the organization periodically to know precisely the performance of the entire organization. It involves details of everyday affairs such as the problems that a company might be facing, the solutions that have already been utilised to resolve the issues and the proposed solutions which would be fruitful in countering similar problems in the future. These reports are precise.

2.4.3 Formats of Report Writing

Reports have been further divided into two based on the different formats they follow:



- 1. Letter Format:** If a report is to be sent outside the organization, that is, if it is an external report, the letter format is used for writing report. It is useful for drafting long reports.

Elements of Letter Format of Report:

- 1. Heading:** Name and address of the organization of the reporter.
 - 2. Date:** The date of sending the report.
 - 3. Receiver's Address:** Along with receiver's designation.
 - 4. Subject**
 - 5. Salutation**
 - 6. Body of the report:** It includes introduction, observations and findings, and conclusion based on the details given in the beginning. It may also include internal headings and tables for a precise and clear understanding of the subject. As far as the language is concerned, it can be written in first person.
 - 7. Complimentary close**
 - 8. Signature**
 - 9. Enclosures (if any)**
- 2. Memo Format:** It is short for "memorandum". It is a brief note or a record for future reference that moves within the organization. Terms such as "Interoffice Memorandum" or "Office Memorandum" are used while drafting the memo format of the report.

Elements of Memo Format of Report:

- 1. Heading:** Name and address of the organization of the reporter.
- 2. Title:** Interoffice Memorandum/Office Memorandum.
- 3. Date**
- 4. To:** Recipient's Designation.
- 5. From:** Sender's Designation.
- 6. Subject**
- 7. Body:** The formal salutation which is an essential part of the letter format is not required here. However, like in the letter format of report, personal pronouns can be used in the Memo



Format as well. It can also include recommendations and suggestions.

- 8. Signature:** Complimentary close as present in the letter format is not required here. Providing signature with name is sufficient here as the designation of the reporter is already mentioned in the beginning of this format.

2.4.4 Steps to Write a Report

Writing a report can be a challenging task. A reporter has to make sure that taking specific subject matters into consideration, the correct type of report should be chosen and drafted with careful planning. One has to always bear in mind the audience of the report so that it can be drafted accordingly for their understanding. There are some steps that should be followed while drafting a report:

- 1. Introduction:** A report must begin with a clear statement of purpose. Here, the subject of the report can be introduced. At this step, the report should indicate the readers what they could expect in the following body of the report.
- 2. Providing Information:** All the relevant details including the context of the subject matter being recorded in the form of a report must be provided to arrive at a logical conclusion. The observations and findings regarding what happened need to be included here.
- 3. Development:** Based on the observations provided in the above step, the explanation and analysis of the issues related to the subject matter is done at this step.
- 4. Conclusion or Recommendations:** A reporter arrives at conclusions or proposes some recommendations depending upon the details given in the report. If a problem persists, the recipient can expect the reporter to provide recommendations from his/her perspective. This will help the recipient to monitor the situation clearly.
- 5. Editing and Proofreading:** After finishing the report, a reporter must ensure that the correct format of the report is used other than the type of report. Any unnecessary information has to be removed from



the report. The statement of purpose should be clearly mentioned. The report must be devoid of grammatical and syntactical errors.

Sample Reports

A: Assistant Vice President of ABC Company has asked for a progress report from the Manager. Draft a report clearly stating the status of the work assigned to you. Also, provide your plan for the same over the period of next two months.

ABC Company
New Delhi
Interoffice Memorandum

Date: 17 August 2022

To: Assistant Vice President

From: Manager

Subject: Progress Report for July 2022 and Plan for August and September 2022

As per your requirement, I am sharing the report on the amount of work completed in the month of July 2022 for the target assigned to me.

Sl. No.	Client Name	Date of Meeting	Amount of Business	Expected Closure Date
1.	Supreme Logistics	03 July 2022	Rs. 10 Cr	Closed on 20 July 2022
2.	Rajesh Auto Parts	05 July 2022	Rs. 2 Cr	Closed on 15 July 2022
3.	Kumar Auto Sales	15 July 2022	Rs. 7 Cr	Closed on 30 July 2022
4.	Smart Ventures Pvt. Ltd.	03 Aug 2022	Rs. 20 Cr	Expected to be closed on 27 Aug. 2022
5.	Tarachand & Sons	Meeting to be held on 18 Aug 2022	Rs. 5 Cr	Expected to be closed on 03 Sep. 2022

(signature)

XYZ



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B: You are the CEO of ABC Firm. Write a report sharing first quarter's financial results for the year 2022 and CFO succession to be sent to a stakeholder.

ABC Firm
Gurugram

Date: 17 August 2022

179, Nariman Point,
Mumbai-400004

Subject: Half year 2022 financial results and CFO succession

Dear Stakeholder

Today, we are releasing consolidated financial results for ABC Firm's first quarter of 2022 (April 1 - June 30), as well as for our business segments. All our businesses have delivered exceptional and record-breaking numbers, much ahead of the plans.

We reported revenue of approximately \$ 8 billion, an increase of 5% as compared to the prior-year second quarter. Adjusting for the impact of foreign currency, revenue growth was 2%. On an organic basis, which excludes the impact of foreign currency and any acquisitions or divestitures, revenue growth was 3.5%.

Our adjusted operating margin increased by 190 basis points and was 15% of revenue, compared to 12% of revenue for the prior-year second quarter. And our overall free cash flow results were \$ 500 million.

Based on these strong results, it is clear that ABC Firm is well positioned to compete vigorously across our businesses around the world. We are winning new business, bringing the best to our clients and actively recruiting. And we are going to continue to innovate and adapt to address evolving client needs.

Lastly, we are delighted to announce that the ABC Firm's board of directors has unanimously selected Mr. Vijay Sharma as the company's new chief financial officer. Mr. Vijay Sharma currently leads our Banking segment and will immediately take on the role and succeed current Mr. Ankur Mehta in this role, upon his retirement on December 31, 2022.



Yours sincerely

(signature)

Mr. Umesh Singh

ABC Firm

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IN-TEXT QUESTIONS

3. ——— aims at making people work together for the common good of the organization.
- (a) Communication (b) Conversation
(c) Combination (d) Connections
4. Communication is a nonstop——.
- (a) Paper (b) Process
(c) Programmed (d) Plan

2.5 Improving Personal Writing Skills

It is often found that despite having an understanding of what to write, how to organize thoughts and execute them in the written format, written communication is full of grammatical and syntactical errors. It is because of these mistakes that a company ends up leaving a bad impression upon the receiver. This leads to a decline in an established business relationship. Therefore, writing skills are of paramount importance. Before moving on to composing long paragraphs and essays, it is essential to start from the basics.

2.5.1 Sentence Structure

The knowledge of sentence structure can prove to be the steppingstone for creating clear and correct messages. Broadly, a sentence has two parts: The Subject and the Predicate. The subject indicates the doer of the action, while the predicate tells something about the subject. For example,



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Subject Predicate

- ◆ The police caught the thief.
- ◆ Anil kicked the football.
- ◆ The dog jumped over the wall.

Each of the sentences clearly state how a sentence can be broadly divided into two. Delving deep into this, it is to be understood that each of the words used in a sentence has its own role which in turn add meaning to the sentence. This brings us to the different parts of speech which collaborate to make a sentence.

1. Parts of Speech

- ◆ **Noun:** Names of people, places, animals, things, the state of a person: For example, Jia, crown, table, anger.
- ◆ **Pronoun:** Words that are used in place of a noun to avoid repetition: For example, I, you, he, she, it, we, they.
- ◆ **Adjective:** Words that describe nouns or pronouns: For example, beautiful, vast, enormous.
- ◆ **Verb:** Words that indicate action or state of being: For example, dance, study, be.
- ◆ **Adverb:** Words that describe verbs, adjectives or other adverbs: For example, very, really, soon, sometimes.
- ◆ **Prepositions:** Words that are placed before a noun or a pronoun: For example, at, on, for, with.
- ◆ **Conjunctions:** Words that link words, phrases and clauses in a sentence: For example, because, but, and, either... or
- ◆ **Interjections:** Words that express sudden emotion: For example, oh, alas, hey.

After going through each of these details, one should be comfortable in identifying various parts of speeches while framing a sentence.

Some of the most common mistakes found in writing styles in terms of Sentence structure are:

1. Run-on Sentence:

- (a) **Incorrect sentence:** *The manager asked for the report from Anil by yesterday he has not sent it yet.*



This is an example of a run-on sentence which does not separate two independent clauses with the help of any punctuation mark.

Correction: *The manager asked for the report from Anil by yesterday. He has not sent it yet.*

- (b) **Incorrect sentence:** She loves to write stories she would write more often if she had the time.

Correction: She loves to write stories. She would write more often if she had the time.

OR

She loves to write stories, and she would write more often if she had the time.

2. Sentence Fragment:

- (a) **Incorrect sentence:** *Because the manager fired Anil* is an example of a sentence fragment. Although it contains the main verb, it stands incomplete as it is dependent on another clause indicated by the presence of the word “Because”.

Correction: *Because the manager fired Anil, he had to advertise for the vacant position.*

- (b) **Incorrect sentence:** Shows no sign of declaring a bonus. (Subject missing)

Correction: The company shows no sign of declaring a bonus.

3. Parallel Structure:

It means that the same pattern of words is used throughout the sentence.

- (a) **Incorrect sentence:** Reena likes dancing, singing, and to hike.

Correction: Reena likes dancing, singing, and hiking.

OR

Reena likes to dance, sing and hike.

- (b) **Incorrect sentence:** The company awards those employees who are diligent, efficient, and who submit their work on time.

Correction: The company awards diligent, efficient, and punctual employees.



4. Lengthy phrases and sentences:

It is essential to avoid lengthy phrases and sentences to highlight clarity of thought in the written content. Concise phrases and sentences should be preferred always.

Phrases

- Due to the fact that - because
In the end - ultimately
Give consideration to - consider
Sooner or later - eventually

Sentences

- (a) When I started my own company, it gave me skills to handle problems on my own and find their solutions.

Concise version:

Starting my own company made me adept at solving problems.

- (b) There are two employees who have been selected for this year's Best Employee Award.

Concise version:

Two employees have been selected for this year's Best Employee Award.

2.5.2 Paragraph Construction

Now that sentence structure and common mistakes with reference to the same have been discussed, the next step of paragraph construction demands equal attention. It is imperative for a paragraph to be dedicated to one central topic. All the sentences of the topic should be connected to that same topic being discussed in a paragraph. It must mention the topic sentence either in the beginning, the middle, or the end of the paragraph. The rest of the sentences in the paragraph provide support using vivid words, logical sentence order, and grammatically and syntactically correct sentences. An effective paragraph lacks run-on sentences. It also uses transition words such as 'then', 'in addition to', or 'finally' to connect separate paragraphs coherently. The concluding sentence of a paragraph summarizes the central idea discussed in the paragraph.



As far as paragraph breaks are concerned, they offer a pause to the reader before moving into a different set of ideas in the new paragraph. There is no fixed number of sentences to be dedicated to one paragraph. The main idea is to stick to one chain of thought while writing one paragraph. A good writer reflects these aspects in writing.

Look at the following group of sentences and try to compose them logically:

Since this is not the kind of experience, we want you to have, we've made a note of your feedback on the driver-partner's profile. Please note that we have adjusted the fare as per our thresholds and will not be able to make any further changes to the trip fare. We appreciate you bringing this to our attention. We are sorry to hear that you are not happy with the fare you have been charged for this trip.

Solution:

We are sorry to hear that you are not happy with the fare you have been charged for this trip. Please note that we have adjusted the fare as per our thresholds and will not be able to make any further changes to the trip fare. Since this is not the kind of experience, we want you to have, we've made a note of your feedback on the driver-partner's profile. We appreciate you bringing this to our attention.

IN-TEXT QUESTIONS

5. Communication is a ——— skills.
 - (a) Soft
 - (b) Hard
 - (c) Rough
 - (d) Short
6. A business proposal from a branch manager of a company to the managing director of the company is an example of horizontal communication. (True/False)

2.6 Writing Composition

After understanding how to construct a paragraph, it is important to take the next big step wherein paragraph will be seen as a part of a larger



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essay. Many paragraphs combine to make one long essay. An essay composition requires three parts - the introduction, the body, and the conclusion. Skilful writers remind themselves of these three broad requirements as they continue to pursue writing essays. Other than one paragraph dedicated to both introduction and conclusion, there are more than one paragraphs which develop the key idea in the body of the essay. Just as creating a paragraph requires supporting statements developing the key idea, essay composition too demands the same through the inclusion of several paragraphs. The purpose is to develop the thesis statement in an elaborate manner. There are some steps that can be followed to compose an essay systematically:

1. **Prewriting:** It is the first step where a writer comes up with a topic. Various methods such as making notes, brainstorming, or free writing are used in order to finalize the main idea on which the body of the essay would be developed. The whole plan and structure to execute its various themes and sub-topics is charted at this stage. The purpose of writing is made clear. Questions such as why, for whom, and what are thought of and answered. After the topic has been decided, the thesis statement has to be decided. Clarity in this regard expresses the author's clarity of thought. Ideas can be developed logically later in the essay once the thesis statement is established in the beginning.
2. **Writing:**
 - (a) **Introduction:** The writer should capture the readers' attention through the introductory paragraph. The thesis statement should be carefully placed here so that the readers become interested in reading further. The plan to incorporate various themes, and sub-topics which were decided at the prewriting stage must be divulged here. The reader should be directed towards the organization of the writing.
 - (b) **Body of the essay:** Ideas are developed here. Facts, figures, and other details specific to the topic are provided. Body of an essay can have more than one paragraph. The writer has to ensure that each paragraph is related to the thesis statement and gets developed with the help of supporting ideas.



(c) **Conclusion:** After systematically organizing the ideas throughout the introduction and the body of the essay, the last paragraph that sums up the main points is called the concluding paragraph. It gives the coherent shape to the whole writing. Phrases such as, “After a thorough analysis of this, it is clear that...”, “Therefore,”, “It can be concluded that...” or “Thus,” are used to conclude an essay.

3. Editing: At the end, editing and proof-reading eliminate any errors present in the writing. The writer can revise, replace, add or omit any phrase or sentence which seems incorrect. This will help the readers receive a well-organized and completely correct version of the essay.

It is therefore clear that writing is a challenging task. It requires dedication at every stage right from the beginning, be it the sentence structure, grammar, paragraph construction or essay composition.

2.7 Summary

Each business relies heavily on the formal modes of communication. These include a lot of written communication. Therefore, as seen in this unit, written communication is put on a high pedestal. If a writer goes wrong even on the basic level, it will end up leaving a bad impression on the receiver of their message and may also result in hampering their established business relationship.

A thorough knowledge of the advantages and disadvantages of written communication, how to plan and execute different types of messages and their relevance in the business world, the role of different types of reports, and how to improve one’s writing skills beginning absolutely from the start, can help one achieve efficiency.

As shown through various examples of planning, executing, organizing data in a systematic manner and correction to be made at the first level of phrases and sentences will help a writer create highly impactful written communication in every field. Any person who has to work in a vast business environment should attain fluency in communication. It will help one attain the ability to perform all tasks without any trouble.



2.8 Answers to In-Text Questions

1. (c) Telephone
2. (a) Upward Communication
3. (a) Communication
4. (b) Process
5. (a) Soft
6. False

2.9 Self-Assessment Questions

1. Try to identify some parts of speeches in the following sentences:
 - (a) I admitted my mistake politely.
 - (b) The boy swam across the river.
 - (c) The company rejected my application.
 - (d) There has been a huge rise in the sales of our product lately.
 - (e) The table is right behind you.
2. As Administrative officer of ABC College, you, as a part of routine inspection, visited the college canteen. Write a report to the principal about the findings. Also include recommendations in the report.
3. You are a woman activist. You carried out a survey to find out the reasons of escalating crimes against woman in Delhi. Prepare a report on the outcome of the same. Also recommend some measures.
4. Draft a report on the increase in sales in the first quarter of the current financial year to be sent to the shareholders of your company.
5. Discuss the importance of written communication in the business world.
6. What should a writer keep in mind before drafting a formal document?
7. What are the different steps of writing a composition?



2.10 Suggested Readings

- ◆ Garg, Manoj Kumar. (2020). *English Fluency (Part 1)*. New Delhi: MKM Publishers Pvt. Ltd.
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Interpersonal Communication

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STRUCTURE

- 3.1 *Learning Objectives*
- 3.2 *Introduction*
- 3.3 *Understanding Interpersonal Communication*
- 3.4 *Communicating in Teams*
- 3.5 *Negotiation*
- 3.6 *Communication Skills During a Conflict*
- 3.7 *Mentoring and Appraisals*
- 3.8 *Communication in Social Media and Digital Communication*
- 3.9 *Summary*
- 3.10 *Self-Assessment Questions*
- 3.11 *References and Suggested Readings*

3.1 Learning Objectives

- ◆ Define interpersonal communication, its principles and the major theories of interpersonal communication.
- ◆ Understand the dynamics of communicating in teams and apply strategies for improving your communication within the team.
- ◆ Understand the process of negotiation and apply communication strategies for successful negotiations.



- ◆ Use communication strategies for averting and resolution of conflicts.
- ◆ Formulate a plan for mentoring and communicating with mentees for improved transfer of knowledge and skills.
- ◆ Improve handling of appraisals through communication strategies.
- ◆ Understand the process of digital communication and social media communication.

3.2 Introduction

Lack of communication ruins everything because instead of knowing how the other person is feeling, we just assume.

- From the Internet

Humans are a gregarious species for whom communication is a tool of socialisation. We communicate with each other all the time at the level of individual-to-individual, individual-to-group and *vice versa*. In fact, communication is identified as a basic human need which implies that people engage in interpersonal communication throughout their lives starting from infancy till the very end of one's life.

Interpersonal communication is a very important and highly valued skill not just in the professional context, but also in the personal and social context. It is through interpersonal communication that humans develop and maintain relationships.

On closer examination of the concept of interpersonal communication, you will realise that you simply cannot choose to opt out of it. There is no way you can choose not to have interpersonal communication. So much so that making a conscious decision not to communicate by ignoring somebody is also a type of communication. Your signal of ignoring someone will be decoded based on the other non-verbal signals accompanying your silence.

3.3 Understanding Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal Communication refers to the exchange of thoughts, ideas and feelings between two or more people through the means of verbal



and non-verbal communication. Interpersonal communication can be of the following types:—

- (a) **Listening:** The most important yet the most neglected communication type is that of listening or active listening which is the cornerstone of interpersonal communication as well as a relationship.
- (b) **Verbal:** It is the spoken word, including the language that you select, the manner in which you speak, and so on.
- (c) **Non-Verbal :** In a face-to-face interaction, everything that gets conveyed without the use of words is non-verbal communication. It includes gestures, postures, silence, eye contact (or absence of it), expressions, pitch of voice, intonation and modulation, etc.
- (d) **Written:** This type includes the use of writing and involves codifying the message in a particular language that the receiver understands.

3.3.1 Principles of Interpersonal Communication

There are certain principles of interpersonal communication that form the basis of our understanding of the phenomenon. These principles will help a discerning individual to be an effective communicator. The principles are mentioned below: –

- (i) You cannot do without interpersonal communication. In other words, interpersonal communication is **indispensable**. It is quite evident that a life devoid of any interpersonal communication is impossible. Any attempt to lead a life of complete isolation is bound to fail, as the interdependence of humans for emotional, physical and material needs is inescapable.
- (ii) Interpersonal communication is **irreversible** by definition. It simply means that once you communicate something, it is out there and cannot be taken back. You may regret whatever you said or make a formal apology; however, the damage to the relationship may already have taken place. Mahatma Gandhi famously wrote in his autobiography: –

“And I can now give myself the certificate that a thoughtless word hardly ever escapes my tongue or pen”. - Mahatma Gandhi



- (iii) Interpersonal communication is a **complex** process due to the sheer variety of the variables involved in it. There are the individuals themselves who choose a language, words, symbols, body language, expressions, etc. followed by perceptions of the individuals and then there is the all-important ‘context’, all of which have infinite permutations and combinations causing interpersonal communication to be highly complex.



Figure 3.1: Is communication really taking place

(Source: <https://redshoemovement.com/>)

- (iv) Interpersonal communication occurs in a **context** that a communicator needs to be aware about. In other words, the context help you determine how your messages will be interpreted. The broad categories into which the context can be segregated are listed below: –
- (a) **Psychological:** Interpersonal communication is influenced by the state of mind or the state of psychological well-being of the parties engaged in communication. For instance, an individual under considerable work-related pressure may get agitated on being asked completely harmless questions at home or yell at a child who insists on him/her playing with the child.
 - (b) **Situational:** The place/situation/circumstance/occasion/setting where the communication is taking place has a great impact on it. In simple words, people communicate differently in different situations.



- (c) **Relational:** The nature of relationship that exists between the communicating parties greatly influences the communication process. For instance, two friends would communicate so differently when compared to how each of them would communicate with, his/her parents.
- (d) **Cultural:** Every culture has certain set of unwritten rules that are manifest and understood only by those initiated into that culture. The difference in cultures of the people engaging in communication may cause them to interpret signals differently due to ethnocentric bias or ethnocentrism.

3.3.2 Theories of Interpersonal Communication

There are several theories of Interpersonal Communication that provide very useful framework for understanding the process. These theories are based on different perspectives and accordingly help in the study and practice of effective communication.

Uncertainty Reduction Theory

Human beings are inherently uncomfortable with uncertainty and prefer predictability. The uncertainty is classified into cognitive and behavioural uncertainties. The former refers to the lack of clarity on the other person's beliefs, thoughts, views and opinions, etc. whereas the latter refers to the lack of predictability of an individual's actions.

The uncertainty reduction theory tries to explain the initial interaction among people as an attempt to reduce the uncertainty as to their behaviour towards each other. The higher the uncertainty the greater is the distance between people. The theory assumes that people would cognitively gauge uncertainty and act with the objective of reducing it. Though, there needs to be a trigger as per this theory that will prompt the individual to take steps to reduce the uncertainty. This trigger is usually in the form of a social situation and/or the cognitive process. The uncertainty reduction theory states that people tend to reduce uncertainty using the approaches mentioned below: -

◆ Active Approach

It involves an individual trying to gain information about the target by asking those acquainted with the latter.



◆ **Passive Approach**

As the name suggests, the passive approach entails gathering information about the other person by observation.

◆ **Interactive Approach**

This approach is also an active approach where an individual uses direct interaction as a strategy to learn about the other person by probing and sharing.

◆ **Extractive Approach**

The extractive information seeking approach was later added to the theory and is about using online media to get information about a person.

◆ **Application of the Uncertainty Reduction Theory**

The major application of the uncertainty reduction theory is in the area of intercultural communication, recruitment, treatment of patients and computer-mediated communication (CMC).

Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC)

The various forms of communication between people that happens through two or more electronic devices connected through network, which can be synchronous and asynchronous. The exchange can be one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many through the medium of text messaging, voice and video.

Social Exchange Theory

The social exchange theory states that individuals choose social interactions that they perceive to be beneficial for them. This theory postulates that human interaction is akin to economic trade which is founded on cost-benefit analysis, with each participant vying for maximization of benefits and minimization of costs. The process involves disclosure of information between individuals as long as the costs of doing so are more than offset by the benefits. As a consequence, the individuals progressively gain intimacy as long as they keep receiving rewards. Marriage is an example of a social exchange where each individual in the relationship feels content and comfortable as long as they feel that they are getting reciprocated with benefits equal to the efforts put in by him / her. The failure of a marriage is a result of decreasing level of rewards and reciprocity as



perceived by one or both the partners. A similar situation can be imagined in a professional context where an employee will be discontent if he/she thinks that the remuneration is not commensurate with the efforts and performance. It must be amply clear by now that the cornerstones of this theory are the cost-benefit analysis and reciprocity.

3.4 Communicating in teams

A **team** is a group of individuals selected on the basis of possession of complementary skills who work together and generate synergy to achieve a common objective. Teamwork is based on sharing of responsibility and active communication.

How are Teams different from Groups?

The simple difference between a group and a team lies in that, in the former, the members coordinate their efforts in the pursuit of individual goals and in the latter, the members coordinate their efforts towards achievement of a common goal.

3.4.1 Characteristics of a Team

◆ Clarity of Goal

The fundamental aspect of teams is that before a team is put together, the goals/objective and the desired outcomes have to be decided. It would help the team to work with a clear direction. However, the team is often given sufficient flexibility to formulate strategies for achieving the goals.

◆ Interdependence

The team members are dependent on each other and are unable to achieve the goals independently. There is considerable reliance of the team members on each other for the right information and support in terms of expertise in a particular domain.

◆ Responsibility and Accountability

The team members are collectively responsible for completion of the assigned work and are collectively accountable for it. The risks and rewards are shared by the team members.

**◆ Authority**

The team as a unit is given the authority to make decisions pertaining to the activities undertaken by it in the pursuit of the desired outcomes and goals.

◆ Open Communication

Communication is the most important ingredient for an effective and successful team. The way of communication, the methods adopted for communication within the team and the frequency of communication, etc. determine how well the team is functioning. It is this characteristic of teams that we will be focusing on.

3.4.2 Team Communication

Team communication refers to the exchange of information among the members of a team working towards a common goal/objective. An overwhelming number of professionals would agree that the most common cause of failures in the workplace is ineffective communication. Organisations rely on teams for getting the work done and therefore, effective teams are valued very highly not just in the organisational context but also in myriad fields, such as sports, research, etc.

◆ Benefits of Improving Team Communication

Organisations and leaders are constantly on the lookout for ways of improving communication within the organisation. These organisations have several teams that are working on crucial projects. It is imperative for leaders to ensure that there is a culture of open and effective communication for smooth functioning of the organisation and for the achievement of organisational objectives. Improving team communication has the following key benefits:

◆ Rapport Building

During the initial phase of a team, improving communication within the team reduces the uncertainty as to each other's behaviour which helps break the ice. It leads to better coordination and helps build trust and confidence within the team. A well-coordinated team with no trust issues is better placed for achieving the goals and desired outcomes.



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◆ **Fosters Innovation**

Continuous exchange of information and feedback within a team can be the source of creativity and innovation. It helps discover more efficient ways of doing things and arriving at out-of-the-box solutions to work-related problems.

◆ **Conflict Management**

Possibly the greatest advantage of better team communication is that it helps in early resolution of conflicts within the team. It can even help in avoiding and averting potential conflict situations. Active listening is a skill that is all important in team communication as it improves shared understanding of each other's perspectives, opinions, needs and emotions. By paying attention to other's perspectives and giving it a genuine thought, you will be able to better comprehend and appreciate them and respond in a constructive manner thereby minimizing the chances of conflicts. Active listening also includes "listening" to the body language which can supplement your comprehension of the spoken word. Some very simple yet useful techniques that will come handy in handling situations of conflict are mentioned below (Note how these are all closely connected with active listening):

- **Paraphrase:** Restate what the other person has said in your own words. This will prompt the other person to recognize that you genuinely listened to him/her and that you understand the other person's view.
- **Restate:** It is plain repetition of what the other person has just told you. This again demonstrates that you are actively engaging in the communication.
- **Reframe:** It is a description of what you understand about the other person's needs or demands. If you use positive language to reframe, it will show your earnestness to overcome the impasse.
- **Summarize:** It involves a giving a brief of the situation in your own words also putting into words the emotions that may have been manifest in the other person's communication. It will reassure them that you have the right understanding of the situation.

◆ **Improves Productivity**

A team that communicates effectively gets to improve its productivity as there is a clear understanding of each other and very few chances of



an information blockage. We have seen technology coming to the aid of teams in the form of applications that enable sharing of screens, virtual meetings, etc. It has lowered the timeframe required for team members to get in sync.

◆ **Work Culture**

Communicating routinely as a trust and confidence building measure helps build a work culture that appreciates and values teamwork. It helps create a healthy and transparent work environment where employees put in their best with earnestness.

3.4.3 *Strategies to Improve Team Communication*

In an idyllic workplace, there is open communication with full professionalism and close collaboration among team members. Each team member is aware and conscious of his/her roles and responsibilities. There are no conflicts and all goals are achieved within the given timelines.

However, the reality is nowhere close to the above picture. Most workplaces are characterised by mistrust, misunderstandings, conflicts, delays and cost overruns.

There are certain strategies that will help in improving team communication and overcoming issues, such as misunderstandings, conflicts, delays, etc. Some of these strategies have been discussed below:

◆ **Cultivate “Open-Door Policy”**

Many organisations have been following the open-door policy which encourages employees to ask questions, raise concerns, share experiences and put forward novel ideas. Some have gone to the extent of removing actual doors and partitions as it is believed that it would facilitate free exchange of thoughts and ideas. The open-door policy also helps create an atmosphere of trust and confidence which is conducive for improvement in productivity. This policy would help in immediate resolution of issues rather than waiting for a formal meeting to be scheduled for it.

◆ **Exchange Feedback**

The leaders must help develop a practice of exchanging feedback at various levels. Feedback is a two-way process and the person receiving the feedback needs to develop a receptive temperament. However, feedback has to be constructive rather than vindictive.



Documentation of constructive feedback can also help create resources that can be used for future learning.

◆ **Team-Building Exercises**

Team outings, excursions, games and other such fun activities go a very long way in improving the communication between team members. A two-day trip with your colleagues will help you learn about them more than years of working together in office. Such activities, if planned at regular intervals, can be a great de-stressing experience. It will help the team members rejuvenate themselves and the activities undertaken during the team-building exercise will help expose hidden talents in some of the team members.

◆ **Use Technology**

Technology has provided tools for teams to better coordinate and simplify workflow. There are innumerable cloud-based applications available which aid in communicating better, especially when the team is not located at one place. Standardizing the use of some of these applications will make it convenient for everyone and it would be easier to initiate new members into the ecosystem. These applications enable collaboration, progress-review, referring to workflow, deadlines, etc. in a much easier way than a conventional email based communication.

◆ **Address Personnel Diversity**

The industry is witnessing greater workforce diversity than ever before. Individuals of different nationalities, regions, cultures, professions, sexual orientation, ideologies and languages, etc. often come together to work in the same teams. Understanding each other's culture, language, accents, slangs, beliefs and humour will take time and concerted efforts at team building. The leaders have to take charge and devise methods to enable greater interaction and overcome difficulties due to a multicultural team.

◆ **Communication Training**

Training the team members in communication-related modules/courses will equip them with skills to function as a coherent unit by application of effective communication strategies. The training programmes may be selected based on the nature of the work being handled by the team and the existing skill sets, strengths and weaknesses of the members.



3.4.4 Challenges in Team Communication

There are many challenges that teams have to deal with in order to operate efficiently. It is important for you to understand what these challenges are, so that you can detect issues before they get out of hand and cause injury to the team fabric. Let us discuss some major challenges that teams face.

◆ Bias towards One's Own Position

It is observed that sometimes a group member takes a position and defends it unnecessarily in a bid to prove himself right. Such a situation arises when an individual keeps his ego above the interest of the group. The solution is to orient the team members, right from the time of induction into the team, to think for the common good of the team by putting the interest of the team first.

◆ Lack of Trust

Trust deficit among members of a team is one of the most common causes of lack of communication within the team. This lack of trust can manifest itself in the form of the following behaviours:

- Members avoiding each other
- Avoiding team meetings
- Refusal to seek and offer assistance
- Low morale
- Lack of warmth

◆ Groupthink

When the group members become too comfortable with each other, they tend to desire group cohesion to such an extent that the group starts thinking of having a consensus all the time. This is known as groupthink and it has the effect of driving out critical analysis of ideas, opinions and alternatives. Groupthink retards proper communication within a team as there is no exchange of fresh ideas, alternative positions and perspectives. Everybody agrees to everything and eventually, nothing innovative comes out of the team.

◆ Issues with Communication Tools

It is obvious that the members of a team may not be sitting in the same office. In fact, some or even all team members may be working from



different locations. In such a scenario, the communication among team members is only as good as the tool(s) used for communication. If there are hi-tech cloud-based tools for communication, it makes things pretty seamless, however there may be members who may not be as comfortable with such tools as others.

◆ Information Overload

It has been observed that when a team makes use of multiple platforms for communication, such as emails, phone calls, video conferencing, face-to-face meetings, instant messaging, etc., there is so much of information being exchanged on a daily, even hourly basis that keeping a track of things becomes a challenge. As you can see, issues in team communication can arise not just because of the lack of information exchange, but also due to excess of it.

◆ Hybrid Teams

After the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, companies started forming Hybrid Teams. A hybrid team one in which some members work remotely, and some may be working from the office premises. Mostly, the facility of working from a remote location is rotated between members so as to offer flexibility to all. Based on the workload and urgency, the arrangement is adapted to suit specific requirements. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, the concept of hybrid teams was restricted mostly to distributed teams. However, it is now used widely because of obvious benefits, some of which are mentioned below:

- Cost-effective both for the employee as well as the employer
- Provides flexibility
- Companies can hire talent which may not be available locally
- Helps in attaining work-life balance

The above benefits notwithstanding, there are several issues with hybrid teams as well. The most important thing is that in hybrid teams, physical connect is lost. Cohesion among team members usually develops by means of face-to-face interactions. Especially those informal conversations around the pantry area during coffee breaks. Further, whatever important decisions are taken in the office is required to be communicated to the remote workers to keep them abreast. These communication channels need



to be worked-out and formalised to ensure that the people for whom it is intended actually consume it.

3.5 Negotiation

Negotiation refers to the back-and-forth communication or dialogue between two or more parties to reach an agreement on issues that concern these parties where there may be some common interests and some conflicting interests. People negotiate routinely in their personal and professional lives. However, some negotiations are rather challenging that require certain skill sets for achieving a mutually agreeable outcome.

You will observe that most people are not very adept at negotiation; in fact, many people fear negotiations. Though, one can pick up the required skills to be a good negotiator by training, doing your homework and with some practice.

3.5.1 Types of Negotiations

◆ Distributive

There are negotiations in which the involved parties negotiate for the distribution of a fixed value. In such negotiations, one's gain is a result of the share foregone by the other. These negotiations are like zero-sum games where the gain of one is the loss of the other. It is also known as a win-lose negotiation.

◆ Integrative

The negotiations where multiple factors and interests are under discussion and provide an opportunity to the negotiators to satisfy the needs of each party are called integrative negotiations. It can potentially turn out to be a win-win situation for the parties involved. Distributive negotiations also have the potential to be turned into integrative if the issues are rethought and the parameters are reworked.

◆ Team Negotiation

The negotiations which is conducted by a team of negotiators from each side is called as team negotiation. For instance, an automotive component manufacturer from India is interested in entering into a Joint Venture



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(JV) with a Japanese company. The Indian company sends a team of six negotiators with each of the negotiators having a specialised expertise. The Japanese counterpart will also have multiple members to proceed with the negotiations.

◆ Multiparty Negotiation

As the name suggests, multiparty negotiations involve multiple parties and the interests of each other these parties is at stake which makes multiparty negotiation much more difficult. For the same reason, multiparty negotiation requires more polished and wider skills. A very good **example** is that of trade negotiations at the World Trade Organisation (WTO), where the interest of all 164 member countries is involved and the representatives of each of the member countries are experts in the domain.

◆ One-Time or One-Shot Negotiation

Negotiations where the parties involved negotiate only once and have no intention of any further dealings in the future. Since there is no intention of a long-term engagement, the parties can potentially resort to unethical means. **For example**, suppose you are standing outside a movie theatre and see the House Full sign and decide to purchase a ticket from a black marketer. The latter may resort to unethical means to sell the ticket. His/her only aim is to sell at a high price and yours is get it at a cost as close to the window price.

3.5.2 Some Key Negotiation Skills**◆ Planning**

Proper planning to work out the details of the short-term, medium-term and long-term ramifications of the terms of negotiation will ensure that you are not caught by surprise in the middle of the negotiation and will prevent you from exposing your position.

◆ Communication

Communication is an indispensable skill that becomes the medium through which negotiations take place. During a negotiation, communicating the right messages in the right manner so as to sound compelling and persuasive is a skill that is acquired over time. It involves careful selection of words,



observation of non-verbal cues and developing a deep understanding of the context, especially in case of an intercultural setting.

◆ Resourcefulness

Resourcefulness and creativity are skills that come in handy during negotiations where spot thinking is required to overcome new constraints.

◆ Problem-Solving

Most negotiations occur when there is an impasse, and no progress can be made. Seasoned negotiators apply their problem-solving skills to overcome the situation and end the stalemate.

◆ Active Listening

This skill helps you to perfectly understand the other party's position and helps create an atmosphere of trust and confidence which is a great catalyst for a successful negotiation.

◆ Persuasiveness

The ability to convince the other party that the terms you have set forth are justified and get them to agree to it is called persuasiveness. In other words, successful negotiators have the ability to influence the other party.

◆ Identify Trade-offs

You must study the entire situation deeply to identify issues that are dear to the other party but not very important for you. Such trade-offs can be exploited to your advantage by allowing to take a step closer on that point in return for something of value to you.

3.5.3 Key Strategies in Negotiation

The naive approach to negotiation is based on a reactive tactic rather than taking the proactive approach. The biggest downside of the reactive approach is that the outcomes or possible outcomes of the negotiation will be a function of the proposals/demand coming from your counterpart. The reactive approach may seem to work in simple situations, such as haggling for a discount from a street vendor. However, complex negotiations require a well-developed strategy that you can implement during the process. Some of the key strategies in negotiation are discussed below:

**◆ Engage with Stakeholders other than the Obvious Counterpart**

Before you begin the negotiation process, think about all the parties other than the counterpart that have an interest in the outcome of the negotiation. You may find some stakeholder who could be your counterpart in bringing about the desired outcome without even having to negotiate with the original counterpart. You will be required to think about ways to engage with the new counterpart to achieve the desired outcomes. This strategy is frequently used in legal cases where a hostile party is disciplined by using another related party in the value-chain by negotiating with the latter to halt supplies to the former.

◆ Find out about potential allies at the planning stage

During the negotiation process, you may require the support of others to help with your cause. You must complete the potential ally identification process at the planning stage so that you can fall back on your ally for crucial support in negotiation.

◆ Identify your potential Adversaries

Just as you identify your allies, the process of identification of potential adversaries who can potentially derail the negotiation is equally important. If possible, address the concerns of your opponents to prevent them from forming a damaging alliance and trying to block the negotiations.

◆ Use your Leverage Effectively

Leverage is generally perceived as the negotiating power that one party has over the other. It may be thought of as the extent to which one party wants the deal relative to the other and the relative value of the best alternative available to each party.

◆ Work on your Best Alternative to Negotiated Agreement (BATNA)

BATNA is the next best deal available with you in case the negotiation with the party fails. You will feel much more confident walking into the negotiation room if you have prepared your BATNA. It will also give you the leverage to demand more from the other party. The first step is to list down all your options and check how feasible and actionable each one is. The second step is to make the same assessment for your counterpart's available and actionable options.



Leverage and Negotiation

ABC Ltd. was in urgent need of appointment of a vendor to procure laptops for a new batch of Management Trainees. A tender was floated for procurement and only one bid was received for the same. This bidder had already worked with ABC Ltd. previously. The bid was too high and there was no time to retender. The procurement manager of ABC Ltd. was in a difficult situation. He decided to invite the bidder for negotiation of the prices received in the bid.

The procurement manager had already checked the work record of the bidder and he found that a substantial sum of the bidder was lying with ABC Ltd. as security deposit which was not being released due to some issue with a document submitted in connection with a previous work executed by the bidder. However, the work itself was completed satisfactorily.

The procurement manager had some leverage in hand to negotiate with. In the meeting, the bidder refused to reduce the prices as he was aware that he was the only bidder. However, the procurement manager told the bidder that he was considering retender as there was only one bid and too was very high. It was communicated in a matter-of-fact manner and gave the bidder an impression that he could lose the work despite being the only bidder. The procurement manager also stated that he was aware that security deposit of the bidder lying with ABC Ltd. and he could help in getting the matter resolved.

The offer seemed good to the bidder as there was some chance of getting the stuck payment released in exchange for a reasonable reduction in the bid. The vendor readily agreed to resubmit a lower bid.

3.6 Communication Skills During a Conflict

Conflict can be defined as a disagreement or dispute between interdependent parties that often arises due to incompatible goals, scarcity of resources or opposing point-of-view. Interpersonal conflicts can be manifested by individuals over an interesting spectrum of verbal and non-verbal expressions, ranging from complete withdrawal into silence to an emotional and furious outburst. Interpersonal conflicts are bound to happen because



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whenever individuals go out of sync in terms of information exchange, potential misunderstanding can develop which can turn into a conflict, if not addressed in a timely manner.

The importance of communication for preventing and resolving conflicts can hardly be exaggerated. Poor communication, more often than not, causes misunderstandings that soon balloons into a conflict. Therefore, communication as a tool will help you build relationships and help you in managing conflicts that will inevitably occur even in the strongest of relationships.

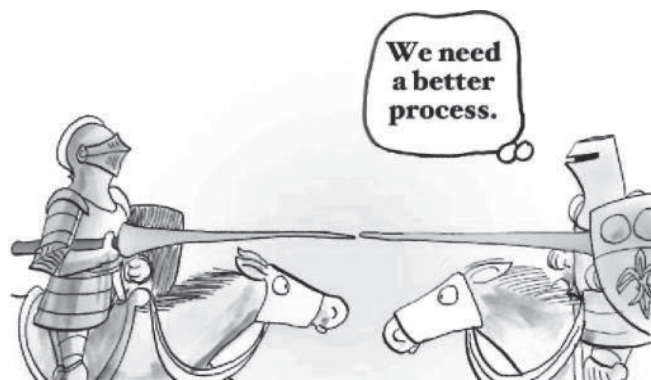


Figure 3.2: Communication is the answer

(Source: <https://www.readersdigest.in/>)

3.6.1 Communication Strategies for Conflict Situations

◆ Active Listening

Active listening is one communication skill that we will keep talking about in this course. Despite being one of the most potent skills in the entire process of communication, it remains the most under utilised and neglected one. When in a conflict situation, lend an ear to the other person and listen genuinely to what he/she has to say. This listening has to be without any animated expressions, interruptions and loss of attention. The person being heard will feel placated with your sincere effort. Use the pauses to restate or paraphrase what the other person has been saying to confirm your understanding.



◆ Watch Your Tone and Pitch

A very interesting fact that you will notice during arguments is that when one party begins speaking in a very loud pitch the natural reaction from the other party is to respond in an equally loud pitch which leads to worsening of the situation. It can be deduced that on the contrary, if you mellow down your pitch and volume during a heated argument the other party will be compelled to do the same thereby de-escalating the situation. Therefore, you can make use of this strategy in real life by controlling the pitch and tone of your speech in a conflict.

◆ Timing of Communication

Bad timing to attempt resolving a conflict can potentially prolong the conflict despite the best of intentions. In interpersonal conflicts, sometimes it has been observed that one party is so eager to resolve the conflict that an attempt is made even if the other party is unwell or in an important office engagement or a social gathering. Such ill-timed interventions can further worsen the situation and make resolution even more challenging and painful. The best strategy is to ask the other person if he/she is comfortable and willing to have a dialogue and take cues from the response, both verbal and non-verbal.

◆ Keep Your Non-Verbal Communication in Check

Improper non-verbal communication can cause as much damage in a conflict situation as can poor verbal communication. The strategy to be followed here is to restrain from expressing extreme emotions, such as walking out in the middle of a conversation, withdrawing into silence, etc. This animated display will send the signal that you do not wish the situation to improve, further reducing any chances of de-escalation and resolution of the dispute.

◆ No Absolute Statements

In a conflict situation, one should avoid using absolute statements like “never”, “ever”, “always” as an expression of emphasis because it can further aggravate the situation and spark a fresh series of arguments on how the statement was unjustified.

◆ Avoid “You” Statements, Use “I” Instead

In a conflict situation, the communication has to sound like an attempt at reasoning with the other party and not like an interrogation. Rather



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than using sentences that contain “you”, such as “Why did you give away all the credit of success to Mr. X.” Instead, use “I” statements, like “I felt dejected when all the credit of success was given to Mr. X.” Your statements sound more like blaming or accusing someone for something.

◆ Accept Responsibility

Admitting your mistake graciously is not actually a strategy rather it is plain honesty, which would resonate well with the other party. Owning responsibility of one’s mistakes is a trait found in leaders and is appreciated by all. It can be a profound experience for the one owning responsibility and equally as overwhelming for the other party to see such a gesture of honesty and sincerity. It would have an immediate effect of the de-escalation of the situation.

◆ Avoid Passing Judgments and Verdicts

Jumping to conclusions when you are extremely agitated and stressed is a bad idea as rational thought would be missing from such conclusions. In fact, one should make a conscious effort not to pass any judgments on the statement/behaviour/motive of the other person as it is certain to backfire and would lead to a rapid deterioration of the situation. The best strategy is to actively listen to the other person, process each thought with logic and facts before summarizing the chain of events in your words. This can be followed by presenting your account of the whole matter in an empathetic manner so as not to hurt the sentiment of the already upset counterpart.

3.7 Mentoring and Appraisals

Mentoring is a learning relationship between an experienced person and a relatively junior person, where the former offers guidance, support and counsel for the long-term career development of the latter. It is a one-to-one interaction between the “mentor” (the senior person) and the “mentee” (the junior person). The mentee stands to gain a great deal of knowledge and wisdom from the mentor without having to go through the slow learning curve. The mentor, on the other hand, gets a fresh perspective on the business and possible new solutions to old work problems.



3.7.1 Objectives of Mentoring

- ◆ To train and groom employees
- ◆ To fast-track the professional development of an employee
- ◆ To foster creativity and innovation
- ◆ To provide an opportunity for skill-transfer to the mentor
- ◆ For succession planning

Effective communication between a mentor and mentee is the key to a successful mentoring programme. It is important to understand that the communication in a mentoring relationship is often about imparting problem-solving skills to enable the mentee to learn to solve such problems without actual handholding. The mentee may just be learning to communicate in a professional setting and would look up to the mentor for guidance.

3.7.2 How to ensure effective communication in a mentoring relationship?

◆ Active Listening

A mentee may have a hundred questions for you simply because he is new to the professional world or to the industry. You must make it a point to listen to him so as to inspire and build trust in the relationship. Listening actively is also important for you to interpret the issue in the right context so that your response caters to it adequately.

◆ Speak in First Person

Speaking in first person conveys ownership of whatever advice you are giving as a mentor and helps inspire confidence in the mentee. So, try to use more “I” statements like “I have observed while working on similar assignments that...”

◆ Ask Questions

Probing to gauge the understanding of the mentee on the underlying concepts of an issue which is being discussed helps the mentor to calibrate the learning process appropriately. Asking questions as you go along during a session is also important to ascertain whether the mentee is grasping the nuances well.



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◆ Body Language

Make use of your knowledge of body language, including gestures, posture, expressions and eye contact to supplement your reading of the mentees understanding. Any divergence in the two will prompt you to interject and ask questions to clarify and improve understanding.

◆ Mind the Generation Gap

More often than not, there is some age difference between the mentor and the mentee leading to potentially significant differences in the perceptions, metaphors and vocabulary. Seeking clarification wherever you think your mentee has used a certain term which you find to be out of place from your perspective is always a good thing to do to avoid divergence in understanding.

◆ Use Technology to Communicate

After the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic there has been a significant increase in work-from-home (WFH) option for employees. In such cases, the mentor and mentee may be sitting far apart and physical meetings may happen rarely. Communicating through the electronic media, *i.e.* email, instant messaging (IM), etc. may be a good idea for routine issues. However, the more important issues are best discussed in person, or with the use of video conferencing (VC) applications, such as MS Teams, WebEx, Zoom, etc. as per the policy of your organisation.

3.7.3 Appraisals

Appraisal is a tool in the hands of the reporting managers to systematically track, evaluate and document the performance of a team member based on which regular feedback is provided to the latter to enable improvement in performance and deliverables. The performance appraisal is also used as a document based on which pay hikes, job rotations, promotions, etc. are decided.

Appraisal and Communication**◆ Confidentiality**

The most important aspect of communication of performance appraisals is confidentiality. Appraisal contains sensitive information as to the employee's pay grade, designation, roles and responsibilities, key performance



indicators, timelines, etc. which needs to be kept confidential. When appraisal forms are sent, they are kept in sealed envelopes and handed over to the addressee only. However, these days the performance appraisal systems are online application-based with each supervisor and employee getting login accounts to keep it private and confidential.

◆ **One-To-One Communication**

Appraisal being such as a sensitive process needs to be conducted with due care and diligence. Never conduct appraisals for your team members in a group as it would entail ethical issues. Discussing one's performance in a group can be insulting and humiliating, besides you cannot expect a team member to be candid in front of others. Therefore, it has to be a one-to-one exercise and a focussed and detailed one at that, conducted in a dignified manner.

◆ **Listen and Discuss Openly**

An appraisal is not complete without the employee agreeing to what the assessment says. Therefore, the supervisor and the employee have to be in agreement on the performance appraisal before it is formalised. In case the employee differs in opinion about your assessment, sit down and discuss the points where the employee feels that the assessment is not a true reflection of actual performance. Listen carefully without any preconceived notion or bias as the employee may really have a point which requires rethinking of certain items in the appraisal made by you. It will help clear any potential resentment which can even lead to the exit of the employee from the organisation. It is a fact that attrition in many organisations peak immediately after appraisals. This can be avoided if reporting managers are able to communicate well during appraisals and listen to what the employees have to say and valuing it on merits.

◆ **Celebrating the Outcome**

As a supervisor, you must make it a point to congratulate your team members on the appraisals and promotions in a way that makes them feel appreciated. Many supervisors spend some time with the employees at their workstations discussing and commending the journey of the employees over the appraisal period. This recognition can be a great motivation for the employees to continue to put in their best.



3.8 Communication in Social Media and Digital Communication

Digital Communication

The process of communicating with people through various online channels, including social media, emails, web-banner adverts, online adverts and advertorials, blogs, podcasts, etc. is known as digital communication. The digital medium has gained huge traction over the past decade.

Social Media

A platform of interaction for people that they use to create, share and consume information, ideas, thoughts, entertaining content, etc. is known as social media. The most popular social media platforms include YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter LinkedIn and blogs. Social media is used by a very large number of people on a daily basis for having conversations, sharing thought and ideas, images and videos, advertising and marketing and making new friends and relationships. Profiles are created on these platforms not just by people for their personal use, but also by organisations, institutions and brands.

The biggest advantage of communication using Social Media is that there is hardly any cost involved in it. Brands can reach a wide audience at negligible costs if they choose to utilise the social media. In fact, there are many brands, such as Rolls Royce, Ferrero Rocher and Zara that hardly spend any money on advertising through the conventional media of television commercials (TVCs) and print adverts. Such companies rely almost entirely on digital communication and social media for the purpose.

3.8.1 Social Media Communication as a Key External Communication Strategy

Social media has captured the imagination of marketing professionals and communicators across businesses and organisations. The entire paradigm of external communication has shifted in favour of social media. It has changed the way corporations communicate with its external stakeholders, including customers, investors, distributors, suppliers, etc. Managers use the social media platforms for story-telling, creating a buzz around an



event or a product, spreading awareness and so on. Organisations have started realising that their priority is to continuously engage with their stakeholders and that social media is too important a tool to be ignored. The importance of social media for communication with external stakeholders can be understood from the reasons mentioned below—

- (a) Social media facilitates direct and open communication with stakeholders. Brands can rely on information discovery by stakeholders provided that they keep posting engaging content.
- (b) Social media is a great tool for mobilising public opinion and, it is increasingly being used for market research, surveys, opinions polls, product development, customer service, etc.
- (c) Social media enables organisations in reaching a wide audience at negligible costs, which would otherwise involve spending huge sums on advertising through conventional media.
- (d) Another great advantage of social media for communicating with external stakeholders is that it provides a channel for direct feedback on a continuous basis which enables communication professionals to adapt the company's offerings to the evolving needs and expectations of the stakeholders.

3.8.2 Communication Using Social Media Campaigns

Social media campaigns are presently the most preferred medium for businesses to connect with customers. The primary reason is that social media is much more engaging than the conventional media. Further, social media enables artificial intelligence (AI)-enabled delivery of customized content based on the interests of various target groups and individuals. Let us see how communication professionals build engaging social media campaigns on various platforms.

- ◆ **YouTube** is a platform that is used by communications professionals for brand building by partnering with influencers, creating how-to-videos for relevant brands, create behind-the-scenes or making-of-something videos that creates a story around the evolution of a product, etc.



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- ◆ Brands utilize **Twitter** in many ways, including a direct marketing communication with customers, conduct market research and surveys and provide customer support by setting up full-fledged customer support handle. Many brands make use of trending handles to communicate with its target market.
- ◆ **Facebook** is a great medium to engage with groups and social communities. Professionals communicate with the communities through dedicated brand pages and groups. Facebook Store feature also allows small businesses to create an online store on their platform for free.
- ◆ **Instagram** is used by brands that rely on visual appeal to connect with its target market. For instance, all brands connected to the fashion industry, celebrity marketing and so on.
- ◆ **LinkedIn** is a professional networking platform where people share and discuss their thoughts, ideas, experiences, etc.
- ◆ **Blogs** are internet sites that are written in the form of a journal where the author posts entries in a sequential manner. Brands often use blogs as a part of their web content to reach out to its target audience. Blogging is not just used for external communication, but also for internal communication regarding policy changes, new initiatives, etc.

3.8.3 Challenges in Social Media Communication

Social media communication has great advantages for corporations. However, it is also the most challenging medium of communication for the reasons discussed below:

- ◆ **Creating Content Frequently**

People have very short memories when it comes to digital content. They need something new for consumption every time they are online. Thus, social media communicators have the gargantuan task of developing creative content too frequently. You would appreciate that it is indeed a challenge, for human creativity cannot be forced.



◆ Customising Content for Various Target Groups

Creating content on a regular basis is not good enough, there is also the need to customise the content to suit the tastes of different target audiences. This task of customisation can be equally enormous and time-consuming. The issue with customising the content for too many audiences is that it becomes difficult to maintain the uniqueness of content.

◆ Timing

Timing the release of content and the duration for which the content is to be run on various platforms is also one of the most challenging aspects of social media communication. Social media communicators have to keep a close watch on how well the content is being received in order to make the most out of it. If a popular campaign is withdrawn too early to make way for a fresh campaign, the potential benefits of the former may be lost.

◆ Lack of Expertise and Resources

Social media content creation is a highly skilled job and the expertise may not be available in-house in most companies. Further, if you want to use multimedia content in your posts, finding the right multimedia which is high-quality, fitting the specifications etc. can be a challenge.

◆ Legal Aspects

Another key issue with social media communication is that of the legal implications pertaining intellectual property rights (IPR). Therefore, social media communicators have to be very conscientious when using multimedia content developed by third-parties.

3.9 Summary

1. The exchange of thoughts, ideas and feelings between people through verbal and non-verbal communication is called Interpersonal Communication.
2. Team communication refers to the exchange of information among the members of a team working towards a common goal/objective.
3. Negotiation is the dialogue that two or more parties engage in for sorting out their differences. Effective communication strategies help in successful negotiation and finding a win-win solution.



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4. A disagreement between interdependent parties that arises due to incompatible goals, scarcity of resources or opposing point-of-view is known as a conflict. Proper communication is the most potent solution for preventing conflicts from arising and also resolving them without much damage.
5. Mentoring is referred to as the process of guiding, advising and supporting a junior by a seasoned and experience senior within the organisation.
6. Appraisal refers to a continuous process evaluating and documenting the performance of an employee in the execution of the duties assigned to him / her for a specific period of assessment. The key performance indicators (KPIs), expected outcomes, etc. need to be documented well and communicated for a fair and just assessment.
7. Digital communication and its major component, *i.e.*, social media are the most important communication channel for developing and nurturing relationships with your stakeholders. The right communication mix using various digital media channels help in reaching the right people and relaying the right message.

3.10 Self-Assessment Questions

1. Discuss the benefits of improving communication within a team.
2. What is interpersonal communication? How would you use the uncertainty reduction theory to help you transition successfully into your new study or work environment?
3. Identify some negotiation skills that you think are the most useful in turning the tide in your favour?
4. Have you ever been embroiled in a conflict? Recall the strategies that you used to resolve it and compare it with the strategies given in the lesson.
5. Why is so much emphasis given on confidentiality during appraisal communication?
6. What are some of the strategies that you use on your personal social media handles to invite attention of people and engage with them?



3.11 References and Suggested Readings

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Cross-Cultural Communication

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STRUCTURE

- 4.1 *Learning Objectives*
- 4.2 *Introduction*
- 4.3 *What is Culture?*
- 4.4 *Studying Cultures*
- 4.5 *Cross Cultural Communication*
- 4.6 *Communication Across Cultures Through Different Mediums*
- 4.7 *Business Etiquette Across Cultures*
- 4.8 *Strategizing for Effective Cross-Cultural Communication*
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4.1 Learning Objectives

- ◆ Define culture and explain the evolution of culture.
- ◆ Enumerate the different approaches to study cultures.
- ◆ Define cross-cultural communication and appreciate its importance in the present context.
- ◆ Enumerate the different mediums through which communication occurs across cultures.
- ◆ Enunciate business etiquettes observed in different cultures.



- ◆ Formulate strategies for successfully communicating across cultures using the theoretical framework provided in the lesson.

4.2 Introduction

Have you noticed that the world around us is getting more diverse and our interactions with people from different cultures are growing at a rate faster than ever? The interaction among people from different cultures has been on the rise due to industrialisation, migration from rural to urban areas and improvement in technology, modes of transportation and communication. Foreign trade is taking place at unprecedented levels and more people are travelling to get their business done. Corporations are enthusiastic about having a culturally diverse workforce and flaunt it in their presentations and annual reports.

Communication with people from different cultures within the country or different nationalities can be a greater challenge than you imagine. Your chances of success in business will be determined by how well you are able to overcome this challenge.

Cultural differences can be tangible and intangible. Food, art, costumes, etc. constitute the tangible or visible aspect of cultural differences. However, it is only a minor aspect when compared to the intangible aspect which basically stems from differences in core values across cultures. Therefore, it is upon the intangible aspect of cultural differences that we will be dwelling upon in this lesson.

4.3 What is Culture?

Culture refers to the collective way of thinking and going about life. It evolves as a consequence of the complex phenomenon of continuous communication between people. As they go along, the people adopt certain ideas, values, beliefs, principles, rituals and customs that are passed on from one generation to the next. This definition implies that culture is a collective asset and is shared by each individual who happens to be a part of it. Those from the same culture often feel an affinity for each other, especially when interacting in a heterogeneous environment. A culture often evolves within a geographical region.



Members make conscious efforts to preserve it which means that culture becomes a unifying factor for its members.

Every culture has certain unique attitudes which greatly influence the communication patterns of its members. Culture has a deep impact on the style of communication, however people frequently oversimplify it and create stereotypes which is a barrier to effective communication.

4.3.1 *Where can you Start?*

*Acknowledge...*The first step towards learning to communicate better in a cross-cultural business environment is to acknowledge that there are differences in culture and that there is nothing good or bad about it. The next step is to shed all preconceived notions about a culture and start afresh.

*Be curious...*If you want to make a genuine attempt at communicating better with people of different cultures, get curious like a child and start reading.

4.4 Studying Cultures

The two key approaches to studying cultures are detailed below.

4.4.1 *Structural Approach*

Examining culture using the structural method entails studying its constitution and forms. The structural approach is based on identifying the differences in cultures of various nation states, geographical regions not confined by national boundaries, faiths, ethnicities, etc. based on differences in values, beliefs, customs, attitudes, expectations and goals.

For example, there are stark differences in the western and oriental cultures. The culture of British people is distinct from that of the other mainland European nations which in turn, have distinct cultures of their own.

The structural approach is the traditional way of studying cultures and offers great insights in developing an understanding of how to communicate to be successful in our day-to-day interactions with people from different cultures.



4.4.2 Transaction Approach

This approach views a culture being created as a result of the communication or the multifarious interactions between people. In other words, culture emerges and evolves as people go about transacting their thoughts and responses. The everyday communication between people leads to creation of patterns which are distinguishable and over a period of time these patterns get reinforced as the transactions continue to take place over and over again.

The transaction-view of culture recognizes the importance of going beyond nation-states and geographical regions to broaden the scope by encompassing groups which display a certain distinctiveness in their behaviour and the manner in which they communicate. From their communication it is said that the culture is symbolically transacted.

For instance, medical doctors, share brokers/traders, musicians and online gamers all share a certain vocabulary and display common styles of communication which is essentially an outcome of the daily transaction of their distinct businesses. Interestingly, studying and adopting the styles of communication can potentially help one in gaining acceptance or even membership of various cultural groups.

Exercise 1

1. Look back at your personal and social life and try to pen down the number of distinct cultures you have come across.
2. Based on the above, do you think cultures change strictly with nationality?
3. Try to remember the longest interaction you had with a person from a different.
4. Make an effort to isolate the key points of difference between your culture and the other person.

4.5 Cross-Cultural Communication

The interaction between people of different cultures, whether between those from different geographical regions, nation states, religions, etc. is



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called **cross-cultural communication or intercultural communication**. The process of exchanging messages between people of different cultures can potentially lead them to interpret the verbal and non-verbal signs differently. Cross-cultural communication involves the study of culture mostly from the structural perspective to identify the differences from one's own culture to develop strategies to align with the target to improve understanding and the probability of a successful engagement.

Cross-cultural communication deals with how people from varied cultural milieus interact and the that challenges they face in the process. These challenges are not confined to differences in languages or dialects but extend much beyond to differences in non-verbal signals, perceptions, metaphors and so on.

The biggest hindering factor when it comes to cross-cultural communication is perception and pre-conceived notions. You really don't know what to expect from the other person because you are not aware of the values and accepted behaviours in his/her culture. Due to this unawareness, perception and stereotypes dominate your thoughts thereby potentially ruining the chances of success.

Another factor that acts as an impediment in cross-cultural communication is ethnocentric bias or ethnocentrism. Ethnocentric bias compels people to see and judge other cultures under the influence of one's own culture.

An Illustration of Ethnocentric Bias

An American and a Chinese were visiting a cemetery where their friend had been buried. The American was carrying a beautiful bunch of flowers to put on his friend's grave. The Chinese was carrying a bowl of cooked rice and some fruits. The American found it ridiculous that one would leave food at a grave. "Do you really think", asked the American, barely hiding his contempt, "that your dead friend will come and eat the food you leave at the grave?"

"Yes, of course," retorted the startled Chinese after a moment's pause, "my friend will come and eat the food around the same time your friend comes out to smell the flowers you're leaving for him."

It was a friendly dig at each other's culture. It grew from the difficulty the American had in understanding the logic of a Chinese custom.



Fortunately for the two, the cultural differences did not threaten their friendship. However, one's culture can be a major block, especially in international communication.

Source: Monipally, M.M. (2001), Business Communication Strategies, p. 44.

For the purpose of this lesson, we will delve deeper into the structural construct of culture to be able to develop strategies for successfully communicating in a cross-cultural environment.

4.5.1 Understanding Cross-Cultural Communication through Structure-View of Cultures

The structure-based approach leads us to classify cross-cultural characteristics into the following divisions:

- (a) Context
- (b) Individual/Collective
- (c) Time
- (d) Conflict

◆ **Context**

Context refers to the setting, environment, relationship, etc. in which the communication is taking place. The extent to which this communication relies on being explicit or implicit varies from culture-to-culture. The portion that is left unsaid is decoded based on the situation and the relationship between the parties in communication. Based on the degree of what is left unsaid, cultures are classified as high-context and low-context.

High-Context

Cultures that attach high importance to circumstances/setting/environment and are not very explicit in verbal terms are called high-context cultures. Such cultures tend to be ceremonial, and protocols exist for conduct in meetings and gatherings. In South Africa, great importance is given to a person's tribal lineage when comprehending a conversation. Its culture considers it fair to assign higher priority to friends, family and close associates even in business transactions. Therefore, what may seem unethical in, say American culture, is regarded as ethical in South African culture.

***Low-Context***

On the other hand, in Low-Context cultures, the message itself does most of the communication and the context and background are of no or very little consequence. In such cultures, success would depend greatly on how well-prepared and logical your argument is and how well it is presented. The relationships in such cultures are consciously removed to make an unbiased decision, which is why it is common for people to step aside from making decisions involving family and friends. In fact, such clauses are usually built into contracts that make it an obligation for the contracting parties to declare any related individuals in the business under negotiation.

◆ Collectivist/Individualist

There are collectivist cultures and individualist cultures based on whether importance is given to individual identity or collective identity. It is common knowledge that eastern societies tend to be more collectivist, whereas western societies are individualist.

Collectivist

Societies in the east have been collectivist and assign enormous importance to groups. Decision-making is a consensus-making exercise in such societies. In the villages of India, the institution of *panchayat* is a perfect example of how the interest of the community is assigned paramount importance and individual interests are often sacrificed for the larger good of the community. In collectivist societies, focussed pursuit of personal goals only would be considered selfish. It is quite common for the elders to intervene in such a situation to bring the individual back on the “right” track. In collectivist cultures, much care is taken not to hurt the sentiment of the community. Therefore, criticism is often very oblique, especially when it is about seniors/elders.

Individualist

The societies that regard personal pursuits to be more important than collective pursuits are called individualist cultures. Western societies are classified as individualist and the aspirations of the individual combined with the liberty to make the decisions for him/herself are regarded as fundamental to their existence. Individual achievement is celebrated in such societies. The most remarkable of such societies is the American



society which is quintessentially individualist. In individualist cultures, such as American, relationships are not diffused, but specific. It essentially means that a boss will just be a boss and would not be perceived as, say an elder brother, the way sometimes it is in India. This gives them the leeway to be direct in their criticism. The degree of straightforwardness or bluntness would vary in Western cultures, for instance Americans are quite blunt whereas the British would understate.

◆ Time

The views of different cultures on time is one of the most frequently quoted characteristics of cultures. It is also perhaps one of the most common factors that acts as a potential dealmaker or deal-breaker in a cross-cultural business environment.

How many times have you heard the Cliché - “Time is Money”?

It precisely characterises the perception of time prevalent in the Western cultures, such as the United States and the United Kingdom. Therefore, adhering to timelines goes a long way in creating a favourable impression that lays the foundation for business to take off.

Cultures can be classified into the following two types based on their views on time:

Monochronism

Monochronic cultures take a linear view of time and essentially means that full attention is focussed on one thing and multitasking is avoided. People from such cultures strictly observe and respect timelines. They do not appreciate people reaching late for meetings and digressing too much from the matter under deliberation/discussion. In such cultures, time is an asset of great value and therefore there is little room for being “flexible”.

Polychronism

Polychronism is characterised by a flexible view as regards time and assigns greater importance to relationships and multitasking. The objective is to get the job done, rather than to complete the job within a strict schedule. Examples of polychronic cultures include South American and Arab cultures. Polychronism is also characterised by members attempting unrelated tasks simultaneously and switching frequently between tasks. The insistence of people from monochronic cultures to adhere to timeline may be perceived in polychronic as being too pushy and rude.

**Table 4.1: Comparison of Monochronic and Polychronic Characteristics**

Monochronic Culture	Polychronic Culture
Focus on one thing at a time	Focus on multiple tasks at a time
Builds schedules and timelines	Importance on completion of task than adhering to deadlines
Low context	High context
Time is important	Relationship-building is important
Task-orientation	People-orientation

An interesting scale was developed by R D Lewis that rates Eastern and Western countries on what is termed as a Linear-Active and Multi-Active Scale. As the names suggest, Linear-Active people focus on one thing at a time and are not too flexible. Multi-Active, on the other hand, are known to multi-task and do not bother too much about time. Most Linear-Active cultures, as per Lewis, were German, Swiss, American, Canadian and British, whereas the most multi-Active cultures were Indian, Latin American, Arab, Pakistani and Spanish.

CASE STUDY**A Lost Opportunity**

Lindsey is a mid-level manager from a UK-based exhibition company that wishes to organize a trade expo in New Delhi. She seeks appointment with the Manager in-charge of a leading venue complex in the National Capital Region (NCR) and visits his office at the scheduled time. To her surprise, Lindsey finds that the venue Manager is in another meeting at the time that was allotted to her.

She waits for about 30 minutes after which the venue manager arrives in his office. They start the meeting and Lindsey is perturbed to see that the venue manager keeps engaging in brief conversations with his subordinates on matters unrelated to the ongoing meeting with Lindsey. He also attends to walk-in guests and responds to phone calls during the entire meeting. Lindsey had this unpleasant experience due to the unawareness of the venue manager about the cultural sensitivities of his potential client. The venue ended up losing the event to a smaller competitor in the city.



◆ Conflict

Different cultures deal with conflicts differently. An understanding of the various attitudes towards conflicts can assist in managing conflicts in a better way. As per Martin and Nakayama (2007), based on the writings of Augsburg (1992), there exist two different cultural views to conflicts, namely conflict as opportunity and conflict as destructive.

It has been observed that individualist societies see conflicts as opportunities, whereas collectivist societies view conflicts as destructive.

Opportunity-Approach to Conflicts

The cultures that view conflicts as opportunities regard conflicts as normal and a potentially useful process. Attempts are made to resolve the conflict through negotiation with the underlying assumption that matters may change if confronted and negotiated.

Destructive-Approach to Conflicts

Conflicts are regarded in some cultures as aberrations that need to be addressed by disciplining those responsible for the conflict. Such cultures see conflicts as unnatural, futile and harmful for the general harmony and greater good of the community.

Conflict Management

There are five distinct conflict management styles identified by Rahim (1983): (i) Avoiding, (ii) Obliging, (iii) Compromising, (iv) Integrating, and (v) Dominating.

- ◆ **Avoiding:** This style of conflict management entails withdrawing from a conflict situation.
- ◆ **Obliging:** It involves giving in to the demands of the other party to end the conflict situation.
- ◆ **Compromising:** To arrive at a solution, both parties take a step back/forward due to which neither feels fully satisfied.
- ◆ **Integrating:** It entails active negotiations by all parties involved to understand each other's positions and deliberate on alternative/available options. The idea is to arrive at a solution that is acceptable to all.



- ◆ **Dominating:** It is merely coercing of one party by the other who may be in an advantageous position. It may have negative consequences in the long run.

Exercise 2

1. What is your view on time?
2. Would you classify yourself as monochronic or polychronic?
3. Find out using the table above that classifies the characteristics of monochronic and polychronic cultures.
4. Do this exercise with your friends from different cultures and compare the results. If you don't have friends from other cultures, forget this exercise and get some!!!

4.6 Communication Across Cultures Through Different Mediums

The most widely accepted mediums or channels in the context of cross-cultural communication are - (a) Listening, (b) Verbal, (c) Non-Verbal, (d) Written. Out of these different modes of communication, the verbal, face-to-face version is the oldest and the most common.

4.6.1 Active Listening

Listening is one skill in communication that is usually underappreciated and overlooked. Active listening warrants a person to be attentive to what the speaker is saying and to align himself with the speaker to constantly validate and maximise the understanding.

In cross-cultural communication, listening becomes all the more important, as a genuine effort at paying attention helps in building trust and rapport. However, in every culture there are appropriate behaviours for listening that helps in building trust and gaining acceptance.

How to be a good listener?

Prepare yourself! If you want to be a good, active listener, you should do some homework and learn about the people that you are going to meet. Better preparedness will give you an edge over people who simply walk-in.



Make an attempt to ascertain if the person you are communicating with comes from a high-context or a low-context culture. (Go back to the section in this lesson on Characteristics of Cultures under Structure-view).

Pay attention! If the speaker notices that you are not being attentive or showing signs of losing interest, the communication will suffer and so will the business underway.

If the speaker says something that you find rude, do not take offence and try to reconfirm if the non-verbal signals corroborate the spoken word.

4.6.2 Verbal Medium

Verbal communication is perhaps the most commonly used medium in a cross-cultural environment. It comprises of spoken/oral communication and the written mode. The verbal medium relies on language, dialects, tone and tenor, loudness, level of education and so on.

◆ The Spoken Word

Spoken communication can happen face-to-face or through telephone, computer and mobile phone applications that run on the Internet, radio, television and so on.

In high-context cultures, such as Chinese, oral communication is decoded and understood in the context of non-verbal signals manifested by the communicator. For this reason, if the non-verbal cues are not consistent with the verbally coded message, the receiver may go with what the non-verbal signals suggest. Therefore, the importance of non-verbal medium can hardly be exaggerated, especially in the high-context cultures.

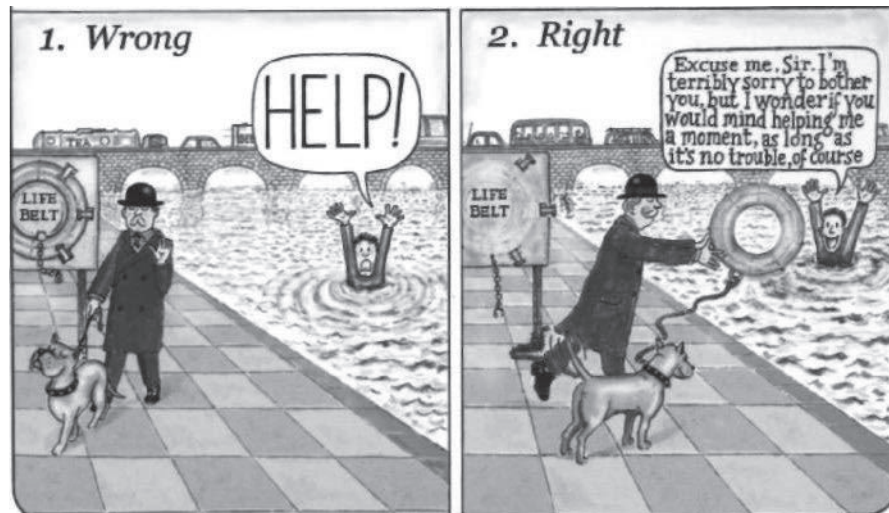
On the other extreme of the cultural spectrum *i.e.*, American, a low-context culture, the explicit verbal message is considered almost final for the purpose of interpretation. It must be evident by now that two people from cultures far apart on the cultural spectrum will do best by studying and understanding each other's cultural nuances to have a successful engagement.

Even within the Western culture, there are differences that warrant closer study to be able to navigate successfully in a global business environment. For example, the British are accustomed to being rather formal and polite in asking for things in contrast with, say the Germans who are quite



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straightforward. The British enthusiastically follow courtesies and words and phrases such as, “please”, “sorry”, “thank you”, “beg your pardon”, etc. are used very frequently.

THE “BRITISH WAY” OF ASKING FOR HELP

(Source: From the Internet)

◆ Written Communication

The written mode of communication is considered relatively easier than the oral mode as the sender has more time at his disposal to strategize and encode the message. However, the flipside is that one doesn't get instant feedback as in verbal communication, that helps you modulate and fine-tune your strategy during the conversation. In a global business environment, the written mode is the most commonly used method of communication, and hence becomes the most important to be mastered. The written word stays forever as it may be preserved as record. It is reason enough for one to be extremely aware and thoughtful when communicating through the written medium. The written medium includes letters, emails, memorandums, reports, contracts, proposals, etc.

How to write effectively in a cross-cultural context?

To write effectively and be impactful and clear to your reader, the first step is to be aware of your own culture. An awareness of one's own cultural characteristics and biases will help in neutralizing the influence it would have on your communication with people from other cultures. Once you clearly have your own culture in mind, you can compare it



with the culture of your target to have a strategy in place to write in a tone and tenor neutral of ethnocentric biases.

The tone and tenor of the written communication should be consistent with what the target would be expecting based on whether the latter's culture is skewed towards low-context or high-context. Therefore, a mix of theoretical and hands-on approach derived from one's own experiences or from that of your seniors/mentors should be employed when writing to people of different cultures.

Extent of Detail

People from low-context cultures, such as Germany and United States prefer detailing at minute levels because whatever is explicit is more important for them. Contrast this with high-context cultures like Japanese, where the writer would expect the reader to have the basic understanding of the subject matter and therefore will be less-than explicit. You should have this at the back of your mind to avoid the reader from taking offence at being provided excess or less information. However, this doesn't hold true for the decision-making process in the US and Japan. Corporations in the US tend to be quicker in decision-making as the powers are sufficiently delegated as individual contribution is important to the Americans, whereas in Japan the decision-making is a consensus-building process and may take somewhat longer.

You must select your words carefully and arrange the text in a logical, organised fashion after building-in sufficient context. **Articulation is of much more importance in written communication than eloquence.**

One should avoid using slangs, idioms and proverbs when writing to a counterpart or a colleague who is from a different cultural milieu, as it can obscure the understanding of the latter. Roundabout and ornate language is also best avoided in the written medium.

Use universally recognized conventions rather than the ones in vogue only in a particular region or culture. For instance, the format of dates can cause confusions as shown below

Table 4.2: Use a Culture-Neutral Convention

American	British	Neutral
08.02.2022	02.08.2022	2nd August, 2022



As you can see, the British and American conventions of dates differ which can cause confusion between the month and date. Therefore, it is best to use the neutral convention which is quite explicit.

Decoding the written communication received by you from somebody from a different culture is also an art. Imagine that you had sent a request asking for something from your business associate in Japan and if the latter wants to decline it, there are high chances that you will **not** get a direct 'no'. The Japanese tend to avoid using 'no' as an answer as it is considered rude, so they would try to write obliquely hoping that the other party would get the message.

4.6.3 Non-Verbal Medium: Speaking Sans Words

Non-verbal communication involves communicating without the use of spoken words and instead using facial expressions, hand/body gestures, posture and physical distance. It also refers to the communication that happens at a subconscious level while the oral communication is underway. The most interesting thing about non-verbal communication is that it can send out signals that are inconsistent with what is being said thereby leading an intelligent listener to discover the contradiction. There are certain emotions that are universal and culture-neutral, such as happiness, sadness, fear, anger, etc. which are expressed by means of non-verbal communication in similar ways throughout the world. However, there are accepted cultural norms for how emotions are expressed in front of others. For example, in Arab culture it is quite acceptable to mourn-out loud to express grief. Whereas, in China or Japan expressing feelings of great happiness or grief openly is considered unacceptable.

CASE STUDY

Cultural Shock

A recent Indian migrant to the United States who was used to pulling cheeks of even unacquainted kids back in India was shocked when a young American kid snapped back aggressively saying, "You don't wanna mess with me!!!" on getting his cheek grazed by the Indian man with his hand. It is because the expression of affection through non-verbal medium varies across cultures.







It is quite acceptable for friends to embrace in some cultures, whereas it is considered inappropriate in others. Even the distance maintained by people during a conversation can have a profound impact on the communication as we shall learn later in the lesson.

◆ Gestures (Kinesics)

Movements of the body made in particular ways carry meanings that are manifest and clear only to those initiated into that culture. Most common gestures include the thumbs-up/thumbs-down, the OK sign, the beckoning sign, etc.

Table 4.3: Some Common Gestures and their Meanings Across Cultures

	<p>The thumbs-up or thumbs-down gesture are used to convey approval or disapproval, respectively, in the US.</p> <p>Whereas in some Arab cultures, it is a highly offensive gesture equivalent to the middle finger in the US. In India, this gesture is used with the right hand to disappoint and taunt somebody.</p>
	<p>This is perhaps the most recognizable hand gesture. It means “OK” or approval of something in the US.</p> <p>However, it is an obscene gesture in Brazil and an insulting gesture in Turkey and some Arab cultures.</p>
	<p>This gesture is also known as the beckoning sign and can be made using just the index finger or a curled palm. It is a common gesture used for beckoning.</p> <p>However, in some Asian cultures, such as Japan and Philippines, it is an insulting gesture considered fit only for beckoning animals.</p>
	<p>This gesture is called the Moutza. It is used by spreading out all fingers of a hand and showing it close to the face of a person. It is an insult gesture traditionally used by the Greek. You will see the use of this gesture in demonstrations and protests in Greece.</p> <p>In India, especially in the northern states this gesture is used when cursing (<i>la'anat</i>) somebody.</p>



Notes

◆ **Postures**

Postures convey emotions and intentions and can be classified into open and closed postures. Adopting certain positive postures will help you to make an impact on the people you communicate with during the course of your professional and personal life.

The basic postures are standing, sitting, squatting and lying down (Hargie, 2011). Out of these the most relevant for cross-cultural business communication are standing and sitting postures. In western cultures, putting one's hands just above the hips in a standing position is considered as an attempt to dominate and be assertive.

Open and Closed Postures

The open posture suggests friendliness or receptivity. It can be identified by a person with his legs apart in a relaxed position with open arms facing outward. In the American culture, people adopting an open posture are perceived to be more convincing than those who adopt a closed posture. A closed posture involves folding your arms across your chest, crossing your legs in the standing/sitting position, etc.

◆ **Proximity and Personal Space (Proxemics)**

The physical distance maintained by people communicating with each other is also a function of the cultural background. The appropriate distance to be maintained in each culture largely depends on the relation between the people in communication. In the Western cultures, the personal distance is classified into - intimate, personal, social and public. *Intimate distance* is close contact that is reserved for a person with whom you share a very close relationship. *Personal distance*, around 1-1.2 metres apart, is the space between two people shaking hands and is considered most appropriate for face-to-face communication. *Social distance* is the distance between people who are in a social gathering or in a business environment, for instance people working in an office. *Public distance* is maintained between speakers and the audience in a public event, teachers and students in a lecture hall, etc.

For the Americans, the comfortable distance for conversation is about arm's length to around 3-4 feet. Any intrusion into this space will be perceived as either intimacy or aggressiveness. Whereas Arabs stand closer to each other than the Americans and perceive it as a sign of warmth.



◆ Para-Linguistics

Para-linguistics refers to the non-verbal cues that are sent out through intonation and modulation of voice, pauses, rate of speech, etc. In fact, the famous English sarcasm is also a para-linguistic medium of communication.

◆ Oculesics

It is the study of communication through the eyes, for example eye-contact, blinking of eyelids, gazing, etc. If you make eye-contact and keep nodding while listening to somebody from the US, it would be appreciated. Whereas, if steady eye-contact is maintained while listening to a Japanese person it will be construed as inappropriate and even rude. The Japanese also perceive nodding as merely listening as opposed to valuing what is being said. They also place great importance on silence and taking pauses as they speak, for these behaviours connote earnestness and genuineness in the Japanese culture.

Exercise 3

1. Studying the idioms in a language can potentially assist in developing a better understanding of the non-verbal cues in the culture that is associated with that language. One such idiom been suggested below.
2. Keep at arm's length - to avoid from getting close.
3. Find out if there are more in English and other languages that you speak.

4.7 Business Etiquette Across Cultures

A code of conduct in the society, professional setting or a group in general with rules, protocols, courtesies, conventions, customs, proprieties, etc. is called etiquette. It is a part of culture and human behaviour and has variations across different cultures.

Table 4.4: How are etiquettes different from manners?

Etiquette	Manners
The code of conduct that acts as a set of guidelines for positive and polite behaviours in the society.	The way of behaviour consistent with the expected behaviour.



Notes

Etiquette	Manners
Set of rules of behaving in the society or in a group.	It refers to the actions themselves.

Business Etiquette

A set of guidelines that helps people behave and interact in a business setting with stakeholders, clients, vendors, etc. in a way that is professional and accepted by the fraternity and helps portray the right image.

It is clear that business etiquette is a key social skill that is indispensable for success in the business world. Business etiquette is also a function of the culture under study. Therefore, in a cross-cultural setting, it is important for you to research about the culture of the people with whom business is to be transacted.

Now, we will delve into the business etiquette followed in India and some of the major countries/cultures in the world.

Table 4.5: Business Etiquette in India

Greeting	<i>The common way of greeting people is by shaking hands and it has overtaken the folded hands greeting almost completely at least in business.</i> <i>The most appropriate way to greet women is to wait a moment to see if they move their hands forward for a handshake, else the folded hands gesture can be used. However, in most big cities it is common for women to shake hands while greeting someone.</i>
Eye Contact	It is not considered appropriate in the Indian context to maintain eye contact with seniors though it may be construed as being evasive or even dishonest in other cultures.
Exchange of Cards	Though exchanging cards is not as ceremonious as it is in some other cultures, cards are formally presented with the right hand, sometimes with the left hand under the elbow of the right which connotes respect.
Appointments	Appointments can get cancelled even at the last minute, therefore it is best to give as much warning as to your



	travel schedule as possible and confirm your appointment before you leave your office or country!
Time	Indians tend to be flexible with time, especially for social events/gatherings. However, the practice of punctuality may vary within India too from the north to the south and so on.
Hierarchy	Indians follow hierarchies in social as well as professional relationships. This hierarchy is always there at the back of their minds. Those in positions of authority will not be seen doing manual work even if it is their own. This is more true of the public sector.
Dress Code	The business dress code is mostly smart yet comfortable clothing. The dress code varies based on hierarchy. Women tend to wear sarees, tunics and western formal attire which is getting more and more common.
Meetings	Meetings tend to start late and overrun the allotted time. A clear agenda may not be there, and the meetings will usually commence with unrelated casual banter.

Table 4.6: Business Etiquette in the United States

Greeting	<i>A firm and warm handshake with proper eye contact is offered while greeting. If you are meeting a delegation, make sure that you don't lose eye contact with the person with whom you are shaking hands.</i>
Eye Contact	Maintaining proper eye contact during a conversation is perceived as a sign of sincerity, genuineness and confidence.
Exchange of Cards	If interacting with someone for the first time, it is not appropriate to start a conversation by exchanging business cards, until the conversation turns business oriented. However, if it is a formal business meeting, the exchange of cards takes place before the start of the meeting so that those attending are familiar with each other's names and roles.



Notes

	Writing on the business cards is not considered inappropriate, in fact it may be appreciated if you write your personal mobile phone number on the back of the card and hand it over.
Appointments	People in America like to keep their appointments and there are hardly any cancellations except in case of emergency.
Time	US culture is monochronic and events are scheduled one at a time. They are particular about punctuality and adhering to schedules.
Hierarchy	The culture in US corporates is less hierarchical because of their inherent belief in equality.
Dress Code	Business Suits in navy blue or grey and tie with solid white shirts for formal meetings. Women wear dresses or suits in classic colours of grey, white, navy, etc.
Personal Space	The US being a no-touch culture, Americans are very particular about their personal space. In fact, there is concept of personal bubble within which no intrusion is tolerated. So, at least an arm's length distance is always maintained.
Meetings	Meetings are taken seriously and have clear agendas. Side-activity is not appreciated at all and may be perceived as disinterest.

Table 4.7: Business Etiquette in England

Greeting	<i>Handshake is the norm for men as well as women.</i>
Eye Contact	Persistent eye contact should be avoided as it can make people uncomfortable. The best thing to do is to make eye contact every now and then.
Exchange of Cards	Card etiquette is quite relaxed in Britain. Business cards are considered as an easy way of handing out your contact details to a potential vendor or client.
Appointments	Appointments are honoured, except in case of emergency or some genuine reasons.



Time	Punctuality is important. Arriving a little early is acceptable.
Hierarchy	British society had been traditionally class-based and hence, hierarchy is taken seriously. Titles are very important. So, if a person has been knighted, he will expect himself to be addressed as “Sir” followed by the first name.
Dress Code	For business meetings or engagements, formal conservative attire is the norm, which includes dark suits for men. Though for women there aren't much restrictions as to colour.
Personal Space	For English people, personal space is important and touching in public is considered inappropriate. Also, personal questions are to be strictly avoided as privacy is very dear to English people.
Meetings	Meetings are pre-arranged by taking appointments. Documentation of the meetings, including circulation of agendas, minute-taking, etc. are of importance.

Table 4.8: Business Etiquette in the Arab World

Greeting	<i>Handshakes are the norm, though they last longer than handshakes in the western cultures. It is best to wait for your counterpart to withdraw his/her hand before you do. Men are recommended not to initiate a handshake with an Arab businesswoman unless she extends her hand.</i>
Eye Contact	Eye contact is acceptable.
Exchange of Cards	Please ensure to get your business cards printed in Arabic and English, keeping in view that the former is written from right to left.
Time	Most of the Arab world follows a different working week from the rest of the world. Weekends fall on Fridays and Saturdays, barring a few exceptions. Business hours are truncated during the month of <i>Ramadan</i> , so



Notes

	<p>it is advisable to avoid business and meetings during this month.</p> <p>The concept of time is more relaxed in the Arab world, and it is common for people to be late for meetings. However, it is advisable for you to be on-time as a visitor.</p>
Hierarchy	Arab societies are hierarchical and organisational functioning is mostly top-down with decision-making in the hands of the powerful few.
Dress Code	Dark coloured business suits for men. Avoid wearing shorts and t-shirts when travelling in the Arab world. Women are expected to dress conservatively and modestly in the Arab world.
Personal Space	Arabs stand closer to each other during conversations than Americans do. Touching is also observed between members of the same gender and in fact, Saudi men can be seen walking hand-in-hand in public, without being judged as to their sexual orientation.
Meetings	Meetings are not planned much in advance and need to be confirmed a few days beforehand. Meetings usually start with an initial round of small-talk. Interruptions during meetings are common as the Arab culture is polychronic.
Hospitality	You may be offered refreshments during a meeting. Please accept it graciously. There is a lot of socialising before the food is served. It is common for men and women to dine separately. When socialising, avoid taking about religion and politics, especially Israel, as it may be taken offensively.
Other	As the month of <i>Ramadan</i> is for fasting and austerity for the Muslim people, it is advisable to eat and drink indoors and away from the public eye, that is, if you are in the Arab world during the holy month.

**Table 4.9: Business Etiquette in China**

Greeting	<i>Between people of the same gender, handshake and a nod at the time of meeting and departing is the norm. Between people of the opposite gender, a handshake or a nod is considered appropriate.</i>
Eye Contact	Eye contact is acceptable and considered polite.
Exchange of Cards	Make sure that your card is printed in Chinese on one side. Present your business card with both hands with the Chinese side up. Please see the card carefully before you place it and never write on a card that is presented to you.
Time	Punctuality is valued so arrive for meetings on time or a little early.
Hierarchy	Chinese corporates are hierarchical and based on age and position and each individual has a specific position and role in the organisation.
Dress Code	Formal business suits are the best for meetings with the Chinese as it conveys respect.
Personal Space	Chinese are comfortable standing less than arm's length apart, though this distance increases with strangers. Touching is not observed unless with family.
Meetings	Meetings are a formal affair with a ritualistic approach. The senior member of the host speaks first, introducing himself and his team, followed by the leader of the visiting party. The Chinese like the visiting party to know who is in command and the latter should make that evident too during the meeting.

4.8 Strategizing for Effective Cross-Cultural Communication

Now that you are equipped with a sound understanding of the theory and practices in cross-cultural communication, it is time to evolve a strategy to communicate effectively in a cross-cultural context. Given below are steps that will assist you in developing a strategy and fine-tuning it.



Notes

◆ ***Be Receptive***

Your receptiveness and openness will help you in exploring and dwelling on certain aspects of your own or the target's culture that may help you overcome certain biases.

◆ ***Improve Your Awareness***

Awareness of the existence of vast or subtle differences in cultures is crucial to get on to the next step.

◆ ***Always Prepare Well***

Read as extensively as possible and watch a movie based on that culture. The movie will help you understand the non-verbal communication styles and subtleties of the culture under study.

◆ ***Decide on the Language***

If you do not speak the language of your counterpart, hire the services of a competent interpreter. However, if you are fluent in the language, make sure that you brush up your skills based on the peculiarities of how it is spoken in your counterpart's region or country as a native speaker.

◆ ***Be Careful with Humour***

You need to be extra cautious when it comes to using humour in a cross-cultural context, for it can go wrong badly. For instance, the English use self-deprecating humour combined with understated sarcasm, whereas for the Japanese humour is a private thing as they want to avoid embarrassment for themselves or for the other party.

4.9 Summary

- ◆ Culture refers to a set of ideas, beliefs and customs based on which certain norms are evolved over a long period of time which becomes a way of leading life for the members who are a part of it. A culture typically traces its origins to a particular geographical region.
- ◆ There are two distinct approaches to studying a culture, namely Structure-based and Transaction-based. The former involves examining the constitution and forms of cultures, whereas the latter studies its evolution through the multifarious interactions between people.
- ◆ Cross-cultural communication is the process of individuals or groups from different cultural backgrounds interacting with each other,



recognizing their similarities and differences for a successful engagement.

- ◆ The four characteristics of culture under the Structure-based approach of studying culture are:-
 - **Context** - Refers to the environment or setting
 - **High Context Cultures:** Attach high importance to circumstances/environment and less to verbal communication.
 - **Low-Context Cultures:** The message itself does most of the communication and the context and background are of no consequence.
 - **Individual/Collective:** Based on whether importance is given to individual or collective identity.
 - **Time:** Classified as monochronic and polychronic cultures.
 - **Monochronic:** Linear view of time, focus on one item and avoids multitasking.
 - **Polychronic:** Flexible view on time, greater importance to relationships and multitasking.
 - **Conflict:** Individualist societies see conflicts as opportunities, whereas collectivist societies view conflicts as destructive. Styles of conflict management:
 - Avoiding
 - Obliging
 - Compromising
 - Integrating
 - Dominating
- ◆ The important mediums or channels in the context of cross-cultural communication are - (a) Listening, (b) Verbal, (c) Non-Verbal, (d) Written.
- ◆ Cross-cultural business etiquette refers to observance of certain accepted rules, customs and behaviours for mutual consideration of people interacting for an effective engagement.



4.10 References and Suggested Readings

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Career Management and Communication

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STRUCTURE

- 5.1 *Learning Objectives*
- 5.2 *Introduction*
- 5.3 *Career Planning*
- 5.4 *Career Management and Communication*
- 5.5 *Resume Writing*
- 5.6 *Cover Letters*
- 5.7 *Group Discussions*
- 5.8 *Interview*
- 5.9 *Communication During Exit Interviews*
- 5.10 *Ethics and Communication*
- 5.11 *Summary*
- 5.12 *Self-Assessment Questions*
- 5.13 *References and Suggested Readings*

5.1 Learning Objectives

- ◆ Articulate your career objectives and prepare a career plan for achieving the objectives.
- ◆ Write compelling résumés and cover letters to ensure that you get an interview call.
- ◆ Perform well in a group discussion and interview.



Notes

- ◆ Communicate effectively in an exit interview.
- ◆ Understand the ethical aspects of communication and implement it in your career.

5.2 Introduction

A typical span of one's career is around 35-40 years, which may seem like a long time to enable proper planning to accomplish career objectives. Yet, very few people tend to succeed in this endeavour. **Career Management** is a continuous process of orienting and reorienting your career based on the evolving sets of goals and objectives. These goals and objectives are embodied in certain milestones that one strives to achieve through career management strategies.

"I always wanted to be somebody, but now I realize I should have been more specific."
- Lily Tomlin

The above quote from Lily Tomlin hits the nail right on its head as career management starts with setting of specific goals and objectives. However, with for longer time horizons, the objectives tend to become less specific which is quite understandable. Therefore, the time scale is the most important factor when it comes to formulation of these goals and objectives. Time-horizon based goals and objective are classified below.

- ◆ **Short-Term:** Goals tend to be rather specific as one has the advantage of less uncertainty and therefore are easier to articulate. The time horizon for short-term goals would be up to two years. Formulating the right short-term goals that align with your long-term objective is of paramount importance.
- ◆ **Mid-Term:** Goals are larger in scope but less specific when compared with the short-term ones. The time horizon for mid-term objectives is around three to twenty years. As the timeframe increases, so does the uncertainty which makes mid-term and long-term goal-setting much more difficult.
- ◆ **Long-Term:** Objectives are the most difficult ones to set due to very high uncertainty about the future. Though these objectives are easily modified due to the time advantage.



The key takeaway is that the responsibility for your career advancement is entirely yours. You cannot expect promotions, salary raises and so on to come your way simply with time. It is sufficiently clear that setting of goals and objective for successive time horizons is the crux of career management.

5.3 Career Planning

The ongoing process of goal setting, devising the means of achieving the goals, and reviewing and assessing it continuously is known as career planning. It has to be borne in mind that career planning is not just about the jobs and the positions that you see yourself occupying in your career. It involves many more activities, including going for higher education, taking professional certifications, joining membership of professional bodies, networking, etc.

5.3.1 Steps in Career Planning

- ◆ The **first step** in career planning can be called - writing the preamble of your career plan. So, how should the preamble of your career planning document look like? You must clearly articulate your areas of interest; present skill sets and preferences. The preamble will keep guiding you as to the overall direction of your career, though it is quite possible that you may want to rewrite the preamble itself as you go along your career path.
- ◆ The **second step** and the most important one is that of goal setting. Based on the preamble that you have written, start by setting goals for the very short-term for it is the easiest to do. The goals should be realistic and objective. You may also use the SMART criteria of goal setting devised by George T. Doran.

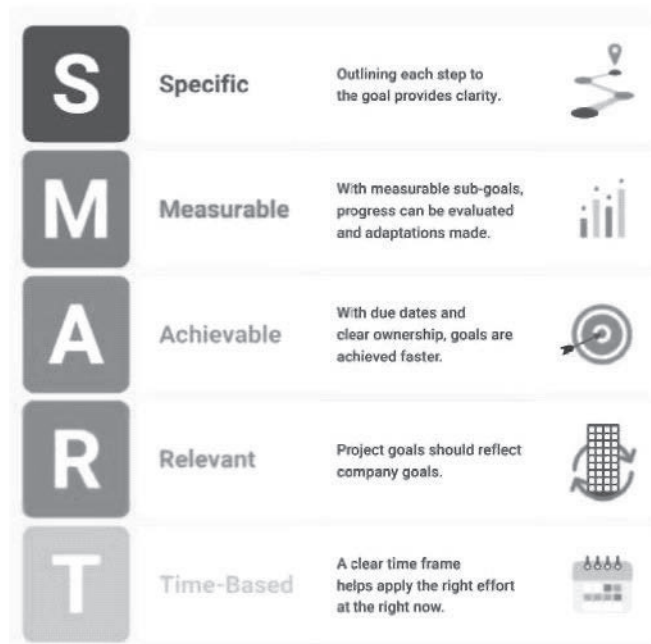


Figure 5.1: Doran's SMART Criteria of Goal Setting

(Source: <https://www.slingshotapp.io>)

- ◆ The **third step** involves an analysis of the opportunities that are available to you. This step would automatically be akin to making a career choice. An objective and informed analysis of the opportunities would help you in making the right choice.
- ◆ The **fourth step** is to make a strategy and implement the plan. If the attainment of the goals necessitates acquiring new skills, you must budget enough time for the same and keep resources ready.

5.4 Career Management and Communication

In the process of career management, one of the most important tools at your disposal for success is effective communication. However, it can potentially turn out to be a perfect recipe for failure, if not done properly. Therefore, learning to communicate for career management should be an essential part of your career planning. There is a series of steps involved in communicating with a prospective employer. It all starts with applying for a position by means of a cover letter enclosing your résumé. This will be followed by interviews, group discussions, etc. The life cycle



of communication involved for a job and exiting from the job has been shown in the exhibit below.

Notes



Figure 5.2: The Life-Cycle of Communication in Career Management

5.5 Resume Writing

Let us start with the correct pronunciation of the word *résumé*. The word is of French origin and is pronounced as **‘rezju:meI**. You will be surprised to learn that the first resume to be drafted and sent to a prospective employer was from the Italian polymath Leonardo da Vinci to the then *de facto* ruler of Milan, Ludovico Maria Sforza.

A *résumé* is a formal document containing information about your contact details, educational qualifications work experience, skills, achievements, accomplishments, etc. Its purpose is to attempt to convince your prospective employer about your suitability for the opening.

5.5.1 *Résumé* Styles

As mentioned earlier, a *résumé* is a summary of your educational qualifications and work experience along with other details. This summary can be organized and presented in different layouts and styles. Please



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remember that it is a “summary”, therefore it has to be brief and yet attention-inviting. The following styles of résumés are popular:

◆ **Chronological or Reverse-Chronological Résumés**

This style of résumé is the most common and best for a work history that is free from any gaps. The focus is obviously on your work experience. The practice is to start with the latest job followed by the second most recent and so on.

◆ **Functional**

Functional style is adopted when a candidate does not possess the relevant experience that is required for the job. This style of résumé writing focuses on the skills that are required for the job that you have applied for, based on the details given in the job description.

◆ **Hybrid/Combination**

This style of résumé writing tends to utilize the best of both functional and chronological styles. It is best when you have a sizeable work experience behind you along with skill training/education. You may start with an objective seeking the right positions followed by a summary of professional training and skills, which in turn will be followed by a chronological history of work experience.

◆ **Targeted**

Targeted résumés are specifically designed for a particular opening that interests you. These résumés are be written in any of the aforementioned styles, viz. Chronological, Functional or Combination. The prior experience, education and skills are carefully calibrated and drafted to suit the requirements of the position. Targeted résumés require you to conduct in-depth research on the organization that you are applying to, its vision and mission statement, the various business units in the organization, etc. Such résumés also help in online job portals, where it is important that your résumé ranks higher in searches.

5.5.2 How to write an eye-catching and convincing résumé?

A complete résumé will include the following five parts with the length of each part varying from individual-to-individual.



Identification Details

- ◆ It should have your name, city name and contact details, including Email Address, Contact Numbers and Address to your LinkedIn profile.

Objective/Résumé Caption/Introduction

- ◆ The career objective is usually seen in the résumés of those who are recent graduates and who do not have much experience or achievement behind them for the objective to be replaced with a résumé caption or introduction.
- ◆ You can fine-tune your career objective or introduction based on the nature of the position and/or the company/industry of which you intend to be a part.

Education

- ◆ You must include the Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates along with the respective Universities/Institutions attended along with the city name.
- ◆ Remember to include the month and year of award of the Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates.
- ◆ Highlight special achievements, if any, in academics.

Experience

- ◆ Mention your work experience reverse-chronologically, *i.e.* starting with the present on top, followed by the next latest and so on.
- ◆ If you are a fresher with no professional experience, you may include any part-time work or summer internships, volunteering work, etc.
- ◆ For each entry under experience, add around 2-5 statements. You may write more for the current position, if required.
- ◆ Try to use a bulleted format and use indenting for ample clarity and bundling of relevant things together.
- ◆ The entry under the experience head should look like the following:

**State Bank of India, Ahmedabad - Assistant Manager**

January 20XX- December 20XX

- ◆ In-charge of Banking Operations in the branch reporting directly to the Chief Manager.
- ◆ Responsible for Alternate Channels, including Internet Banking (Retail and Corporate), Mobile Banking, ATM, etc.

Skills

- ◆ Skills that are relevant to the position that you are applying for may be prominently mentioned, including technical skills, soft-skills, foreign language, etc.

Awards/Honours

- ◆ Fellowships, awards, medals and other such recognitions may be listed.

References

- ◆ Based on whether the prospective employer has sought references, you may write the names and details of the references. However, please ensure to take permission from each of them before you go ahead and mention them in the résumé.

The one thing that you need to keep in mind at the time of writing your résumé is -“What purpose is the résumé going to serve for the prospective employer? “The résumé as a document will be used for shortlisting potential candidates for interview. Therefore, it has to catch the attention of the HR Executive or Manager whose task is to sift through hundreds of résumés. Your drafting should be an exercise in assessing the keywords and information that your reader will be looking for. Therefore, you must add as many actionable words as relevant and necessary in your résumé. It will also help your résumé to appear in searches on online job portals, that is, in case you are applying for a job through an online platform.

What is a Curriculum Vitae (CV) and how is it different from a résumé?

The term Curriculum Vitae (CV) is more popular in the UK, whereas résumé is more popular in the US. Though, there is a technical difference between the two. A Curriculum Vitae is a more elaborate version of the



résumé with details of your research work, publications, seminars and conferences attended/delivered and so on. A CV is usually made for applying to research institutions, educational institutions, international jobs, etc. Therefore, a CV has an academic orientation whereas a résumé is meant for applying to non-academic positions.

	<p>Full Name New Delhi, India 70420XXXXX xxxxxx@ xxxxxxx. com LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/xxxxxxxxxxxxx</p> <p>PROFILE Management Professional with 7+ years of experience in strategy building and marketing of very large-scale international trade fairs, policy making for events and marketing of the largest expo venue in India.</p>
2015-09 - till date	<p>EXPERIENCE Company Name, Location - Manager</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Instrumental in making the two flagship trade expos of Company - ABC and XYZ - the highest revenue generators in the history of the organisation. ◆ Worked on introducing policy-level changes to strengthen [Company Name]’s flagship event ABC, the largest ever in the history of exhibitions in India. ◆ Launched the Tender Desk for Foreign Events of for streamlining appointment of vendors. ◆ Part of the core negotiations team for rescheduling exhibitions lined up in the expo venue due to the ongoing redevelopment work. ◆ Conducting training on various topics, including transition to e-Office, official drafting, soft skills, change management, etc.



Notes

	<p>Company Name 2, Location - Deputy Manager</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ In-charge of Banking Operations in the branch reporting directly to the Chief Manager. ◆ Disbursement of Government subsidies to farmers & other target groups under various schemes. ◆ Responsible for cross-selling of the PMSBY and other such schemes of the government.
<p>2015-02 to 2015-08</p>	<p>EDUCATION/QUALIFICATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Management Development Program (MDP) from Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT), One-Week Programme in Global Trade Management ◆ Qualified UGC-NET in Management ◆ Post Graduate in Global Business Operations (2-yrs full time) from Shri Ram College of Commerce (SRCC), University of Delhi ◆ MBA-International Business from Pondicherry University ◆ B.Sc. (Hons) Physics from University of Delhi <p>CERTIFICATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Certified Trainer from Indian Society for Training and Development (ISTD). ◆ Certified Project Manager with an Executive Diploma in Project Management (EDPM) from International Institute of Project and Program Management (I2P2M). <p>AFFILIATION</p> <p>Life Member of the Indian Society for Training and Development (ISTD).</p>

Exhibit : A Sample Resume



5.6 Cover Letters

A cover letter is your first communication to a prospective employer that acts as an introduction to your résumé, which is a mandatory enclosure with the cover letter. It is also known as an application letter. Separate cover letters should be written for different positions that you wish to apply for and should be demonstrative of your keenness for the job or the employer or both.

The objective of a cover letter is to convince a prospective employer that you are really interested in the opening and qualified for the job. You should avoid writing things in the cover that you have already mentioned in the resume.

5.6.1 Structure of a Cover Letter

Just as any other formal letter, a cover letter is also divided into three parts, namely introduction, body and closing. You need to **present three basic ideas** in the cover letter:

- ◆ Reason for your interest in the position and the prospective employer.
- ◆ Why should the prospective employer consider you?
- ◆ Contact details and plan for follow-up.

Let's see how you can incorporate these ideas in an organized and interesting manner so as to invite the attention of the hiring managers. Given below is the explanation of the format of a cover letter with each item elaborated for ease of understanding.

Contact Details

The usual format is to mention your contact information on the top, followed by the date and the name and contact details of the addressee, all aligned to the left-side of the page.

Salutation

The most widely accepted salutation is Dear Mr./Ms. [Last Name]. If the name of the concerned hiring manager is not available, you may simply use Dear HR Manager.

**Introduction**

The letter starts with an introduction where you have to try to captivate the attention of the reader. You can briefly introduce yourself and mention the source from which you learned about the position.

Body/Main Content

- ◆ Objectively describe your suitability for the position with corroborating facts from your past job(s).
- ◆ Describe how your education and training have equipped you well for the job.
- ◆ Mention your successful projects and how your skills were pivotal in making them a success.
- ◆ Focus on the skill sets that are required for the position being applied. This is where your reading of the job description will be of great help to you.
- ◆ Be careful not to repeat what is already there in your resume.

Closing

- ◆ The closing must include the next plan for follow-up. Ensure that you observe the courtesy of thanking the prospective employer for considering your candidature.
- ◆ The letter ends with “Sincerely”.

Your Name

Address 1

Address 2

City

State PIN

Email:

12th August, 2022

Ms./Mr./Dr. [Full Name of the Addressee]

[Company Name]

Address

City

State PIN

Dear Mr./Dr./Ms. [Last Name of the Addressee],



I am writing to express my interest in applying for the position of Deputy General Manager (Corporate Strategy and Planning) available at [Company Name]. I learned about the position from your colleague Mr. [Full Name] during the automotive aftermarket Buyer-Seller Meet (BSM) that we attended last week in New Delhi.

I am a Strategy Professional with 12+ years of relevant experience in Strategy Planning and Execution of Inorganic Growth (Mergers & Acquisition and Joint Ventures). I am currently employed at the Corporate Headquarters of [Company Name]. Our function provides captive strategy consulting services to our business units based in India and overseas.

I was a part of the core team that established the Strategy Planning Process at [Company Name]. I helped develop a robust framework for the Strategy function and devised periodic review mechanisms for continuous assessment and evaluation of the approved Strategy Plan. All this was accomplished with minimum intervention from external experts.

My strength as a seasoned strategy consultant has led me to work very closely with all our business units and the senior leadership team in particular for assisting them in identifying potential targets for acquisitions, joint venture and mergers. Based on my work, over the past five years, two acquisition - [xxxx] and [yyyy], and one JV with a Japanese brand were completed successfully. All three have been going strong and have emerged as turnaround stories.

As an industry professional, I regularly read the literature of your company and I have come to understand that the strategy function at [Company Name] would benefit from my experience and expertise as having had hands on experience of multiple acquisitions/JV.

I would really appreciate an opportunity to discuss this more elaborately in person with you at the time. I am available at the contact details mentioned in my resume (enclosed).

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely

[Name]

Enclosure: Résumé

Exhibit : Sample Cover Letter

5.7 Group Discussions

A Group Discussion (GD) is a type of group activity where the group is given a common topic on which each individual is expected to exchange ideas, views and opinions and try to arrive at a conclusion. A group



discussion may be moderated or completely free from any moderation and allowed to take its own course.

5.7.1 Purpose of a Group Discussion

- ◆ Generation of new ideas
- ◆ Arrive at a solution to a problem
- ◆ Recruitment/Selection of suitable candidate(s)
- ◆ Used in a training environment for learning new skill(s), etc.

Depending on the purpose of the GD, time and resources in hand, and so on, the number of individuals in each group may vary. A typical group consists of around 6-10 persons. A group discussion is a just like a meeting, yet there are certain important differences and are listed below:

- ◆ There is not fixed agenda in a group discussion.
- ◆ There are no roles and responsibilities that one has to fulfil. Though the group may be asked to appoint a leader/moderator from among its members.
- ◆ The emphasis on the process rather than on the outcome.

5.7.2 What are Some of the Key Features of an Effective Group Discussion?

- ◆ All individuals in the group have a chance to speak and express their ideas and views about the topic of discussion.
- ◆ Members who are not sure about the topic under discussion or have not formed an opinion, have the chance to hear what the others have to say and respond afterwards.
- ◆ New ideas and those that have not been fully developed can be tested.
- ◆ A wide variety of ideas and views can be obtained in a very short span of time.
- ◆ The discussion is not hijacked by one dominating member.



- ◆ There is a tacit understanding among members that the group has to arrive at a conclusion which leads them to engage constructively even when confronted with disagreements.
- ◆ Arguments are considered a healthy way of testing theories put forward by members.
- ◆ Feedback is exchanged in a constructive manner.

5.7.3 Group Discussion as a Tool in the Recruitment Process

GD is a tool used in the recruitment process in campus recruitment, special recruitment drives, recruitment to government organizations, etc. In some of these, GD may be used as the first level of elimination that makes is a formidable challenge. You may be allowed to attend the interview rounds only upon clearing the GD, therefore you must prepare well for it.

5.7.4 How to Communicate Effectively in a Group Discussion?

Communicating in a group is always more challenging than communicating with an individual, simply owing to the presence of more people, which can potentially make things chaotic. With an increase in the number of members in a group discussion, the task becomes even more challenging. Yet, by following some basic steps you can expect to perform well in the group discussion and increase your chances of succeeding in the same. These steps are discussed below:

◆ Prepare yourself

It is always a good idea to have some mock discussions with your friends so that you get accustomed to a group setting. Selects a few current topics that you can discuss at length. This little practice session will help boost your confidence level and will assist you in smooth sailing on the day.

◆ Don a Positive Attitude

Thinking positively and being warm to the other candidates will help you break the ice. A brief introduction with all participants will help you be more comfortable with them and will positively impact your performance.



Notes

◆ Practice your pitch and tone

Group discussion is a type of public speaking where you have to be audible and clear to the audience. Practice speaking at an appropriate pitch and learn intonation and modulation of your voice which will make your speech appealing. The tone should be polite but assertive. It will help you sound convincing.

◆ Take the leadership role and encourage others

Remember that it is a group discussion, and everyone has to speak. If you notice that a fellow participant has not got the chance to speak even after a long time into the discussion, you can interject and say “Before we carry the discussion forward, I think we should listen to Mr. X.” Such initiatives will not go unnoticed, and you will get credit for encouraging others.

◆ Don't Clamour

You should avoid clamoring for your turn to speak. Instead, you should smartly try to initiate your speech between momentary pauses during the discussion. If the discussion is degenerating into a clamour, somebody has to take the initiative to bring order back into the discussion. It will be a great opportunity to demonstrate your leadership capabilities and intellectual maturity.

◆ Maintain an air of Sophistication

You should maintain your dignity throughout the activity and sound professional throughout.

◆ Don't Speak too Much

Speaking just to hog the limelight is not a good strategy. After your opening remarks, you should let others speak. Be an active listener and try to build further on the points being discussed. Interject if you have something to add or a counter argument to make. Whatever you speak has to be in articulate and professional language.

5.8 Interview

An interview is a formal conversation between an applicant for a job or an educational programme in which the former responds to the questions



put forward by one or more members of the interview board. Interviews can be structured or unstructured based on the objective to be achieved. Interviews are formal occasions where verbal communication, non-verbal communication and business etiquettes are all under scrutiny. Therefore, as a candidate you must prepare well for it.

5.8.1 *Non-Verbal Communication*

- ◆ Knock the door before opening it and seek permission to let yourself in. Walk in confidently with your head straight with a relaxed disposition.
- ◆ Greet the interviewer with a firm handshake and if it is a panel, you may offer a polite and warm greeting collectively; say “Good Morning Everyone” or just “Good Morning” warmly.
- ◆ Wait for the panel to ask you to sit down. Say thank you before you sit down and make yourself comfortable yet attentive.
- ◆ The interview is to be conducted by the interviewer or the interview panel. Therefore, after the initial greeting, wait for the panel to ask you something. Maintain the right posture while sitting and do not slouch.
- ◆ No fiddling with the pen.
- ◆ Please try not to carry any coins or bunch of keys in your pockets to avoid clinking.
- ◆ Maintain eye-contact with positive facial expressions conveying sincerity.
- ◆ Refrain from responding to questions only with gestures or facial expressions as it will be considered as rude and may convey that you are not interested enough.
- ◆ Using your hands in graceful and professional gestures while responding to questions from the panel will demonstrate your self-confidence and that you are not nervous.
- ◆ Try to sport a gentle smile as and when deemed appropriate as it would assist you in building rapport.



5.8.2 Verbal Communication

- ◆ You will get ample opportunity and time to speak, however you will have to wait for the interviewer to finish the question. So, listen carefully to the question uninterrupted before you go ahead and begin your response.
- ◆ Try to give concise and concrete responses rather than giving long-winded answers. Try to come straight to the point without long introductions.
- ◆ Use formal language and avoid using short-forms and slangs, etc. It is considered unprofessional to use slangs.
- ◆ Prepare yourself well, at least for those clichéd questions that most interviewers happen to ask. Some of the questions are:
 - “Tell me something about yourself.”
 - “Five reasons for why we should hire you.”
 - “Where do you see yourself in the next five years? ”
 - “Describe yourself.”
 - “What is your biggest weakness?”

These questions are very common, and you should make it a point to prepare well for these questions. If you falter with these questions, you will have no one else to blame.

- ◆ Incidental humour in a manner that is accepted contextually is considered acceptable. In fact, the appropriate use of humour is always a great way of establishing rapport with the interviewer.
- ◆ If you do not know the answer to a question, simply regret by stating that “I do not know the answer to that. However, I will try to find out”. No beating-about-the-bush. An interviewer will appreciate your courage to say that you do not know. It is alright not to know. Nobody knows everything.
- ◆ Refrain from making any sort of excuses and show the courage to accept your past failure. Make a case of how you learnt from the failure and used it to work on your next success.



- ◆ Refrain from using speech fillers, such as “you know”, “um”, “like”, “uh”, etc. as it may sound annoying and unprofessional. The interviewer will, most certainly, view it as your lack of fluency in the language. Instead, if you replace these fillers with pauses you can possibly turn it into strength.
- ◆ Rate of Speech: Many people have a misplaced notion that speaking fast is the same as being fluent. It is important that you speak at an optimum rate so as to enable your audience to receive your messages and process them to have a perfect understanding of the same.

5.8.3 *Etiquettes for Interview*

◆ **Be on time**

The most basic etiquette is to reach the interview venue on time. Start early so that you get to the venue even if you have any hassle finding the route. However, avoid reaching too early as there is a reason why you have been given a fixed time. The interviewer may have other things to attend to before getting on with your interview.

◆ **Remember Names**

Make an extra effort to remember the name of the interviewer, i.e. if you have corresponded or spoken before. Forgetting names reflects lack of preparedness and even indifference.

◆ **What if you are offered refreshments?**

The best thing to do is to have a glass of water as it would help you rehydrate your dry throat and help you in case you are nervous. For other things you may politely decline as it would really be awkward.

◆ **No Mobile Phones**

Keep your mobile phone off or on silent mode. It is very unprofessional if your phone rings in the middle of an interview. In case it happens by mistake, please ensure that you apologize genuinely and immediately switch it off.



Notes

◆ Do not share confidential details

You should never share confidential details about your previous employer as it is unethical and will be taken adversely by the interviewers. Badmouthing or complaining about your previous employer or job or reporting managers also reflects badly on you. Employers are looking for professionals who have unquestionable integrity and are reliable.

◆ Express Gratitude

After the interview gets concluded, remember to thank the interviewer(s) for their time and the opportunity to discuss your suitability for the position at length. It is also good if you send a thank you email as a follow-up.

5.8.4 Stress Interviews

A style of conducting interview where a candidate is asked unsettling questions, using a confrontational manner or using stressful conditions or a combination of all these to understand how the candidate responds to stress.

Some of the tactics used in a stress interview are listed below:

◆ Using seemingly offensive questions

An interviewer may ask questions which you may find offensive, for instance “why did you get fired from the previous employer?”

◆ Intimidating behaviour

The interviewer may show hostile body language in a way that is intimidating. You may be asked questions in a demanding tone and your answers may be dismissed altogether.

◆ Aggressive manner

The interviewer may be aggressive in his/her manner and ask back-to-back rude questions.

These questions are used to gauge if they unsettle you and how well you are able to handle the situation. The objective is to see if the candidate gets unnerved by the tactics.



CASE STUDY

Mr. X was attending an interview for the post of Management Trainee in a reputed consulting firm. After his introduction, Mr. X was asked about his father's occupation which he found quite offensive. (Mr. X's father was a stenographer and typist in a government department) The interviewer did not stop there, he continued, "Why don't you become a stenographer yourself"? Such questions are offensive and may dent the self-esteem of an individual.

How should Mr. X have responded to these questions?

There are many ways in which one might respond to such questions. One of the better ways to respond is in the manner mentioned below.

It is obvious that the interviewer has deliberately asked this question to see whether it unnerves you. So, do not show any visible sign of you being upset or perturbed by the offensive questions. Gather your composure and start responding in a way as if nothing was amiss.

Try to be as logical as possible. Tell the interviewer that stenography is an art that is hardly being used in the current context, except in certain professions, such as legal/judicial. Most of the younger executives prefer to do their own writing/typing.

Further, you may mention that you have a certain domain expertise which will be best utilised in the positions such as the one that you are being interviewed for. Also, mention that as a professional, your efforts are always directed at the actualisation of your potential.

5.9 Communication During Exit Interviews

An interview held between an employer and an employee who is getting separated from the organization is known as Exit Interview. Through the exit interview, the employer attempts to get feedback of the exiting employee on the key reasons for leaving, culture of the organization, policies, work environment, learning opportunities, work-life balance, management, reasons for joining the next organization and so on. The purpose of the exit interview is to improve various aspects of the organization, devise strategies for retaining the employees and thereby reducing employee turnover.



Notes

Some of the most asked questions in an exit interview are mentioned below:

- ◆ Are there reasons for your decision to leave the organisation that we should know about?
- ◆ The most satisfying aspect about your job was?
- ◆ The least satisfying aspect about your job was?
- ◆ Is there anything about your own job that you would like to change?
- ◆ What is the best thing about working for the organisation?
- ◆ What is the one thing that you do not like about the organisation? How can we improve?
- ◆ Is there anything that you'd like to change about the way the organisation functions?
- ◆ Was the management supportive during your service period?
- ◆ If a suitable opportunity comes your way to re-join the organisation, would you take it?
- ◆ Would you recommend / refer your friends to join the organisation?



Source: <https://brainstuck.com>

Figure 5.3: Exit Interview on a Lighter Note

5.9.1 How to Communicate During an Exit Interview?

◆ Go with a neutral and balanced state of mind

You should aim at attending the exit interview with a balanced state of mind and try to be objective in your responses. It is an occasion for the final formal interaction between you and the management and should be seen as an opportunity to make sure that you leave on a positive note.



◆ Be Candid, Not Virulent

Exit Interview is not to be considered as your chance to give your employer a piece of your mind and to settle personal scores with your reporting managers. Criticism of your managers is completely acceptable; however, it should be articulated constructively. If done the right way, the employer may well take action as per your suggestions for improvement, which will make life a little easier for your successor.

◆ Be Specific

Your points will be taken seriously depending on how specific your responses are, and how you can supplement your responses with examples or actual instances. Please focus on the larger picture of your Business Unit/Department and the organization as a whole rather than dwelling on petty personal issues. It will demonstrate that your responses are valuable and insightful and may compel the employer to take action. The employer will take it favourably and give you an excellent review and may even make a counteroffer.

◆ Don't Give a Completely Negative Feedback

If you give only negative feedback, or even a fully positive one for that matter, it will likely be taken as an unfair/uninterested/not-so-genuine response and may be simply discarded. On the other hand, if you give a mixed bag of both positive and negative responses, it will be taken as fair and honest.

5.10 Ethics and Communication

As per the Oxford Dictionary, “ethics” are “*moral principles that control or influence a person's behaviour.*” “So, it is a set of “moral” principles. What is meant by that? Morality is about the principle of whether something is right or wrong, good or bad and so on.

So, we can say that **ethics** are a set of principles which governs the conduct of an individual or a group and indicates whether their actions or inaction, for that matter, are right or wrong and whether the intent behind it is good or bad.



Ethics and Communication

Communication is an essential and inseparable part of your careers and there would hardly be any day in your professional life when you do not make any sort of communication with your bosses, colleagues, vendors, clients, prospective employer, etc. It is of paramount importance that your communication passes the necessary scrutiny of being ethical, by which you mean that it is honest and bona fide. The underlying thought behind it is that your communication should not cause any harm or damage to the receivers. Therefore, your communication should be free from any manipulation, obfuscation, misrepresentation, discrimination, perception bias and exaggeration.

Why is ethical communication so important?

Ethical communication helps in building trust and credible relationships that are essential for business. By following ethics in your communication, you will ensure that your dealings are perfectly lawful. Business can take place only with trustworthy people which makes ethical communication all the more necessary to gain the confidence of your stakeholders.

5.10.1 What are the Principles of Ethical Communication?

There are certain principles that guide us in communicating ethically. These principles are listed below:

◆ Honesty

Honesty is obviously the most common principle that comes to mind when we think about communicating ethically. If you are honest in your interaction with people, you have fulfilled one of the most important criteria of ethical communication.

◆ Transparency

The second principle is that of openness in your dealings and interactions. It is one of the key principles on which building and maintaining the trust of your stakeholders rests.

◆ Confidentiality and Privacy

You must maintain confidentiality of information at all times and strictly refrain from divulging any information that is sensitive and concerns



other parties. There are some industries where confidentiality is even more important, such as defense, industrial research, etc.

◆ Acting Responsibly

Being responsible in your actions is seminal to the concept of ethics. At every point in the process of communication, one must take ownership of things and think responsibly. Wherever you think that things are going beyond your control, you should escalate the channel of communication to put things back on track. You must also bear in mind conflicts of interest that may arise every now and then in an organization.

Examples of how Ethical Communication is Critical in Business

◆ Suppose that you are a member of a committee whose job is to make recommendations for appointing a vendor for providing Golf Carts to be used in the factory campus. If one of your relatives who runs a Golf Cart company has bid for the job, it would be unethical for you to be on the Committee and therefore you should immediately communicate the same to the appropriate authority.

◆ Ethical communication has great bearing on the marketing industry. Companies advertise about their brands routinely and often they use hyperbole and deception in advertisements. An interesting example is that of food photography used in advertisements of popular burger chains. In the photographs, the burgers appear much bigger and more stuffed than what it is in reality. It is a clear case of deception and misrepresentation of facts. The companies engaging in such deceptive advertising tactics should come clean about it to be fair to its consumers. Such companies risk losing their market share as the consumers gradually become aware of the deception.

5.11 Summary

- ◆ Career Management is a continuous process of orienting and reorienting your career based on the changing sets of goals and objectives.
- ◆ The ongoing process of goal setting, devising the means of achieving the goals, reviewing and assessing it continuously is known as career planning.



Notes

- ◆ A résumé is a formal document containing information about your qualifications, work experience skills, achievements, contact details, etc.
- ◆ A cover letter is your first communication to a prospective employer which acts as an introduction to your résumé that is a mandatory enclosure with the cover letter.
- ◆ A Group Discussion is a type of group activity where the group is given a common topic on which each individual is expected to exchange ideas, views and opinions and try to arrive at a conclusion.
- ◆ An interview is a formal conversation between an applicant for a job or an educational programme in which the former responds to the questions put forward by one or more members of the interview board.
- ◆ Interviews are formal occasions where verbal communication, non-verbal communication and business etiquettes are all under scrutiny.
- ◆ A style of conducting interview where a candidate is asked unsettling questions, using a confrontational manner or using stressful conditions or a combination of all these to understand how the candidate responds to stress is known as a stress interview.
- ◆ Ethics are a set of principles that governs the conduct of an individual or a group and indicates whether their actions or inaction, for that matter, are right or wrong and whether the intent behind it is good or bad. Ethical communication helps in building trust and credible relationships which are essential for business.

5.12 Self-Assessment Questions

1. Explain the concept of career planning and the steps involved in it.
2. What is the purpose of a résumé and how is it different from a Curriculum Vitae (CV)?
3. How can you communicate effectively in a group discussion?
4. What are the etiquettes that you should follow in the interview process?



5. What is a Stress interview?
6. What are ethics? What are the principles of ethical communication?

5.13 References and Suggested Readings

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