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Directorate of Distance Education

B.Com.(Computer Applications)

I - Semester

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BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

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INTRODUCTION

NOTES

Communication is an essential part of our lives, its importance increases manifold when talking about the conducting or operating of a business. This is because, communication then becomes the important link between the entrepreneurs, customers and stakeholders. It has a defined influence on the profit or revenue which the business is already generating or is potentially going to generate. Business communication is different from other types of communication owing to its nature of having its origin and having an effect on the financial outcomes of the company's operations. But business communication is not restricted to merely interaction with the external elements, it also includes in its folds the communication to be carried out internally among the members of the organization. It may take the form of verbal or non-verbal communication depending on the need, nature and gravity of the issue. Since, business is involved, there are certain set patterns which need to be followed to ensure the best results and establish a formal relationship through a chain of command. It must, however, be remembered that business communication is not always formal in nature, it also includes informal interaction between the employees at work or during lunch hours.

The need for business communication arises from the requirement to communicate and spread information through planning, coordinating, organizing, directing and controlling. Communication in businesses have varied mediums including e-mails, telephone calls, letters, press releases, applications, orders, enquiries, complaints, presentations, conferences, etc. In this book, *Business Communication*, we will study the major aspects of communication in business including the fundamentals of communication, the types of communication, business letters, writing reports and e-mails, conducting meetings, and employment communication.

This study material on *Business Communication* aims to cover all the major aspects of business communication. It is written with the distance learning student in mind. It is presented in a user-friendly format using a clear, lucid language. Each unit contains an Introduction and a list of Objectives to prepare the student for what to expect in the text. At the end of each unit are a Summary and a list of Key Words, to aid in recollection of concepts learnt. All units contain Self-Assessment Questions and Exercises, and strategically placed Check Your Progress questions so the student can keep track of what has been discussed.

BLOCK - I
FUNDAMENTAL OF COMMUNICATION

NOTES

**UNIT 1 COMMUNICATION:
AN OVERVIEW**

Structure

Introduction
Objectives
Purpose of Communication
Process of Communication
Importance of Communication in Business
Difference between Technical and General Communication
Barriers to Communication
Measures to Overcome the Barriers to Communication
Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
Summary
Key Words
Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
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INTRODUCTION

Communication is the modus operandi of social and commercial intercourse. It is communication which gets the world going. It is the lifeblood of any group or organization. The communication process encompasses men, women and children as individuals and also members of a group, society, community or organization. One cannot visualize a world where men and women do not communicate. Communication keeps the world going.

Communication is relevant not only to human beings, but also to other living beings. It is the most important link that connects all living organisms. Communication takes place not only among people, but also between people and animals and among animals. The dog owner, the horse rider, the ringmaster in the circus and the fortune-teller communicate with their animals and birds.

It is the ability of mankind to communicate across barriers and beyond boundaries that has ushered the progress of mankind. It is the ability of fostering speedy and effective communication around the world that has shrunk the world and made 'globalization' a reality. Communication has had a vital role to play in ensuring that people belonging to a particular country or a cultural or linguistic group interact with and relate to people belonging to other countries or cultural and linguistic groups.

NOTES

Communication is at once the cause and consequence of a powerful world order. Development of varied and sophisticated means of communication over a period of time has brought human beings across the globe closer and has facilitated speedy and effective transmission of thoughts and ideas. The expanse or reach of communication, therefore, is worldwide and truly encompasses human life in all its facets and endeavours. It galvanizes action among individuals, organizations, societies and the world community at large.

Communication adds meaning to human life. It helps build relationships and fosters love and understanding. It enriches our knowledge of the universe and makes living worthwhile. Imagine life without various tools of communication—newspapers, books, letters, television and mobile telephone—and the expanse and significance of communication becomes crystal clear. Understanding the power of communication is imperative for the success of any human endeavour.

OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the significance of communication
- Learn the purpose of communication
- Describe the process of communication
- Know about the barriers of communication
- Discuss various measures to overcome the barriers of communication

PURPOSE OF COMMUNICATION

Sociologists describe human beings as social animals. As members of society, they have to constantly interact with their fellow beings. They have feelings, emotions, likes and dislikes—all of which they have to convey. In other words, whatever the environment in which they are placed, they have to build links and establish relationships. The need for communication arises from their desire to express themselves in a meaningful manner. Communication stems from the desire to express oneself in a meaningful manner. As stated earlier, communication is the modus operandi of social intercourse. As a member of the family, a social group and as part of a work-team, they need to communicate with others.

Just as they are social beings, human beings are also emotional beings. Human beings have the urge to convey feelings, ideas and thoughts. They have certain thoughts and emotions. Human heart generates feelings. Further, just as human beings are social beings, and emotional beings, they are equally importantly, rational beings. They are endowed with the faculty of thinking. They have intelligence and brainpower. The human mind is a very potent force. There is always a constant urge to give expression to what the mind generates. In order to give a meaningful

expression to thoughts, ideas, reasoning, creativity and intelligence, human beings resort to communication.

*Communication:
An Overview*

The need for communication arises from the need to emote, to interact, and to express one's ideas and thoughts and the need to relate and connect. The need or the desire to communicate, however, varies from person to person, depending on time and context. There are times and occasions when a person is extremely communicative. There are also times and occasions when he or she prefers to remain silent. Be that as it may, most of our waking hours are spent in communication. Such communication may take place in several ways—listening, speaking, reading and writing.

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It is a well-known fact that we spend a major part of our waking hours in communicating. In the past, researchers have noted that we spend about 45 per cent of the time in listening, about 30 per cent in speaking, about 15 per cent in reading and about 10 per cent in writing. This was in the past when the communication technology was in its nascent stage. But the subsequent developments in communication technology leading to the emergence of Internet, email, SMS, Instant Messaging, video-conferencing, e-books, etc. have added a new dimension to the simple acts of reading, writing, speaking and listening. All the same, communication in its myriad forms continues to be the major pre-occupation of men, women and children.

Evolution of Communication

The art of communication is as old as mankind itself. It is, in fact, older than the written word or even the spoken word. Human beings learnt to communicate much before they learnt to speak, read or write. That is why communication is not unique to human beings. Communication encompasses Expanse and Scope of Communication all living beings and pervades the animal world as well. Birds and animals also communicate. The sounds they make carry meaning. The chirping of the birds, the roaring of the lions, the hissing of the snakes and the whining of the dogs are often meant to be expressive.

Much before they learnt to speak, human beings had learnt to express themselves through sounds, gestures and actions. If we observe closely, we can notice that we continue to use these methods to communicate even to this day. It is not that those who cannot speak, read or write cannot communicate. A visually challenged person or an illiterate person, resorts to oral and non-verbal communication; while a person with a speech or hearing disability resorts to gesticulations and lip reading.

The art of communication has evolved over the years. It goes back in time to the biblical era, mythological times and even to the prehistoric period. People learnt to express themselves even before they evolved fully into their present form. From sounds, grunts, actions, signs, gestures and gesticulations to the spoken word and thereafter to the world of reading, writing and modern and sophisticated methods of communication, it has been a long yet fascinating and rewarding journey

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through time. As they progressed on this fascinating journey, human beings learnt to interpret sounds, understand actions and use signs and gesticulations. Messages were conveyed through sounds, cries and drumbeats. The spoken word added a new dimension to the world of learning. Sages and saints of yore learnt to pass on sacred verses and holy texts through word of mouth. Thereafter, human beings learnt to use symbols and pictures to convey messages. Early writings were on stones and leaves. As human beings progressed, communication evolved further. The invention of printing, as we all know, revolutionized the process of communication. In terms of its reach, the written word signified a quantum leap. Side by side, various inventions made possible the recording of the spoken word and its transmission, irrespective of time and distance. Gradually, the emergence of new media added new dimensions to the world of communication. Advancements in technology further enabled storage and retrieval of oral and written records in an effective, time-saving and cost-efficient manner.

The objectives and functions of communication are inter-related. Communication could have many objectives depending upon the group and context. Communication within the family, in a classroom, in a theatre, in a church, in a war field, in a seminar and in the boardroom has different objectives. The objectives are defined depending upon the group and the purpose to be achieved. Each of these groups has a different set of goals and objectives.

Communication aims at sub-serving those goals. In each of these groups, the dominant objectives of communication would be to inform, connect, educate, entertain, motivate, provoke, integrate, reassure and persuade, as the case may be. Communication is thus the means to an end. Communication is largely goal-oriented and the objective of any personal communication would depend upon the person or the group one is addressing and the purpose or object one has in mind.

Key Point: Communication Skills Are Critical in Business

The world around us is dynamic and fast changing. Business organizations, therefore, have to deal with new situations every day. The issues, problems, competitive demands, as well as the pressures and challenges that confront people in business are ever-changing. The operating environments in the workplaces are dynamic and evolving. People need to constantly reach out to others and get across their messages clearly and precisely in order to get results. This means the role of and need for communication skills in today's workplaces have to be viewed in a dynamic and fast-changing context. The skills and practices of yesterday may not necessarily work well today. Old methods become obsolete and new skills become relevant. While the basic time-tested skills and practices would continue to be broadly relevant, new approaches, refinements and skill sets have to be developed and adapted in order to cope with the emerging situations. This means effectiveness in communication cannot be taken for granted. Effective communication demands conscious efforts and a

variety of skill sets. Learning and implementation should progress side by side on an on-going basis. Theoretical knowledge and basic time-tested practices have to be supplemented with new and modern tools and skills. Old methods of communication have to be supplemented by the modern technology-enabled methods and systems of communication. Communication affects every type of business and all levels of people. Communication failures result in ineffective messages, lack of results, and may even damage business relationships. This makes the role of communication skills critical or one of decisive importance. And, that is why, today's organizations and workplaces need, more than ever before, effective communicators.

Communication Clue

Business organizations value good communicators. Communication brings people together and keeps them at work. Moreover, purposeful communication helps achieve organizational goals. Effective communication skills are, therefore, the need of the hour.

Let us now look at the objectives of communication in business organizations. It is a process common to every business, whatever be its primary function. Business organizations exist for the purpose of meeting specific needs of the community in which they operate. Every business organization sets its goals and objectives in relation to the specific need it aims to fulfil. Every organization uses resources, including human resources to function effectively, and also targets specific clients and markets. Businesses are often associations of people coming together for specific purposes. It has people within and it also addresses people outside the organization. The activities of any organization require both people within and people outside to act, interact, reach, share, exchange and get across to each other so that specific objectives are accomplished in an effective manner. The word 'business' connotes a commercial motive. As distinct from a charitable or religious organization, any business organization is driven by a profit motive. This implies that the organization would like to ensure that its objectives are achieved with the optimum utilization of resources like time, money and effort. The communication system that is put in place within the organization should, therefore, address and meet these objectives.

Since business organizations are multi-disciplinary in nature, communication encompasses wide areas and is inter-disciplinary in approach. Large organizations are described as networks of interdependent relationships. The objectives, activities and inter-relationships of a business organization necessitate communication to subserve its many diverse objectives.

Let us discuss the objectives of business communication. Refer to Table 1.1.

NOTES

Table 1.1 Objectives of Communication

- Inform
- Educate
- Train
- Motivate
- Integrate
- Relate and Connect
- Promote
- Entertain
- Facilitate Decision Making
- Help Networking

NOTES

Inform

The first and foremost objective of any communication is to inform. In today's world, information is power. Communication brings power through information. The dissemination of information covers a wide range of areas, both internal and external. People within the organization have to be kept informed about the organizational goals, objectives, procedures, processes, systems, plans, priorities and strategies. Equally important is the objective of ensuring effective external communication—with customers, prospects, competitors, suppliers and the public, about products, services, plans, happenings, events and achievements. The information needs within the organization take on different nomenclatures—market-related information, product-related information, client-related information, employee information, executive information and management information.

Educate

Another objective of communication in an organization is to educate, i.e., to disseminate knowledge and develop skills and attitudes among the people working in the organization. There is also a need to familiarize them with the systems, procedures and processes. This process of education may extend to customers as well. This may be done through product literature, publicity, presentations and demonstrations.

Train

Communication is an integral component of any training program. Business organizations need to train people to achieve proficiency in specific skills. They have to provide working knowledge and attitudinal inputs through training programs to employees at various hierarchical levels. Training sessions involve teaching, instruction, demonstration, practice and discussion. The process of communication is integral to each of these.

Motivate

People in any business organization have to be motivated to pursue goals and achieve higher levels of performance. High levels of morale and motivation are a must to ensure high levels of productivity and efficiency on a sustainable basis. Communication provides the means to keep the motivation levels high. Talks,

lectures, films, meetings, workshops and non-verbal messages are among the means used to motivate people.

*Communication:
An Overview*

Integrate

Large business organizations have different business units, departments and territorial divisions. Each of them pursues different goals, sub-goals and target sections. Communication provides the means for an integrated approach in pursuing organizational goals. Effective communication is a must to ensure that people working in different functional and geographical areas are integrated into well-knit teams that eschew working at cross purposes and continue to achieve organizational goals as envisaged. Communication binds together people working for a common objective and helps team building. Communication is of particular relevance in conflict resolution.

Relate and connect

Good business relationships are a must for the continued success of any business organization. It is communication that provides the means for building and nurturing mutually beneficial relationships. These relationships are both internal and external. They may be among and/or between employees, supervisory staff, top management, customers, suppliers, other players, press and other media. As part of the larger community, progressive organizations make it a point to relate themselves with the community at large. It demonstrates that they are a sharing and caring organization. All this is achieved through well-organized communication strategies.

Promote

Promotional efforts are a must for any organization to fully achieve its objectives. One of the Ps of marketing (the others being Product, Price and Placement), promotion relates to various activities such as advertising, publicity, public relations and communication, which aim at customer information, customer education, customer communication and customer retention. In the marketing concept, the customer is said to move from stage to stage till the transaction is completed. They move progressively from the state of awareness of the need for a product to the knowledge of the product and thereafter to a state of product preference. The needs of the customers develop into effective demand for products, resulting in the purchase of the product or availing of the service. Promotional aspects of the service are particularly relevant in a service industry like banking or insurance, where the product, i.e., the service, cannot be readily 'seen'. Financial service providers essentially sell benefits. For this, they have to organize effective promotional measures, which seek to inform, educate, persuade and actualize the clients/markets. Communication constitutes the basic plank on which promotional strategies are built.

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Entertain

Every business is not necessarily a serious business. Even serious businesses are not 'serious' all the time. Whatever may be the nature of business, there is a time for entertainment. Communication facilitates entertainment. It facilitates social bonding and brings in lighter moments that help in releasing tension, fostering camaraderie and getting rid of negative feelings. Humour, when used effectively, can play a vital role in fostering positive behaviour in business organizations. In the entertainment industry, communication has a much bigger role to play. Communication can serve to achieve the objective of purposeful entertainment.

Facilitates decision making

Decision making constitutes an important function for any business organization. Well thought out decisions, quickly taken, lead to better results. Such decision making is spread across all the functional areas—personnel, marketing, accounts, production and maintenance. Day in and day out, people in organizations keep taking decisions at various hierarchical levels. People at higher levels in the organization command respect depending upon their decision-making abilities. Any such decision making, however, depends on the availability of adequate and timely inputs. It calls for facts, figures, analysis, deliberation, clarification, confirmation and evaluation. Communication—both oral and written—facilitates decision making in any business organization.

Helps networking

Today's business world is highly networked. Networking means a closely connected group of people. People need to connect with each other, not only within their organizations, but among themselves as well. Progressive organizations are inter-connected organizations and lay much stress on networking. They invest in networking systems where a number of computers and other devices are connected together so that the equipment and information can be shared. Networking facilitates easy flow of ideas, thoughts, policies and decisions. At their individual level too, people need to network themselves so as to exchange ideas and information. Networking at the individual level means connecting with and being in touch with other people who may be useful, both personally and professionally. Any such networking takes place through the medium of communication.

The objectives of communication, it must be emphasized, are dynamic and ever-changing. Depending upon the nature and functions of the organization, the range of people it deals with, and the sensitivities involved, the process of communication assumes new dimensions. In order to caution, counsel, persuade, clarify, elicit support, reprimand, organize, apprise, evaluate and achieve numerous other objectives, people in organizations resort to communication. Business organizations today function in an extremely dynamic context. Nothing ever remains

the same for long. There are mergers and acquisitions, joint ventures, high employee turnover, low customer loyalty, move towards corporate governance, outsourcing, paperless offices and flexible work hours. All these developments have had their impact on the conventional methods of organizational communication.

As much as organizations themselves are adapting to changes in their operating environment and are facing new challenges, the contours of business communication will have to undergo a change. Communication systems, concepts and approaches will have to cope with new demands on business and there is a constant need to review the adequacy of existing methods and practices. Communication is essentially a support system for any business. With every change in the profile of business, the process of communication has to see refinements. Let us take an illustration. Till recently, a supervisor in an organization would consider having a 'long chat' with an employee whose productivity had declined or had started showing indifference to work. The typical scene has undergone a noteworthy change. Today, there may not be much of an opportunity to have a long, focused person-to-person 'chat.' With flexible working, outsourcing and limitations of time, new approaches will have to be found. Although internet 'chatting' facility may be available in some places, the advantages of person-to-person verbal communication are certainly not there. Every new situation translates into a need for new approach to communication. To cope with new situations and emerging challenges in business, people associated with the process of communication will have to be necessarily creative and innovative.

The objectives of communication, both internal and external, thus cover multifarious facets of organizational functioning. Within the organization, it covers varied functions such as planning, directing, controlling, coordinating, reviewing, monitoring and staffing. It facilitates appropriate feedback so vital for decision making and relationship building. Marketing, selling, goal-setting, employee counselling, team-building, performance highlighting, image-building, morale-building and community orientation are all valid objectives which communication seeks to achieve in an organizational context. Communication supports every business function.

Check Your Progress

1. How are the objectives of communication defined?
2. What are the dominant objectives of communication?
3. What does the word 'business' connote?

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PROCESS OF COMMUNICATION

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Communication is a process that involves certain distinct steps. In its simpler form, it relates to stimulus and response. The stimulus arises from the communicator and the receiver responds. Communication is not complete till the message conveyed by the sender is properly understood by the receiver. Any communication process should necessarily have three elements—sender, receiver and the message.

Every communication has a distinct purpose, which determines the message. The stimulus emanates from the sender, and the receiver comes up with the response. The objective in any business communication, as we have seen earlier, is to elicit the desired response. To be understood, however, is a necessary but not a sufficient condition in the organizational context. When the understanding results in the intended action, the objective of the communication is achieved.

The process of communication in an organization can be illustrated with the help of Figure 1.1. It brings out the following steps involved in the communication process:

Step 1 Message is initiated.

Step 2 Sender picks up the idea and encodes it for proper understanding.

Step 3 The encoded message is then transmitted through the chosen medium or channel.

Step 4 Receiver receives the message and decodes it.

Step 5 The decoded message is used or acted upon.

Step 6 As a final step, feedback on use or action is sent back to the sender.

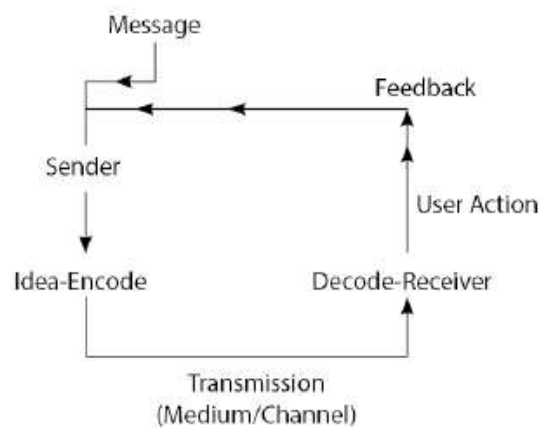


Fig. 1.1 Process of Communication

Communication relates to stimulus and response

The starting point of any communication is the existence of a message. The process of communication starts with a purpose. There is an underlying idea that has to be

put across. This idea is developed into a message. The sender gives shape to the idea he wants to communicate.

The next step, as is evident from the chart, is the encoding of the idea. Encoding ensures that the idea or the message assumes a communicable form. Encoding would involve choosing the right words, expressions, phrases, charts and pictures in order to facilitate complete and clear expression of the idea. In doing so, the sender of the message should keep in mind the ability of the receiver to decode and comprehend the message.

The encoded message is now ready to travel. The journey or transmission is undertaken through a medium or channel. The sender of the message has to select the medium or the communication channel—oral, written, visual, audio-visual, electronic or a combination of any of these. Each of these offers various options. The choice of the medium would be influenced by factors like availability, cost, urgency and reliability.

The transmission is complete when the message reaches the receiver. The message has travelled from the sender to the receiver. Having received the message, it is now up to the receiver to respond as he pleases. If the receiver does not open the mailbox, ignores the letter, declines to take the call, refuses to view the audio-visual film or ignores the e-mail, the message gets lost, and the idea fails to reach its destination.

For the communication process to progress as intended, the receiver, on getting the message, should decode it. Decoding relates to reading, listening, viewing, understanding and interpretation of the message. Proper decoding is again a must for effective communication. It calls for earnestness on the part of the receiver. It depends on one's willingness to respond to the sender's efforts in sending the message. Even when one responds, understanding and interpretation of the message will be influenced by one's knowledge, attitude and perception. Communication is complete and effective only when the receiver correctly comprehends the purpose of the message, uses it and acts upon it as envisaged by the sender.

In the organizational context, in particular, the communication process moves a step further resulting in relevant feedback to the sender. The quality of feedback received from the target indicates the effectiveness of communication.

The process of communication is thus a progressive step-by-step movement. Both the sender and the receiver have a definite role to play in ensuring the success of communication. Their internal background, social status, hierarchical relationships, organizational climate, knowledge, skills and attitudes are among a host of factors that determine the effectiveness of communication. Added to that is the efficiency and reliability of the channels of communication chosen in the process. The choice of methods and channels should be such that they are capable of overcoming barriers, if any, to the process of communication.

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Importance of Communication in Business

The importance of business communication in today's inter-linked global economy is widely appreciated. Effective communication is at the heart of any business. Businesses deal with people and communication serves as a vital link in connecting people. Business organizations that underestimate the crucial role of communication do so at their peril. It is also well recognized that every communication is not necessarily effective. In real-life business situations, there are everyday instances of communication failure. The messages delivered are not what are intended. The messages understood are not what are conveyed. Messages often get distorted, diluted or misunderstood. Every organization, therefore, not only needs to recognize the importance of communication, but also should put in place adequate efforts and proper systems to make communication, both internal and external, effective and result oriented. Successful business communication is not automatic or mere happenstance. It needs time, effort and constant attention across all organizations to ensure that communication becomes effective.

QUOTE TO NOTE: *Communication is an essential function of enterprise. Whether written or oral, it is the conduit through which an enterprise speaks to its customers.*

—Harvard Business Essentials

Effective communication skills are among the most essential competencies in any aspiring manager's skill set. It is well understood in modern day business organizations that in the long run, soft skills are more important than technical skills. Soft skills include communication, time management, team work, negotiation and conflict resolution, assertiveness and business etiquette. Communication, however, tops the list of soft skills that managers need to possess. Important as they are, communication and other soft skills are also the hardest to acquire and the most difficult to practice. Nevertheless, like other skills, communication skills too can be mastered and practiced with ease through constant learning and application.

Given the importance of communication for any business, business organizations are always on the lookout for good communicators. The need for good communicators is particularly strong in business organizations in the service industry where services are delivered through people-to-people interactions. These organizations also put in place their own systems for improving the communication skills of their employees.

The nature of communication in business is quite diverse. In large organizations, the flow of communication is both internal and external and encompasses numerous stakeholders. Such communications could be personal or professional, formal or informal, written or oral, upward or downward or lateral or one-way or interactive. Communication involves the act of sharing ideas, opinions, thoughts, strategies, findings, concepts, attitudes, perceptions,

perspectives and a wide array of communication needs. It could be individual-to-individual, individual-to-group or even group-to-group communication. The method of business communication could again take varied forms—written or verbal or non-verbal. Letters and memos, reports and notices, speeches and presentations, signals and gestures and a host of such means are used in business communication. Depending on the nature of communication, its transmission takes place through e-mail, fax, courier, telephone, teleconferencing, video conferencing and even films and other audio visual aids.

Given this diversity, a good communicator should have a clear understanding of the alternative types and methods of communication and the circumstances under which each one of them or a combination of them can be used. The communicator should also master the technical aspects of different methods of communication so that breakdowns and barriers are eliminated. Meetings, seminars, workshops, discussions, presentations, negotiations, strategy sessions and such other interactive fora translate into substantial man-hours involving executives, managers, specialists, guests and customers. Hence, every effort should be made to ensure that smooth flow of communication is facilitated through proper planning and organization. The nature and expanse of communication would depend on the nature of business and its reach across various stakeholders. In real-life situations, the needs and complexity of communication are quite diverse, depending on the type of industry, number of employees, geographical spread of the organization, level of sophistication and technology adoption, hierarchical structures, cross-cultural dimensions and such other relevant factors. Business communication is about sending and receiving messages and sharing information. Information is the key input for decision making and action taking. People in business organizations need to constantly gather information and take business-related decisions. Owners need to know about business growth and profitability. Managers need to know about market trends and organizational strengths. Employees need to know about production schedules. Customers need to know about product features. Almost everyone in business irrespective of his/her functional or geographical or hierarchical position needs to communicate. And those who can communicate effectively stand to gain, achieve better results and win over others.

Unlike what it used to be in the olden days, communication in modern day business organizations relies heavily on technology. The advent of mobiles, computers, networking systems, teleconferencing and video conferencing tools, fax machines and power point sets have added a new dimension to the world of communication. As businesses grow, expand and reach out, they need to rely more and more on such instruments and people well versed in operating such machines. Technology powers business communication. A good communicator, therefore, needs to not only master the varied business communication skills, but also needs to develop adequate knowledge of technology and its use in business communication.

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Difference between Technical and General Communication

The communication which covers mostly *general* topics, topics which are on the surface such as the market, weather, people, ideas, opinions, politics, current news etc falls under the category of general communication. *Technical communication* is more in depth into a specific topic.

General communication

- Contains a general message
- Informal in style and approach
- No set pattern
- Mostly oral
- Not always for a specific audience
- No use of technical terms or graphics

Technical communication

- Contains a technical message
- Mostly formal in style and approach
- Follows a set pattern
- Both oral and written
- Always for a specific audience
- Frequently involves jargons, graphics and so on

The word ‘technical’ means application of scientific methods and machinery. To convey the facts, figures, ideas and all types of scientific and technical information, a person would require to use technical communication. Technical communication primarily consists of responding specialized information for the practical use of readers or listeners who need that information.

Check Your Progress

4. Till when is the communication not complete?
5. What does encoding involve?
6. What do soft skills include?

BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION

As we have seen earlier, communication is a process that covers six different steps involving, among others, encoding, decoding and transmission. For ensuring effective communication, all the parties and instruments will have to play their part as envisaged. At every stage of the communication process, however, there are

barriers, which hinder or dilute the flow of communication. The barriers to communication in an organizational context may arise out of authority structure, status difference, reporting relationships, culture and background of individuals. The barriers to communication may arise out of behavioural differences, differences in skills and understanding as well as physical factors. While some kinds of barriers like behavioural differences and differences in skills may be commonly applicable to all methods of communication, barriers arising out of physical factors may be specific to the method of communication adopted. Some barriers, which are specific to the written communication, are handwriting, spellings and legibility. Similarly, barriers to oral communication would include absence of felicity of expression, accent, speed of delivery and appropriateness of the language.

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Poor expression

The power of expression of the communicator determines the quality of communication. To be effective, the message has to be properly developed from an idea. Barriers relating to expression result in poorly expressed messages. Lack of conceptual skills results in inadequate or incomplete shaping of the idea. Ambiguity as well as lack of clarity arise due to limited word power, improper organization of ideas and lack of coherence. If the words and thoughts are not organized properly, the communication would suffer for want of structural balance or a sense of proportion. Obviously, such poor expression of thoughts and ideas leads to incorrect, incomplete and incoherent messages. All this would result in avoidable errors and seeking of further clarifications, adding to costs and delays in communication. Encoding and decoding require skill to ensure clarity and precision. Poor expression is likely to occur under the following circumstances:

1. When a person is ill
2. When a person is fatigued
3. When a person is under severe stress
4. When a person is under the influence of alcohol
5. When a person's thoughts are not clear and vocabulary is limited.

These are true for both oral and written communication.

Faulty transmissions

The process of transmission, essential for any communication, is susceptible to errors of omission and commission. In the organizational context, the person transmitting the message may be different from the person who conceived the idea. The intent and purpose of the message may not remain the same as it moves from the originator to the transmitter. Not only that, the person transmitting the message may bring in his own bias, feelings and perceptions, which the originator of the message would not have intended. Or else, there may be occasions when

the originator of the idea expects the transmitter to detail, illustrate and elucidate the idea, which the latter may fail to do.

Indifference and lack of interest

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This is indeed a very strong barrier in the process of communication. Organizations have to make considerable effort to ensure that indifference to organizational communication is brought down to the minimum. Communication, to be effective, presupposes that the receiver of the message is also attentive or receptive. Attentive listening in oral communication, careful reading in written communication and keen observation in non-verbal communication are a must. Indifference or lack of interest on the part of the recipient, in turn, adversely impacts the enthusiasm of the communicator. When the students are not attentive, the teacher is likely to lose interest. On the other hand, when the speaker lacks expertise or credibility, the receptivity of the audience wanes. Indifference and lack of interest creates barriers to communication, as a result of which the quality of communication suffers. The intended message is either not received at all or is incomplete and, worse still, is understood incorrectly.

Noise

Noise is yet another barrier especially relevant to verbal communication. Noise disturbs the flow of communication. The recipient fails to receive the oral messages sent by the communicator, as a result of which the message gets diluted. While noise certainly affects oral communication, it may also affect written communication to the extent that the person writing a letter or a report may lose his concentration and consequently his flow of thoughts may suffer.

QUOTE TO NOTE: *The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.*

—George Bernard Shaw

Physical factors

The process of communication, especially transmission of messages, makes use of numerous channels, instruments and gadgets such as telephone, microphone, projector, printing, photocopying, telex, fax, radio, film, cassette and of late, the floppy, compact disc and the pen drive. All these are very useful when they function smoothly. At the same time, they act as barriers when they fail to perform their functions efficiently. As a result, communication fails to reach the target audience. Snapping of telephone lines, non-availability of meeting rooms, failure of multimedia equipment and disturbances of power supply may lead to delays in transmitting the messages to the intended recipients.

People related factors

The process of communication essentially involves human beings. Like democracy, we may describe communication as of the people, for the people and by the people. Yet, people do not think, understand and interpret alike. In other words,

meanings are in people. In any large organization, especially in multinational ones, there are differences among the employees in terms of language group, cultural background, rural-urban origin and hierarchical levels which in turn create psychological, linguistic and cultural barriers. Differences in hierarchical positions have their implications in terms of work structure, authority, status and relationship. In such situations, people may have bias, fear and reticence, which act as barriers to the free flow of communication. All these factors lead to different expectations among people within the organization, as to who should communicate with whom and in what manner. Apart from this, the organizational climate has its impact on communication. It is conducive when people are encouraged to speak out and there is free flow of communication. On the other hand, when the organizational climate is disturbed, and when dissenting voices are stifled, barriers emerge.

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Wit and Humour

Plain Speaking

Once the British Prime Minister and his secretary were travelling through the English countryside. Suddenly they realized that they had lost their way. The Prime Minister told the secretary, 'When we next see a person on the road, stop the car and ask him exactly where we are.' Accordingly, the secretary stopped the car and asked the next passerby, 'Where are we?' The man replied, 'You are in your car.' On hearing that, the Prime Minister told the secretary, "This is the perfect example of a British parliamentary reply. It is brief, to the point, truthful and does not tell anything more than what you already know!"

We have seen in the foregoing paragraphs that there are often numerous barriers to the free flow of communication. Such barriers disturb or dilute or hinder the process of communication. These barriers may be classified as physical, psychological, linguistic and cultural. It is worth emphasizing, however, that most barriers are surmountable. It is possible to anticipate, recognize and foresee the prevalence of barriers and take appropriate corrective action. With conscious effort, it should be possible to overcome these barriers and ensure free flow of communication on an ongoing basis. This book, in chapters ahead, discusses extensively on how to overcome such barriers, whether they relate to oral, written or non-verbal communication, and make communication meaningful and effective.

Check Your Progress

7. Mention two reasons becoming barriers to communication in an organization.
8. What are some of the instruments of communication?

MEASURES TO OVERCOME THE BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION

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Effective communication calls for coordinated effort. Good communication like any other high-quality output is very much the result of hard work. Good communication does not occur accidentally. It calls for proper planning, understanding of human behavior, choice of physical facilities and mechanical or electronic devices and the organizational context. In order to overcome the barriers to communication, it is necessary to understand the essentials of good communication and work towards achieving them.

Be clear about the purpose

The first essential for effective communication is to be clear about the purpose of communication. Every communication has an objective. It is a means to an end. One should be clear about what one wants to achieve through the process of communication. The objective of any communication is not just to receive or convey a message. The communicator has to ensure that the message reaches the receiver. Any message that is not backed by a clear and well-developed idea becomes purposeless communication entailing wastage of time and effort. The urge to communicate should be preceded by clarity of purpose. Ask yourself what you want to achieve or accomplish by the communication: is it to impart information, express concern, enlist support, express displeasure or imbibe skills? The objective may not be one but a combination of these purposes.

Understand the process of communication

Another essential for effective communication is the need to understand how the process of communication works, i.e., the principles and tools of communication. To appreciate the various steps involved in communication in terms of encoding, decoding, transmission, comprehension and feedback, it is necessary to have a good understanding of the mode, channels, types, instruments, methods and barriers relating to communication and the factors affecting it. Good communicators, like good artists, use their tools effectively.

Be clear about your target audience

The intended message cannot bring about the desired result unless it reaches the right person or group of persons. The message should address the target group. For communication to be effective, it should be properly focused. Be it a letter, a speech, a film or a presentation, make sure the receiver is connected with or is relevant to the purpose of communication. Quite often, communication loses its effectiveness because it reaches an unintended audience. Good ideas and messages reaching the wrong persons will end up as an exercise in futility. The next essential step is to develop good communication skills. Effective communication presupposes the ability to communicate under varied circumstances. The skills of communication that need mastering are reading, writing, listening, speaking, body language and

presentation. One must be clear about the merits and demerits of various types of communication and which of them is to be used under a given set of circumstances. Each of them is a different skill and requires a conscious effort to develop it.

*Communication:
An Overview*

Be well informed

Communication quite often relates to providing information. The initiator of the communication should, therefore, be well informed about the message he wants to pass on. The initiator should also have the right perspective about the message and be in a position to appreciate the context in which the message is being communicated. Limited information or limited understanding by the sender naturally limits the sender's ability to communicate. This happens in an organizational context when the sender of the message is doing so based on incomplete information. People receiving the message often have their expectations about it and the person giving the message should take cognizance of it.

Plan your communication

In order to be effective, any communication is to be well planned. The message to be conveyed, the words to be chosen, the action to be sought, the feedback to be obtained, are all the areas that need to be carefully considered. These aspects will have to be evolved properly before deciding on the right choices. While some routine messages can be communicated without advance planning, all important communication in organizations/ businesses need organized effort. Inadequate planning can, and often does, result in ineffective communication. Good planning should take note of the target audience and pay attention to their attitudes and expectations, as well as timings.

Be positive in approach

Yet another requirement for effective communication is a positive approach and the right mental attitude. The communicator should have faith in the process. He should develop confidence through learning and practice. He should take responsibility for making the communication work. The communicator should learn to overcome barriers and look for positive signals. She should not bring in her own bias. He/she should recognize the power of communication and strive to achieve results through the process. She should not underestimate the reader or listener and develop the skill of dealing with every receiver of communication with respect and understanding. A positive approach begets a positive outcome and contributes to the success of the communication process.

Avoid extreme feelings

Extreme and strong feelings are not conducive to effective communication. Anger, depression and frustration adversely impact the thought process and thereby distort what is intended to be conveyed or what needs to be conveyed. A disturbed mind brings out disturbed thoughts and thus distorts communication. While addressing important communications, and reacting to provocative remarks, it is essential to wait till the mind regains its balance and the severity of feelings subsides. It is

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absolutely essential to realize that quite often the process of communication is irreversible. A word spoken or a letter written in a fit of anger can do considerable damage. This is particularly true in work situations, market places, organizations and business. Restraint pays.

Be sincere

Effective communication demands a certain degree of honesty and sincerity on the part of the parties involved in the communication. It is necessary that the messages are given sincerely and truthfully. There should not be a deliberate attempt to mislead or manipulate the recipient of the message. If the receiver of the message loses faith in the communicator, the process of communication suffers in terms of credibility. Effective communication therefore presupposes sincerity and humility.

Communication Clue

It is well recognized that magic words like, "Please", "Thank You", and "I am sorry" can do wonders in communication. Using them in our everyday written and spoken communication underlines sincerity.

Be consistent

Communication is mostly a regular process rather than a one-time affair. In personal dealings, in organizational settings and business places, communication takes place almost all the time. The parties involved in the communication quite often are the same. When communication takes place on a regular basis, it is necessary to be consistent. It is necessary not to contradict oneself. There may be scope for modification or correction, but not for contradiction. Further, when different methods of communication are used in conveying a particular message, contradictions have to be consciously avoided. The spoken message should be in tandem with the body language. Non-verbal communication should supplement oral messages.

Appreciate the time factor

In any communication, especially in business communication, time is of prime importance. Speed and timeliness contribute significantly to the effectiveness of communication. In today's world, the value of time is well recognized. Organizations and businesses set goals which have to be achieved within a given time frame. Tasks have to be completed before the allotted deadlines. All communications concerning such goals and tasks will have to appreciate the time factor. Quite often the message that is delayed is wasted. Therein lies the significance of the choice of the channel of communication. The channels selected should be such that the message is delivered well in time.

There is another dimension to the time factor in communication. The process of communication should take just the right time. Long speeches that stretch well beyond the allotted time, lengthy written communication and unusually long films and documents not only test the patience of the listener/reader/viewer, but also tend to lose their force and get diluted in the process. Communication should be in

measured doses, since an overdose of even useful and relevant communication may be received without enthusiasm. The time the receiver of the communication allocates for the purpose has to be borne in mind to ensure effective communication. This factor is particularly relevant in today's context of communication overload.

Use proper modes and channels

We have already discussed the various modes, channels and types of communication. The method or type of communication to be used will vary from situation to situation. Effectiveness of the communication will depend on the choice of methods and instruments. There are times when written communication cannot convey as forcefully as oral communication. There are occasions when a telephone call would be more appropriate than a letter. There may be messages which are important enough to be conveyed through fax rather than by regular mail. Similarly, some messages can go by ordinary mail, some by telex and some others by fax or even e-mail. Make the right choice and repeat the message, when essential. The choice of the wrong channel may delay or dilute the message and hamper its effectiveness.

Be cost conscious

The process of communication quite often entails costs. There are direct and indirect costs involved in sending messages. These costs vary depending upon the method of communication and the means of transmission. Since communication in an organization is ongoing, such costs can add up to a substantial amount. The results achieved by the communicator should justify the costs incurred in the process. If not, there is no effectiveness in such communication. Organizations should, therefore, make conscious efforts to make their communication systems not only efficient, but also cost effective through proper evaluation of available options.

Obtain feedback

Feedback is another important component of the process of communication. The person communicating the message calls for feedback to reassure himself that the message has reached the target as envisaged.

Key Point: Feedback

Question: Which is the shortest word in English language that contains the letters a b c d e f?

Answer: Feedback

Always remember that feedback is one of the most essential elements of effective communication. Give feedback and receive feedback.

Check Your Progress

9. State the first essential point for effective communication.
10. Mention two measures to overcome barriers to communication.

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ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

NOTES

1. The objectives are defined depending upon the group and the purpose to be achieved.
2. The dominant objectives of communication are to inform, connect, educate, entertain, motivate, provoke, integrate, reassure and persuade.
3. The word 'business' connotes a commercial motive. As distinct from a charitable or religious organization, any business organization is driven by a profit motive.
4. Communication is not complete till the message conveyed by the sender is properly understood by the receiver.
5. Encoding involves choosing the right words, expressions, phrases, charts and pictures in order to facilitate complete and clear expression of the idea.
6. Soft skills include communication, time management, team work, negotiation and conflict resolution, assertiveness and business etiquette.
7. Two reasons due to which barriers to communication in an organizational context may arise are status difference, and background of individuals.
8. Some instruments of communication are telephone, microphone, film, cassette and pen drive.
9. The first essential for effective communication is to be clear about the purpose of communication.
10. Two measures to overcome barriers to communication are by understanding the process of communication and being clear about the target audience.

SUMMARY

- The objectives and functions of communication are inter-related. Communication could have many objectives depending upon the group and context.
- The objectives of business communication are to inform, relate and connect, educate, promote, train, entertain, motivate, facilitate decision making, integrate, help in networking.
- Communication is a process that involves certain distinct steps. In its simpler form, it relates to stimulus and response.
- Every communication has a distinct purpose, which determines the message. The stimulus emanates from the sender, and the receiver comes up with the response.

- Communication involves six steps. The starting point of any communication is the existence of a message.
- The process of communication is a progressive step-by-step movement. Both the sender and the receiver have a definite role to play in ensuring the success of communication.
- Effective communication is at the heart of any business. Businesses deal with people and communication serves as a vital link in connecting people.
- The nature and expanse of communication would depend on the nature of business and its reach across various stakeholders.
- The communication which covers mostly general topics falls under the category of general communication. Technical communication is more in depth into a specific topic.
- At every stage of the communication process, there are certain barriers, which hinder or dilute the flow of communication.
- Some barriers, which are specific to the written communication, are handwriting, spellings and legibility. Barriers to oral communication would include accent, and speed of delivery.
- In order to overcome the barriers to communication, it is necessary to understand the essentials of good communication and work towards achieving them.

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KEY WORDS

- **Organization:** An organization is a body of people with a particular purpose, especially a business, society, association, etc.
- **Management:** Management is the administration of an organization, whether it is a business, a not-for-profit organization, or government body.
- **Stimulus:** Stimulus refers to a thing or event that evokes a specific functional reaction in an organ or tissue.
- **Networking:** Networking refers to the exchange of information or services among individuals, groups, or institutions; specifically, the cultivation of productive relationships for employment or business.

SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What is the purpose of communication?
2. How does effective communication help in networking?

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3. What is the difference between technical and general communication?
4. Mention the circumstances under which poor expression is most likely to occur.
5. What are the measures to overcome barriers of communication?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Define communication. Why is it important for businesses?
2. What are the objectives of organization? Discuss them in detail.
3. What are the important steps of communication? Throw light on each one of them.
4. Discuss the major barriers to communication. How do they hamper effective communication?

FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 2 TYPES OF COMMUNICATION

NOTES

Structure

- Introduction
- Objectives
 - Types of Communication: An Overview
- Methods of Communication
 - Verbal Communication
- Importance of Verbal Communication
- Advantages of Verbal Communication
 - Advantages of Written Communication
- Significance of Non-verbal Communication
 - Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- Summary
- Key Words
- Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- Further Readings

INTRODUCTION

The process of communication involves both words and expressions to express one's feelings to others or to convey some important message. It also involves the use of gestures, symbols and body movements to transfer the message to the other person. This is included in non-verbal communication. Non-verbal communication is also used with verbal communication to convey ideas, thoughts and feelings in a better way. Our facial expressions and body movements play a decisive role when it comes to establishing good and effective communication. If our expression and body language are not in sync with the message to be transferred, then it may convey a wrong message to the other person. Communication plays a very decisive role in our lives. Today, the significance of communication has increased more than ever.

OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the types of communication
- Discuss the importance of verbal communication
- Learn the advantages of written communication
- Describe the significance of non-verbal communication

TYPES OF COMMUNICATION: AN OVERVIEW

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Communication can be categorized into different types depending upon the level at which it takes place, the direction it takes or by its very nature. Some of the commonly referred to types of communication are:

1. Personal and business communication
2. Internal and external communication
3. Upward and downward communication
4. Formal and informal communication
5. Lateral communication
6. Interactive communication
7. Mass communication
8. Global communication
9. Supportive communication
10. Social communication
11. Grapevine communication

The relevance and importance of each of these types of communication is discussed in the following paragraphs.

Personal communication

Personal communication concerns communication that takes place between any two individuals, be it in a family, group, community or even an organization. It takes place in an individual capacity and is characterized by informality. There is an element of privacy in all such communications. It can take the form of personal letters, personal telephone calls, conversations, one-to-one meetings or e-mail messages. It is private in nature and there is nothing official about it. Private and confidential conversation between two individuals is also referred to as *tete-a-tete*.

Business communication

Business communication takes place to further the goals of a business. It takes place among business entities, in markets and market places, within organizations and between various groups of employees, owners and employees, buyers and sellers, service providers and customers, sales persons and prospects and also between people within the organization and press persons. All such communication impacts business. Done with care, such communication can promote business interests. Otherwise, it will portray the organization in poor light and may adversely affect the business interest. It helps the person concerned in moving up in the organizational hierarchy. Communication is the vehicle on which the business moves.

The ability of the communicator to communicate effectively—verbally, non-verbally and in writing—is a prerequisite for organizational and business-related success.

Internal communication

Internal communication takes place within the organization or group—among people within, among different groups of employees and between employers and employees. It could be oral or written, visual or audio-visual, formal or informal and upward or downward. Internal communication serves to inform, instruct, educate, develop, motivate, persuade, entertain, direct, control and caution people in the organization. When a personal letter is written at an official address, besides writing the name of the addressee, the envelope is superscribed ‘private’ or ‘confidential’ to convey the nature of communication. Knowledge, skills, goal orientation, sharing of corporate concerns, review and monitoring, performance appraisal, counselling and training are among the issues that internal communication addresses.

External communication

Unlike internal communication, external communication flows outward. It addresses people outside the organization, like the prospective customers, competitors, public, press, media and the government. External communication can take place in various ways and through different channels. Letters, notices, brochures, demonstrations, telephone calls, business meetings, press releases, press conferences, audio-visual presentations, publicity films, product launch events and advertisements are all examples of external communication. It is important to note that the external agency or person targeted through such communication quite often forms an image or impression based on such communication and it is, therefore, very necessary that adequate care is taken in making it clear, intelligible and appealing.

Upward communication

Large organizations have different hierarchical levels or tiers. Banks, finance companies, insurance businesses, railways and such other people-oriented organizations have typically a three-tier or a four-tier structure. The process of communication to be complete and effective should encompass all these levels and tiers. Upward communication is one which moves upward, i.e., from the bottom to top levels in the hierarchy.

Any communication that moves from employees to supervisors, supervisors to managers, managers to executives and regional manager to general manager may be categorized as upward communication. Similarly, communication from branches to regional offices, regional offices to zonal offices, zonal offices to the head office is referred to as upward communication. Employee suggestions, market reports, performance reports, feedback on new products and requests for facilities or instructions are all examples of upward communication in the organizational context.

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Fig. 2.1 Upward Communication

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Downward communication

Downward communication moves from top to the bottom, i.e., from the CEO downwards. It travels through senior executives to junior-level functionaries, from the controlling office to the branch, from the head of the division to the head of the unit. Corporate goals, business priorities, motivational letters, work-related instructions, newsletters, letters from the CEO/General Manager’s desk are all typical examples of downward communication.

There may be some communication which would move both upward and downward. Atypical example of this is performance budgeting, which is a two-way process. It is a top-to-bottom as well as bottom-to-top exercise. Refer to Figure 2.2.



Fig. 2.2 Downward Communication

Formal communication

To ensure communication on an ongoing basis, organizations develop formal systems. Staff meetings, union-management meetings, branch managers’ conferences, periodical sales review meetings and customer meets are examples of forums that facilitate formal communication. Formal communication generally follows a well-defined hierarchical pattern and periodicity. Memos, circulars, instructions, guidelines, clarifications, agreements and reports are some of the channels that facilitate the flow of formal communication in business organizations.

Informal communication

This type of communication takes place in an unstructured manner and outside the formal fora. There is an element of spontaneity in this communication. Informal communication works well in smaller, loosely knit organizations. It is used more often in situations where there are no rigid hierarchical tiers. While formal structure of communication is a must in large organizations, it is the informality that helps sustain goal orientation in small well-knit units. Informal communication takes place through chats, conversations and informal talks and the like.

Lateral communication

Lateral communication generally takes place in an organization and is neither upward nor downward. It proceeds in a horizontal manner and takes place among equals and at peer level.

It may also be described as peer-level communication. Any communication that takes place, orally or in writing, from one branch head to the other, from one division head to the other, from one group head to the other, may be described as lateral communication. An important point worth noting in any such lateral communication is that there is not much difference in terms of the hierarchical levels or positions of the sender and the receiver. Refer to Figure 2.3.

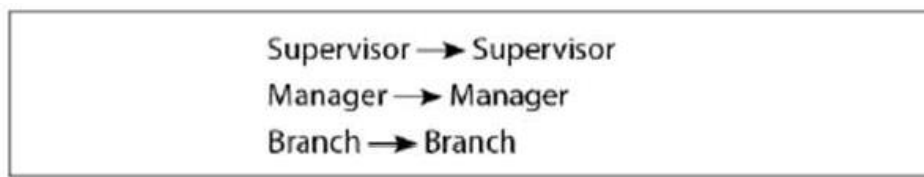


Fig. 2.3 Lateral Communication

Interactive communication

Interactive communication is essentially a two-way process. It takes place through meetings, conferences, teleconferencing, multimedia presentations, group discussions and other such active two-way exchanges. Interactive communication is most appropriate when the message or subject is to be presented at length, e.g., in practical sessions, case study discussions and strategy formulation. When many speakers are involved, there may be a need for a moderator who will facilitate effective flow of communication from different speakers.

Mass communication

Mass communication is distinctive in view of its scale. Essentially, it addresses a large mass of people. Public speaking, newspapers, magazines and journals, radio, television and dotcoms are channels of mass communication. Mass communication has developed into a specialized area of study. Each of these areas or channels calls for distinct skills. By its very nature, mass communication addresses a vast, well spread-out and heterogeneous group of people and, as such, special efforts will have to be made to sustain their interest and achieve the desired response. At the government level too, there is often a separate ministry or department of mass communication to deal with this functional area. Main branches of study relating to mass communication are public relations, advertising and publicity, journalism and digital media.

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Global communication

Global communication relates to communication that takes place beyond the national boundaries. Businesses operating in today's world are characterized by their global nature. Most businesses operate beyond the local or even national boundaries and are influenced by global trends. Businesses are known to operate in what is known as a global village. They often deal with customers, buyers, suppliers, service providers and even employees who are located in countries abroad. That is how global communication comes into play. Global communication has its own characteristics in terms of language, culture, etiquette and time factor, which have to be reckoned within the process of communication.

Supportive communication

Supportive communication is a form of communication in which people are encouraged to speak freely and come out with their feelings and concerns. This happens when managers take time to listen, do not interrupt or pass judgments, make efforts to understand, and do not criticize and snub the other party. This type of communication calls for abundant patience and empathy, or the ability to understand the other person's feelings and experiences on the part of the manager or superior. Any person will freely share his or her inner feelings and concerns only when he or she feels that the listener is empathetic and interested. The supportive communicator has to create an environment where a person will feel encouraged to speak up without restraint.

Social communication

As members of society, people everywhere will have to interact with others on a regular basis. Social communication takes place when people meet each other outside business and workplace situations. Social skills refer to the ability to talk easily to other people and do things in a group. Social communication often takes place at an informal and friendly level. Nevertheless, when business people meet at social events to exchange pleasantries, or meet for lunch or dinner, there are some social etiquettes which have to be taken note of.

Grapevine communication

Grapevine is a kind of informal communication that prevails in organizations and businesses. The source of such communication may not be clear. It spreads by way of gossip and rumours. It travels through informal networks and quite often travels faster than the formal messages. Sometimes, it gets more powerful and becomes more receptive than the formal communication. The prevalence of this type of communication in an organization has to be recognized and accepted. A skilled communicator can derive benefits from such a communication as well. It may not always be possible to control the grapevine, but, nevertheless, an able communicator knows how to influence it. Like any other type of communication, this one too has its merits and demerits.

2.2.1 Methods of Communication

Types of Communication

Communication takes place through various methods and channels. The three main methods of communication are oral or verbal communication, written communication and the non-verbal communication. Oral communication takes place by way of talks, conversation, dialogue, speech, discussion and meetings. Written communication is carried out through letters, circulars, memos, reports, brochures and books. Non-verbal communication takes place through body language. Language constitutes the vehicle on which both oral and written communication travel. Apart from these three main methods of communication, there are others like the visual, audio-visual and electronic. Silence is also accepted as a method of communication. Each of these methods has its own merits, demerits, channels and aids.

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Oral Communication

Oral communication refers to the spoken word. It takes the form of sounds and words. Starting out as a struggle by the early man, oral communication has had a long journey. It has developed across different regions, cultures, countries and continents. The development of numerous languages across the world has empowered oral communication.

Oral communication plays a vital role in everyday life, both for individuals and organizations. It is, indeed, the most commonly used method of communication both at the social level and at the organizational level. Everyone makes copious use of oral communication in their transactions and interactions. For the individual, talking and speaking provide a very dependable means of communication within the family and in social groups. Oral communication is also extensively and gainfully used within organizations and business entities as well.

Oral communication is also referred to as verbal communication. It takes place between individuals with the help of words. Oral communication takes place in many ways—casual and serious, formal and informal, structured and unstructured. Oral communication encompasses conversation, monologue, dialogue, talk, speech and chat. Some of these are pre-meditated and some are not. Formal speeches are pre-planned and well structured, whereas informal ones are unstructured and often loosely worded.

As already noted, oral communication can be both structured and unstructured. It can also be formal or informal. In other words, oral communication comprises of both small talk and big talk. Small talk is informal and unstructured. You simply talk. Small talk is often casual. On the other hand, big talk is both formal and structured. It is a serious talk with particular concern for its impact and effectiveness. Big talk calls for planning and organizing. Small talk usually refers to conversations, chats, gossiping and the like where the speakers talk without much concern for the consequences. They are casual and often described as friendly chat, idle talk, common gossip, and so on. Figuratively speaking, when we say,

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“we indulged in small talk before getting down to business”, it means that we did some casual talking before discussing business. Big talk comprises of giving a speech, making a presentation, participating in a meeting, handling a negotiation, counselling, dealing with a crisis, attending an interview, making a sales talk, strengthening customer contact, discussion as a panel member, and a host of other talks which are now an integral part of the business world. Small talk may not always be aimed at achieving anything specific. It, nevertheless, helps in building rapport and paving the way for big talk. Big talk, however, is always goal oriented. Big talk is done with specific objectives. Big talk aims to inform, influence, educate, convince, promote, resolve, motivate, and attain several such objectives. Big talk, to be effective, calls for tremendous skills and persistent efforts. The world of business especially looks for those people who are good at big talk.

Direct person-to-person communication plays a very useful role in any organization, essentially in work situations, where there are employer- employee, superior-subordinate and service provider-customer interactions. Oral communication is a speedy two-way process. The message conveyed through oral communication is instantaneous. The messages can travel back and forth without any loss of time. It is possible for the receiver of the message to respond immediately to the sender making the process highly interactive. The messages between the sender and the receiver can go back and forth, with role reversals taking place, till the objective is achieved.

There are many businesses and groups where spoken word carries considerable weight. There are businesses where, for various reasons, not much is documented or reduced to black and white. The verbal contracts are taken as seriously as the written ones and are faithfully fulfilled. A promise made is a promise kept. Likewise, in organizational situations, oral instructions, appeals and messages are seldom disregarded. Oral communication, besides being interactive, can also be quite persuasive.

Another noteworthy merit of oral communication is that it can be supplemented and complemented by non-verbal communication for greater impact. When a speaker speaks, the message is conveyed not only through the spoken words, but also by body movements and actions. When a person is talking or speaking or counselling, the warmth or otherwise of the person’s feelings is also expressed through the body language. It is, however, worth noting that if this language is not used consciously to reinforce the verbal messages, it may lead to confusion and even contradiction.

Notwithstanding its several merits, oral communication gets constrained by various physical factors. It works well in small groups—at counters, in classrooms, in meetings and conferences, in counselling and persuasive sessions. A major drawback of oral communication is that it cannot be erased. There is a sense of finality concerning the spoken word. Any word uttered by the speaker travels swiftly and reaches the target. Any slip of the tongue can create an embarrassment

and an unintended hurt. The moment a wrong or unintended word is delivered, the damage is done. Effective speakers are acutely conscious of this factor. More so, when they make extempore speeches. Recognizing this limitation, while resorting to any form of oral communication, one should learn to make a careful choice of words. Until the fine art of speaking with restraint is developed, it would be desirable to make the speeches and interventions, structured and well thought out rather than spontaneous and extempore. Whenever the oral communication is intended to achieve an important objective, extra care should be taken with the choice of words.

In personal as well as organizational communication, several channels or tools are regularly used. These include the telephone, the cell phone, the microphone, the radio, the amplifier and the loudspeaker. To the extent they are well chosen and well maintained, they facilitate smooth and effective flow of communication. If care is lacking while using them, they may prove to be a hindrance rather than an aid.

Written Communication

Written communication is another powerful method of communication. History is replete with instances where a piece of writing was involved in events of great significance—in love, war, peace, unions and betrayals. The power of writing is eloquently expressed in the saying ‘the pen is mightier than the sword’. The author of this book is also communicating with the readers through this piece of writing. After experimenting with writing on sand, stone and leaves, man invented paper, pen, books and printing. Newspapers and journals developed as the media of mass communication.

Written communication has come to acquire great significance in the lives of individuals as well as business organizations. It reaches across vast geographic areas and targets readers around the world. The reach of written communication is limited to the literate world. However, with the literacy levels steadily rising across the world, written communication can accomplish much more today than it could in the past. Writing skills and word-power of the communicator come into play in making the written communication forceful and effective.

Written communication is, more often than not, well structured. The words are carefully chosen to suit the message and the context. Be it a letter, a circular, a memo, a brochure or a report, the subject matter is carefully presented keeping in view the receptivity of the reader. This is how it ought to be. Progressive organizations make conscious efforts to ensure that people across the organization acquire well-developed writing skills. It is possible and necessary to collect all relevant facts and figures beforehand so that the communication is properly structured.

Written communication invariably creates a record that can be preserved over time. Letters, memos, contracts, agreements, documents and reports often

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carry time value and need to be stored and preserved. As a result, it becomes possible to access them for reference or study. Most businesses rely more on records and written documents rather than verbal contracts and oral commitments. Documentation of knowledge and experience facilitates institutionalization of individual wisdom.

Communication Clue

One big difference between verbal communication and written communication is that in any verbal or oral communication, the words you speak are supplemented by your facial expressions, voice modulations, postures and gestures and pauses and punches, whereas in written communication, words alone carry the burden of communication.

Non-Verbal Communication

The third method of communication relates to non-verbal communication, which is neither oral nor written. While oral communication thrives on listening and the written communication thrives on reading, the non-verbal communication thrives on observation. Non-verbal communication may take any of the following forms—body language, gestures, postures, appearance, personal space, codes, signs and signals, facial expressions, timings, examples and personal behaviour.

Non-verbal communication may be conscious or unconscious, deliberate or unintended. It may substitute verbal communication or supplement it. There may also be occasions when the non-verbal communication may be out of line with or even contradict oral communication. When used with full awareness, body language can create the desired impact. At the same time, unintended body movements and expressions may confuse the listener. Non-verbal communication is extremely relevant during meetings and interactions of a direct or face-to-face nature.

The greatest merit of non-verbal communication is that it has a universal appeal. Unlike both oral and written communication, which depend on a particular language, non-verbal communication can reach across to people of different regions, irrespective of the language they speak. Mother Teresa's language of love and compassion is just one example. In the organizational context, however, non-verbal language can be used effectively as an adjunct to verbal communication.

Visual Communication

Visual communication is effected through pictures, graphs and charts, as well as through signs, signals and symbols. They may be used either independently or as an adjunct to the other methods of communication. It is also useful in reaching out to an illiterate target group. It can be used in addressing groups of people who do not understand the language of the communicator. As the saying goes, 'A picture is worth more than a thousand words'. Pictures, graphs, charts and diagrams often convey the intended message quite effectively.

Similarly, there are pictures to convey 'No swimming', 'Danger zone' and 'Fasten seat belts'. In business communication, pictures, graphs, charts, signs and symbols are frequently used to illustrate, highlight and focus attention. The channels and instruments of visual communication include hoardings, films, transparencies, floppies and projectors.

Audio-Visual Communication

This is an extremely sophisticated method of communication. It involves demonstrations and presentations through various audio-visual aids. Audio-visual communication is an effective blend of both verbal and visual communication. Such communications are, generally speaking, very effective and carry high retention value.

Audio-visual communications are highly skill oriented. They are preplanned, developed with care and are often delivered at formal and structured sessions. This method of communication is particularly useful in fostering learning and in classroom sessions. Audio-visual communication is gainfully used in training colleges as also in seminars and workshops. The use of multimedia presentations is gaining popularity in the business world. Advertisements on television channels are another example of audio-visual communication.

Audio-visual communication involves demonstrations and presentations

Signs, Signals and Symbols

Signs, signals and symbols have come to acquire considerable significance in the world of communication. Having evolved over a long period of time, they date back to biblical times and mythological periods. Well before language evolved, pre-historic man had learnt to communicate with the help of signs and signals.

A sign is a mark traced on a surface or an object with a view to indicate a particular meaning. It may be a piece of paper, wood or metal that has writing or a picture on it and which gives out information, instruction or warning. It may also be a gesture, a movement or a sound to convey something specific. Let us look at some examples of sign language:

1. Priests and elders convey their blessings by placing their hands on the heads of people bowing to them. (sign of blessing)
2. A player raises two of his fingers in a V sign after a game. (sign of victory)
3. A teacher puts her finger on her lips in a nursery class. (sign that says, 'keep silent')
4. Disciples and youngsters touch the feet of teachers and elders. (sign of reverence)

Such signs are sometimes group specific and are accepted as a matter of convention. A sign may also relate to a written mark conventionally used to convey a specific meaning. Such signs may be general, as in the case of road and traffic signs or subject-specific signs, specific to a profession or body of knowledge. In

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mathematics, there are numerous signs specific to arithmetic, algebra and geometry as also in science and medicine.

Apart from the set of signs, which are commonly understood, there is also the sign language. Sign language is a system of communicating, with people who are hearing impaired, by using hand movements rather than spoken words. In other words, it is the language of the speech impaired, just as Braille is the language of visually challenged.

A signal is a sound or a movement that people make to give others information, instruction or warning. A signal is also understood as an indication that something exists or something is about to happen. We are familiar with the use of a danger signal and a green signal. Similarly, there are traffic signals and radio signals.

Some everyday examples of communication with signals are signal to the waiter for a bill, signal that you are turning right and signal that one is thirsty. Signs and signals are often used with very similar meanings. There is, however, a noteworthy difference between the two. A sign is something that we find or see whereas a signal is generally used for something that is done intentionally and suggests that some action be taken in response. Signs and signals may be overt or covert, explicit or in a code language. Awareness and understanding of signs and signals makes communication more meaningful.

A symbol refers to a credo or a manner of representation of ideas. Symbols often use the power of association to convey a specific meaning. A symbol is also understood as a person, an object or an event that represents a more general quality or situation. In modern day business, the use of a logo is also very common. A logo is a printed design or symbol that a company or organization uses as its special sign. Here are some examples of the use of symbols.

Symbols are well accepted and widely used in present day business communication. Use of symbols at the right places enhances the effectiveness of communication.

Silence Silence is also a method of communication. It refers to a state of wordlessness or verbal abstinence. It may express anger or atonement. Self-inflicted silence conveys a powerful message. Silence may also convey a form of punishment. The word 'excommunication' refers to a state of deliberate cutting off of communication. There are indeed occasions when by keeping quiet one can 'say' a lot. Silence can also be either deliberate or unintentional. Unexpected silence sometimes results in awkward situations. In personal communication as well as business communication, silence has a definite role to play. In dealing with an irate customer, an employee would be well advised to observe silence and listen to the customer before reacting. Even the legal system takes cognizance of silence as a method of communication.

QUOTE TO NOTE: *Well-timed silence has more eloquence than speech.*

—Martin Tupper

We have, in the foregoing paragraphs, studied the salient features of various methods of communication. Each of these methods of communication has its own distinguishing features in terms of speed, reliability, cost, reach as well as overall merits and demerits. In a large organization, communication takes place at various levels. People in large business organizations need to resort to all these methods of communication depending upon the situations. Inasmuch as choices are available, it is necessary to clearly appreciate the relative merits and demerits of these methods in dealing with people and situations in any organization. Good communication is hardly ever accidental. It calls for conscious efforts and the choice of the most appropriate methods and channels, keeping in view the target sections and context.

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Check Your Progress

1. Mention any four types of communication.
2. Where does internal communication take place?
3. Define grapevine communication.

VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Verbal communication is a type of oral communication wherein the message is transmitted through the spoken words. Here the sender gives words to his feelings, thoughts, ideas and opinions and expresses them in the form of speeches, discussions, presentations, and conversations.

The effectiveness of the verbal communication depends on the tone of the speaker, clarity of speech, volume, speed, body language and the quality of words used in the conversation. In the case of the verbal communication, the feedback is immediate since there are a simultaneous transmission and receipt of the message by the sender and receiver respectively.

The sender must keep his speech tone high and clearly audible to all and must design the subject matter keeping the target audience in mind. The sender should always cross check with the receiver to ensure that the message is understood in absolutely the same way as it was intended. Such communication is more prone to errors as sometimes the words are not sufficient to express the feelings and emotions of a person.

The success of the verbal communication depends not only on the speaking ability of an individual but also on the listening skills. How effectively an individual listens to the subject matter decides the effectiveness of the communication. The verbal communication is applicable in both the formal and informal kind of situations.

Importance of Verbal Communication

With a major rise in the use of technology, verbal communication is still vitally important in the workplace. Email and smartphones may make it more convenient

to communicate, but sometimes only verbal communication gets the point across effectively.

Verbal communication provides clarity

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Nothing beats verbal communication. For example, many people can retain information more easily when it's presented directly to them or by watching someone in-person complete the task. During an in-person meeting or training session, participants can ask spontaneous questions, get immediate answers and fully understand the situation or task at hand.

Verbal communication increases motivation

Words of appreciation from a manager boost the confidence level of employees. Hearing encouraging words from a manager seems more genuine than an impersonal email, and can increase workers' productivity. Verbal communication is the best way to let your employees feel valued and understood.

Having regular in-person group meetings with your employees can generate team spirit and motivate your workforce. Weekly sit-downs with their co-workers encourage employees to share their concerns with leadership and each other. An in-person, "town hall-style" meeting also provides an opportunity for employees to learn how they can help each other in their job roles.

When you assign a project to an employee, she should have a clear understanding of what is required. Verbal praise for a job well done lets her know she is valued and has a purpose within the organization. An employer doesn't need to hold an employee's hand throughout the entire project or provide positive feedback every day, but positive, verbal encouragement goes a long way.

Advantages of Verbal Communication

1. Information can be given out quickly and to large numbers of people
2. Opportunity for immediate feedback and two-way communication
3. More understanding through body language
4. It is the most effective tool of persuasion and for resolving conflicts
5. It is effective for group interaction.
6. It is economical both in terms of money and time.
7. It is flexible as it provides ample scope to the sender to make himself clear and make amendments unlike written messages which cannot be changed.

Check Your Progress

4. What is verbal communication?
5. What are the factors on which the effectiveness of the verbal communication depend?

ADVANTAGES OF WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

Written communication is essential in every business. Writing is a creative activity. While oral communication is based on spontaneous reactions, written communication is more carefully thought out and the information gathered is processed logically. It involves a certain time factor. The writer can take his own time in formulating the message. Then it takes some time to reach the receiver. The receiver then takes his time in understanding and interpreting the message and responding to it. Written communication has fewer cycles than face-to-face communication, that is, in comparison to oral communication, the messages are sent to and fro between the sender and the receiver for a fewer number of times.

Written communication has the following advantages over oral communication:

1. Written communication has an extremely wide reach.
2. Written communication can be well-organized so as to convey the precise message.
3. Written communication creates records. Maintenance of proper records, letters and reports build up the legal defences of the organization.
4. Written communication promotes uniformity in policy and procedure.
5. It can be exactly reproduced or repeated.
6. It can be targeted to reach specific individuals/sections.
7. Written communication can be prepared at a time when the communicator is best prepared to do so.

2.4.1 Significance of Non-verbal Communication

One does not use words in non-verbal communication. It is thus a very prominent type of communication as distinct from both oral and written communication. It takes place extensively at various levels—individuals, family, society and organization. Non-verbal communication is ancient and constitutes the earliest type of communication. It developed much before oral communication and languages came into being. Gestures, postures, signals and facial expressions were obviously among the earliest means of communication used by the pre-literate man. The language of the hearing impaired which uses signs and gestures perhaps evolved from these ancient methods of communication.

Another significant dimension of non-verbal communication is its universality. Unlike verbal communication, which has limitations in terms of reach, the non-verbal communication is universal in appeal. Words have boundaries, whereas non-verbal communication, which does not use words, transcends linguistic and cultural barriers and boundaries. The language of love and compassion is widely recognized as a universal language. Mother Teresa, for example, was a communicator par excellence who ‘spoke’ the universal language of love and

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compassion that was understood all over the world. The silent movies of the bygone era are another example of effective non-verbal communication.

Quote to Note: To know what people really think, pay regard to what they do, rather than what they say.

—Rene Descartes

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Non-verbal communication is closely associated with the power of observation. The receiver of the communication should be in a position to see, hear and even feel the communicator. The receiver of the communication should be in a position to clearly see the face, the gesture, the tone, the dress, the appearance and also hear the voice of the communicator. Since it is through observation, non-verbal communication may be both intended and unintended. It is intended when the communicator tries to convey certain messages to the target group through conscious gestures, postures, attire and other forms of body language. Non-verbal communication is unintended when the body language, posture or appearance of the communicator is interpreted by the receiver, even though it is not done consciously. A sloppy posture or a casual attire may be interpreted as lack of seriousness, although the speaker may be quite intent.

Although non-verbal communication can take place independent of other methods of communication, it often goes along with oral or verbal communication by the speaker. Used appropriately, body language and non-verbal messages can supplement and complement the oral message.

Together they can make the message loud, clear and forceful. On the contrary, if they are not consistent, the message that comes out would be ambiguous or garbled. When a speaker speaks, it is not just through words, but through the speaker's personality as well. Similarly, although interpreting each non-verbal message provides a useful clue, listeners or the target audience should not jump to conclusions, but should, instead, take note of the totality of the messages communicated. It takes conscious effort and keen attention on the part of both the communicator and receiver to appropriately convey and interpret the message. The required degree of awareness and consciousness on the part of both is of particular relevance for the effectiveness of non-verbal communication.

It is essential to note that what a person says, together with the body language of that person creates the total impact. If they are consistent, they strengthen and reinforce the message and if they are inconsistent and contradict each other, then it clearly means that the person is speaking two different things. The body belies what the tongue utters. Sometimes, what a person says with her body negates what she is saying with her tongue. Thus, a person may appear calm and self-controlled, but if her foot is tapping the floor restlessly, or she is fidgeting with her fingers, or biting her nails, her nervousness speaks loud. Under such circumstances, the recipient disregards the verbal message and accepts the message conveyed by the body language as the more authentic one.

Non-verbal communication can have an overwhelming impact. There are myriad ways in which the body and its associated actions communicate messages,

both intended and unintended. Non-verbal communication takes place at various levels when parts of the body, actions, mannerisms, behaviour, attire and demeanour tend to communicate. In other words, non-verbal communication takes place through the following objects, actions, and expressions:

1. Body language—facial expressions, eye contact, voice modulation
2. Postures/Gestures—carriage, leaning, shrugging, nodding
3. Attire
4. Appearance
5. Handshake
6. Space
7. Timing
8. Example
9. Behaviour
10. Smile

Body language is a well-developed discipline of study. Behavioural psychologists and researchers have studied, over the years, individuals and groups of people in business organizations and have developed the art of interpreting each one of the above as a means to ensuring effective communication.

Social scientists use the term “paralanguage” to describe a wide range of characteristics or expressions based on voice, facial expressions, or actions. A paralinguistic study relates to interpreting communication that takes place through other than words. It relates to studying the tone of voice and expressions on one’s face and actions. Paralanguage relates to ‘how’ something is said, rather than ‘what’ is said.

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Check Your Progress

6. Mention any one advantage of written communication over oral communication.
7. Which is the earliest type of communication?

ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Four types of communication are personal communication, business communication, internal communication and external communication.
2. Internal communication takes place within the organization or group—among people within, among different groups of employees and between employers and employees.
3. Grapevine is a kind of informal communication that prevails in organizations and businesses.

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4. Verbal Communication is a type of oral communication wherein the message is transmitted through the spoken words.
5. The effectiveness of the verbal communication depends on the tone of the speaker, clarity of speech, volume, speed, body language and the quality of words used in the conversation.
6. One advantage of written communication over oral communication is that it can be exactly reproduced or repeated.
7. Non-verbal communication is the earliest type of communication.

SUMMARY

- Communication can be categorized into different types depending upon the level at which it takes place, the direction it takes or by its very nature.
- Personal communication concerns communication that takes place between any two individuals, be it in a family, group, community or even an organization.
- Business communication takes place to further the goals of a business.
- Internal communication takes place within the organization or group—among people within, among different groups of employees and between employers and employees.
- Unlike internal communication, external communication flows outward.
- Upward communication is one which moves upward, i.e., from the bottom to top levels in the hierarchy.
- Downward communication moves from top to the bottom, i.e., from the CEO downwards.
- To ensure communication on an ongoing basis, organizations develop formal systems.
- Informal communication takes place in an unstructured manner and outside the formal fora.
- Lateral communication generally takes place in an organization and is neither upward nor downward.
- Interactive communication takes place through meetings, conferences, teleconferencing, multimedia presentations, group discussions and other such active two-way exchanges.
- Verbal communication is a type of oral communication wherein the message is transmitted through the spoken words.

KEY WORDS

- **Communication:** Communication refers to the imparting or exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium.

- **Gestures:** Gestures refer to movements of parts of the body, especially a hand or the head, to express an idea or meaning.
- **Hierarchy:** Hierarchy is a system in which members of an organization or society are ranked according to relative status or authority.
- **Paralanguage:** *Paralanguage* is nonverbal communication such as your tone, pitch or manner of speaking. An example of *paralanguage* is the pitch of your voice.

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SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What are the different types of communication?
2. What is the difference between formal and informal communication?
3. Write a short note on grapevine communication.
4. How can verbal communication be made more effective?
5. What are the advantages of written communication?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the different types of communication in detail.
2. What is verbal communication? Why is it important?
3. Why is non-verbal communication important? Discuss.
4. How is downward communication different from upward communication?

FURTHER READINGS

- Madhukar, R.K. 2018. *Business Communication, 3rd edition*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.
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UNIT 3 LISTENING SKILLS

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Structure

Introduction
Objectives
Listening Skills: An Overview
Objectives of Listening
Purpose of Listening
Listening Process
Levels of Listening
Classification of Listening
 Inefficiency of Listening
Poor Listening Habits
Common Barriers to the Listening Process
 Measures to Improve Listening
Efforts by Listener
Ten Commandments of Listening
Efforts by Speaker
 Listening Skills at Workplace
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Summary
Key Words
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INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will be introduced to listening as an important communication skill. You will learn the objectives and importance of listening. It describes, in detail, the various stages of the listening process. In addition, you will be taught the various levels and types of listening. You will, further, learn about the poor listening habits that lead to inefficiency in listening, the barriers to effective listening and tips on how to improve the listening process.

OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Examine listening as an important communication skill
- Discuss the objectives and importance of listening
- Explain the listening process
- Describe the various types of listening
- Learn about the various barriers to effective listening
- Discuss the various ways to ensure better listening

LISTENING SKILLS: AN OVERVIEW

Effective listening is the process of analysing sounds, organizing them into recognizable patterns, interpreting the patterns and understanding the message by inferring the meaning.

Listening is not to be confused with hearing. Hearing is a physiological process which involves receiving the sound waves by the eardrum and transferring them to the brain. Listening is more than hearing. It involves the process of interpretation and inference.

Listening is extremely important for the communication process. Many of the problems we experience with people are primarily attributable to ineffective listening or lack of listening. Good listening skills are the foundation of effective human relations. Good listeners can be good negotiators and can handle crisis situations successfully.

Objectives of Listening

The objectives of learning may be one or more of the following:

- To learn
- To increase one's understanding
- To advise or counsel
- To relieve one's boredom

Purpose of Listening

A lot of one's time is spent on listening. One quarter of our waking time is spent in listening. Research shows that at the workplace, on an average, personnel spend about 32.7 per cent of their time listening, 25.8 per cent of their time speaking and 22.6 per cent of their time writing. Effective listening is one of the most crucial skills for becoming a successful manager. This requires paying attention, interpreting and remembering sound stimuli. Listening is an important skill to be inculcated by managers and workers.

- Communication is not complete without effective listening.
- An attentive listener stimulates better speaking by the speaker.
- A good listener learns more than an indifferent listener.
- A good listener can restructure vague speaking in a way that produces clearer meaning.
- A good listener learns to detect prejudices, assumptions and attitudes.

Listening Process

For listening to be effective and meaningful, the process of listening should involve the following steps:

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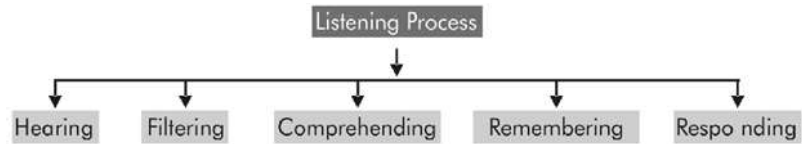


Fig. 3.1 Listening Process

NOTES**Hearing**

Hearing is the first essential step in the listening process and relates to the sensory perception of sound. The listener further processes the perceived sound. For learning to be effective, hearing needs to be done with attentiveness and concentration.

Filtering

The next step involves sensing and filtering of heard sounds. The heard message is categorized as wanted or unwanted, useful or useless. The unwanted message is discarded. In this step, the sense of judgement of the individual comes into play, that is, the filtering process is subjective and a person chooses to retain what makes sense to him.

Comprehending

The next level of listening consists of comprehending or understanding. The listener understands or interprets what the speaker has tried to convey. This activity can be described as absorbing, grasping or assimilating. In order to grasp the meaning of the message, the listener uses his knowledge, experience, perception and cognitive power. The verbal and auditory message is coupled with non-verbal communication to understand it.

Remembering

Remembering relates to a process whereby the assimilated message is stored in memory to facilitate future recall. Remembering assumes significance because many times messages received are meant not for immediate consideration but for future use.

Responding

For listening to be complete, a response is important. Responding to a message may take place at the end of the communication, immediately after or later. When it is stored for future use, the response may take place later. However, if there is a need to seek clarification or to empathize with the listener, it may take place earlier. Responding may also take the form of prodding or prompting in order to show that the message is being received and comprehended.

Levels of Listening

Based on the effectiveness of the listening process, three levels of listening have been identified. Level 1 is that of non-listening and is the least desirable, followed by Level 2 which is passive listening. Level 3 is active listening, which is most desirable. Though we listen at all the three levels during the course of the day depending on our interest and situation, it is beneficial to move to Level 3 for maximum listening effectiveness. Good managers and leaders spend more time listening at Level 3.

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- (i) **Level 1—Non-listening:** Here, the listener may appear to be listening but actually he is more occupied with his own thoughts. He is minimally aware of the speaker speaking. He is likely to appear detached and will be unresponsive and passive.



Fig. 3.2 Non-Listening

- (ii) **Level 2—Passive Listening:** Passive listening is more of hearing than actually listening. The listener superficially hears the words but does not understand in depth what is being said. He concentrates on the word content of the message rather than the feelings and emotions associated with the message. He does not get much involved in the communication activity, and rather than contributing equally to the conversational exchange, he is merely spoken to.
- (iii) **Level 3—Active Listening:** This is the most desirable form of listening wherein the active listener gives full attention to what is being said. The listener concentrates on what is being said and also motivates the speaker to speak, making it easier for the speaker to deliver the message. An active listener not only comprehends the message better but is also in a better position to remember and recall the message. He not only pays attention to the word content but also concentrates on the emotional and non-verbal aspect of the message. In active listening, the listener is directly involved in the conversation. He provides feedback to the speaker and voices his opinions and arguments.

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Fig. 3.3 Active Listening

Classification of Listening

Discriminative listening

This is the most basic type of listening. It involves identifying the difference between various sounds. It also enables one to differentiate between familiar and unfamiliar language. The subtleties of accent and pronunciation typical of a language can be identified by this kind of listening.

Comprehension listening

This type of listening involves something more than just differentiating between various sounds. It involves attaching meaning to what is being listened to, that is the message is comprehended. It may also include comprehending the non-verbal messages being conveyed intentionally or unintentionally by the speaker.

Evaluative listening

This is also called as critical listening. This involves not only comprehending the message but also evaluating and analysing the message being received in light of one's own background. It involves judging the acceptability of what is said depending on how logical one finds it to be.

Attentive listening

It involves paying attention to the words that are being spoken rather than understanding the head and heart of the person speaking. It involves making a conscious effort to listen attentively and decode the message. The concentration is on the verbal part of the message rather than the non-verbal aspect.

Pretence listening

This involves more hearing than listening. It means pretending through facial expressions that one is listening to the communicated message when actually one is not.

Selective listening

Listening is done only partly or selectively. It involves selecting the desired part of the message and ignoring the undesired part of the message. The attention of the listener is not focused and the listener keeps switching off and on.

Intuitive listening

It is a higher form of listening. It means listening through the intuitive mind by silencing the other forms of internal dialogues going on simultaneously.

<p>Check Your Progress</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is effective listening? 2. Define hearing.

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INEFFICIENCY OF LISTENING

Research shows that after two days we retain only one fourth of what we hear. In fact, we do not hear all that is said and forget many of the things we hear. This is a reflection of our poor listening habits.

Inefficiency of listening can be harmful for the organization. Some people like to talk more than they like to listen, some listen selectively, some cannot concentrate for long on what others are saying or some may just listen superficially without really bothering about what is being said. All this leads to ineffective listening.

Poor Listening Habits

It is possible to improve your listening habits by identifying which are the poor listening habits and then working upon them to change them. Some of the most common poor listening habits are:

Inattentiveness

Not paying attention to the speaker is one of the major causes of inefficient listening. The listener may get distracted or may not want to hear what is being said. The listener withdraws his attention and starts daydreaming.

Faking attention or 'Pseudolistening'

Often people who are not actually listening and are thinking about something else deliberately try to look as though they were listening. The listener may do so so as not to appear rude or discourteous to the listener. At times this may lead to disasters in communication because such pretence may leave a speaker with the impression that the listener has heard some important information or instructions offered by him.

Focusing on delivery

Sometimes a person concentrates on how someone says something that he pays little attention to what he or she is actually saying. The listener may focus on the appearance and other nuances of the speaker and may, in the bargain, miss out on the real meaning of what is being said.

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Rehearsing

If the listener is thinking about his reply before the other person has finished, then in all probability he is not listening.

Some people listen until they want to say something; then they quit listening, start rehearsing what they will say, and wait for an opportunity to respond.

Interrupting

Some people prefer to do the speaking rather than listen to someone speak. Such a listener does not wait for the speaker to complete what he is saying so that the complete meaning can be determined, but interrupts often resulting in a break of the chain of thought of the speaker and thus hampering the communication process. Unnecessary interruptions may discourage and irritate the speaker.

Hearing what is expected

People like to hear what they want to hear. Very often, people think they heard speakers say what they expected them to say. Further, people tend to accept only that part of the communication which is consistent with their existing beliefs. Alternatively, they refuse to hear what they do not want to hear and what goes against their beliefs and perception. Poor listeners tend to filter those parts of the message from their understanding which do not readily fit with their own frame of reference.

Avoiding difficult and uninteresting material

The listener may just switch off listening when he finds the material difficult to understand or uninteresting. This may become a habit with the listener and he will conveniently stop listening every time he encounters some difficult or uninteresting material. Many a time, the listener may assume in advance that the subject is boring, unimportant or difficult.

Being defensive

Sometimes listeners feel threatened by what the speaker is saying and they immediately become defensive, that is, they try to justify their stance on whatever is being said. They may just overreact to certain words and phrases. They get so involved in guarding themselves that they do not get the actual message of what is being said.

Being on the offensive

Some listeners seem to wait for the chance to criticise someone. They listen intently for points on which they can disagree and vent out their criticism. They constantly try to counter whatever is being said. Here too they miss out the actual message of what is being said.

Common Barriers to the Listening Process

The factors which act as impediments to effective listening can be classified into the following:

1. Physical Barriers

Noise, poor acoustics, malfunctioning of the mechanical devices being used, frequent interruptions and uncomfortable seating arrangements are physical barriers that hamper effective listening. The first step of the listening process is hearing, and extraneous noise disturbs the hearing process. Extraneous noise disturbs both the listener and the speaker. In case a device like a microphone or telephone is being used, then the malfunctioning of the device will act as a hurdle or it may also result in the failure of transmission of the message from the speaker to the listener. Poor acoustics of the room or uncomfortable seating arrangements may make it difficult for the listener to concentrate on the speaker. Interruptions by other people or by the telephone while someone is speaking disturb the concentration of the listener, frustrate the speaker and make the listening process less effective. Message overload, which involves listening to a lot of information one after another, also makes it impossible to listen attentively after a certain point.

Thus we can summarize the physical barriers to include:

- Noise
- Poor acoustics
- Defective mechanical devices
- Frequent interruptions
- Uncomfortable seating arrangements and environment
- Message overload

2. People-related Barriers

Both the speaker and the listener influence the communication process. People-related barriers can be both physiological and psychological.

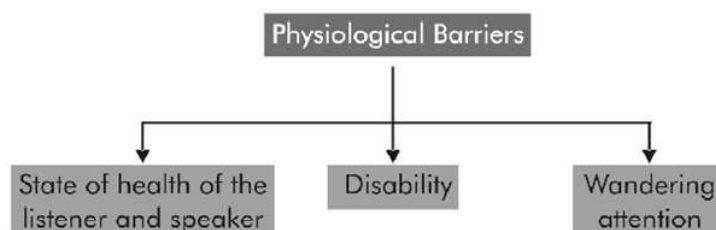


Fig. 3.4 Physiological Barriers

State of health

The physical condition of the individual affects the listening ability. Fever, pain or any other form of bodily discomfort makes it difficult for an individual to listen

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attentively. Similarly poor health conditions of a speaker reduce his ability to speak well and this in turn reduces the listening efficiency of the listener.

Disability

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As discussed earlier, hearing is the first step of the listening process and, therefore, hearing deficiencies may lead to poor listening. Similarly, speech disorders of the speaker may make speech incoherent to the listener. At times the speaker’s accent, though not a disability, may make it difficult for the listener to comprehend. Similarly, when a speaker speaks very rapidly, it may also result in an unclear message reaching the listener.

Wandering attention

Research shows that the human mind can process words at the rate of about 500 per minute, whereas a speaker speaks at the rate of about 150 words per minute. The difference between the two is quite large—350 words per minute. This leaves the listener with sufficient time to let his mind wander. The listener has to be careful of this rather than let his mind wander. Spending the time concentrating on the message and analysing it would improve listening.

3. Psychological Barriers

Psychological barriers relate to attitudinal and behavioural aspects. These include the following:

Being unsure of the speaker’s ability

Based on past experience or inputs from sources, the listener may have a preconceived notion of the speaker’s ability. He may perceive the speaker to not be well informed, or to be lacking in depth and ability. This acts as a barrier to the listening process as the listener will not listen to what the speaker has to say.

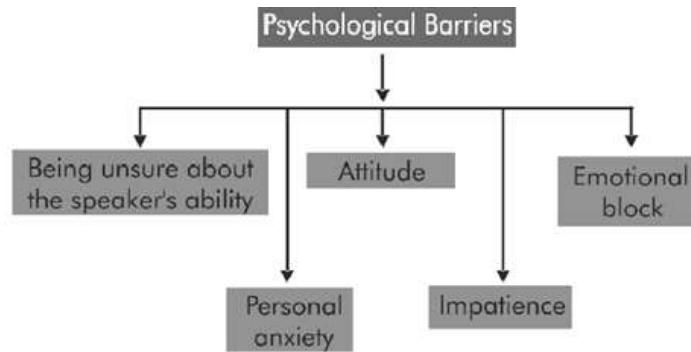


Fig. 3.5 Psychological Barriers

Personal anxiety

Sometimes we are preoccupied with personal concerns and anxieties. This makes it difficult to perceive what is being said and thus acts as a barrier to effective listening.

Attitude

Many times the attitude of the listener acts as a barrier to effective listening. The listener may be highly egocentric with a 'know it all attitude' and may not listen because he feels that he already knows what the listener has to say. A casual attitude on the part of the listener towards listening, assuming it can be done without much concentration and effort, also acts as a barrier to listening.

An overly critical attitude of the listener may shift the focus of listening from what is being said to noticing faults and errors in accent, delivery, appearance of speaker, grammar, and so on.

Impatience

The listener may not have patience to wait for the other person to finish what he has to say. He may be intolerant or may be eager to add his own points to the discussion. As a result, his desire to speak overcomes his desire to listen, thus acting as a barrier.

Emotional blocks

Our deep-seated beliefs in certain ideas may make it difficult for us to listen to ideas which go against our belief. We may hear such an idea wrongly or it may get distorted in our mind to match our perception or we may completely block it off by not listening to it. Many a time, we block something off completely because of painful memories associated with it.

Check Your Progress

3. Mention any two common poor listening habits.
4. What are the two most common physical barriers to listening?

MEASURES TO IMPROVE LISTENING

Effective listening calls for efforts on the part of the speaker, listener as well as others concerned with the process to remove the barriers that come in the way of effective listening.

Efforts by Listener

As stated earlier, conscious efforts have to be made by the listener to improve his listening ability and develop effective listening skills. Some important guidelines to develop listening skills by the listener are:

1. **Concentration:** To be a good listener, you must pay attention to the speaker. When a speaker is a dull conversationalist or when it is difficult to follow the speaker because of voice problems like a regional accent, and so on, a listener may have to make an effort to keep from being distracted

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by other things. Research shows that the more motivated a listener is, the more receptive he is.

2. **Preparation:** Sometimes it is better to make some preparations beforehand in order to improve listening; more so in the case of topics that are perceived as difficult. Preparations may include gathering information about the topic or removing distractions in the environment. This will help in developing an interest in what the speaker is saying and will also help in focusing on the message.
3. **Show interest:** Show that you want to listen by being and looking attentive. It is important not only to focus on the speaker, but to use nonverbal cues (such as eye contact, head nods and smiles) to let them know they are being heard. A listener may ask appropriate questions at the right time to show his interest in what is being said.
4. **Listen for the whole message:** Listen not only through the use of your ears, but also the other senses so as to get the complete message. This includes looking for meaning and consistency or congruence in both the verbal and non-verbal messages and listening for ideas, feelings and intentions as well as facts. Pay attention to the voice intensity, inflection, emotional cues, body movements, and so on, while listening to the speaker so as to ensure that the total message is communicated to you.
5. **Empathy:** Empathize with the speaker, that is, put yourself in the speaker's shoes. This will help you to better understand what the speaker is trying to say rather than only what you want to understand. For listening to be effective and to achieve its objective it is important that the listener understands the message from the speaker's point of view.
6. **Listening before evaluating:** Listening to what someone says without drawing premature conclusions is a valuable aid to listening. Premature judgement hampers effective listening. Listen patiently to what the speaker has to say. Give him time to complete what he has to say. By questioning the speaker in a non-accusative manner, rather than giving advice or judging, you can often discover exactly what the speaker has in mind, which oftentimes is quite different from what the listener had assumed.
7. **Note taking:** Many experts recommend note taking as an important technique to improve the efficacy of the listening process. Taking down notes not only enhances the attentiveness of the listener but also helps him record what is being conveyed. Further, when the speaker sees that his listeners are sufficiently interested in take notes, it generates confidence in him and motivates him to speak better.
8. **Paraphrasing:** Paraphrasing is simply restating what another person has said in your own words. Paraphrasing serves a dual purpose. Firstly, it acts as a control device to check whether the listener has listened carefully. Secondly, it checks accuracy because by restating what has been said and

feeding it back to the speaker the listener verifies the accuracy of his understanding. The best way to paraphrase is to listen carefully to what the other person is saying. It is important that the listener develops the habit of paraphrasing.

9. **Body language:** The listener should maintain a positive body language—an upright posture, eye contact with the speaker—which reflects the listener’s interest in what is being said. An upright posture also helps a listener have better concentration. At the same time, if the listener leans forward slightly it shows that the listener is interested in what the speaker is saying. Constantly fidgeting, too much of movement, and so on, reflect a lack of interest on the part of the listener and this may demotivate the speaker.

Ten Commandments of Listening

There are certain well-accepted essentials for good listening. More specifically, there are ten commandments, credit for which is given to an anonymous writer. These ten commandments are as follows:

- **Stop talking:** The first commandment of good listening is to stop talking. One can’t be talking and listening attentively at the same time. The speaker cannot speak and get the message across if the listener continues to talk. Stop talking and start listening.
- **Put the speaker at ease:** The speaker can really organise his thoughts and convey them meaningfully only when put at ease. The listener does so through several positive signals, such as sitting down, turning to the speaker, observing and so on.
- **Show you want to listen:** This calls for a positive attitude on the part of the listener. The listener should indicate preparedness. The listener should make it clear that the listener is attentive and is keen to receive the message the communicator wants to convey. This may be done by appropriate body movement, right posture or by keeping the pen and pad ready.
- **Remove distractions:** Communication between sender and receiver cannot progress if there are distractions. The receiver of the communication should show interest in listening, just as the speaker is interested in speaking. The listener has to remove distractions, if any, such as shut the door, switch off the cell phone, remove objects, if any, placed between the speaker and the listener so that body movements can be observed and so on.
- **Empathise with the speaker:** An important requirement for effective listening is that the listener should show empathy or proper understanding. The speaker may not be perfect and may have shortcomings. As a listener one should learn to put oneself in the speaker’s shoes.
- **Be patient:** This is an important attribute of good listening. A listener should not only be attentive, but also patient. One should wait for the speaker to

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complete the talk. The listener should refrain from making frequent interruptions, should avoid making derogatory remarks, cynical comments and distracting gestures. Every speaker has a train of thought, and gestures of impatience on the part of the listener may disturb the delivery of speech.

- **Hold your temper:** Good listening also calls for the right temperament. The listener may not appreciate what the communicator is conveying or the listener may decide that the speaker is factually incorrect. That does not give the listener a right to instant reaction.
- **Refrain from argumentation and criticism:** This is not an uncommon happening. Occasions are many when the listener picks up an argument with the speaker. The listener tries to challenge the speaker and criticize the person. Any such argument or criticism would be detrimental to the flow of communication.

Efforts by Speaker

Since communication is a two-way process, the onus of improving the communication process not only lies with the listener but also with the speaker. The speaker too can influence the way in which the listener listens to the message. The following are some of the guidelines which the speaker can use for facilitating effective listening by the listener.

The speaker needs to have clarity of thought and purpose, that is, he should be clear about what he is conveying to the audience.

The speaker needs to communicate the message in a lively, stimulating manner which will capture the attention of the listener.

The speaker should try to empathize with the listeners. He should imagine himself in their position and this will help him know if the listeners understand his message or if they are bored or confused.

The speaker should modulate his delivery to retain the attention of the audience. A dull monotone may induce the listeners to switch themselves off.

LISTENING SKILLS AT WORKPLACE

Good listening, as we have seen already, is an art that can be cultivated. A good listener is generally interested in what the speaker has to convey. A good listener knows the art of getting much more than what the speaker is trying to convey. A good listener knows how to prompt, prod, persuade but not cut or interrupt what the other person has to say. At times, the speaker may or may not be coherent, articulate and well organized in thought and expression. One may have it in one's mind and yet fail to marshal the right words while communicating one's thoughts. Nevertheless, a good listener puts such a speaker at ease, helps articulate and facilitates the speaker to get across the message in full and with clarity. Good

listener should also not have any biases and should cultivate the right temperament. A positive attitude helps in making listening effective.

Development of listening skills at various levels is very essential for business success. As we have seen earlier, every business has its stakeholders and there is communication taking place all the time between the organization and the stakeholders, and within the various groups connected with the business. If communication within the organization has to be purposeful, people need to listen to each other attentively. Hearing without listening is often a common refrain needing attention. Progressive organizations encourage the people within to learn and adopt active listening.

We have entered an information era and modern day organizations are described as information processing units. There is so much that is happening that needs to be shared with the clients as well as other interested parties. Similarly, today's worker is being described as the 'knowledge worker'. People have to constantly upgrade their skills and knowledge, whatever be the business or profession they are associated with. While reading is undoubtedly an important source for skill and knowledge upgradation, active listening too can make a significant contribution.

One area where listening skills are becoming particularly relevant concerns the service industry, such as banking and financial services. In these organizations, businesses involve person-to-person interactions. Products are sold and services are provided over counters and through customer outlets. Quite often, the product is not standardized, but tailor-made to suit specific requirements. These organizations are making relentless efforts to know customer requirements and respond to them. There is a growing concern in every business to offer value added services. This means that people at the counters, the sales force, the people who make customer contacts and everyone concerned with understanding customer needs should actively and sincerely listen to the customer. Organizations which make a conscious effort in this regard are described as 'listening organizations.' Behavioural skills and attitudes that focus on attending to the customer are far more relevant today than in the past. Training programs that cover these groups of service providers are focusing on various communication skills including listening.

Good listening skills are particularly relevant in dealing with customer complaints and employee grievances, in hearing the voice of dissent and while seeking suggestions from customers and employees. Suggestions will be more forthcoming when people in authority lend a patient ear. The customers of today seek reassurance that they are being heard. When they come up with a complaint, the minimum that an organization has to ensure is that there is someone there who lends a patient ear to what the complainants have to say. Moreover, in most organizations, there are meetings and other interactive forums where business-related issues are discussed and issues resolved. All these can be effective only when people learn to listen.

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Listening to Customers

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Customers constitute an important segment of stakeholders for any business. They are the very purpose of any business. If there are no customers, there can be no business. The importance of customers gets further accentuated in a competitive environment. Goods manufacturers and service providers have to make conscious and continuing efforts to seek out and retain customers. In service organizations like banks, customers visit branches and offices and seek delivery of service. In such businesses, services are delivered in person. Service delivery takes place through person-to-person interaction. During all such interactions with customers, whether in person or over the telephone, listening attentively becomes crucial. The manager in the cabin, the officer receiving the telephone call and the frontline staff at the counter, in fact everyone should listen to the customer actively and attentively.

People good at listening are good service providers and poor listeners often fail to provide good service to the customers. Good listening is a must to ensure satisfactory service delivery. Be it a request, or a complaint, or a suggestion or a piece of advice, listening to the customer is a must. Unless the listening is active and purposeful, response to the customer cannot be effective. Quite often, customers are dissatisfied because people in service organizations do not bother to listen and respond. When the customer speaks, the service provider should listen with patience and attentiveness. Indifferent listening results in customer annoyance and customer complaints. In recent years, business organizations have been setting up call centres which not only receive calls, but also make outbound calls. Employees working in call centres work full time receiving and making calls. Needless to say, attentive listening is a must in call centres.

Check Your Progress

5. Mention any two important guidelines to develop listening skills by the listener.
6. What kind of body language should a listener maintain?

ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Effective listening is the process of analysing sounds, organizing them into recognizable patterns, interpreting the patterns and understanding the message by inferring the meaning.
2. Hearing is a physiological process which involves receiving the sound waves by the eardrum and transferring them to the brain.
3. Two common poor listening habits are inattentiveness and pseudolistening.
4. Two most common physical barriers to listening are noise and poor acoustics.

5. Two important guidelines to develop listening skills by the listener are concentration and preparation.
6. A listener should maintain a positive body language—an upright posture and eye contact with the speaker.

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SUMMARY

- Effective listening is the process of analysing sounds, organizing them into recognizable patterns, interpreting the patterns and understanding the message by inferring the meaning.
- Listening is not to be confused with hearing.
- Hearing Hearing is the first essential step in the listening process and relates to the sensory perception of sound.
- Remembering relates to a process whereby the assimilated message is stored in memory to facilitate future recall.
- Discriminative listening Discriminative listening is the most basic type of listening. It involves identifying the difference between various sounds.
- Research shows that after two days we retain only one fourth of what we hear.
- Inefficiency of listening can be harmful for the organization.
- It is possible to improve your listening habits by identifying which are the poor listening habits and then working upon them to change them.
- Noise, poor acoustics, malfunctioning of the mechanical devices being used, frequent interruptions and uncomfortable seating arrangements are physical barriers that hamper effective listening.
- Both the speaker and the listener influence the communication process. People-related barriers can be both physiological and psychological.
- Effective listening calls for efforts on the part of the speaker, listener as well as others concerned with the process to remove the barriers that come in the way of effective listening.
- Since communication is a two-way process, the onus of improving the communication process not only lies with the listener but also with the speaker.

KEY WORDS

- **Listening:** *Listening* is the active process of receiving and responding to spoken (and sometimes unspoken) messages.

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- **Hearing:** Hearing refers to the process, function, or power of perceiving sound; specifically: the special sense by which noises and tones are received as stimuli.
- **Acoustic:** Acoustic refers to anything relating to sound or the sense of hearing.

SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Differentiate between listening and hearing.
2. Briefly explain the types of listening.
3. What are the steps involved in the listening process?
4. What are the physical barriers in effective learning?

Long-Answer Questions

1. What is effective listening? Explain its importance with special reference to organizational communication.
2. Discuss the various stages of an effective listening process.
3. Explain the barriers to effective listening.
4. Describe the various techniques to improve listening skills.

FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 4 LANGUAGE FOR COMMUNICATION

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Structure

- Introduction
- Objectives
- Language and Communication
- Language: A Medium of Communication
- Written Communication
 - General Principles of Writing
 - Improving Writing Skills
 - Essentials of Good Style
- Expressions and Words to be Avoided
- Grammar and Usage
- Paragraphs and Sentences
- Selection of Words
 - Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- Summary
- Key Words
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INTRODUCTION

Language is an inevitable part of communication. A good command over language, proper usage of words, perfect pitch and good delivery of thoughts lead to better exchange of ideas. The ability to use language properly helps a person to deliver his ideas, thoughts and expressions clearly. Language is very important to establish a good communication. If a person knows how to use words properly he or she can build a rapport with anyone. Not only with individuals, language is equally important in organizations. Language is required to establish good communication across departments.

OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss language as a medium of communication
- Describe the general principles of writing
- Explain measures for improving writing skills
- Examine the essentials of good style
- Recollect the expressions and words to be avoided
- Discuss Grammar and Usage

LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

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A workable definition of language as used by linguists is where they see language as a system of arbitrary vocal symbols with which a given speech community cooperates. Language has been defined by some other scholars as a unified system of signs that permits a sharing of meaning (Gamble & Gamble 1987:100). These symbols or signs are known as words. Our language skills depend largely on the way in which we use words. Most of the times, we take our ability to use language so much for granted that we rarely recognize the role it plays in our lives until a situation arises when it cannot be used, for example, when you have difficulty in finding the right words to express yourself or when your meanings are misunderstood by others.

Language: A Medium of Communication

Ever since the humankind developed their settlements, domesticated animals and started living in a community, they found a way to communicate with each other using various speech patterns for proper words for various things that they must have used. That was the birth of a language which in later years became a tool to express thoughts, ideologies and expressions. Social forces like establishments of villages and later cities made the situation favourable for languages to develop rapidly as a medium of communication.

The tradition of oral or verbal communication continued for ages until the need for recording what had already been said was felt. Various records of the societies, families, wisdom and skills of the communities were passed from generations to generations only verbally. The disadvantages of this oral tradition where the information and knowledge, when passed further was either found incomplete or distorted or completely forgotten, paved the path for the need of written word to store the knowledge not in memory but in records.

Written Communication

Written communication is a communication that makes use of the written word. The content of a letter, book, manual, newspaper, report, office order and application is communicated through written words. Written communication is required in schools, colleges, work places or in our personal lives. It has become an essential part in most of the business enterprises.

The best feature of written communication is that it is documented. It can be consulted or reviewed any time. There is hardly any scope of tempering or distorting the facts once they are written. Hence, written communication is not temporary, cannot be forgotten and it spreads the same message to everyone, making it uniform in nature as in the case of books, novels, reports, etc. There might be some disadvantages also of written communication, like it is time consuming or it tends to be formal, but as the written form is reliable and authentic, it would be appropriate to ignore its drawbacks.

It is appropriately said that written word symbolizes a kind of power. Humans have undergone a journey of thousands of years to achieve this power. The art of writing has been invented to replace the role of memory in advancing knowledge. In earlier days memorizing the knowledge was considered a skilful job. Legends, prayers and even family or tribe records were maintained orally.

The insight that everything could be represented by a pictorial symbol led to the invention of writing. Expressing through pictures was first carried out on clay tablets in Assyria sometimes in 3500 B.C. The pictures were cut with a wedge-shaped tool in the damp clay which was dried to serve as a permanent record. 'Cuneus' is a term that originated in Latin which means a wedge. Hence, this style of writing was known as cuneiform writing. Next, hieroglyphs came into use in Egypt. These were painted or drawn on papyrus. In Egypt these pictorial writings were meant only for the temples. The term hieroglyph is derived from two Greek words namely, 'hiero' and 'glypho', they meaning sacred and engrave, respectively. The Egyptian Empire encouraged its scribes in maintaining the accounts of its temples and military accounts. Sumerian cuneiform writing and the Egyptian hieroglyphs are the earliest forms of writing.

As in picture writing system, the glyphs represented objects, in the next stage, i.e., phonetic system, glyphs referred to spoken symbols. This made the task easy to make syllables where a limited number of sounds were combined to make a number of words. Thus the Sumerian system now had only about a hundred symbols as compared to their system that had thousands of symbols. This system is known as the phonetic system of writing.

The new form of writing was based on the idea of the alphabet. People were finding some system where each of the sound of spoken language could be represented by one letter sign. The idea was to combine relatively few signs while writing. From 100 symbols now people reduced the symbols to about two dozen or more. Many types of alphabetical writings were developed by various civilizations. Some like Phoenicians, Canaanites and Hebrews did not use any vowel in their alphabet. But out of all, the Greeks developed the most simplified and systematic system of writing by adding vowels to the alphabet.

Check Your Progress

1. Define language.
2. What do you understand by written communication?

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF WRITING

Written messages can be broken down into the following parts:

- Words
- Sentences
- Paragraphs

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Words are the fundamental unit of writing. Words combine to make sentences and sentences are arranged logically to form paragraphs. In addition to this, paragraphs combine to set the overall tone of the message. Writing principles apply to these four elements of the written message.

The following are the principles of effective writing:

1. **Clarity of writing:** For the written message to be clear and understandable to the reader, both clarity of thought and clarity of expression are required on the part of the writer. By being clear about the purpose of the message and knowing exactly what needs to be conveyed to the reader, one can obtain clarity of thought. The writer needs to arrange his thoughts logically before writing them down.

In order to achieve clarity of expression, the message needs to be well-expressed, because if encoding is faulty the message may be misinterpreted. Clarity of expression can be achieved by the following means:

- (i) *Use simple words:* Short and simple words are easily understood and are less likely to be misused. Of course, variety in vocabulary makes the writing impressive but too many long words in a sentence should be avoided. They distract the reader and do more harm than good. It is a myth that the bigger the words, the greater is the intellect of the writer. One needs to remember that writing is to express rather than to impress.
- (ii) *Use familiar words:* Use words which are familiar to you as a writer and are also likely to be familiar to the reader. For this, you need to possess a good vocabulary to enable you to select the words most appropriate for the reader. Unfamiliar words unnecessarily confuse the reader and he may, ultimately, get disinterested.
- (iii) *Use short sentences:* To enhance the clarity of writing, use short sentences. Long sentences can be confusing and many a time, they may be misinterpreted. If the sentence is of more than thirty words, break it up.
- (iv) *Use concrete expressions and not vague expressions:* While writing, choose words that have definite and specific meaning. If the words chosen are ambiguous the reader is likely to act based on his own interpretation, which may be different from what the writer intended.
- (v) *Avoid unnecessary use of jargon:* Jargon refers to technical vocabulary used by members to communicate within a specialized group. It is alright to use jargon to communicate within the same specialist group as the words will be familiar to the members and will, hence, be understood by all of them. However, if the reader is from a different field, he is likely to either misunderstand the word or not understand it at all. For example the word 'virus' has different meanings for a doctor and a computer specialist. Therefore, it is better to avoid the use of jargon especially for communicating outside one's specialized group.



Fig. 4.1 The word 'Virus' has Different Meanings for a Doctor and for a Computer Specialist

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(vi) *Avoid ambiguity in framing sentences:* A message is ambiguous if it means more than one thing. Avoid using ambiguous sentences in your message as this may confuse the reader.

2. **Completeness:** In business communication, completeness of facts is absolutely necessary. This is more so with written communication where immediate feedback is generally not possible. Incomplete information may either result in an incorrect decision or in time being wasted in the follow-up correspondence to complete the gaps in the information. While answering a letter, make sure that you have answered all the questions. While giving some information, check for the five Ws for ensuring completeness, that is, tell the reader the who, what, where, when and why of the information.

3. **Accuracy:** The accuracy of the message depends on what is said and how it is said. Thus, the message has to be accurate both in terms of truthful presentation of the contents, that is, the facts and figures mentioned in the message and in terms of the timeliness of the message, that is, the message should be conveyed at the appropriate time. The credibility of the written message depends on its accuracy.

Check and recheck the message for accuracy of the facts and figures, especially where important decisions have to be taken based on the document containing the information.

4. **Appropriate tone and language:** It is not only the accuracy of the contents but the tone in which they are expressed which take away or add meaning to the message. Tone refers to the feelings created by words used to communicate a message. Just as the tone of voice is important in oral communication, the tone of the written communication affects the reader. The selection of the appropriate tone depends on the relationship between the reader and the writer and their relative status in the organization. These factors determine the level of formality of the message. Depending on the level of formality between the writer and the reader, the tone of the message can be informal, semi-formal or strictly formal. The language that involves the selection of words should also be appropriate. Some of the issues to be considered are:

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- (i) *Avoid clichés and slang:* Clichés are overused phrases that become boring through overuse. They take away the originality and freshness of the message. Avoid these to present your message from sounding stereotyped and mechanical.

Slang is an informal word or phrase which is not a part of the standard language and is often used by a specific category of individuals. Use of slang reflects a high degree of informality and should be avoided in written business communication.

- (ii) *Use non-discriminatory language:* Avoid the use of sexist language, that is, words and phrases which show a gender bias. This involves replacing words such as ‘chairman’ with ‘chairperson’, using ‘Sir/Mam’ in the salutation if you are not sure of the person you are addressing. Do not assume that the addressee is a male. With an increasing number of women forming a part of the workforce, this is a common error that is committed. Do not use words which lower the dignity of women. Refer to women and men in the same way. Writing should also be free from bias based on factors such as race, religion, disability, and so on. Our writing should reflect sensitivity and should not offend others.

The following are examples of the use of masculine pronouns for both sexes and their gender-neutral substitutes.

Gender biased use of pronoun: When a new employee joins the organization, he undergoes an orientation programme of 15 days.

Gender-neutral substitute: A new employee who joins the organization undergoes an orientation programme of 15 days.

Gender biased use of pronoun: When a customer asks for a replacement during the guarantee period, he has to be provided one.

Gender neutral substitute: A customer who asks for a replacement during the guarantee period has to be provided one.

Gender Neutral Substitutes

- (iii) *Avoid negative words:* Some words have a negative connotation associated with them. Avoid using such words. Instead, replace them with substitutes that sound positive.

Some words that reflect negativity are unpleasant like disagree, damage and complaint. Some examples of how negative sounding words can be replaced by words that sound positive are as follows:

<i>Negative</i>	–	We will not be able to dispatch the goods till 12th July.
<i>Positive</i>	–	We will be able to dispatch the goods by 12th July.

- Negative* – Complaint department
Positive – Customer Service Department
Negative – Our product is very cheap as compared to others in the same category.
Positive – Our product is economical as compared to others in the same category.
Negative – I cannot attend the seminar.
Positive – I wish it were possible for me to attend the seminar.

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5. Courtesy: Incorporate courtesy in your writing. Apologize sincerely for an omission and thank generously for a favour. Do not be rude or harsh. Timely response to correspondence also reflects courtesy. Follow the golden rule of not replying to any communication when you are angry or upset. A tone of courtesy and sincerity enhances the effectiveness of the message by making it more acceptable to the reader.

Avoid offensive statements even though they may be the truth. Even though such statements may be stating the obvious, they result in humiliating the reader.

6. Brevity: Being brief and to the point also contributes to making the writing effective. Brevity in writing saves the reader's time, and is clearer and more interesting. Being brief means conveying only what is relevant and leaving out what is irrelevant or words which are unnecessary. However, brevity at the cost of clarity is not desirable. Shorter Substitute

7. Appropriate emphasis: In a message there are some items that are more important than others and these need to be emphasized to get the desired effect of writing. There are certain techniques which can be used to give proper emphasis to the selected parts of the message. These techniques include:

- (i) *Using position for emphasis:* The major emphasis positions are the beginning and the closing of each sentence, paragraph or the message. Place words, sentences or paragraphs at these positions if you want to emphasize them. Other parts of the message that do not need emphasis can be placed between these positions.
- (ii) *Using space for emphasis:* It is natural that the more you say about something, the more likely it is to draw attention. Thus repeating certain points which require emphasis or elaborating them in detail is a useful technique for emphasizing important parts of the message.
- (iii) *Using mechanics for emphasis:* Using bold letters, italicized letters, capital letters, underlining, using a different colour or a different font are some of the ways in which a particular part of writing can be emphasized to readily catch the attention of the reader.

8. Unity and coherence: The message consists of information in the form of words, sentences and paragraphs that need to be logically arranged to give a

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unified and coherent effect. There is a slight difference between a paragraph that is unified and a paragraph that is coherent.

A unified paragraph gives information directly relevant to the topic and presents it logically. A way of achieving unity in a paragraph is to give the sentence that contains the subject of the paragraph as the opening sentence. This helps the writer to focus on the topic of the paragraph while writing the message.

A message is said to be coherent when each sentence is smoothly linked to the succeeding sentence. Various techniques are known to impart coherence to the message, that is, to bind together the information that is presented so as to convey the big picture to the reader. These include the use of transitional words and pronouns, repetition of key words and using parallelism in structure.

- (i) *Using transitional words:* Transitional words tell the reader the thought connection between sentences and the relationship between sentences. Some commonly used transitional expressions are: in addition, moreover, besides, also in contrast, although, but, however, as a result, in the same way, likewise, thus, therefore, for example, in conclusion, to summarize, meanwhile, and so on.
- (ii) *Using pronouns:* As pronouns refer to words that have been previously used, they help in connecting ideas and words they relate to. The use of pronouns like this, that, these, those, he, they, and so on, help in relating ideas in different sentences.
- (iii) *Repeating key words:* By repeating key words from one sentence to the next one can provide a link between two sentences. Avoid needless repetition but use purposeful repetition to achieve coherence in the message.
- (iv) *Using parallelism in structure:* Sentences need to have a parallel structure, which means using a similar grammatical structure for similar ideas, that is, matching adjectives with adjectives, nouns with nouns, infinitives with infinitives, and so on. Parallel sentence structure enhances coherence.

Improving Writing Skills

- Before you can start writing incredible content, you will need at least an intermediate understanding of the basic principles of writing.
- The best writers are also keen readers, and reading on a regular basis is an easy way to start developing your writing skills.
- If the message is complex, outline it.
- Anticipate your readers' questions.
- Don't over-explain everything.

Essentials of Good Style

Writing style refers to the way in which the information is expressed and not the substance. It is related to the choice of words and their arrangement into sentences,

paragraphs and the complete message. The effectiveness of the message and the overall tone of the message largely depend on the style. Effective writing not only needs to be error-free but should also have style.

Some of the characteristics of an effective writing style include the following:

- (i) Use of short simple words
- (ii) Varied vocabulary
- (iii) Crisp, concise and clear writing
- (iv) Use of positive language
- (v) Logical flow of ideas in paragraphs
- (vi) Optimum paragraph length, that is, paragraphs which are neither too long nor too short.
- (vii) Use of a variety of sentence types
- (viii) Reflecting courtesy

Writing style is about the mechanics of writing. Mechanics are elements of writing that are of relevance when the message is in written form. Mechanics of writing include spelling, punctuation, capitalization, abbreviations, and so on.

Expressions and Words to be Avoided

Good writers should learn how to avoid some common mistakes in English writing. They should know how to use the right word and avoid the inappropriate word. Let us look at the following examples:

- My manager and the customer were wearing same shirts.
(similar, not same.)
- The judge interfered when the lawyers started fighting. (intervene, not interfere.)
- The general manager appraised the chairman about the incident.
(advise, not appraise.)
- The pilot manipulated the aircraft very well. (manoeuvred, not manipulated.)

While both the words mentioned above appear to convey the same meaning, in fact it is not so. Some words like interfere or manipulate even carry a negative connotation. Good writers understand the subtle differences and avoid using incorrect and negative words.

Grammar and Usage

Every language has a grammar. In fact, the grammar comes into being even before the language itself gets written. If you look up the dictionary, grammar is described as the accepted rules by which words are formed and combined into sentences. It is a description of these rules as applied to a language. Grammar is nothing but the logic or discipline relating to a language. That explains why grammar becomes so

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important to any language. Good writing is therefore grammatically correct writing. What is acceptable in spoken English may not necessarily be so in written English. Grammar deals with rules of writing or generalizations that are generally true. For example, every sentence in English must have a subject and a verb. If these rules are not followed, whatever be the other merits of writing, it fails to be counted as good writing. What is being emphasized here is grammatical correctness of writing such that there are no noticeable and obvious errors. Grammar is a vast subject and mastery over it does not come easily. You may not master and remember every grammatical definition such as a dangling modifier or conjunctive adverb or ditransitive verb or a modal auxiliary. Nevertheless, what is absolutely essential is the ability to identify and avoid an obvious grammatical error.

Paragraphs and Sentences

A paragraph is a group of sentences covering or describing a central idea. Good writers take care to organize their paragraphs sequentially and ensure that each paragraph is well structured. Paragraphs can be long and short depending on the central idea that needs to be conveyed. The length of the paragraph depends upon the details that the writer wants to cover in that paragraph. Every paragraph essentially consists of topic sentences and supporting sentences.

A topic sentence is the key sentence of the paragraph. Good business writers usually start the paragraph with a topic sentence. It describes the key thought that is elaborated and substantiated in the following support sentences. Although some writers use the key sentences in the middle of the paragraph, opening the paragraph with a topic sentence makes the writing much more effective. When you start a paragraph with a topic sentence, the reader knows exactly what will be dealt with in the subsequent sentences.

Some examples of a topic sentence introducing the central theme of the paragraph to the reader are given below:

- The bank achieved significantly higher profits during the year.
- The company suffered a severe setback during the quarter.
- Communication is a process that involves six different steps.
- Sport plays an important role in character building.
- While preparing a resume, it is important to know what a good resume can achieve.

Each of the sentences above introduces a key message or thought that should be elaborated by supporting sentences. Depending upon the nature of the reader and what details the writer wants to share, the topic sentence is developed into a full paragraph with the help of supporting sentences. Towards the end of the paragraph, the central thought is often reiterated or summarized for greater impact. A support sentence, as noted already, elaborates, substantiates and takes forward the central theme. By its very definition, a support sentence does not bring a new

idea or thought that is not in alignment with the topic sentence. The beauty of the paragraph gets enhanced when every support sentence adds clarity and further dimension to the key thought expressed in the beginning.

A good paragraph should also necessarily consist of unity and coherence. A paragraph has unity when every sentence in the paragraph revolves around a particular idea or thought. Unity ensures that there is no unrelated sentence or idea in the paragraph. Similarly, coherence brings in logic or consistency of thoughts. Ideas are developed in a logical order within the paragraph. Good writers learn to make their paragraph convincing and interesting. Such paragraphs are neither too long nor too short. When you are writing a letter, it is desirable to keep each paragraph somewhat short. If you are writing a report or a lengthy article or text message, you may keep paragraphs relatively long. If you are giving instructions through a memo or a circular letter, it is better to keep the paragraphs short. The grasp or absorption of the idea is easier in short paragraphs. If paragraphs extend beyond a page, reading gets tedious. Take care of your paragraphs and your writing becomes effective. To sum up, a paragraph is a section of a piece of writing of variable length, starting on a fresh, often indented, line and dealing with a distinct point or idea. Make sure that every paragraph of yours starts with an indent or an appropriate margin.

Selection of Words

Words make your writing. Effective writers know how to choose their words. Let us take a look at these two sentences:

- The consequences of delaying action are obvious.
- But as the real economy worsens, there will be a ricochet effect and banks and investors will continue to be affected by the developing crisis and the losses in the real economy.

The first one is a short sentence with only seven words. The second one is a long sentence with 31 words. Both are relevant and convey the intended message. In any good writing, such long and short sentences both co-exist. Every idea cannot be simplified and stated in a less than 10-word sentence. What a good writer tends to do is to use both short and long sentences keeping in view the readability of the target group.

We have noted that building a vast repertoire of words is both an opportunity and a challenge. We have also noted that words and ideas are the raw material that an effective writer requires in abundant supply. Copious supply of words and ideas is a must to build an appealing writing style. In the following paragraphs, we shall be studying in greater detail how one can go about choosing the right words.

Unlike a speaker, a writer has time to improve his or her writing. Good writers do not necessarily use the first word that comes to their mind. They stretch into their vocabulary. They delve into their word power and pick up the most appropriate words. Every word, indeed, has many equivalents. Good writing is a

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progressive accomplishment. One develops and evolves as a competent writer over the years. If you do not accept the first or easiest option and are determined to aim at consistent improvement, your writing gets progressively better.

Let us look at the vocabulary of a beginner. If he or she has limited word power and uses the first option, his or her writing would be somewhat like this:

1. The music was good.
2. The lunch was tasty.
3. The coffee was very nice.
4. The climate is pleasant.
5. The movie was funny.
6. It was a year of good performance.
7. He secured very low marks.
8. The situation is very bad.
9. He mentioned it again.
10. Her face showed no emotion or feeling.
11. It was a year of very ordinary performance.
12. The performance of the team was extremely good.

Apparently, there is nothing wrong with these sentences. They are simple and do convey the meaning in general. But as the writer makes progress and addresses a more informed audience, the same ideas may have to be expressed more specifically. At the first level, writers tend to use words such as good, bad, ordinary, simple, nice and pleasant. But as their word power improves, they will bring into play words that have greater vigour or words that are more exact. Let us look at the same ideas that we conveyed earlier and see how we can use different words.

1. The music was melodious.
2. The lunch was delicious.
3. The coffee was exquisite.
4. The climate is salubrious.
5. The movie was hilarious.
6. It was a year of robust performance.
7. He secured abysmally low marks.
8. The situation is grave.
9. He reiterated it.
10. Her face was impassive.
11. It was a year of lacklustre performance.
12. The performance of the team was superb/exceptional.

We can see from the above sentences, how the writer’s ability to convey ideas and feelings improves as more equivalents become available. The choice of words available to a writer while writing thus depends on his or her repertoire of words and how readily they come to the writer’s mind.

Good writers know how to economize on words. If you can convey the intended meaning with fewer words, your effectiveness improves. The following examples suggest how one can write with fewer words:

Table 4.1 Examples of Writing with Fewer Words

Instead of	Use
In the near future	Soon
In the same manner	Likewise
In the region of	About
Within a short time	Shortly
Without intending it	Inadvertently
With full knowledge	Consciously
From this time onwards	Henceforth
In view thereof	Hence
Once in a while	Occasionally
It is absolutely essential	It is imperative
If the need arises	If necessary
Please send your reply at the earliest	Please reply expeditiously
We are in receipt of	We received
In the month of September	In September
I acknowledge the receipt of your letter	I received your letter

What we have given above are just some examples. In everyday business writing, there would be many such occasions where a good writer can avoid unnecessary words. Good writing relates to using simple words instead of verbose or wordy expressions.

Good writers avoid sexist language and use gender-neutral words. The world of business today accommodates a growing number of women. Workplaces are no longer male dominated as they used to be. Similarly, market research studies have shown that women play an important role in making decisions in buying products and using services. Good writers, therefore, should be inclusive writers. Modern writing emphasizes a non-sexist, non-discriminatory approach to business writing. Sexist language suggests prejudice against women and often excludes women. Sometimes the words or terms we use may exclude either men or women. Apart from using gender-neutral words as suggested above, good writers should also ensure that their sentences are not sexist. For example, the sentence ‘A good writer keeps his writing short and simple’ is sexist. Instead you may say, ‘A good writer keeps his or her writing short and simple.’ Another way of ensuring gender neutrality is by making it plural. You may say, ‘Good writers keep their writing short and simple.’ Yet another way is to just say, ‘Good writing is short and simple.’

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Gender-neutral writing also relates to avoiding masculine words. Masculine words are generally used in a male-dominated society. Masculine words exclude women. Today's organizations call themselves equal opportunity employers.

Masculine words generally start or end with 'man'. We have seen some masculine words already such as businessman, salesman, workman, spokesman and chairman. Those beginning with 'man' include man-hours, man-days, manhunt, man-made and mankind. While reasonable efforts should be made to avoid masculine words and make the writing inclusive, it cannot be stretched beyond a point. Some words like man-eater, manhandle and manslaughter may have to be accepted as non-sexist words. Similarly, the word 'manageress' though refers to a female manager of a business is considered offensive and not usually used in official titles. It is desirable to use the word manager to refer to someone who manages, be it a 'he' or a 'she'.

Good writers should also make it a point to avoid cliches and hackneyed or trite phrases. Cliches and trite phrases make writing dull and lacklustre. Cliches are overused expressions. Cliches are described as once striking and effective phrases or combination of words that have become stale and hackneyed due to overuse. Clichés are to be avoided because their continued use becomes annoying. Some examples of cliches are given below:

- 'last but not the least'
- 'needless to say'
- 'thanking you in anticipation'
- 'there is no room for complacency'
- 'assuring you of our best services always.'
- 'better late than never'.

One comes across such phrases so often, both in written and spoken English that the audience finds them dull and lacklustre. Similarly, some phrases are used so frequently that these expressions have lost their freshness and effectiveness. They are described as trite or hackneyed. A hackneyed phrase is something that is commonplace or banal. Some overused phrases in business writing are—'assuring you of our best services always', 'leave no stone unturned', 'achieve greater heights' and 'giving a thoughtful consideration.' Such phrases are used in such a routine manner that the reader sees no sincerity behind these statements.

Precise words are words that are clear and accurate. A precise writer is one who writes providing detailed and accurate information. Precise writing is careful and meticulous writing. The opposite of precise is careless or vague. Sometimes, we may use words that convey somewhat vague meanings. Words like soon or early may convey different meanings to different persons. If you assure a customer that "you will attend to his request soon", by soon you may mean three days, whereas the customer may interpret soon to mean today or tomorrow. Effective writers and speakers choose words with precision.

Capitalization

Capitalization relates to the use of capital letters. A capital letter is the alphabet in its large form. A capital is also called uppercase. Capitals are used in the following ways:

1. At the beginning of a sentence:
 - Be an upright citizen.
 - Small is beautiful.
2. After a full stop:
 - We must do it. No time to waste.
 - Look. There is a tiger.
3. As the first letter of places, people and other proper nouns.
 - The Sri Lankan cricket team plays first.
 - In the centre of Nagpur.
 - The book written by James Hadley Chase.
 - As approved by the Government of India.
 - The Niagara Falls
4. While using brand names:
 - It is a Reebok shoe.
 - We had our dinner at the Pizza Hut.
 - She was wearing a Titan watch.
5. While referring to the titles of books, novels, etc.:
 - A Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens
 - Dustin Hoffman acted in All the President's Men.
 - He acted in Merchant of Venice.
 - I have read the Bible and Quran, besides the Bhagvad Gita.
6. While referring to organizations:
 - I studied in the Indian Institute of Management at Bengaluru.
 - She works as a manager in Canara Bank.
 - I have applied to the Harvard Business School.

The capital letter serves its purpose by drawing attention. While we have mentioned the different ways in which capital letters can be and should be used in English writing, it is also essential to avoid using capitals where they are unnecessary. Use of capitals where it is not appropriate makes the writings clumsy, and may even mislead the reader. Let us look at the following examples:

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- Indian Businesspersons were Reluctant to Sign that Deal.
- The trade Volume Between India and north korea is quite Insignificant.
- The Child and His father were the First to enter the British museum.
- During my next Tour, I want to see The ganges, himalayas and Snowfall.
- Dr. Abdul Kalam was one of the Finest Presidents of India.

In all these examples, there is an excessive and unnecessary use of capital letters. Moreover, the capital letter has not been used where it is essential. A good writer should know when to use the capital letter and when to refrain from using it.

Where to Use Capitals

1. All proper nouns—Alexander, Ayan, Margaret, Fatima, Singh
2. Titles used with the names—Dr. Kalam, Prof. Ranade
3. Names of places—Bangalore, Sydney, Portland
4. Months—June, August, December
5. Days—Thursday, Saturday, Sunday
6. Holidays and Festivals—Republic Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas, Diwali, Ramzan
7. Rivers—Ganges, Cauvery, Nile, Amazon
8. Mountains—Himalayas, Nilgiris, Alps
9. Planets—Jupiter, Earth, Mars
10. Universities—Delhi University, University of Texas, Benares Hindu University
11. Official title—Mayor Muthanna, Senator Kennedy, Pope Paul
12. Historical events—Battle of Panipat, Great Depression
13. Countries—India, Australia, Brazil
14. Streets and Localities—Anna Salai, Park Street, Janpath, Mohali
15. Religions—Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism
16. Languages—English, Latin, Hindi, Urdu

Abbreviations

Abbreviation refers to the short form of a word. To abbreviate means to make a word, phrase or name shorter by leaving out letters or using only the first letter. A good writer should know when to use abbreviations and when not to use them. While well-known and generally used abbreviations can be and often should be used, using not so well-known and unfamiliar abbreviations is to be avoided. Good writers, in fact, make it a point to state and explain the use of abbreviations up front or in the very beginning. For example, the dictionaries mention the abbreviations used in the very beginning.

Some commonly used abbreviations are discussed below.

1. While referring to titles like mister, miss, etc.:

- Mr. Madhukar
- Mrs. Margaret Thatcher
- Ms. Noor Begum

2. While referring to professors, saints, doctors, etc.:

- Prof. Mukherjee
- St. Joseph
- Fr. D'souza
- Dr. Khan

3. While referring to Latin expressions:

- i.e. - that is
- e.g. – for example
- viz. – namely

It should be noted that abbreviations like ‘&’ for ‘and’ should be sparingly used. ‘&’ is used in place of ‘and’ when mentioning the names of teams, partnerships, etc.

- Cox & Kings
- Khanna & Kapoor
- Murthy & Co.

Italics

Italics denote printed or written words leaning to the right. Italics are fonts different from the normal English letters. Italics are commonly used in business writing. When something is written in italics, it is italicized.

1. For showing emphasis:

- You can go there – I shouldn't.
- We shall achieve the goals, come what may.

2. For indicating the titles of books, papers, etc.:

- Shakespeare's Macbeth
- An article in The Hindu
- He acted in the play, Merchant of Venice

3. While using foreign words and phrases:

- He said, que sera sera.
- I did that work gratis.

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Numbers

In English language, numbers one to nine (single digit) are usually written in words and numbers ten and above are written in numerals.

- I want two volunteers.
- She ate six biscuits.
- Before the month-end, I have to submit 14 reports.
- This book runs to 240 pages.

There are some exceptions to this general rule.

- Twelve cows do not yield any milk. (at the beginning of a sentence)
- You owe me five thousand rupees. (while mentioning amounts)
- I scored sixty-six per cent. (while referring to percentages)

These examples look clumsy.

- It touched a high of forty-two degrees Celsius yesterday. (use numerals and symbols)
- We have to reach National Highway fifty eight. (use numerals)
- I want twenty six inch screws. (say twenty 6-inch screws)
- India's population is one point two billion. (say 1.2 billion)

It is clear from the above that if the numerals are not used appropriately, the writing becomes clumsy. Both errors of omission and commission are to be avoided by a good business writer.

Spellings

A spelling is a group of letters used in a certain sequence to describe the words. Every word is made up of letters. Just as it is imperative to know the right word for every idea, it is also essential to know the right way of spelling the word. Spellings are fixed or specific. Everyone must spell in the prescribed manner. Any deviation is unacceptable. What is not spelt correctly is an error. Incorrect spelling makes the writing shoddy and exposes the writer. Not only that, incorrect spelling may even change the meaning of the word. A word is spelt properly when the right set of letters is used. Also, they should be used in the exact sequence. Spellings carry a precision that must be followed by a good writer. There can be no good writer with a bad spelling.

Good News and Bad News Communication

Good news writing relates to communicating messages which the reader finds pleasant and is keen to receive. Instances of good news include the following:

- A request for a loan is considered favourably.
- A job applicant has been selected.
- An employee has been promoted.

Good news is best communicated in a direct manner. Your opening sentence should start on a pleasant note. Cover the good news in brief sentences. Follow a friendly tone. Convey the positive content of the message. Avoid irrelevant details. Do not wait till the end of the letter to convey the good news. If the good news has a limiting factor or a portion that is not considered favourable, put it across in a positive manner. Make sure the letter or writing leaves a positive impression in tune with the content of the letter. Otherwise, the good news will be marred by poor writing.

Persuasive Writing

Writing effective persuasive messages constitutes a challenging task for any good writer. Here the writer has to go beyond a mere statement of fact. The writer has to not merely inform, but has to go beyond and persuade. Persuasive messages call for planning in advance and working out an appropriate strategy. The writer should be clear about his or her approach towards persuading the reader. The type of persuasion would vary depending upon the target group and the objective of the persuader.

In order to make persuasive writing effective, the writer should first be clear about the meaning of persuasion, and how to persuade. According to the Business Dictionary.com, persuasion is a process aimed at changing a person's (or group's) attitude or behaviour toward some event, idea, object, or other person (s) by using written or spoken words to convey information, feelings or reasoning, or a combination of them. Thus, persuasion is a process which calls for deliberate and planned efforts. In written communication, it means writing in a manner that influences the reader to respond as intended by the communicator.

The process of persuasion has several approaches, and a look at some related words helps us in understanding how to be persuasive in writing. The word persuade has several synonyms or shades of meaning. They include satisfy, impress, urge, assure, prompt, prevail upon, cajole, induce, reason, gain confidence of and work over. When the writer starts writing to persuade, he or she should be conscious of these options, and choose the most appropriate one or a combination of those to make the persuasion effective.

Persuasive communication, generally speaking, should cover the following steps:

1. Gain reader's attention.
2. Make your opening statement so as to get the reader interested in what you want to say.
3. State clearly and reason out.
4. Anticipate probable resistance and try to address it.
5. End by seeking action.

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The objective of any persuasive writing is to seek the desired action. Your effectiveness in persuasion depends on the extent to which your written message influences the readers and wins them over. Persuasion succeeds when the reader is induced, convinced or prevailed upon to act as intended. Your strategy will determine what would be the most appropriate approach to persuade the reader in any given context - whether to make an emotional appeal, or to follow a strong logical reasoning, or emphasize and highlight the benefits and advantages, or use a combination of these, depends upon the subject and the target group. You need to be clear about the audience or target group, their needs, beliefs, attitudes, values, expectations, and so on. You cannot really woo them or influence them without understanding them. Make your writing as target-specific as possible.

In the real world of business, persuasive communication is an everyday happening. There are multifarious ways in which persuasion takes place. When you are inviting someone, when you are seeking an appointment, when you are organizing a customer meet, when you are sending a proposal, when you are seeking a favour, when you are applying for a loan, when you are seeking an admission, when you are enlisting someone's support, when you are bringing something to notice, and in many other different ways persuasion is taking place. Of course, the intensity and the words you use may vary depending upon the context.

The most ubiquitous or pervasive type of persuasive communication relates to the sales letters and advertising communication. Sales letters, product demonstration meets, direct mailers, brochures, pamphlets, customer oriented letters, and a host of such other written messages flowing from business organizations are all examples of persuasive communication. In writing such messages, the business writer should ensure clarity, presentation appeal, the 'you' factor, vibrant and vigorous words, and all such factors which make persuasion result-oriented. Often, persuasion calls for repetitive efforts. The initial message will have to be supplemented by follow-up letters and reinforcing messages.

Rules of Grammar

It is very important it is to ensure grammatical correctness. Since bad grammar stands out like a sore thumb and mars elegance of writing, let us study more about the subject. Grammar is learnt the hard way. One should read a good book on grammar to understand and appreciate the fundamentals.

Full sentences are made with the help of different kinds of words known as parts of speech. The parts of speech refer to word classes. Thus, the parts of speech relate to classes into which words are divided according to their grammar. They fall traditionally into nine categories—a noun, a pronoun, a verb, an adjective, an adverb, a preposition, a conjunction and an interjection and articles.

It is a fairly vast subject and calls for a dedicated step-by-step approach. Even experts agree that when it comes to grammar, very few indeed are absolutely

free from the uncertainties. There is always a lingering doubt relating to grammar and whether your writing is grammatically correct. That makes ensuring grammatical correctness all the more challenging for any business writer. What we propose to do here is to look at some examples of incorrect grammar and bad English.

Singular and Plural

While singular refers to one person or thing, plural refers to more than one person or thing. Person is singular and persons are plural. In most cases, plural is indicated by adding an 's'. There are, however, instances where the plural is not achieved by adding 's', but by spelling the word differently.

In the following sentences, some are right and some are wrong. Can you note them?

- Our country needs well educated peoples.
- Only one children was waiting.
- At the end of the day, my foot get tired.
- Man is kind but men are cruel.
- What I need are three umbrellas.
- Our team stand a very good chance

Articles

Articles are three in number—'a', 'an' and 'the'. While 'a' and 'an' are indefinite articles, 'the' is a definite article.

Let us look at the following sentences and note which are right and which are wrong:

- Human mind is like the monkey.
- You should bring with you a apple and umbrella.
- He is an ardent admirer of the chairman
- It was an unique experience.
- It is a honour to meet a person like you

Participles

A participle shares some of the characteristics of a verb and is used as an adjective. What is relevant while using it is that a participle used in a sentence should be related to its subject. When there is no relationship or reference, it is called a dangling or unattached participle. In the following examples, some participles are used properly and some are dangling:

- Driving carefully, he arrived in time.
- Playing on the road, the car hit the child.
- Being a sought-after artist, the auditorium was full.

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- Reaching late in the morning, the bus had left.
- Looking for something sharp, she picked up a knife.

Question Tags

Question tags are used in spoken English and are not used much in formal written English. Question tags follow certain well laid down principles. For example, if the statement is positive, the tag is negative and vice versa. Let us again look at the following question tags, where some are right and some are not.

- You are not going there, are you?
- I am not coming there, am I ?
- This is a lovely dress, is it?
- Anyone can do it, can they?
- Jamuna speaks well, doesn't she?

We have noted the important rules to be observed by a good writer. We have appreciated the significant aspects of grammar, punctuation, spellings and capitalization. We have seen how good writers can improve their writing by avoiding hackneyed phrases, dull and outdated words and expressions, and instead use strong and vibrant words. We have also noted several examples of common grammatical and other mistakes that good writers need to avoid.

Through conscious efforts and regular practice, one can accomplish continuous refinement.

Check Your Progress

3. In how many parts can written messages be broken down?
4. Mention any two principles of effective writing.
5. What is abbreviation?

ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Language has been defined by some other scholars as a unified system of signs that permits a sharing of meaning.
2. Written communication is a communication that makes use of the written word.
3. Written messages can be broken down into three parts, words, sentences and paragraphs.
4. Two principles of effective writing are completeness and clarity of writing.
5. Abbreviation refers to the short form of a word.

SUMMARY

- A workable definition of language as used by linguists is where they see language as a system of arbitrary vocal symbols with which a given speech community cooperates.
- The tradition of oral or verbal communication continued for ages until the need for recording what had already been said was felt.
- Written communication is a communication that makes use of the written word.
- The best feature of written communication is that it is documented. It can be consulted or reviewed any time.
- Words are the fundamental unit of writing. Words combine to make sentences and sentences are arranged logically to form paragraphs.
- Clichés are overused phrases that become boring through overuse.
- Avoid the use of sexist language, that is, words and phrases which show a gender bias.
- Incorporate courtesy in your writing. Apologize sincerely for an omission and thank generously for a favour. Do not be rude or harsh.
- Being brief and to the point also contributes to making the writing effective. Brevity in writing saves the reader's time, and is clearer and more interesting.
- A unified paragraph gives information directly relevant to the topic and presents it logically.
- Writing style refers to the way in which the information is expressed and not the substance.
- Every language has a grammar. In fact, the grammar comes into being even before the language itself gets written.
- Words make your writing. Effective writers know how to choose their words.
- Question tags are used in spoken English and are not used much in formal written English.

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KEY WORDS

- **Linguists:** A person accomplished in languages especially one who speaks several languages is known as a linguist.
- **Manual:** A book giving instructions or information is called a manual.
- **Jargon:** Jargon refers to special words or expressions used by a profession or group that are difficult for others to understand

- **Slang:** Slang refers to a type of language consisting of words and phrases that are regarded as very informal.

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SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on language as a medium of communication.
2. How did the tradition of written communication develop?
3. Why is clarity of writing important?
4. How can one write a coherent message?
5. Why should one emphasize on selection words while communicating with other?

Long-Answer Questions

1. What are the general principles of effective writing? Discuss.
2. Why is it important to maintain appropriate tone and language in communication? Explain.
3. 'Good writing is therefore grammatically correct writing.' Throw light on the statement with reference to the context.
4. What makes a person a good writer? What are the factors that a good writer keeps in mind while writing?

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BLOCK - II

TYPES OF COMMUNICATION, BUSINESS LETTER

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UNIT 5 COMMUNICATION IN ORGANIZATIONS

Structure

- Introduction
- Objectives
- Meaning of Communication in Organizations
- Internal Communication: Stakeholders and Channels
- Importance of Internal communication
- External Communication: Stakeholders and Channels
- Importance of External communication
- Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- Summary
- Key Words
- Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- Further Readings

INTRODUCTION

Organization as a means to get things done has been practiced by humans since time immemorial. Interaction between the members of organizations to achieve shared goals became the central feature of such organization. Eventually, human organizations took the shape of much complex and diverse business organizations, and as a result, the role and importance of communication in organizations has increased manifold. Today, effective organizational communication has become a prerequisite for organizational excellence.

Almost all the modern organizations of the 21st century have been witnessing and operating in turbulent times characterized by changing technology, economic pressures, globalization, diversification and several other factors. Many of these modern organizations which have survived the turbulence give credit to effective organizational communication.

Managers today have realized that an important part and the majority of time spent on their work is on communication whether it is meetings, face-to-face discussions, memos, letters, e-mails, business reports, and so on. A study published in *Business Outlook* revealed that executives and managers in an organization spend staggering amounts of time in communicating. The study, which was based

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on the responses of 1000 employers of Fortune 1000 companies, found that workers send and receive an average of 1798 messages each day via the telephone, email, faxes, papers, and face-to-face communications. Some experts believe that the average business executive spends 75 to 80 per cent of the time or about 45 minutes of every hour communicating.

Effective organizational communication has become a prerequisite in every organization and serves at two levels, both inside and outside the organization. Internally, effective organizational communication infuses confidence towards an organization's vision and mission, connects employees and motivates them, eases change and contributes to overall development. Externally, it assists in creating and developing an organization's image, exploring newer avenues and linking with society. The first unit of the book aims at introducing the concept of organizational communication, its importance for an organization, its development and important components.

OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the process of communication in organizations
- Identify the stakeholders in internal communication
- Describe the channels of internal communication
- Know about the channels of external communication

MEANING OF COMMUNICATION IN ORGANIZATIONS

To properly define organizational communication, one first has to diagnose and define the two words that make up the term 'organizational communication' independently, namely, 'organizations' and 'communication'.

Simply put, organization relates to the process of organizing, which is nothing but a grouping or putting together of things or people to bring stability. Organization, therefore, is an age old process where in the roles and positions are defined and arranged and concerted action takes place to achieve those shared goals. The Israeli American sociologist Amitai Etzioni (1964) has described organizations as social units or groupings of people deliberately constructed and reconstructed to strive for specific goals. The author Katherine Miller (2003) identifies five features she believes are possessed by all organizations: two or more people (a social collectivity), goals, coordinating activity, structure, and environmental embeddedness.

The author Gerald Pepper (1995) provides a communication-based definition when he describes organizations as consisting of the organizing activities

of its members. Pepper argues that, 'Though this definition may seem circular, it really is quite descriptive of a communication explanation of organizations. The definition accounts for traditional, pyramidal organizational form just as easily as it accounts for non-traditional democratic, 'feminist' organizational forms, because the key to the definition is the communicative relationships among the members, rather than arbitrary components assumed to define the organization'. The author of *Organizational Behaviour* Stephen P. Robbins (2001) defines an organization as a 'consciously coordinated social unit composed of two or more people that functions on a relatively continuous basis to achieve a common goal or set of goals'.

Communication is the key to functioning of organizations and takes place constantly in different forms. In the current era of an information rich society, communication is inseparable and has therefore become the lifeline of every organization to a large extent. The authors Weick and Browning (1986) define it as 'Communication is the process of conveying the message from one person to the other'. The authors Wehrich and Koontz state that the function of communication in the organization is to connect the employees of that organization in order to reach mutual goals. Hence, communication in the organization is important:

- To realise the company's objective;
- To develop plans and work towards their realization;
- To manage human and other resources in the most successful and appropriate way;
- To help in performance evaluation of organization members; and
- To help manage, guide, motivate and create a climate in which people want to contribute.

R. Fox, the author of *Business Communication* defines communication as, 'Communication in the organization represents a complex system of the flow of information, orders, wishes and references made out of two partially complementary systems: formal communication network and informal communication network.'

Check Your Progress

1. What do you understand by the term 'organization'?
2. Mention the five features of organization.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION: STAKEHOLDERS AND CHANNELS

The success of any organization depends on its internal communication. Communication between employers and employees is very significant for the betterment of any organization. Internal communication is required in all the

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processes. The transmission and reception of information between all members of an organization requires a good internal communication. The communication can be of various types such as vertical, diagonal or horizontal depending on the parties involved.

What is internal communication?

Vertical communication is communication either up or down the formal hierarchy established in a business. The message could move down the hierarchy to the lowest level and the feedback moves back up the same hierarchy.

Horizontal communication is among people in the same level in the organization. Horizontal communication is also known as lateral communication. It is important when people on the same organizational hierarchy need to collaborate on a project.

Formal communication is when the information is passed through the formal channels of communication preset in the organization.

Every member of an organization from employees, owners, the board of directors, managers to investors constitute a part of internal stakeholders. These individuals are also known as primary stakeholders and know all the ins and outs of the profitability, performance, and significant decisions that will eventually reach the external stakeholders who are responsible for the company's overall performance.

Channels of internal communication

- Letters to staff
- Email
- Employee newsletter
- Staff meeting
- Bulletin boards
- Employee app.

Importance of Internal communication

Internal communication is communication within the organization. Internal communication integrates and coordinates all the managerial functions, that is, it facilitates planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling. Internal communication is thus considered important for the following reasons.

- (i) *It facilitates planning:* Effective communication systems facilitate both the establishment and the dissemination of objectives in an organization. It further helps in planning for the achievement of these objectives by collecting timely and accurate information. In fact, the success of planning is largely dependent on the quality of information on which it is based.

- (ii) *Increasing complexity of business:* Businesses are becoming increasingly complex. Due to specialization, different functional areas like advertising, finance, sales, production, training and recruitment are handled by different departments. For the coordination of the various departments, effective communication is essential amongst them. For example, the planning department may have spent a month to work out the details of a new project, but it will all prove to be futile if the finances are not available to execute the project.
- (iii) *Growth of businesses:* Organizations have a number of branches both within the country and abroad. Therefore, for healthy and even growth, an effective and efficient network of communication is required. This will facilitate effective information transfer amongst various branches and will also update information at the head office to facilitate planning and decision making.
- (iv) *Promotes cooperation and understanding:* If there exists effective and smooth communication between the management and employees, it helps to bring about an atmosphere of mutual trust and confidence which is beneficial to both the parties. The management gets better returns as there is an increase in productivity. The employees get increased job satisfaction and also develop a sense of loyalty and belongingness towards the organization.

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Fig. 5.1 Communication Exchange

- (v) *Helps in the decision-making process:* The decision-making process, like planning, is also based on the availability of information. If the right type of information is not available at the right time due to the lack of effective communication, the management will be unable to consider all the pros and cons before taking the decision. Effective communication results in high quality decision-making.

- (vi) *Increases employee morale:* Communication in organizations is the basis of morale building. Through an effective communication system, the employees can bring their grievances to the management and get them redressed satisfactorily. It thus creates trust and ensures job satisfaction.

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EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION: STAKEHOLDERS AND CHANNELS

The communication that occurs among various organizations is called external communication. In order to achieve one's goals, every organization needs to maintain relation with other organizations or individuals. So, when a business organization exchanges information with other organizations, banks, insurance companies, customers, suppliers, leaders and people, it is known as external communication.

The goals of external communication are to facilitate cooperation with groups such as suppliers, investors and stockholders. It is also endowed with the responsibility of and presenting a favorable image of an organization and its products or services to customers and to society at large.

External stakeholders are individuals or groups who are outside of the company but still impact the decisions and performance of the organization. These can include suppliers, customers, competitors, governmental agencies, and society as a whole. These groups hold a lot of weight concerning how the organization is seen and heard by the public.

A variety of channels may be used for external communication, including face-to-face meetings, print or broadcast media and electronic communication technologies such as the internet. However, internal stakeholders have a broad influence that affects the culture and voice of the company before messages or products even reach the public at large.

So, external communication is an informal exchange of information and message between an organization and other organizations, groups or individuals outside its formal structure.

While external business communications seem like an effective way to reach out to the public, it is not without its challenges. The public impression of an organization can define the success or failure of the company in the long-run. One misplaced quote, or badly worded newsletter will not only ruin an expensive external communications plan, but also has the potential to affect corporate revenue. Therefore, those in charge of external communications for the company need to be aware of their audience and the company image they wish to convey.

Importance of External communication

External communication refers to the communication of the organization with external agencies, both government and private. External agencies include

government agencies and departments, distributors, retailers, individual customers and competitors. Business organizations are required to deal with licensing authorities, foreign trade offices, banks, custom offices, income and sales tax offices, transporters, and so on, which call for effective communication. Modern businesses are highly competitive and organizations which communicate better are undoubtedly more successful. External communication is thus considered important for the following reasons:

- (i) *Contact with the external environment:* Organizations do not exist in isolation. It is important that they keep in touch with the external environment to follow the changes taking place and the effect they will have on the functioning of the business. Good communication networks will enable to anticipate changes and prepare accordingly.
- (ii) *Improves ability to handle competition better:* This is an era of competition for businesses. Effective communication helps in handling information about competitors, their products, policies, and so on, to meet the challenges of competition. The right kind of information at the right time can thus help in handling competition better.
- (iii) *Improves public relations:* Communication helps in building relationships with all stakeholders which include customers, suppliers, competitors, press, and so on. Good communication promotes goodwill amongst the various stakeholders.

Check Your Progress

- 3. Define external communication.
- 4. What are the goals of external communication?

ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

- 1. Organization relates to the process of organizing, which is nothing but a grouping or putting together of things or people to bring stability.
- 2. The five features of organization are two or more people (a social collectivity), goals, coordinating activity, structure, and environmental embeddedness.
- 3. The communication that occurs among various organizations is called external communication.
- 4. The goals of external communication are to facilitate cooperation with groups such as suppliers, investors and stockholders.

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SUMMARY

- To properly define organizational communication, one first has to diagnose and define the two words that make up the term 'organizational communication' independently, namely, 'organizations' and 'communication'.
- Organization relates to the process of organizing, which is nothing but a grouping or putting together of things or people to bring stability.
- Communication is the key to functioning of organizations and takes place constantly in different forms.
- The success of any organization depends on its internal communication.
- Communication between employers and employees is very significant for the betterment of any organization. Internal communication is required in all the processes
- Every member of an organization from employees, owners, the board of directors, managers to investors constitute a part of internal stakeholders.
- Internal communication is communication within the organization.
- The communication that occurs among various organizations is called external communication.
- External stakeholders are individuals or groups who are outside of the company but still impact the decisions and performance of the organization.
- External communication refers to the communication of the organization with external agencies, both government and private.

KEY WORDS

- **Stakeholder:** Stakeholder refer to an independent party with whom each of those who make a wager deposits the money or counters wagered.
- **Media:** *Media* are the collective communication outlets or tools used to store and deliver information or data.
- **Internet:** Internet refers to a means of connecting a computer to any other computer anywhere in the world via dedicated routers and servers.

SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What is the importance of communication in organization?
2. Write a short note on organizations.

3. What is internal communication?
4. Why is external communication important?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Who are the stakeholders in internal communication? What are the different channels of internal communication?
2. Why is internal communication important? Discuss.
3. What are the goals of external communication? Discuss.

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UNIT 6 COMMUNICATION NETWORK

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Introduction
Objectives
Scope and Types of Communication Network
Formal and Informal Communication Network
Informal Communication Network
Formal Communication Network
Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
Summary
Key Words
Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
Further Readings

Structure

INTRODUCTION

Business employees communicate in a variety of different ways. Some discuss ongoing business activities with their supervisors, while others enjoy talking about their weekend plans with their colleagues. These examples of organizational communication exemplify the types of communication networks within a business. Typically, organizational communication travels throughout a business's employee sector on one of two paths: an informal or formal communication network. The type of network used typically depends on the information being shared and the role of the employee who is sharing that information.

OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the scope and types of communication network
- Discuss the formal and informal communication network
- Identify the difference between upward and downward communication network
- Examine the horizontal and diagonal communication network

SCOPE AND TYPES OF COMMUNICATION NETWORK

Basic networks of communication can be classified into different forms. Research has established the presence of wheel, chain, circle and all channel types of network.

The *wheel* or *star* network as is illustrated in the figure below consists of an individual at the centre of the wheel. Other individuals at the subordinate level have the role of channeling information and opinions to the centre. The flow of information and opinion is sometimes one-way and sometimes two-way.

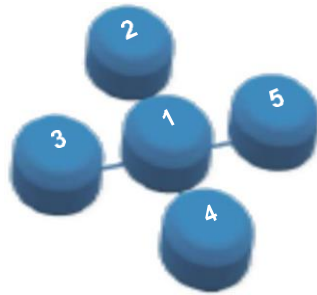


Fig. 6.1 Wheel or Star Network

The *chain* network takes two forms. The first one is a vertical chain and the other a horizontal chain. The vertical chain represents the traditional hierarchy with a very narrow span of control. The horizontal chain, on the other hand, is a work group in which the two outer individuals are so introverted that they only speak to the person next to them, while those in the middle may be prone to interact with each other.

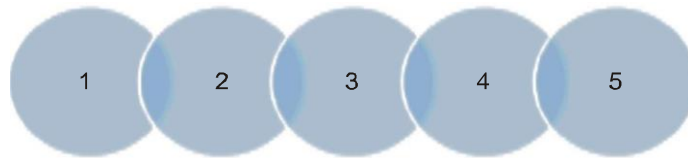


Fig. 6.2 Horizontal Chain

The *circle* network illustrated below is a group without any leader. In such a group, each individual only communicates with the two others immediately adjacent to them. When all members of a circle network can communicate with each other, then the circle becomes a free circle or all-channel network.

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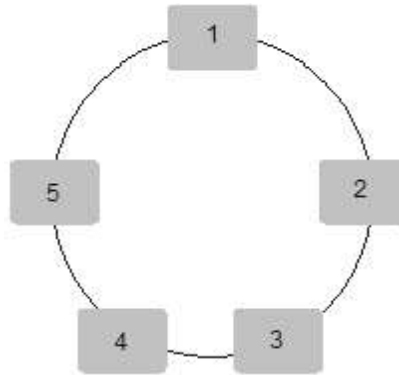


Fig. 6.3 Circle Network of Communication

Finally, the *All-channel* network is the one where multiple interactions between all members of a group, whether actual or virtual becomes possible. In such a group, the potential for brainstorming and maximum interchange of information is the greatest but, the model is also plagued with the possibilities of information overload, paralysis by analysis, and difficulty in reconciling differences by consensus or other decision-making methods.

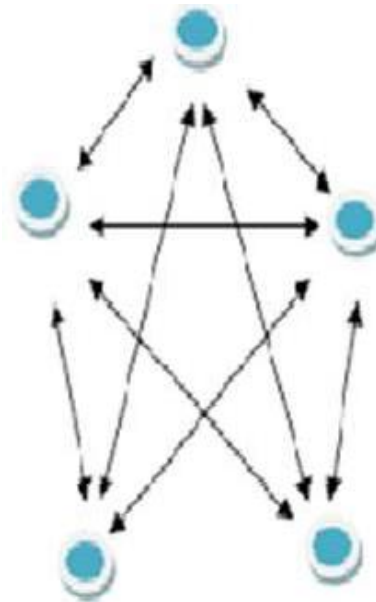


Fig. 6.4 All Channel Network of Communication

Check Your Progress

1. What is a circle network?
2. Define all-channel network.

FORMAL AND INFORMAL COMMUNICATION NETWORK

Let us now go through the various types of communication network:

Informal Communication Network

A formal organizational structure assists in arriving at a framework that helps us understand working of communication in organizations.

However, there always exist an unofficial organization within a formal organization – the informal organization. Authors like Mintzberg and Van Der Heyden; Rosner; Rummmler and Brache strongly believe that organizational charts and diagrams show the official structures, but often conceal other important information. For example, customers or other stakeholders, the patterns of power and influence, the pathways of unofficial communication etc. are not evident in any of the organizational charts. There are people who work in different department but are following the same sports, some of them are meeting over the lunch or tea, some are old school friends, some see each other at children's park and some are having an affair. All these follow an unofficial pathway of communication that has no sanction and therefore deviates from the top-down or bottom-up communication channel.

The major part of this informal organization is the informal communication which is referred to as grapevine. The term was first used for the temporary telegraph wires, often strung from trees, used during the North American Civil War. The information carried via this system was not always accurate.

Hellweg (1987) notes the following about grapevines or informal organizational networks:

- Five out of every six messages in the organization are transmitted by the grapevine.
- Secretaries play a key role in grapevine communication.
- Liaisons play a key role in grapevine communication.
- As the size of the organization increases, grapevine activity increases.
- Grapevine communication is fast.
- Grapevine information generally is incomplete.
- Rumours are more prevalent in organizations that foster secrecy.
- Once a rumour is assigned credibility, other events in the organization are altered to fit in with and support the rumour.
- Employee gender is not a predictor of participation in grapevine communication.

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- Grapevines, if not controlled, can be very harmful for any organization. Grapevine communication has no specific source and it is always difficult to control, eliminate or reduce them.

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Crampton, Hodge and Mishra (1998) suggest following measures to manage grapevines:

- Increase the levels of participation in decision making, so that an information vacuum will be less likely to form. Likert (1976) suggests that in truly participatory organizations the informal organization will simply wither or merge with the formal one.
- Reduce or eliminate secretive communication, and abolish information vacuums.
- Be aware of unclear communication (vague words) that may lead to misinterpretation; encourage two-way communication and ensure that information exchanged is accurate.
- Send out messages using more than one channel.
- Resist the temptation to hide bad news from employees. Don't censor reality and thus sacrifice credibility.
- Work as a sounding board, allowing staff to let off steam and reduce stress.
- Create a socialisation milieu in which new staff learns about informal group norms.
- Give a sense of belonging to staff who may feel alienated in a bureaucratic environment.
- Process information not handled by formal channels.
- Help to get work done, when official channels and chains of command are too bureau-cratic and slow, by using connections, influence and 'quick and dirty' methods and other types of knowledge.
- Demonstrate that the staff is actually interested in their jobs and shoptalk.
- Act as a countervailing restraint on management, who may take extra pains in planning for fear the informal organization would passively resist ill-considered initiatives.

Formal Communication Network

The formal communication networks are as follows:

1. Upward Communication

Businesses, railways and such other people-oriented organizations have typically a three-tier or a four-tier structure. The process of communication to be complete and effective should encompass all these levels and tiers. Upward communication is one which moves upward, i.e., from the bottom to top levels in the hierarchy.

Anycommunication that moves from employees to supervisors, supervisors to managers, managers to executives and regional manager to general manager

may be categorized as upward communication. Similarly, communication from branches to regional offices, regional offices to zonal offices, zonal offices to the head office is referred to as upward communication. Employee suggestions, market reports, performance reports, feedback on new products and requests for facilities or instructions are all examples of upward communication in the organizational context. Refer to Figure 6.5



Fig. 6.5 Upward Communication

2. Downward communication

Downward communication moves from top to the bottom, i.e., from the CEO downwards. It travels through senior executives to junior-level functionaries, from the controlling office to the branch, from the head of the division to the head of the unit. Corporate goals, business priorities, motivational letters, work-related instructions, newsletters, letters from the CEO/General Manager’s desk are all typical examples of downward communication.

There may be some communication which would move both upward and downward. A typical example of this is performance budgeting, which is a two-way process. It is a top-to-bottom as well as bottom-to-top exercise. Refer to Figure 6.6

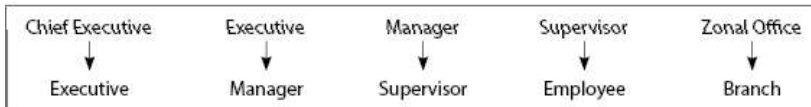


Fig. 6.6 Downward Communication

3. Horizontal communication

Horizontal or lateral communication, on the other hand, takes place at the same level of the hierarchy. It is referred to as sending and receiving messages between the people who are at same levels in an organization. This is often visible within teams, among heads of department, among others in coordination and liaison roles, or among virtually everyone at the lower levels of the pyramid. The figure below illustrates the horizontal communication.



Fig. 6.7 Horizontal Communication

The advantages of horizontal communication are as follows:

- **Informal and sweet relationship:** Horizontal communication takes place at the level of the same position. Communication happens within teams and

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people share ideas, knowledge and thoughts. This can facilitate informal and better relationships between the team members.

- **Co-ordination of activities:** Horizontal communication is very effective in facilitating coordination within teams and departments.
- **Departmental communication:** Horizontal communication is the best system of communication in departmental communication.
- **Quick communication and solution of problems:** Since, horizontal communication happens at the same level and does not follow any hierarchy; it facilitates quick transmission of messages and solves complex problems in the organization.

The disadvantages of horizontal communication are as follows:

- **Overloaded by information:** Horizontal communication does not follow any hierarchy and is therefore less filtered. This often results in the overloading of information.
- **Wastage of time:** Horizontal communication requires a lot of sorting of data which can kill the useful and valuable time of superiors.
- **Lack of understanding:** Horizontal communication may promote a lack of understanding among team members.
- **Lack of motivation:** Horizontal communication often fails simply because organization members are unwilling to expend the additional effort that it requires. It may require contact with people in units, and the channels and rules of interaction may be unclear. Sometimes we do not really know these people. The need to communicate with them makes us uneasy or takes too much time.
- **Ignoring vertical communication:** In horizontal communication, the same level of organizational members contact or exchange information with each other. In most of the cases, they do not inform managers of the hierarchy which break down or ignore the vertical communication.

4. Diagonal communication

In certain low performing organizations, there also exists another kind of communication which cuts across both vertical and horizontal dimensions and is referred to as diagonal communication. For instance, a junior might jump over the immediate supervisor and consult a senior consultant to get information about a particular job.

Check Your Progress

3. What is the role of a formal organization?
4. What are different types of formal communication?

ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. A circle network is a group without any leader. In such a group, each individual only communicates with the two others immediately adjacent to them.
2. All-channel network is the one where multiple interactions between all members of a group, whether actual or virtual becomes possible.
3. A formal organizational structure assists in arriving at a framework that helps us understand working of communication in organizations.
4. The different types of formal communication is upward, downward, horizontal and diagonal communication.

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SUMMARY

- Basic networks of communication can be classified into different forms. Research has established the presence of wheel, chain, circle.
- The *chain* network takes two forms. The first one is a vertical chain and the other a horizontal chain.
- When all members of a circle network can communicate with each other, then the circle becomes a free circle or all-channel network.
- A formal organizational structure assists in arriving at a framework that helps us understand working of communication in organizations.
- Five out of every six messages in the organization are transmitted by the grapevine.
- Grapevines, if not controlled, can be very harmful for any organization.
- Upward communication is one which moves upward, i.e., from the bottom to top levels in the hierarchy.
- Downward communication moves from top to the bottom, i.e., from the CEO downwards.
- Horizontal or lateral communication, on the other hand, takes place at the same level of the hierarchy. It is referred to as sending and receiving messages between the people who are at same levels in an organization.
- In certain low performing organizations, there also exists another kind of communication which cuts across both vertical and horizontal dimensions and is referred to as diagonal communication.

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KEY WORDS

- **Horizontal communication:** Horizontal communication is the transmission of information between people, divisions, departments or units within the same level of organizational hierarchy.
- **Socialization:** Socialization is the process of internalizing the norms and ideologies of society.
- **Hierarchy:** Hierarchy refers to a system in which members of an organization or society are ranked according to relative status or authority.

SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What is chain network?
2. Write a short note on diagonal communication.
3. What are the disadvantages of grapevine communication?
4. What do you understand by upward communication?

Long-Answer Questions

1. What are the different types of communication network? Discuss.
2. What is the difference between formal and informal communication network?
3. How can an organization manage grapevines?
4. What are the different types of formal communication network?

FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 7 BUSINESS LETTERS

Structure

Introduction
 Objectives
 Writing Business Letters and its importance
 Difference between Personal and Business Letters
 Structure and Format of Business Letters
 Layout of a Business Letter
 Types of Business Letters
 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
 Summary
 Key Words
 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
 Further Readings

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INTRODUCTION

The world of business is replete with various types of written communication. Written communication is so much a part of everyday business that one cannot think of a business without related correspondence. Think of any organization or institution—bank, electric company, hotel, college or library dealing with people and there is obviously some written correspondence. It may be handwritten, typewritten or printed. In the olden days, there were people who were specially assigned the job of taking care of correspondence, even in small businesses. Such persons were popularly referred to as ‘writers.’

Business writing always has a purpose. The purpose of any writing is to communicate and convey a message. When you write, you want to communicate your ideas, thoughts sentiments, feelings, events, experiences, etc. Written communication has certain distinct advantages as compared to verbal communication. It has a much larger reach whereas verbal communication can only go as far as the voice or oral messages can travel. Moreover, while verbal communication goes with the non-verbal message, written communication creates a solo impact. Business letters, it should be noted, are a prominent part of written communication in business. Before discussing business letters as such, we need be clear about the advantages of written communication. Written communication has certain clear advantages as detailed below:

1. Written communication has an extremely wide reach, co-terminus with the literate world.
2. Written communication can be well organized to convey the precise message.

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3. Written communication, generally speaking, can be prepared at the time when the communicator is best prepared to do so.
4. Written communication, unlike oral communication, can be effective as a stand-alone medium.
5. Written communication can be targeted to reach specific individuals/sections.
6. Written communication can be composed in a language that the receiver can read and understand.
7. Written communication can carry the much desired personal touch.
8. Written communication can be erased, revised and re-written.
9. Written communication, when stored, can be exactly reproduced or repeated.
10. Written communication, organized properly, can be cost effective.
11. Written communication, very importantly, creates records and reference sources.
12. Written communication, when presented in an appealing manner can create the right impression.

The advantages of written communication far outweigh its limitations and this method of communication is extensively used in the business world. Business letters are extremely popular because they have all these advantages which a written correspondence enjoys.

Although written communication may not provide the depth and intensity of a face-to-face communication, it meets very well the requirements for a variety of simple and direct correspondence/messages that a business needs for its everyday transactions. There may be occasions when the first letter may not give all the details the recipient wishes to have, necessitating further correspondence. Nevertheless, a good business letter constitutes the basic plank on which effective business correspondence rests. A good business letter has to create, nurture and sustain a good business relationship.

OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe how to write business letters
- Examine the importance of business letters
- Discuss the difference between personal and business letters

WRITING BUSINESS LETTERS AND ITS IMPORTANCE

Business letters, to be good and effective, must contain certain essentials. In other words, business letters should conform to certain minimum standards of letter writing. One can look at these essentials from different angles—language, content, context, length, structure, layout, taste, tone, impact and purpose orientation. Any letter is amenable to description in terms of these characteristics or features. To qualify, the letter should measure up as good when viewed from any of these considerations. It may or may not encompass all these features. Nevertheless, a good letter writer should have a clear understanding of all the characteristics that make the letter effective. In order to be clear about what is a good letter, it is also very necessary to know what a bad letter is. While a good letter can be good on many counts, a bad letter may have one undesirable feature which can mar the beauty of the entire letter.

A bad letter stands out like a sore thumb for any of its deficiencies, which might be any of the following:

1. Lack of clarity
2. Poor use of words and expressions
3. Incorrect spelling and grammatical errors
4. Too short or very lengthy
5. Too many ideas crowded into one letter
6. Not accurate or factually incorrect
7. Fails to convey the main purpose
8. Not to the reader's wavelength
9. Too much jargon and technical words
10. Lacking in aesthetic sense
11. Language used not familiar to the reader
12. Lengthy paragraphs
13. Offensive in nature
14. Absence of personal touch
15. Lacking in courtesy
16. Creates ill-will
17. Written out of context
18. Absence of relevant information
19. Use of poor-quality paper and ink

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20. Wrong address

21. Absence of address

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Business is all about creating goodwill, favourable impressions, attracting attention, creating interest, wooing customers, reaching prospects and building relationships. All this calls for conscious efforts, concerted action and correspondence on a regular basis. As this has to be done in a world that is full of competition, one bad letter can cause avoidable damage to the reputation of the business. Badly written letters cause embarrassment to the people behind the business and show the organization in poor light.

Before discussing the essentials of a good business letter, it would be desirable to keep in view what such a letter can achieve for business. A good business letter can reach out and directly address the target, be it a customer or a prospect or a patron or the regulator. A good business letter can address the prospect and set the sales pitch. A good business letter can act as an effective salesperson. A good business letter can strengthen the bond and provide further details to an existing customer. A good business letter can, thus, act as your relationship officer. A good business letter can dispel disinformation and create goodwill. It thereby acts as your ambassador. A good business letter can make announcements, share relevant information and keep you in touch with people who matter. In this way, a good business letter can be your public relations officer (PRO). Well-written and imaginatively drafted letters can play the role of a salesperson, a relationship officer, an ambassador and a PRO for business establishments. This is true especially for small businesses which cannot afford to employ people specifically for carrying out these functions.

Difference between Personal and Business Letters

Business letter refers to formal written letter through which business-related issues and information are exchanged with the suppliers, customers, banks, insurance companies and other external parties of the organization.

On the other hand, personal letter is written for exchanging personal or family affairs with family members, relatives, friends, lovers, teachers, students etc. are known as personal letter.

There are following differences between business letter and personal letter:

- 1. Nature:** Business letter or commercial letter is impersonal and universal in nature. Personal letter is fully personal in nature.
- 2. Purpose:** The purpose of business letter is exchange of various business-related issues and information. Personal letter is exchanged for personal or family related affairs and information.
- 3. Scope:** The scope of business letter is wide and contains various types of business information. The scope of personal letter is limited and contains only personal information.

4. **Structure:** Business letter follows the officially recognized structure. Personal letter does not follow any recognized structure.
5. **Formality:** Business letter maintains formal rules and procedure. Personal letter is informal.
6. **Size:** Generally, business letter is concise in size and avoids irrelevant matter. Personal letter may be concise or large in size.
7. **Types:** Business letter can be categorized differently. Personal letter generally cannot be categorized.
8. **Salutation:** The salutation of business letter salutation is sir, dear sir, dear Mr. x etc. The salutation of personal letter is Dear friends, my dear x, dear x etc.
9. **Language:** The language of business letter should be easy and simple. The language of personal letter may be easy, poetic, emotional etc.
10. **Copy:** Copy of business letter is preserved. Copy of personal letter may not be preserved.
11. **Method:** Business letter uses direct and persuasive method. Personal letter uses only direct method.

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Check Your Progress

1. Mention any two deficiencies of a bad letter.
2. What is a business letter?

STRUCTURE AND FORMAT OF BUSINESS LETTERS

Business letters are different from personal letters and carry a distinct format and style. Business letters are known to cover several widely accepted parts and a good business letter should be drafted in accordance with the principles of such formatting. Although there are different types of letters, each is relevant in a specific context and the parts are generally common to all such letters. One needs to be familiar with not only the different parts of the letter but also, equally importantly, about their positioning in the letter. When we refer to a business letter, we refer to it in its totality, including both external and internal features. As we have seen in the earlier chapters, a good business letter not only carries across the message as intended, but also creates the right impression on the reader.

A letter has many parts—outside, inside, top, bottom, middle, left, right, first page, second page, enclosures and annexure. Each one of these parts has a certain significance and carries a definite place in the context of letter writing. All these external and internal features concerning a business letter carry a time-tested

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position and significance. All the same, when we refer to a position or placement, we are not necessarily referring to a very rigid position for all times. Over a period of time, business writers have brought in flexibility and improvisations resulting in certain choice of positioning as well. Thus, notwithstanding the various types and places relevant to a business letter, it is possible to have different styles in writing a business letter.

Let us take a look at the various parts of a business letter which makes up its structure and format.

Letterhead

The letterhead announces the name of the business. It often suggests what the business is about—whether it is a bank, an insurance company, a transport agency, a trading firm, a building contractor or an estate agent. While some businesses choose to mention their name as well as their line of business in their letterhead, others confine only to the name. Quite often the constitution of the business is also stated—public limited, private limited or government undertaking. Along with the name and line of business, some relevant particulars such as date of establishment, location of head office or registered office, telephone number, fax number and e-mail address are also furnished on the top of the letterhead.

Apart from all these details, the letterhead also carries prominently the logo of the business. If it is a public sector undertaking, as per the official language policy, all these details will have to be furnished bilingually. Each business decides what details it wants to include about itself on the top of the letterhead. Sometimes the details are distributed among the top and bottom portions of the letterhead. The name and logo are covered in the top and the address, phone number, fax number and website are given at the bottom.

Letterheads have the potential to create a favourable impression and hence much thought and effort should go into their design and selection. The colour and quality of paper, the size of the letterhead, the types and fonts used and the spacing are all carefully decided. Such is the importance of the letterhead that some businesses even seek the assistance of advertising agencies or other such specialists in designing their letterheads. A good letterhead not only informs, but also impresses. If the letterhead is the first introduction of the business, one must ensure that it is done well.

When the letterhead does not give the full address or the exact place from where the letter is emanating, the letter writer will have to incorporate these details himself. The writer should mention specifically the branch, the zone, the section and the department from which the letter is emanating. In its absence, if the business is a large multi-branch, multi-department and multidivision establishment, the receiver of the letter will have difficulty in knowing the exact source of the letter and may fail to respond. In practice, this keeps happening quite frequently in large

organizations and people keen to respond will have to waste much time and effort in finding out from which branch, office, division or department the letter has been sent. Too many details, thoughtlessly placed on the letterhead rob the elegance out of it. On the other hand, not furnishing relevant details makes the letterhead an understatement or inadequate. It is essential to strike a proper balance between the two.

Reference Line

Business letters have reference details which help in clearly tracing the letter to its source and context. When the business is large, in terms of functions and customers covered, it becomes necessary to compartmentalize the activities into different regions and functions. A separate file can be maintained for each customer. Reference details usually consist of abbreviations, letters and numbers. They may also carry the initials of the person drafting the letter or maintaining the file. The reference line helps both ways. On the one hand it helps the letter writer or anyone else within the organization to know the exact context in which the letters were written, and makes it easy to relate it to the specific context on receipt of the reply. On the other hand, it also helps the receiver of the letter to make out the exact source and context of the letter and helps the receiver to respond.

Each organization or business would have normally evolved its own reference pattern and the business letter writer has to become familiar with the method followed. In the absence of such reference particulars, the business will have to spend considerable time in relating it to the exact file even after it reaches the branch or department concerned. Not taking any chance on this, some organizations make it a point not only to mention the reference number but also request the recipient of the letter to 'Please quote this reference number in all future correspondence.'

The originating reference number of a letter for any business would be stated thus: 'Our reference number'. Similarly, in any business letter, it would be necessary to refer to the other party's reference details as well.

This is stated as, 'Your reference no. dated '. This may be stated below the subject line or as the first sentence of the body of the letter.

When a particular business letter is part of a series of such communication over a period of time, or part of a protracted correspondence, the letter writer may have to refer to the earlier correspondence, in which case one may have to list out the relevant 'Our letters dated' and 'Your letters dated '. If the relevant letters are too many, instead of referring to all such letters the letter writer may state, 'Please refer to our earlier correspondence on the subject, resting with our letter dated '.

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Date Line

The date line follows or stays close to the reference line and clearly mentions the date, month, and the year of the letter. The date is mentioned in many ways—22.05.2017 or 22 May 2017 or May 22, 2017. The most appropriate way of stating the date would be the second one, i.e., 22 May 2017 for its lack of ambiguity. It is worth noting that the sequencing of date, month and the year, when written only in figures, varies from country to country. In the United Kingdom, like it is in India, the date, month and the year are written in that order, viz., 22.5.2017. In the United States of America, however, the practice is to write the month first and then the date and the year. For example 12 May 2017 is written as 5.12.2017. In view of these different practices, writing the date as 22 May 2017 ensures that there is no misreading of the date of the letter. To ensure elegance, it is also appropriate that writing the day in letters—ninth or eighteenth—and using abbreviations for months—Feb or Apr—are avoided.

Inside Address

Inside address refers to the addressee or the person to whom the letter is addressed. It may be an individual, a functionary, a group or an institution. The letter may be addressed by name or by designation. The inside address need not give the full postal address which has to be necessarily furnished outside. It is generally restricted to the name and/or the designation, the department and the office, since this position is well recognized. The word 'to' may be avoided for greater elegance. Another place normally used for inside address is the bottom of the letter, on the left side at the end of the letter. When the letter is addressed by name, care should be taken to mention the correct initials, name and surname as the individual would like to be addressed. Please take due care in writing the correct name, for that is the least that the letter writer owes to the addressee. If the letter writer does not make due effort to ascertain and mention the correct name of the addressee, it amounts to indifference and discourtesy and qualifies as a bad letter. Spell the name correctly, for it makes the reader or the addressee much more responsive. Mr Jagdish should not be mentioned as Mr Jagdeesh or vice versa. Mrs Rajashree cannot be addressed as Mrs Rajashri. Same is the case with the surnames and initials. If it is Banerji do not change it to Bannerjee or vice versa. In good business letter writing, it is very essential to write the name exactly as the person spells it. If the person has a title such as Professor, Doctor, Father, Revered, Justice, Captain or Brigadier the same is to be correctly stated. When there is no title, Mr or Shri is commonly used for men and Mrs, Miss, Smt. or Kumari, as the case may be, is used for ladies. Ms is used when one is not sure of the marital status of the lady who is being addressed. The plural of Mr is Messers, which is used in addressing partnerships and groups. Likewise, the designation of the person, whenever mentioned, should be proper.

One should be particularly careful when addressing letters to dignitaries like the President, the Governor, the Chancellor, the Ambassador, the Pontiff or to religious heads. The appropriate title such as His Excellency, His Highness or His Holiness will have to be used after ascertaining the same from the appropriate authority. Many such exalted offices will have what are known as protocol officers. Any mistake in addressing the person inside the letter certainly distracts the impact of an otherwise well-drafted letter.

Attention Line

Attention line usually appears on the right side of the inside address and is relevant when the letter is addressed to a designation, to the group or to a firm. The attention line draws the attention of the specific person to the contents of the letter. There is no need for an attention line when the letter is addressed to a specific person. Attention line usually reads, 'Kind attention of Mr so and so.' The attention line does the important function of ensuring that the letter reaches the particular person whose response is essential.

Salutation

Salutation is a must for every letter. It relates the letter to the reader. It can take many forms such as

'Dear Sir' or 'Dear Madam' or 'Dear Mr so and so' or

'Dear Shri so and so' or 'Dear Mrs so and so' as the case may be.

When the letter is addressed to an organization or a group, the salutation is in the plural form, i.e., Dear Sirs. When the status of the person is high and additional respect is intended to be conveyed, 'Dear' is omitted and the salutation is Sir or Madam.

Expert Speak: "Dear" is Still Dear

The long-penned salutation "Dear" appears to be headed for extinction, thanks in part to the proliferation of informal communication like email, the Wall Street Journal reports. Even one spokesperson for a member of Congress, who tries to keep her communications for the press at the "utmost and highest level of professionalism," won't use "dear" because it's "too intimate," she says. What does she use instead? "Hey, folks." Some others use "good morning," "hi," "hey" or "to whom it may concern," depending upon whom they are addressing.

Some etiquette experts, however, insist that such salutations "lack polish." And business experts recommend keeping "dear" in formal communications. Says one, "we don't use dear because someone is dear to us, but because we understand the standards of business writing and recognize the standards of intelligent business people." "I find that I am most likely to start a letter with 'dear' exactly because I have never met the person," Chris Allison, an international trade analyst, said.

(Source: Bangalore Mirror, 8.11.2011, quoting Wall Street Journal)

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Although in our Internet age, “dear” is considered too intimate by some, and too formal by others, the student of communication should note that this salutation is still the most appropriate one for all formal written business letters.

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Communication Clue: Dear or No Dear

In business writing, since long, the use of ‘Dear’ in starting business letters has been widely accepted. Accordingly, over the years, text books have averred that the business letters should start with ‘Dear Sir’ or ‘Dear Madam’. Of late, however, the use of ‘Dear’ in non-personal writing has become controversial. There are suggestions for dropping the prefix ‘Dear’ from business correspondence and make it plain Sir or Madam, as the case may be.

Instead of taking a rigid stand, it is better that we use our discretion and use what the context approves. One should not deviate from time-tested practices just because of some reports.

Subject Line

After the salutation, the next part of the letter is the subject. The subject of the message is stated clearly and boldly at the centre of the letter. This helps to draw and focus the attention of the reader on the specific subject or topic or area which the letter covers. The subject should be stated clearly yet briefly, i.e., in a few words. Often the receiver of the letter looks at the subject and decides as to how important or urgent its contents are for him. A skilled letter writer learns to state the subject in a manner that attracts attention. The subject should fairly reflect the essence of the letter. Furthermore, since this particular position in a letter is meant for the subject line, mentioning ‘subject’ may be avoided to ensure greater elegance. Where appropriate, the subject itself may be mentioned in distinct letters.

Message

The message is the body of the letter which comprises the opening line and the message to be conveyed. The message is organized into appropriate paragraphs in order to convey thoughts sequentially. The paragraphs are so designed as to cover related thoughts and facts. The opening line usually starts with an acknowledgement or introduction. It may draw reference to earlier correspondence, if any. The opening line or the introductory paragraphs endeavour to put the message in perspective. In the next paragraph or paragraphs, as the case maybe, the message of the relevant communication is dealt with. It is important to note that the message is the essence of communication and the very reason for writing the letter. The length of the message would vary depending upon the thoughts and details which the letter writer wishes to convey. The message is the crux or core of the letter and all other features are embellishments or accompaniments. The message of the letter, in other words, is usually the content or subject of the communication. The letter is written because the message has to be conveyed.

Closing Line

The closing line paragraph is very important for the letter. It should sum up the message and emphasize the action intended. Good writers take pains to make the closing line as effective as possible.

The complimentary closing line comes after the message and before the signature. It is 'Yours faithfully' or 'Yours sincerely' or 'Faithfully yours' or 'Sincerely yours' as the case may be. When the salutation is 'Dear Sir' or 'Dear Madam', the closing line is 'Yours faithfully', and when the salutation is 'Dear Shri' or 'Dear Mrs', the closing line is 'Yours sincerely'. It is also common to see the closing line ending with plain 'Cordially' or 'Sincerely', omitting Yours. The business writer should choose the style appropriate to the context.

The complimentary closing line is followed by the signature. Every letter must end with a signature. The signature gives authenticity to the message. An unsigned letter is usually of little significance. Unsigned letters are deficient and the addressee may not act upon them. Official letters also carry the designation of the person below the signature.

Postscript

Postscript or P.S. is an afterthought. Sometimes, however, a postscript is used by a letter writer to re-emphasize a particular point in the message. It is an additional remark that comes at the end of a letter, after the signature. For example, as a postscript to the letter, she may add, "P.S. I will write to you again soon".

Some of the other parts or related aspects of the letter are enclosures or annexure, continuation page, spacing, folding, outside address, envelopes and window covers. These too, call for adequate attention in order to ensure the elegance of the letter. Enclosures contain related relevant information and accompany the letters. The reference to the enclosures is made at the end of the letter—Encl: 2 or Encl: Copy of draft agreement or in the body of the letter appropriate to the message— (Please see annexure 1) or (Please refer to the table enclosed). Reference to the continuation of the matter in the next page is indicated for greater clarity. The spacing of the letter is important in terms of ensuring elegance and making the letter attractive. Spacing should be such that there is neither crowding of sentences nor undue gaps in between. When the letter extends over several pages, it is essential that all the page numbers are clearly mentioned and appropriately stapled. Quite often, seemingly elementary aspects are overlooked—the stapling or pasting is done so badly that one has to struggle to open the letter intact or the enclosure which is mentioned in the letter is left out. One can bring in considerable imaginativeness in letterheads, envelopes, colour of the type, spacing and page presentation. While commonly accepted and widely followed positions of various parts are stated in the foregoing paragraphs, it is pertinent to reiterate that a skilful letter writer can bring in variety and flexibility in

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approach without sacrificing the principles. Good letters do stand out and gain attention.

Communication Clue: Check Before You Send

Don't ever send any letter or written message in business without re-reading it. Make sure that your words convey precisely what you want to convey. Ensure the correctness of name, address, content, and signature, enclosure, etc. Inadvertent omissions and mistakes can cause embarrassment and damage.

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Good Business Letters—A Checklist

Good Business Letters have to have good appeal, appropriate content, proper style, clear impact and keen review and editing.

APPEAL: Is the letter appealing? – quality paper, good font, proper margins and alignment and short paragraphs.

CONTENT: Is the content appropriate, adequate and clear?

STYLE: Is the message simple, direct and concise?

IMPACT: Is the letter audience-focused and timely? Does it achieve the writer's objective? Does it create goodwill?

EDITING: Have we ensured that there are no grammatical, punctuation and spelling mistakes? Is the letter well organized and the matter logically presented?

LANGUAGE: Is the language reader-friendly? Have we used simple, familiar and precise words and phrases?

Layout of a Business Letter

These days there is a tendency to adopt a friendly informal style. However, one should follow an established type or form to avoid inconvenience, confusion and wastage of time. The company's in-house style includes rules on the layout of its business letters. A proper layout also gives the letter a formal look.

For most business letters single line spacing is used as this gives the letter a compact look. In case the letter is very short one may need to use double spacing. There are various styles of layouts available for business letters. In different forms there are different systems of indentation followed. The various styles include:

- (i) Fully indented style
- (ii) Semi indented style
- (iii) Fully blocked style
- (iv) Modified blocked style

Fully indented style

This style has become old fashioned and is being fast replaced by other styles. Each paragraph appears prominently in this type of layout. This style is at times

found cumbersome because of its numerous indentations. It has the following characteristics

- (i) The name, address and paragraphs of the body are five spaces indented.
- (ii) The letter is typed in single line spacing.
- (iii) The subject heading is two line spacing below the salutation which is three line spacing below the inside name and address.
- (iv) The paragraphs are separated by double line spacing.
- (v) The complimentary close begins at the centre of the typing line and the typed signature and designation follow ten spaces and five spaces as is determined depending on the length of the two.
- (vi) The inside address is offset to give the letter a balance.

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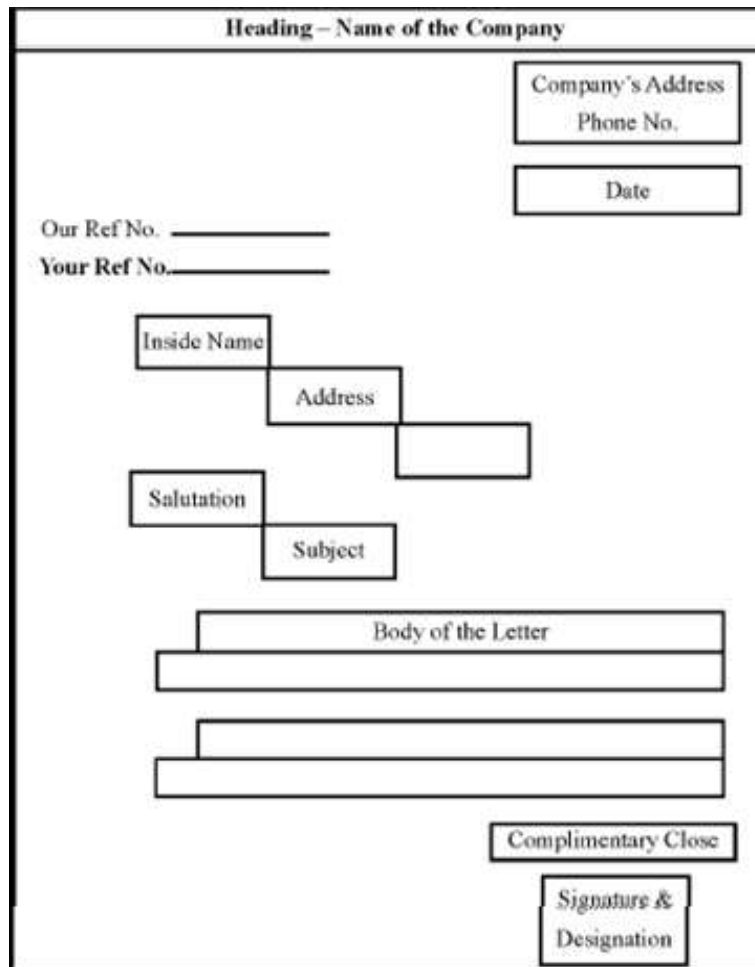


Fig. 7.1 Fully Indented Business Letter Format

Semi-indented style

This is a modified version of the fully indented style. It has the following characteristics:

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- (i) The inside name and address does not have any indentation and is in a block form.
- (ii) The complimentary close and designation are typed evenly across the centre of the typed line. However sometimes they are placed on the right hand side.
- (iii) This style provides a neat and compact look because of the block form of name and address.

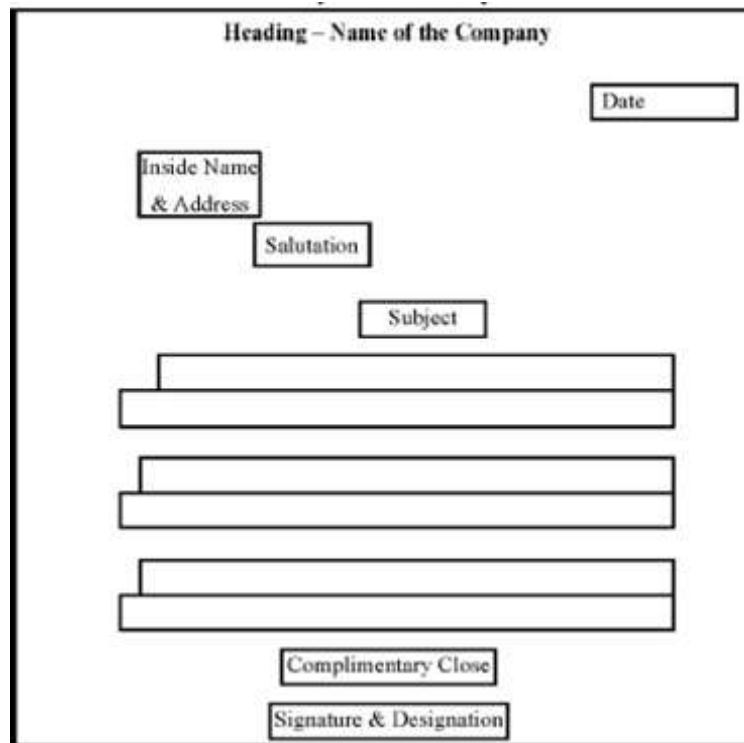


Fig. 7.2 Semi-Indented Business Letter Format

Fully blocked style

This is a modern style and is most commonly used. Earlier the 'indented' format was used for business letters, but as a result of word processing, the 'fully blocked' format is the most commonly used one now, as it saves time setting up tabs and indents and the letters look more neat and tidy. It has the following characteristics:

- (i) All typed entries including date, inside name and address, subject line paragraph, complimentary close, signatures begin at the left-hand margin, form a vertical line down the page.

- (ii) There is a complete absence of punctuation marks from the date, salutation, the complimentary close and the endline of the inside name and address.
- (iii) In some letters, the date and complimentary close are placed towards the right margin so as to give the letter a more balanced appearance. This style is known as semi-blocked style.

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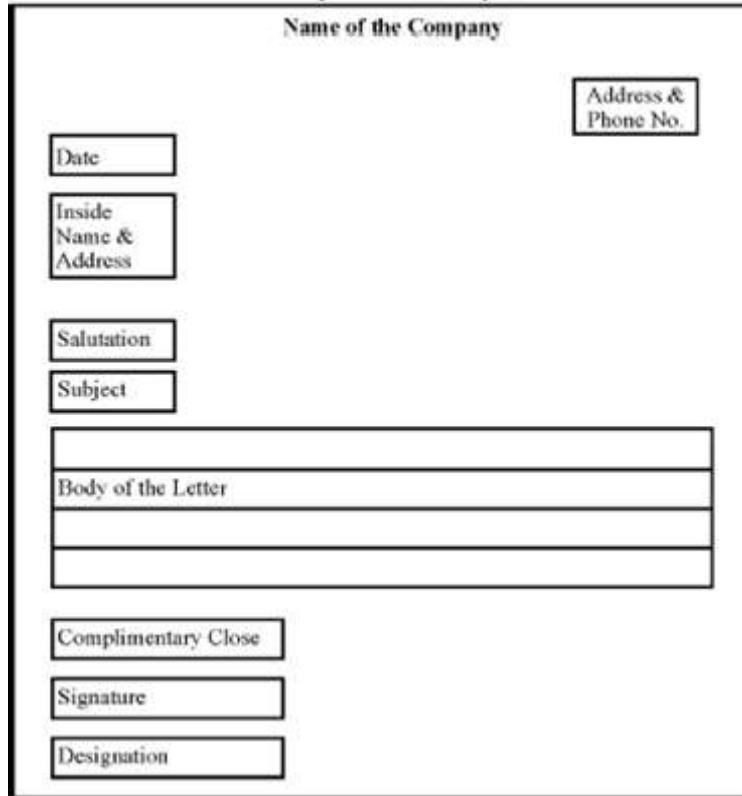


Fig. 7.3 Fully Blocked Single Business Letter

Modified blocked style

This style is similar to the fully blocked style. The difference in this style is that the date, subject heading and the complimentary close signature are placed like semi indented style. There is a treble line spacing between paragraphs to differentiate between paragraphs as paragraphs do not have indentation.

Modified Blocked Style**NOTES**

Fig. 7.4 Modified Blocked Style Business Letter

Form letters

When a number of identical letters are to be sent to many individuals organisations on a regular basis, form letters may be used. These letters are printed and blank spaces are left for filling in the name, date, address and sometimes some other minor details. These type of letters are generally used for acknowledgement of orders, thank you letters, debt collection, etc.

Use of form letters saves time and even a clerk can deal with this kind of correspondence. However these letters lack personal touch and flexibility.

Guidelines for writing effective business letters

Following are some guidelines for writing business letters:

- (i) Business letters, as all other types of correspondence, should follow the structure of a beginning, a middle and an end.
- (ii) The first paragraph would be the introduction and should state the reason for the correspondence.
- (iii) The middle should add detail to the information in the introduction.

- (iv) The ending is the conclusion and should state clearly what action one hopes or expects the recipient to take.
- (v) Words should be effectively used so as to appeal to the level and sensibilities of the recipient.
- (vi) Keep to the point.
- (vii) Be brief without being curt.

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Types of Business Letters

Businesses are of numerous types. They may be big or small, old or new, local or national, public or private, proprietary or partnership, monopolistic or competitive and manufacturing or service units. Nevertheless, by and large, all these businesses have certain common concerns and approaches within any given business environment. They deal with people internally as well as externally. They have their stakeholders in owners, employees, customers and the community. Businesses are also organized into various functional areas such as personnel, marketing, sales, purchase, accounts, administration and secretarial. Business letters are of a wide variety and emanate from all these sources.

Similarly, people who deal with these businesses also correspond with all these departments at some stage or other. To be able to correspond effectively with all these departments under various business situations, one has to familiarize oneself with various types of letters and their features. Although the general principles of good letter writing discussed earlier hold good, the approach will have to vary depending upon the functional area to which the letter relates.

When we refer to various types of business letters and their replies, we are covering letters that move both ways, i.e., letters from business organizations to various other agencies as well as individuals and other agencies to business organizations.

Some common areas of business correspondence or the specific types of letters with which a business letter writer should be well versed with are as follows:

From the Purchase Department:

1. Calling for quotations for products and services.
2. Inviting tenders for jobs and supplies.
3. Asking for samples and drawings.
4. Placing test orders.
5. Placing orders.
6. Status enquiries.
7. Technical bids and commercial bids.

When we refer to tenders, quotations and orders it must be emphasized that there are financial implications. The subject matter and the details of the quotation, tender or order have to be specifically and clearly stated such that there is no ambiguity.

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From the Sales/Marketing Department:

1. Sales letter.
2. Circular letters.
3. Preparation of sales letters with the conditions of sale on the reverse.
4. Preparation of market survey reports.
5. Reports from salesperson to sales executives.
6. Offer of discounts and business concessions.
7. Launch of a new product or scheme.
8. Mailing of company literature.
9. Letter of acknowledgement.

In this category, there are two types of business letters. One set relates to the letters emanating from within the sales departments, or from sales persons and marketing personnel in the field to other departments or to their own executives. The other set of letters relates to letters written by people in sales and marketing to people outside the organization—customers, prospects, agents and distributors and other agencies. It is the latter category that needs particular attention. Letters to the customers and prospects either substitute or supplement personal contacts and as such can make or mar the business promotion efforts. They carry the image of the organization and the people behind the letters. Sales letters should also be elegant and appealing. The presentation should be such that it elicits the attention of the addressee.

From the Accounts Department:

1. Dues and collection letters to various agencies and customers.
2. Follow-up letters.
3. Correspondence with banks.
4. Opening/closing of accounts.
5. Regarding overdrafts, cash credit and current accounts.
6. Stop payment instructions.
7. Request for issue of letters of credit (LCs).
8. Protest for wrongful dishonouring of cheques.
9. Letters relating to interest payments and service charges.

10. Complaint letters covering wrong credits and debits and delays in realization of instruments.
11. Correspondence with insurance companies regarding payment of premium, renewal of policies, claims and settlements.
12. Correspondence with agencies like the Telephone Department, Post and Telegraph authorities, the Provident Fund Office, Income Tax Office and Commercial Tax Department.

By their very nature, these types of business letters should be accurate, brief, simple and to the point. In particular, letters relating to collection of dues and recovery of money need to be drafted with a keen sense of understanding and sensitivity. Such letters should necessarily vary in terms of terseness or intensity and choice of words depending upon the nature of dues, age of dues and other such relevant factors. Some of them have to be polite, some persuasive and some firm.

From the Personnel Department:

1. Calling candidates for written tests.
2. Interview call letters.
3. Offer of appointment.
4. Provisional and final appointment orders.
5. Confirmation in service.
6. Changes in emoluments.
7. Disciplinary matters—show cause notices, charge sheets, calling for explanation, discharge, other punishments and letters of dismissal.
8. Leave and travel sanctions.
9. Training programs and deputation.
10. Reference letters.

When we refer to personnel department letters or employee-related letters, we are indeed discussing a very wide variety of letters. These letters may be general or specific, routine or special, pleasant or unpleasant. Letters from HRD department are normally pleasant or otherwise motivating and training related, whereas letters from the Industrial Relations Department or from the Disciplinary Authority are normally of the none-too-pleasant category. These two are obviously widely different in nature and the letter writer must use the appropriate language and approach. While HRD and training-related letters should carry a positive, encouraging and developmental stance, disciplinary letters will have to carry an authoritarian and even a legal or procedural approach. It is necessary to acquire adequate familiarity with the terms and ensure that there are no inadvertent inadequacies in the letter.

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From the Administration and Secretarial Departments:

1. Change in management.
2. Changes in business hours.
3. Opening and shifting of branches and offices.
4. Invitations and public notices.
5. Correspondence with directors and shareholders.
6. Agenda and minutes of company meetings.
7. Correspondence with shareholders and debenture holders pertaining to dividend and interest payments, transfer and transmission of shares.
8. Correspondence with agents and transport companies.
9. Representations to trade associations, chambers of commerce and public authorities.
10. Letter seeking appointments/personal interviews.

Correspondence relating to directors and shareholders and matters concerning company meetings, especially in listed companies and larger organizations, are often handled by qualified company secretaries. The point to be noted here is that such correspondence is generally specialized in nature and will have to be attended in a systematic and organized manner. The business letter writer keen on acquiring such letter-writing skills will have to necessarily understand secretarial functions.

Other Types of Business Communication:

1. Job applications.
2. Preparation of bio data and curriculum vitae.
3. Export- and import-related correspondence.
4. Preparation of bill of exchange, promissory note and hundi.
5. Telegraphic and fax messages.
6. Mild and strong appeals.
7. Correspondence with foreign institutions and agencies.
8. Advertisements of various types—newspapers and print media, hoardings and banners.
9. Press releases.
10. Questionnaires and opinion polls.
11. Legal correspondence.
12. Publicity literature such as brochures and booklets.
13. Newsletters and house journals.
14. Preparation of charts, graphs and stickers.

Letters of Social Significance:

1. Social letters in business.
2. Inviting a guest.
3. Congratulatory letters on achievements.
4. Letters that say ‘Thank you’.
5. Letters of appreciation.
6. Accepting or declining invitations.
7. Condolence letters.
8. Letter of introduction.
9. Goodwill messages.

We have generally listed in the foregoing paragraphs various types of letters and correspondence that emanate from a business on a regular basis. While most of it is routine involving primary level of writing, there are some, as we have noted, which call for specialized and cultivated skills. The objective in listing various types of letters from different departments and functional areas is to give an idea of the expanse of business communication. Like in other areas, in letter writing too, conscious efforts and willingness to learn are a must. A good business letter writer has to appreciate the essential characteristics of each such letter and develop relevant skills.

Instead of providing drafts or models of various types of business letters, we have thought it appropriate to present a fairly comprehensive list of business letters for all occasions. We have also highlighted the significant features and principles to be borne in mind while drafting some letters such as orders and quotations, sales letters, and collection and recovery letters.

Models tend to inhibit learning. Skills are acquired through attentive learning, application and practice. We are also giving in the following paragraphs some more useful tips or guidelines that should help in developing letter-writing skills. Notwithstanding the routine nature of most business correspondence, it is possible, and indeed desirable, to develop variety and style in writing the letters. Letters must have certain intensity or depth depending upon the situation, and it is not possible to bring out such variations in one or two ‘draft models.’ Students and practitioners desirous of improving their skills in letter writing are advised to practice drafting a variety of such letters, i.e., letters for all occasions, taking note of the following additional guidelines and compare them with standard drafts or models available from authentic sources as confidence-building measures.

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Check Your Progress

3. Define a letter.
4. What are the standard parts of a business letter?

**ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS
QUESTIONS**

1. Two deficiencies of a bad letter are lack of clarity and poor use of words.
2. Business letter refers to formal written letter through which business-related issues and information are exchanged with the suppliers, customers, banks, insurance companies and other external parties of the organization.
3. A letter is a permanent and tangible record of a business relationship.
4. The standard parts of a business letter are heading, inside name and address, opening salutation subject, body of the letter, complimentary close, signature and enclosures.

SUMMARY

- Business letters, to be good and effective, must contain certain essentials.
- Business is all about creating goodwill, favourable impressions, attracting attention, creating interest, wooing customers, reaching prospects and building relationships.
- A good business letter can dispel disinformation and create goodwill.
- Business letter refers to formal written letter through which business-related issues and information are exchanged with the suppliers, customers, banks, insurance companies and other external parties of the organization.
- A letter is a permanent and tangible record of a business relationship. It is generally written for enquiry, give information, give instruction, or to persuade the recipient towards the desired action.
- These days there is a tendency to adopt a friendly informal style. However, one should follow an established type or form to avoid inconvenience, confusion and wastage of time.
- When a number of identical letters are to be sent to many individuals organisations on a regular basis, form letters may be used.
- Businesses are of numerous types. They may be big or small, old or new, local or national, public or private, proprietary or partnership, monopolistic or competitive and manufacturing or service units.

KEY WORDS

- **Interview:** An interview is a conversation where questions are asked and answers are given.
- **Deputation:** a group of people appointed to undertake a mission or take part in a formal process on behalf of a larger group.
- **Memos:** At its most basic level, a memorandum can be a handwritten note to one's supervisor. In business, a *memo* is typically used by firms for internal communication, as opposed to letters which are typically for external communication.
- **Notice:** *Notice* is the legal concept describing a requirement that a party be aware of legal process affecting their rights, obligations or duties.

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SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What are the essentials of business letters?
2. Why are business letters important for the organization?
3. List the deficiencies of a bad letter.
4. Write a short note on the layout of business letters.

Long-Answer Questions

1. What is the difference between personal and business letter? Discuss in detail.
2. Explain the structure and format of business letters.
3. What are the various styles of business letters? Discuss.
4. Discuss the different types of business letters.

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UNIT 8 BASIC OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE

NOTES

Structure

- Introduction
- Objectives
- Principles of Precise Writing
- Language and Writing Style of a Memo
- Memorandum
- Circulars and Notices
- Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- Summary
- Key Words
- Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- Further Readings

INTRODUCTION

Business correspondence is an inevitable part of organizations. People in business need to engage in regular correspondence through different forms such as notices, circulars, memos etc. The kind of correspondence one picks depend upon the situation and the party at the receiving end. One needs to be extra cautious while writing any of the writing forms mentioned above. The language, style and tonality of the piece needs to be up to the mark. In most cases, the writing influences business relationships and helps to maintain a rapport in front of the other person or party. Therefore, there are certain points that need to be taken care of while indulging in any kind of business correspondence.

OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss about characteristics of memo
- Recollect the guidelines of writing memo
- Identify the points to remember while writing a notice
- Describe the format and writing style of a circular

PRINCIPLES OF PRECISE WRITING

A précis is a shortened version of a long passage. While writing a précis, one has to take care that the meaning of the original passage has been effectively conveyed.

According to the Oxford dictionary, précis is defined as ‘a summary or abstract of a text or speech’.

NOTES

1. Decide theme of the passage

The main theme of the passage should be found out through careful reading and then main points and ordinary points are found out for giving importance. These things are essential for brief and clear presentation of précis.

2. Avoid reproduction of important sentences

The sentences of original passage cannot be used for précis-writing. Précis-writing is an art of remodeling of sentences without affecting main theme of the original passage.

3. Have brevity and clarity

Brevity is the soul of précis-writing. But, at the same time, clarity should not be given up. Mere deletion or addition of few words of original passage cannot be a précis-writing. Moreover, brevity should not create any ambiguity in the minds of the reader.

4. Reflects the intelligence of the précis-writer

The style of language and words used in the précis-writing indicate the intelligence of the précis writer. In other words, the précis-writing preserved the spirit of the original passage with different words and sentences.

5. Use your own language

The précis-writer should use his/her own language for précis-writing. The writer should not retain any significant phrases or technical terms of the original passage. It means that the writer should use his/her own sentences for précis-writing.

6. Avoid direct speech and use indirect speech

The précis-writing is presented in third person point of view. The text of the original passage is presented in direct speech. Now, it is the duty of the précis-writer that he/she should present in indirect speech.

7. Include statistical information

If statistical information are included in the original passage, they can be used in the précis-writing for maintaining quality. If statistical information are excluded, it affects very purpose of précis-writing and convey different meaning.

8. Observe proportion

Original passage is divided into many parts. Each part is dealt with according to importance but not according to length. In this way, objectives of précis-writing are achieved.

9. No comments but conclusion

The précis-writer need not give any comments over the original passage but should give conclusion. It means that the précis-writer need not evaluate the mind of the author but interpret the original passage in a meaningful way.

10. One third of original passage

It is the general practice that the length of precis-writing should be one third of original passage. If so, reader can get full information and do his/her job very effectively.

Language and Writing Style of a Memo

Since a memo is a short, informal report, the following points have to be remembered regarding the language and style that is used:

- **Be concise** – It is important to be brief and to the point, so that the memo does not exceed two pages in length. Make the sentences and paragraphs short, limit each paragraph to five lines or less and use bullet points wherever possible. If you are giving reasons, number them, or put them in separate paragraphs with double line spacing. Otherwise use single line spacing between lines.
- **Use active not passive voice** – As mentioned earlier, use of personal pronouns and active voice is permitted in a memo, unlike a formal report where the passive voice should be used for the sake of objectivity. In other words, it is appropriate to say for example that “Based on **my** experience, **I** feel that the budget is not adequate.”
- **Use simple language** – In an earlier unit, the importance of using simple English was emphasized. Use short, uncomplicated words and avoids trying to impress by using unnecessary jargon and technical terms.
- **Avoid giving too many reasons** – Although it is important to provide a justification when you make a request, or try to persuade someone to do something, do not overdo it. In general, a reader can only absorb a maximum of six or seven reasons at once. Therefore, do not overstate your reasons.
- **Close with a call for action** – Do not leave the reader hanging. If you wish to persuade him to accept your request or recommendation, you must say so clearly, using action words and indicating a time frame or limit. For example, “I would like to discuss this in person with you and get your approval before the end of this week.”

Check Your Progress

1. What is a precise?
2. Mention any two points to be taken care of while writing memo.

MEMORANDUM

A memorandum is a written statement or record, especially one circulated for the attention of colleagues at work. It is principally a means of sharing information

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internally. It relates to a note of something to be remembered and acted upon. The word memorandum came from the Latin word 'memorare' which means to remember. In law, a memorandum means a document recording terms of contract. The plural of memorandum is memorandums or memoranda. It is commonly known by its abbreviation, viz., memo.

A memorandum is a means of inter-office correspondence. Memos are sent within an organization from office to office or department to department. In large organizations, memorandums are sent from head office to regional offices, branches, divisions and so on. Of late, memos are sent using the email and the bulky ones and those inappropriate for email have to be sent as printed copies. Memos are intended to be read and acted upon by executives, branch managers, supervisors and all staff members as and when they are addressed to them. Memos may also be referred to as circulars or inter-office memorandum or spiral communication. Large organizations spread across numerous functional departments and geographical areas regularly issue a variety of memos every day or at frequent intervals. In a large organization like a bank, there are many departments such as personnel, credit, accounts, marketing, international business, planning and so on and all of them communicate with the branches, offices and staff through memos and such other internal communication. Memos are used routinely for making announcements, giving instructions, giving reports and conveying policy decisions.

Memos may be typed or printed and dispatched to the target groups and offices across the country and even abroad. For easy reference, memos are often printed in different colours with different departments using specific colours. With the advent of electronic communication, memos are now being sent across by e-mail and are also put on the internal network or intranet for the use of offices and staff. Large organizations like banks may also differentiate between memos and circulars and use them for specific messages.

It would be difficult to draw a precise distinction between circulars and memos. Both are often identical in approach and reach. Some organizations use circulars as a means of specific, subject-related instruction whereas memos are used to cover events and developments.

Circulars are in the form of instructions or guidelines and are expected to be mandatorily followed. Memos are generally a matter of information. Circulars are of a permanent nature, of long-term relevance and may be modified as and when instructions have to be revised. Memos are generally of short-term relevance. Any such distinction, however, is only a matter of internal arrangement and in most books on business communication published abroad, there are references to memos and no discussion on circulars.

Memos contain vital details of relevance on functional areas and may have to be referred to frequently by the personnel working in the organization. Due to their importance and reference value, memos are often carefully indexed, filed and

preserved, facilitating ready sourcing and reference. Although memos are like business letters there are some noteworthy differences.

Business Letters and Memos—Noteworthy Differences

- Business letters are addressed to outsiders and constitute external communication. Memos are addressed to employees and constitute internal communication.
- Business letters are generally formal in nature, whereas memos are more informal.
- Business letters are sent out on a company letterhead whereas memos need not be written and sent on the letter head.
- Business letters should necessarily have inside addresss, salutation and complimentary closing.
- Business letters have to be necessarily signed whereas memos do not carry any signature.
- Business letters should not use unfamiliar jargon whereas memos can use internally accepted jargon and specialized terms.
- Business letters should start by providing the context and preparing the reader whereas the memos can come straight to the subject and come to the heart of the matter. In internal communication, there is a presumption that the reader knows the basic facts.
- Business letters should aim at building goodwill and relationship besides sharing information, whereas memos are focused on sharing information and communicating for action.
- Business letters are largely addressed to individuals whereas memos are largely addressed to groups, teams or a large number of recipients. Memos formally addressed to individuals, however, should be typed/printed and signed.

In writing a good memo, the following points need particular attention.

Take time to plan your memos

Any office memorandum constitutes a piece of official communication. There are many types of memos. Some are aimed at providing information. Some are aimed at eliciting feedback or other relevant details. Some may talk about goals, objectives and action points. In that sense, they may be seeking specific action. Memos are sent across to inform, motivate, persuade, educate, and galvanize people, groups and teams into achieving results.

Given such varied objectives, the memo writer should sit down and plan out the contents of the memo before actually drafting it. He or she should collect relevant information, figures and details which have to be shared with the readers.

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The memo-writer should be clear about his target groups—an employee or branch manager or sales personnel or unit heads or executives. The contents/language and the tone should be appropriate to the targeted readers of the memo. The memo should have the right tone and emphasis. The memo-writer should also decide about the length of the memorandum keeping in view the details to be shared. The memorandum may have to have some relevant annexures and tables or charts, if need be. It may have to make some references to the earlier memos or other relevant communication. All this involves proper planning.

The memo writer should also plan how to reach out to the target groups. Memos can be sent out in a typed format and if the number is large, sufficient copies of the memo may have to be printed. In this case, the writer has to keep in mind the time taken for getting the memo copies printed and the actual travel time before the memo despatched from the office reaches the recipient. Memos often carry a sense of urgency and as such should reach the addressee expeditiously or within the shortest possible time. The advent of electronic channels of communication has made it possible for the memo to reach out instantaneously. That is why organizations today resort to email or internal network or company website to convey internal communication.

Drafting the memorandum

Memos are drafted keeping in view the context of the communication as well as the recipient of the message. Memos are written in the second person with a direct approach. Every effort is made to involve the recipient and the word ‘you’ is used often. The message is conveyed in clear terms using a simple and direct language. There is no need to spend time on niceties like a salutation (Dear sir) or a complimentary close (Yours faithfully, etc.) or a signature at the end of the letter. Since the memo is meant to be read by colleagues within the office, the writing should be to express, and not to impress. The tone should be neither too casual nor too formal.

Examples of good communication—memos

Given below are some examples of memos used in business organizations.

Example 1.

To: All Departmental Heads in Head Office

From: General Manager, General Administration, Head Office

Date: 11 Jan 2018

Subject: Meeting with Courier Agencies

A meeting has been scheduled at 11.00 A.M on Monday, 15 Jan 2018 in the Committee Room on First Floor to meet with the short listed courier agencies and discuss the modalities of cost effective and timely despatch and delivery of out bound mail and merchandise.

You are requested to brief me about the despatch needs of your department and your experience in dealing with the short listed agencies well in advance.

*Basic Official
Correspondence*

Attachment: List of participating courier agencies

Example 2.

Superior Bank Memo 16/2018
Personnel and HR Department 11 February 2018
Mumbai

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To: All Branches and Offices in India

Subject: Dearness Allowance

The confirmed All India Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers (Base 1960-100) for the quarter ended December 2017 is as follows:

October 2017 3378.23

November 2017 3378.23

December 2017 3355.41

All our branches and offices are advised to be guided by this memo while effecting salary payments to our staff for the months of February and March 2018.

Personnel Officer

Example 3.

Premier Motors Ltd.

Commercial Vehicles Department, New Delhi.

Memo 5/ 2018 – 8 February 2018

To: All Showrooms in the Eastern Region

Subject: Special Discount for Commercial Vehicles for March 2018

The Company has decided to offer a special discount of 2 per cent on the sale price of various types of Light Commercial Vehicles (LCVs) sold at all our Showrooms during March 2018.

The applicable price for different categories of LCVs before and after the 2 per cent discount is listed in the annexure to this memo.

All our Showrooms should note that this special discount of 2 per cent will be applicable ONLY TO CASH SALES made during March 2018 and will not be extended beyond this period.

All our Branch Heads are requested to prominently display the Special Rates on their Notice Boards and take full advantage of this special offer in maximising the sale of LCVs during March 2018.

Branch Heads are also requested to send the details of LCVs sold during March by FAX on 1st April 2018, without fail.

Director – Sales

Attachment: List of Special Rates for LCVs

Copy: General Manager, Eastern Region.

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Memos, as we have already noted, often reach out to a large section of people spread across the organization. Since memos are taken seriously by people to whom they are addressed and also acted upon as directed therein, every care should be taken in drafting and despatching memos. Quite often, memos are not drafted by the person under whose authority they are issued. Hence, if any miscommunication occurs on account of the negligence or callousness of the person drafting the memo, the authority or the department issuing the memo would have to face considerable embarrassment. The drafting of memos, especially the important ones, is entrusted to persons with good communication skills. Memos should necessarily possess the usual characteristics of good written communication such as clarity, brevity, cogency, completeness and readability. In view of their importance, quite often the draft of memo passes through several levels or tiers for approval. The method of despatch is also decided keeping in view the target sections and the urgency of the message. Sometimes memos refer to several previous ones on the subject making the comprehension and access difficult for the reader. It would be necessary to bring out a comprehensive memo to facilitate easy and all-in-one-place reference. Sometimes instruction, directives or guidelines issued by external agencies such as government organizations, regulatory bodies, legal entities, etc., may have to be reproduced through the memos. In doing so, care should be taken to clarify the message in terms of internally understood terms, phrases and abbreviations.

Drafting of office memos thus calls for good communication skills. When the subject matter dealt with is complex or specialized in nature, such as clarifying legal aspects or announcing the features of a new product or a pricing policy, all relevant facts and figures will have to be covered in an organized manner. There is often a need to give examples and instructions and also append relevant annexures so as to amplify and clarify the message. Memos carrying ambiguity, inconsistency or incomplete details may end up creating confusion and result in avoidable clarifications being sought by the readers. On the other hand, a clearly worded, logically consistent, unambiguous and complete memo gets well understood, facilitating prompt response.

Readability is indeed an important pre-requisite not only for internal memos, but also, more particularly, for all communication addressed to customers and the public. As noted in a box item earlier, organizational literature often sent to the customers, prospects and the public is often more difficult than standard levels of readability. One area where this is particularly evident is financial literature such as the prospectus. In this regard, communication experts refer to the following example of a Mutual Fund Prospectus.

Check Your Progress

3. State the definition of memorandum.
4. Mention any one difference between memos and circulars.

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CIRCULARS AND NOTICES

Office circulars are meant to convey the same information to a large number of people. Such information is usually of general nature and not confidential. The subject of the circular must be mentioned at the top.

Some of the purposes for which circulars are used include:

- To emphasize certain aspects of office conduct
- To intimate changes in working hours
- To inform employees about changes in rules

Sample Office Circular: Given below is an office circular informing employees about change in office timing.

XYZ Engineering Works

Ghaziabad

Circular No 21/20 Date: March 15, 2007

Subject: Change in office timings

This is to inform all that from April 1, 2007, the office timings will be as follows:

8:30 a.m. -12:30 a.m.	Morning session
12:30 a.m. – 1:30 a.m.	Lunch
1:30 a.m. – 5:30 a.m.	Evening session

Employees are expected to strictly adhere to these office hours

BK Mittal

Personnel Officer

Notice

As the name suggests notices are written messages which are meant to be noticed by a number of people. Generally notices are categorized as tools of internal communication, i.e. they are used for communication within the organization. However this need not always be the case. Notices are also used for external communication and such notice may take the form of Public Notice, Auction Notice, Tender Notice, etc. The one feature which all notices have in common is that they reach out to a number of people for whom they are meant.

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Notices for internal office communication

Notices are widely used in offices to disseminate information. Mostly they are used for downward communication. Notices are generally pinned on a notice board or a wall and are a popular way of effectively reaching out to the persons for whom they are meant. Notices follow more or less a standardised format though the format may vary slightly from organization to organization. While drafting notices one needs to be very careful. Persuasiveness and tactfulness ensure that they are acted upon and add to their effectiveness. Notices need to be precise, clear, polite and simple. Notices need to adopt a requesting tone rather than a commanding or threatening tone. Notices are mostly signed by the concerned person.

A sample notice is given below

XYZ Engineering Works

Ghaziabad

NOTICE

This is to inform that a lecture is being organised at the company auditorium at 2:00 pm on June 26, 2007. The topic of the lecture is 'Effective Time Management' and the speaker is Prof SK Murthy from IIM Lucknow. All are requested to be seated by 1:55 pm. The lecture will be followed by refreshments.

KM Shah

June 25, 2007

Notices for external communication

Public notices, notices to invite tenders and bid, auction notices, etc. are notices which are used to communicate with people and groups outside the organization. These notices are a regular feature in all newspapers.

A public notice is an important announcement giving information to the public. It should essentially possess the following characteristics:

- (i) The writing style should be such that it catches attention.
- (ii) It should contain complete information covering all aspects.
- (iii) The language should be clear and precise.
- (iv) It should have a suitable heading indicating the subject matter.

In his book *Business Communication*, KK Sinha has summarized the key points to be considered while drafting tenders, bids or auction notices. Tender notices are invitations to contractors giving details of construction or engineering works to be done and asking interested parties to submit estimates for the completion of the works. Invitation for bids ask suppliers to send in estimates for supplying specific specialized goods or services detailed in the bidding document.

- (i) All such notices must clearly state the purpose for which they have been sent to the press.
- (ii) Both active voice and passive voice are used in drafting these notices. However, as there is no personal involvement passive voice is more prominent. It is important to note that the notice speaks for the organization and not for a person.
- (iii) Sometimes the tender notice begins with active voice, for example, ONGC invites sealed tenders.....
- (iv) All details of the works to be completed, items to be supplied, articles/ materials to be auctioned must be clearly stated.
- (v) The terms and conditionsofbusinessrequirement ofthe organization, eligibility requirements of the applicant must be clearly laid down in the notice.
- (vi) As far as possible the notice must be brief. Nothing important should, however, be left out.

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Sample Public Notice for grant of environmental clearance to Western Coalfields Limited for its expansion programme

Western Coalfields Ltd.

(A subsidiary of Coal India Limited)

NOTICE

Sub: Environmental Clearance for expansion of Durgapur Rayatwari Underground Coal mine Project (increase in production from 0.30 MTPA to 0.92 MTPA)of Western Coalfields Limited located in Village, Tahsil & District Chandrapur (Maharashtra)

Ministry of Environment and Forests has accorded Environmental Clearance for expansion of Durgapur Rayatwari Underground Coal mine Project (increase in production from 0.30 MTPA to 0.92 MTPA & increase in lease area from 529.29 ha to 779.29 ha) of Chandarpur Area of Western Coalfields Limited. Copy of clearance letter is available with the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board and may also be seen at the website of the Ministry of Environment and Forests at <http://envfor.nic.in>

Sample Tender Notice

Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited

(A Govt. of India Enterprise)

Office of the General Manager Telecom

Wardha –442 006

Tender Notice

Sealed tenders are invited by the General Manager Telecom, Wardha , on behalf of Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited, for Cleaning and Upkeepment for departmental telephone exchange/ administrative office building and premises in Wardha Telecom district. Last date of issue of tender form; upto 1400h of 16.7.2007. for further details, kindly visit our website www.mahatastra.bsnl.co.in or contact on telephone number 07212-253131.

A.G.M. (Administration and Planning)O/o G.M.T. ,Wardha

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Check Your Progress

5. What is the purpose of office circulars?
6. What are notices?

ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. A précis is a shortened version of a long passage.
2. Two points to be taken care of while writing memo are to be concise and use active voice instead of passive voice.
3. A memorandum is a written statement or record, especially one circulated for the attention of colleagues at work.
4. Memos are generally a matter of information. Circulars are of a permanent nature.
5. Office circulars are meant to convey the same information to a large number of people.
6. Notices are written messages which are meant to be noticed by a number of people.

SUMMARY

- A précis is a shortened version of a long passage. While writing a précis, one has to take care that the meaning of the original passage has been effectively conveyed.
- A memorandum is a written statement or record, especially one circulated for the attention of colleagues at work. It is principally a means of sharing information internally.
- A memorandum is a means of inter-office correspondence.

- Memos may be typed or printed and dispatched to the target groups and offices across the country and even abroad.
- Circulars are in the form of instructions or guidelines and are expected to be mandatorily followed.
- Memos are drafted keeping in view the context of the communication as well as the recipient of the message.
- Office circulars are meant to convey the same information to a large number of people. Such information is usually of general nature and not confidential.

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KEY WORDS

- **Annexure:** Annexure is a separate part of a legal agreement, report, etc. that gives extra information.
- **Circular:** A circular is a letter or advertisement which is distributed to a large number of people.
- **Precis:** A *précis* is a summary of a written work, such as an article, book, or other text.

SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What are the principles of precis writing?
2. Write a short note on memorandum.
3. What are the differences between business letters and memos?
4. What is the difference between circulars and memos?

Long-Answer Questions

1. What is precis writing? Discuss its significance in business writing.
2. How important is the language and writing style while writing a memo? Discuss.
3. What are the points to remember while drafting a memo? Explain with the help of examples.
4. How are notices for internal communication different from the notices for external communication?

FURTHER READINGS

NOTES

- Madhukar, R.K. 2018. *Business Communication, 3rd edition*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.
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- Ober, Scot. 2006. *Fundamentals of Contemporary Business Communication*. United States: Houghton Mifflin..
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- Hemphill Davis, Phyllis. 2000. *Business Communication with Writing Improvement Exercises*. United States: Prentice Hall.

BLOCK - III
WRITING A REPORT AND EMAIL

NOTES

UNIT 9 REPORT WRITING

Structure

Introduction
 Objectives
 Writing Reports
 Difference between Business Reports and Engineering Report
 Characteristics of Writing a Good Report
 Different Formats of Reports
 Outline of a Long Report: Combined Format
 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
 Summary
 Key Words
 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
 Further Readings

INTRODUCTION

Writing for some seems to be a difficult task. People fear that what they write will not be worthy to be read by others. This fear prevents them from writing or expressing themselves. As a written document can be preserved for a longer time and can be referred to in future therefore, one usually tends to think that what he/she writes needs to have a certain standard. One should keep in mind that writing is a craft which can be learnt through proper training. No one learns to walk without tripping few times; similarly, writing will never be perfect till we start writing.

It has to be kept in mind that to be an effective writer, one should not only have ideas, but should also know how to put those ideas on paper using proper words and phrases. It is necessary, therefore, that the writer chooses proper words and expressions to formulate coherent sentences to express oneself.

OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the features of a good report
- Discuss the purpose of report writing
- Examine the difference between business report and engineering report
- Identify the guidelines of report writing

WRITING REPORTS

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Reports are an integral part of an organizational activity. Managers are constantly required to submit reports to supervisors and executives to enable them to take informed decisions change policies, etc. Reports are a good way for the management to get a constant and reliable source of information. A report may be defined as a form of systematic presentation of information relating to an event, progress of action or some activity. Reports present facts for the interested reader. More specifically, business reports may be defined as an orderly and objective communication of factual information that serves a business purpose.

The characteristics of business reports can be briefly summarised as follows:

- Generally submitted to a higher authority
- Communicated upwards in an organisation
- Logically organised
- Objective in tone
- For a limited audience
- Both short and long

Purpose of business reports

A report carries information from someone who has it to someone who needs it. It is a basic management tool used in decision making. Reports may be used to provide information (information reports), analyse information and give suggestions (analytical reports), request for action or give recommendations to initiate action. Thus, in a business context reports serve the following purposes:

- Reports give factual information to the management.
- Reports record facts and results of investigations or surveys for future reference.
- Reports are useful tools for providing shareholders, customers, creditors and general public with useful information.
- Based on detailed investigations, reports give recommendations which can be used in future.

Importance of reports

1. **Conveyor of information:** Reports serve as conveyors of information. They provide necessary information to various parties who need it.
2. **Review and evaluate operations:** Reports help management to review and evaluate operations continuously. They help in coordinating the activities of the different departments.

3. **Decision making:** A report aims at providing correct, objective and suitable information to persons who require it so that correct decisions can be taken at his end.
4. **Better coordination:** Reports aim to promote common understanding of information between different groups in the organisation, thus ensuring better coordination.
5. **Tools for measuring performance:** Reports are useful tools for measuring departmental performance. The operational data from various departments helps management to assess performance of each department.
6. **Help in making desirable changes:** Reports help in making and implementing desirable changes to business policies.

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Essentials of a good business report

For a business report to serve effectively the purpose for which it is intended, it is essential that it possess certain essentials. Following are some of the characteristics of a good business report:

- (i) *Accuracy:* The information presented in a report should be as accurate as possible, because on it are based several important decisions and actions. While preparing reports make sure to double check figures to ensure accuracy.
- (ii) *Clarity:* Business reports should be clear and completely understandable. The paragraphs should be logically presented with suitable headings.
- (iii) *Consistency:* The report should be consistent with the main theme and should not deviate. It should serve the purpose for which it is meant. Irrelevant information should not be included. At the same time useful information should not be left out while preparing the report.
- (iv) *Objectivity:* Objectivity involves freedom from personal prejudices. There should be objectivity in observation, collection of related facts and writing the report.
- (v) *Completeness:* The report should be complete in all respects and free from ambiguity.
- (vi) *Brevity:* Time is precious both for the writer of the report and the reader. Therefore reports should not be too lengthy. They need to be brief and to the point, excluding all irrelevant details.
- (vii) *Simplicity:* Reports are not a test of your command over literary aspects of language. A report should be simple and easily understandable and free from too much of jargon.
- (viii) *Appearance:* The arrangement, organisation, format and layout of a report should be pleasing and eye-catching as far as possible. It should be grammatically correct and free from typographical errors.

- (ix) *Reliability*: A report should be reliable. Objectivity and accuracy of information contribute towards the reliability of a report.
- (x) *Timeliness*: To be useful and purposeful a report should reach the reader well in time, otherwise it is of no use.

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Types of Reports

Reports can be in both oral and written forms, though written reports are preferred.

In this section we will be dealing with written reports. Reports can range from one page to those running into several volumes. In all cases reports should be clear, concise and objective in their tone as decisions are based on them.

Advantages of Written Reports

- Oral reports can be denied at any time. Written reports can be referred to again and again which is not the case with oral reports.
- Oral reports tend to be vague as compared to written reports. Written reports can be transferred from person to person without the risk of distortion.

We will classify reports into the following types:

- Informational reports and analytical reports
- Routine or periodic reports and Special reports
- Informal and Formal reports

Informational reports and analytical reports

Informational reports only contain information in the form of facts and data. They do not contain any analysis or suggestions based on the information presented.

On the other hand, analytical reports contain both facts as well as analysis of facts and conclusions. Recommendations/ Suggestions based on the analysis may also be included in such a report.

Routine or periodic reports and special reports

Routine reports are submitted to the management at regular intervals by individuals, sections, departments, etc to help the management control administration effectively. These are the most common type of business reports. These may be submitted on a daily, weekly, quarterly, monthly basis. These are generally meant for internal consumption by the organisation and are not public documents. The length of these reports may vary from a single page to about ten pages. These include budgets, monthly accounts, cost reports, production reports, etc.

Special reports are prepared to deal with problems or issues specifically developed. They are specifically asked for by the concerned authority and are custom prepared to suit the particular purpose.

Informal and formal reports

Informal reports do not follow any fixed form or procedure for submission. They are prepared according to the convenience and requirement of the organisation. The term 'informal reports' does not mean the style and language of the report is informal. It only indicates simplicity in terms of structure or format.

The following are some of the forms these reports may take:

- (i) *Short reports*: These reports are presented in a simple letter format. They are less than five pages in length. The presentation style of such reports is kept simple and facts are reported.
- (ii) *Progress reports*: These reports contain information regarding the progress of a particular work or project.
- (iii) *Staff reports*: These reports are prepared to resolve particular staff problems.
- (iv) *Justification report* : These reports are used to justify a particular recommendation or a course of action.

When a report is prepared in the prescribed form and is presented according to an established procedure, it is called a formal report. Formal reports have a uniform structure and format which is specific to the organisation. Generally formal reports have the following characteristics:

- Longer than an informal report
- More thorough and often based on a detailed examination of a problem
- Formal in terms of format, structure, language.

Formal reports may be

- (i) *Statutory reports*: These are reports which are prepared as a mandatory requirement by law. The format of such a report is as prescribed by the concerned body.
- (ii) *Non statutory reports*: There is no legal binding for preparation and submission of these reports but these are asked for by the management to facilitate the various managerial functions.

Writing a report

A report should be drafted keeping in mind the following points:

- (i) Purpose of the report
- (ii) Time within which it is to be submitted
- (iii) Level of authority for which it is intended

The procedure for report writing includes the following steps:

- (i) Determination of the purpose of the report.

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- (ii) Identify the audience who will be reading the report: Collect information regarding their expertise, hierarchical positions, educational background, etc.
- (iii) Collect the data necessary to prepare the report.
- (iv) Identify and classify the data.
- (v) Outline the report.
- (vi) Prepare the final report.
- (vii) Present the report.

Structure of a report

A report consists of the following parts:

- (i) Title page- may include all or some of these subject, author, date of completion, file reference, confidentiality
- (ii) Table of Contents
- (iii) Acknowledgements
- (iv) Executive Summary(sometimes called 'Abstract' or 'Synopsis' if the report is academic in nature)
- (v) Body of the report
 - (a) Introduction
 - (b) Procedures/method
 - (c) Analysis & Findings
 - (d) Conclusion
 - (e) Recommendations
- (vi) Appendices
- (vii) Bibliography

Executive Summary

- Very important part of a report.
- Extends from a paragraph to two pages in length.
- Should include a bit of all components of the report.
- No one particular part of the report should dominate
- Written after the entire report is complete.
- Gives a gist/summary of what is there in the report.
- Is an independent document and may be circulated to people who do not have the time to read the entire document.
- Should not be a cut and past activity from the main report.
- It should be written afresh.

- It should also be very accurate as decisions might be taken based on just the executive summary.

Body of the report

The various parts of the body of the report are discussed briefly

Introduction: Gives a brief background to the report

Procedures/Method: Outlines how the data was collected, observations etc.

Analysis & Findings: The major findings after the analysis of data is presented in an organized, logical and objective form.

Conclusion: It states what the findings have shown objectively. It is different from an executive summary and should not be confused with it. They are generally written in the past tense.

Recommendations

- Should logically flow from the conclusion.
- Generally expressed in future tense.
- Outlines direct possible course of action.
- No explanation of action is required in the recommendation.

Appendices

- Information that doesn't fit into the text, like charts, data and graphs

Bibliography

- List of references used in the preparation of the report including citations of all websites, books articles
- Consistency should be maintained while citing references
- Listed alphabetically by author's last name
- Various formats are available for bibliographies

Difference between Business Reports and Engineering Report

One of the common forms of communication in business and science is report writing. Writing business and technical reports requires writing and organizational skills, research capabilities and the ability to interpret data and present it in a manner that experts can appreciate yet a layperson can understand.

Business Report Writing

To understand how the business writing style differs from technical writing, you should first clarify what business writing purposes are – this sheds light on the specifics of this area. Experts believe that to be successful, business writing should be highly reader-focused, and its major distinction is in the tone towards the audience. For instance:

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- If you compose a business proposal, here the key emphasis should be made on persuasiveness of your language. Your major purpose is to convince investors or major stakeholders that your idea is worth financing, so persuasion is the ultimate goal. Make a strong focus on facts and figures to show what the value for investors are, be personal enough to show your individual rigor for the project, but at the same time keep it professional enough to show that you are a competent communicator and businessperson.
- If you work on a business memo, then the direct formal voice is mandatory for use. In this way, you will keep to the professional standards of communication and will maintain authority and confidence among colleagues.
- Writing business emails is a substantially different task, since getting a new client or maintaining relationships with an old one requires a professional but warm tone. Here, a balance between an individual approach and professionalism is required, which is often a unique combination mastered only with experience. Be sure to deliver material in a clear and accessible format, remembering that not all clients are technically equipped with your professional vocabulary, but don't oversimplify – this may sometimes sound offensive.

Thus, as you can see, business writing is focused on the purpose of establishing clear, effective, and professional communication with clients and other stakeholders, and is mostly used in companies and organizations. Its specifics depend on whether the audience is internal or external, and the most common types of business writing involve proposal, annual report, white paper, or sales letter writing.

Technical Report Writing

This type of writing is also associated with a clear, formal approach to composition, which it shares with business writing in many aspects. Nevertheless, it differs in terms of purpose: the overwhelming portion of technical documents refers to the how-to information, guides and manuals for composition, instructions, data sheets, releases, and the like. Therefore, most experts believe that technical writings are mostly targeted at a much narrower audience, and they should be created with that audience in mind. While business writing often has clear communication in simple words with the client or shareholders, technical documentation is most often targeted at developers and technical specialists rather than end users, so the use of a specific professional vocabulary is acceptable and even desirable in this kind of writing.

Becoming a technical writer is much harder than being a business writer, mainly because of the need to possess not only communication skills, but also a technical degree that certifies your understanding of the terms you use and mechanics of some devices' work that you describe. Overall, as the presented information suggests, the main purpose of a business writer is to persuade the audience, while a technical writer's job is regarded as successful if he or she explains transparently

and competently how to do something, how something works, and what can be done with the help of some device.

Characteristics of Writing a Good Report

- While writing a report, one must read the instructions carefully on the basis of which report is to be prepared. It is like reading a question paper thoroughly before writing an answer in an examination. Instructions set the design and content of the whole structure of the report.
- Next step is to collect appropriate material required including facts and data to prepare a report. Even in a short report, one must plan for the report and give a thought to the supporting document or arguments.
- Then the outline of report is prepared. Once the outline is ready, one has to fill the relevant details.
- After the writing task is done, still much needs to be done. Reviewing and editing is as crucial as writing. Keeping the purpose and reader of a report in mind, review it for the content.
- The next thing is to look for grammar, spelling and expression accuracy and organization of content. Finally the formatting and the report is ready.

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Check Your Progress

1. Define a report.
2. Mention any two characteristics of report.

DIFFERENT FORMATS OF REPORTS

Reports can be of two kinds – short report and long report. A short report can be submitted in a letter or memorandum format whereas a long report can be submitted in a combined structure.

Short Report in a Letter Format

When Mr. Dibakar Mitra of WebIndia Ltd. was working on the idea of opening a New Office at Greater Noida, he assigned the task of finding an appropriate location to Mr. Kripal Singh. Mr. Kripal Singh prepared the following feasibility report and submitted it to Dr. Mitra.

WebIndia Ltd.
Lucknow

No.: WIL.C.O./2011/146

Date: 27 January 2011

Dear Mr. Mitra

NOTES

Subject: Report on Feasibility of an Appropriate Location for New Office at Greater Noida

As per your instructions I, along with two Assistants, have done a survey of around 15 locations at Greater Noida to find out the most feasible location for opening a New Office of our company. On the basis of thorough investigation, we have finalized one location at 5, Institutional Area, Greater Noida. Following are the facts related to the office building:

1. It is spread over an area of 9000 sq. feet, a two storied building with two big halls and seven rooms. The halls can be converted into cabins where staff can sit and meet the clients.
2. Since it is an institutional area, there will not be any problem related to commercial activity.
3. There is a huge common parking space in front of the building which can be utilized when the office becomes functional.
4. This area is well connected to public means of transportation.
5. The owner of the building has agreed to lease it initially for five years, further extendable for another five years.
6. The rent of the building is very competitive as compared to other buildings of similar location and facility.
7. I have also enquired that the building is free from any legal encumbrances.

I strongly recommend that the building be urgently acquired before it is let out to anyone else as it has been lying vacant and the landlord is looking for an organization to rent it to. All the required papers are ready for verification. I would be happy to provide more details if required.

Yours sincerely

Kripal Singh

Mr. KRIPALSINGH

Enclosures: 1. Consent paper of the landlord related to lease of 5 years. 2. Affidavit of property being free from legal encumbrances. 3. Architect's plan for construction of cabins and the estimate expenditure involved.

Outline of a Long Report: Combined Format

- 1. Title page/cover page:** It includes the title of the report, the name or names of person/s submitting it, name and designation of the person or authority to whom it is being submitted and the date of submission. The contents of title page may vary according to the requirements of the organization to which the report is being submitted.
- 2. Letter of transmittal:** It is a type of covering letter to submit the report to the person or authority. A short report is written in the form of a letter or memo but in a long report that part is taken care of by a separate letter of transmittal. Very briefly it introduces the report to the receiver.
- 3. Table of contents:** It is just like any other book's Table of Contents which gives an idea about how the contents of the report are organised. It presents the main headings of a report corresponding to the page numbers on which

they appear. It helps in locating the content according to page number. These days this part is not specifically written in computerized reports. This page is created with just one command in a software like MS Word on the completion of the report. After editing if there is any change in page numbers, it will be automatically made in the content page as well.

NOTES

4. **Executive summary/synopsis:** In long reports just after the Table of Contents appears the Executive Summary or the Synopsis of the actual report. Generally it is written at the end after the main report has been written but it is placed after the Content page. This part is the summary of the long report which includes the purpose, scope, findings and recommendations of the report. Without going into the details of the main report, the executive summary will provide the person or authority a complete overview of the report.
5. **Main report:**
 - (i) **Introduction:** This part mainly focuses on the purpose and scope of the report, its background information, the methodology used in preparing it and the anticipated outcomes and findings of the report.
 - (ii) **Body/textual content:** It is the main and longest part of the report where the actual report is presented using the methodology and material chosen.
 - (iii) **Conclusion:** This section contains the finding part of the report and appears in the form of a conclusion.
 - (iv) **Recommendations,** if required: On the basis of the findings of the whole study conducted, the writer's recommendations appear in this part, if they are required. In informational reports, recommendations are not required whereas in analytical reports, generally recommendations are given.
6. **Appendix/Appendices:** They are just like attachments to the main document. The documents which are related to the report but cannot be included in the main report are placed after the report in the form of an appendix or appendices.
7. **Bibliography:** It is the alphabetical list of primary and secondary references used in preparing the report.
8. **Index:** It is like the Table of Contents where only the main headings of a report get the page number but in an Index, it is a detailed list of all the terms used in the report in an alphabetical order corresponding to their page numbers. Both, table of contents and index help the reader in locating the relevant content of a long report which otherwise is very difficult. For example, the term like 'communication' will appear in alphabetical order and reflect the page numbers on which the term is explained prominently.

NOTES

- 9. Signature:** All formal reports should be signed by the writer/s of the report. For example, the report of any committee setup by the Government is signed at the end by all the members of the committee. The report becomes legally valid only after being duly signed.

Check Your Progress

3. What are the two kinds of reports?
4. What is letter of transmittal?

ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. A report may be defined as a form of systematic presentation of information relating to an event, progress of action or some activity.
2. Two characteristics of report are that it is generally submitted to a higher authority and communicated upwards in an organisation.
3. The two kinds of reports are short reports and long reports.
4. Letter of transmittal is a type of covering letter to submit the report to the person or authority.

SUMMARY

- Reports are an integral part of an organizational activity.
- A report carries information from someone who has it to someone who needs it.
- For a business report to serve effectively the purpose for which it is intended, it is essential that it possess certain essentials.
- Reports can be in both oral and written forms, though written reports are preferred.
- Informational reports only contain information in the form of facts and data. They do not contain any analysis or suggestions based on the information presented.
- Routine reports are submitted to the management at regular intervals by individuals, sections, departments, etc to help the management control administration effectively.
- While writing a report, one must read the instructions carefully on the basis of which report is to be prepared.
- Short report can be submitted in a letter or memorandum format whereas a long report can be submitted in a combined structure.

KEY WORDS

- **Stakeholder:** A person with an interest or concern in something, especially a business.
- **Bibliography:** A list of the books referred to in a scholarly work, typically printed as an appendix.
- **Documentation:** Material that provides official information or evidence or that serves as a record.

NOTES

SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What are the characteristics of business reports?
2. How are written reports better than oral reports?
3. What are the different types of reports?
4. What is the difference between engineering reports and business reports?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Define report. What is the importance of reports?
2. Discuss the essentials of a good business report.
3. How should a report be drafted? Discuss the structure of a report.
4. What are the characteristics of a good report?

FURTHER READINGS

- Madhukar, R.K. 2018. *Business Communication, 3rd edition*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.
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UNIT 10 WRITING E-MAILS

NOTES

Structure

Introduction
Objectives
Electronic Mail
Overcoming Problems in E-mail Communication
Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
Summary
Key Words
Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
Further Readings

INTRODUCTION

The contours of business communication are changing at a rapid pace. The methods and channels of communication used yesterday are making way for speedier and more efficient ones today. Telecommunications and computers are driving this change across the world. Numerous technology-induced developments towards the end of the last century have brought about new dimensions to the range, speed, methods and modalities of personal and business communication. Internet, laptop, mobiles, modems, word processors, communication networking systems, data warehousing, computer-based messaging systems and a host of technology powered developments have started impacting every sphere of activity, including corporate and business communication.

Businesses are metamorphosing. Old ways of doing things are making way for the new and more sophisticated ones. Telecommunications have seen an enormous growth, thereby impacting the lives of people around the world. As John Naisbitt and Patricia Aburdene say in their book, *Megatrends 2000*, 'In telecommunications we are moving to a single worldwide information network, just as economically we are becoming one global marketplace.' Thanks to globalization and cross-border flow of ideas and resources, developments in one place are rapidly reaching other parts of the world. The technology revolution has started impacting rural areas as well.

A growing number of companies the world over have started investing in networks and e-mail for communications. For business communicators, all these developments bring in new opportunities as well as responsibilities. Messages have to be brief, swift and focused. Transmission leakages have to be brought down substantially. As businesses share and transmit information, both internally and externally, data security assumes significance. There is now a much greater choice of channels and instruments.

OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Learn how to write good e-mails
- Describe principles of e-mail
- Discuss e-mail etiquette
- Examine how to overcome problems in e-mail communication

NOTES

ELECTRONIC MAIL

E-mail stands for electronic mail. 'e' in e-mail stands for electronic. This word can be spelled either email or e-mail. Email is described as a way of sending messages and data to other people by means of computers connected together in a network. Email refers to an electronic message sent via the Internet. It is a computer-based messaging system that transports electronic messages from one computer to another through a communication network. In a large organization, e-mail connectivity is established across numerous locations, such as branches, regional offices, controlling offices, service units and training centres. Each e-mail location is identified by a unique e-mail identification, in short email id. Messages and data, which are otherwise transferred through couriers, speed post and floppies can instead be transferred through e-mail. Physical transfer and movement, so essential in other means of transmission, are avoided. Data transmission through e-mail is both instantaneous and cost effective.

The advantages of using e-mail are indeed many:

- E-mail communication is swift, in fact instantaneous.
- E-mail communication is extremely economical.
- Email communication can be lengthy or heavy when it carries attachments.
- E-mail communication has a large global reach and access.
- Email communication is unmindful of time zones.
- E-mail communication is largely reliable; the sender can know if the message has reached the addressee or not.
- E-mail communication can be readily acknowledged by the receiver.
- The sender can also seek an acknowledgement from the receiver.
- The sender can send copies of the message to many others instantaneously.
- E-mail communication messages normally use the telegraphic language and salutation, and other essentials of a regular correspondence are not a must.

- E-mail communication can be stored and retrieved as and when required by both the sender and the receiver.

Create an E-mail ID

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E-mails are emerging as the fastest system of communication among people across the globe. Websites provide a variety of options to users for transmitting and receiving text messages, graphics and even photographs. Corporates and organizations transmit their messages through e-mails to avoid telephone conversations. Moreover, the message can be conveyed to a large number of people simultaneously.

A person wanting to send an e-mail is required to have an e-mail account with any website which provides an e-mail service to its users. The e-mail ID is similar to the postal address, which a person must have to receive postal mail or couriers.

Businesses which realize the potential of e-mails are giving as much importance to e-mail messages as they are to mail messages. Like any other communication, sales and other people are encouraged to open their e-mail inboxes periodically and make sure that e-mails are read and responded to promptly. Similarly, in order to discourage the use of official e-mail channels unduly for personal communication, strict penal provisions are stipulated and enforced.

No wonder, there is a rapid growth in the use of e-mail across the world. One of the earlier annual reports of Lucent Technologies refers to a whopping five million messages per minute through the e-mail. More recent data (2014) suggest that the number of email messages per minute has crossed 200 million. Email has become an indispensable means of information exchange, continuing to gallop in terms of volumes.

It is indeed very essential to be familiar with e-mail, as most businesses today are using this medium of communication. We have earlier discussed the subject of preparing and sending job application letters and resumes. It is worth noting here that some of the companies and job advertisers insist that application letters and resumes be sent only through e-mail, to the specified e-mail address. Similarly, intimations and other routine communication are also sent by businesses only through e-mails. Having an e-mail ID and being conversant with this medium of message transmission is thus not only useful but also absolutely essential.

Email is used for both personal communication and business communication. When email messages are sent for personal communication, they tend to be informal communication. On the other hand, when email messages are sent in a corporate or business framework, they tend to be formal and official. Email application for a job, sending of an office memorandum and email office reminders are all examples of formal communication in business. Personal emails may or may not give adequate attention to spelling, grammar and the rules of good writing, but business communication must necessarily do so. Every good communicator must keep in

mind the distinction between personal informal communication and official and formal communication. When these distinctions get blurred, business communication becomes shoddy. Business communication should not be informal and casual.

Principle of E-mail and E-mail Etiquette

In this section, let's study when it is not suitable to send an e-mail and the e-mail etiquettes.

When e-mails are not suitable

Notwithstanding the several advantages of email communication, there are some instances where an email communication is not recommended. These are as follows:

- emails are not suitable when the communication or letter is of special significance to the receiver. For example, when an appreciation letter, promotion letter or any communication that is worth preserving is sent. Email messages do not carry the same personal touch which a handwritten or neatly typed message on good quality paper carries.
- emails are not suitable when the receiver has to file them and keep them for long time future reference. The storability or durability of electronic communication is not as well-known as that of paper records.
- emails are best avoided when they are meant to be confidential as they can be easily forwarded to several others.
- emails serve well when the letters are short and the contents routine. When the letters are long and subject complex, it would be more appropriate to send formal written communication.
- emails are not to be used when the receiver expects a signed copy of the communication.

Mind your email language

When it comes to sending business related emails, the rules of good writing are very much relevant. Just because emails are easy to send, due diligence relevant in business writing should not be overlooked. Emails do constitute business communication, although the transmission of the message takes place through the internet mode. Rules of good writing are to be followed.

Avoid the following

- grammatical errors
- misspellings
- punctuation mistakes
- capitalization errors
- lengthy sentences and paragraphs
- casual writing

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- marking unnecessary copies
- texting abbreviations
- typos or typing errors

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Further, the 'to' address, subject line, greetings, formal business language and formal and friendly closing are all very essential in email messages too. The degree of formality in sending emails would vary depending upon the status and relationship of the sender and the recipient of the letter. Email communication does not permit informal and casual approach when the business relationship is formal and official.

Dear is still very appropriate As evident from the Box Item given above, of late, the use of 'Dear' has seen some controversy. The advent of email has impacted the formal writing style and has raised a question mark over the use of 'Dear'. Notwithstanding certain reservations expressed at some quarters, we need to note that, for the present, 'Dear' is still dear when it comes to formal business communication. 'Dear Sir', 'Dear Mr. Khan', 'Dear Ms. Bharathi', and 'Dear Prof Iyer' are examples of how to address the business emails. It is appropriate to use titles wherever they exist. 'Dear All' can be used when addressing a group. 'Hi' and 'Hello' are used only in informal writing. Similarly, while closing the business emails, Sincerely, Cordially, Regards, Best Regards, etc. would be appropriate.

Email provides for sending not only messages but also files and lengthy documents. When such lengthy reports and documents have to be sent through the email, they are invariably sent as 'attachments'. Sending lengthy documents by way of email attachments is instantaneous and works out cheaper than the postal or courier route.

That is why lengthy messages and documents are regularly sent as attachments. In addition to such messages and documents, pictures, internet links, audio files and video files can also be sent as attachments to an email. Emails can be sent by the press of a button. This is both a boon and a bane. Good business communicators should make it a habit to press the 'send' button only after checking the contents thoroughly for grammatical and other errors, ensuring that the attachments are in place and the recipient's address is correctly typed. That is why, it is recommended that the 'to' address and the 'Cc' columns are typed at the end after thoroughly ensuring that everything is in order. Any undue haste invariably results in sending incomplete or incorrect messages and the consequent embarrassments.

Emails are speedy communication. Anyone receiving an email is expected to respond promptly and without any delay. If no reply is warranted, the message is read and either saved or deleted as the case may be. Further, when required, a print out of the message can be taken and filed. Although there is a provision to forward the email received, as a matter of business ethics, due care should be taken while forwarding emails. Any such forwarding should be strictly need-based and any confidential information should not be forwarded indiscriminately. While

acknowledging emails received, do specifically acknowledge the attachments, if any.

Writing E-mails

Example of Good Communication Formal Email Letter

To: ahmad@vikaspublishing.com
Cc: programs@toptrainers.com
Subject: Business Communication Training Material

Dear Mr. Ahmad

I am the Training Manager at Top Trainers Ltd. at Bengaluru. I am contacting you in connection with our requirement of books and CDs available with you on the subject of business communication.

We will be organizing training programmes for the faculty of prominent Business Schools next month. Apart from providing relevant training material to all the participants, we propose to provide to them a few books and CDs on the subject of Business Communication. Our initial requirement would be 30 sets.

Could you please send us a set of relevant books and CDs available with you on the subject along with your price list, delivery time and payment terms. Our mailing address is: Top Trainers Ltd. 55, M.G.Road, Bengaluru 560002. Contact No. 91 9999955555.

Looking forward to your early response.

Regards

Mathew Arnold, Training Manager.

Example of Bad Communication Formal Email Letter

Reply soon.

Bye

Mathew

Overcoming Problems in E-mail Communication

It is very important to use the right tools. In order to fully overcome your email challenges and increase your impact and engagement with email internal communications, you need to take care of certain factors.

Most of the people are still not aware of the fact that the technology exists to bring the full power of the digital age to email. This technology can be used by communicators to personalize communications to the recipient – enabling the right messages get to the right employees at the right time.

Employees receive personalized emails in a recognizable format that can be consumed on any device, and pushes only relevant content to that employee. This helps the employees in not missing any information. Moreover, they also get saved from the risk of being swamped with content that is of little interest or use to them.

NOTES

And, your campaigns are now highly measurable – and provide essential insight to communicators to improve going forward – plus prove business value.

Information Overload

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It is increasingly becoming difficult to cut through the inbox clutter. And information overload is usually part of the problem.

Two types of emails contribute to inbox overload:

- 1. *Employee-to-employee*** – ‘All-employee’, excessive CCs and dreaded reply-to-alls often clutter the inbox and cause important communications to be lost in the deluge. Moreover, email is also being used for the tasks it was never intended to do: document transfer, collaboration and storage. This needs to be specifically addressed by organizations so as to educate and improve the use of email in the workplace – which in turn will decrease inbox clutter.
- 2. *Corporate email communications*** – Here’s where internal communicators can make a big impact – leading by example, using best practice in all internal corporate communications.

The first step towards decluttering the inbox is to create a central calendar. Working as a united team, set up and use central view to control and manage all corporate communications across the business. This can help a lot in decreasing duplication, increasing relevance – and ensuring the frequency is right.

Rather than working in silos, partner with departments to consolidate, align and schedule regular communications; such as newsletters, as well as CEO and urgent messages. To further highlight important messages, implement black out days – and control volume by the use of protected lists that limit the capability to send mass emails. (Newsweaver has calendars built into customer accounts.)

Personalization

The secret to engagement is treating your employees as individuals. Personalization lets you deliver that type of email communications – content relevant to each employee.

Personalization is also fantastic at reducing information overload because you are sending emails based on the needs of the employee. Rather than a batch-and-blast approach, you tailored content at the right time to the right audience.

Conduct a data audit to see what employee data you can use to segment audiences, personalize content, target campaigns and determine frequency.

Channel effectiveness

The growing proliferation of channels can be confusing. The best advice in this small space is not to drop existing technology just to favor a new one. Instead conduct a channel audit to understand what is working, and what your employees like to use, and what you would like them to use more frequently.

Measurement

Organizations increasingly recognize the need for – and benefits of – internal communications. However, as with mature corporate functions such as HR, marketing and finance, with this recognition comes a greater expectation to prove ROI and business value.

If you still count Outlook read receipts as a metric – you’re not getting the in-depth measurement you need. Again, it comes back to using the most up-to-date technology – using the right tools and technology to create smart emails in the digital age.

Opens and clicks are indicators, but they do not provide the complete insight you need. Therefore, what you need to do is drill down on the types of clicks, such as content and section popularity, downloads, and event registrations, etc.

Use data to break out metrics by employee groups. This will allow you to measure employee engagement across the organization. These fields could include departments, pay grade, offices, regions or countries.

Create benchmarks and trend your results over time. While industry benchmarks are interesting, it is more important to create your own unique benchmarks tied to your goals. Review trends over months, quarters and the financial year to get a truly accurate view of peaks and troughs in employee activity.

And once you start measuring, and sharing insights with stakeholders and senior leaders – you are going to be able to work towards getting a seat at the strategic table. You’ll be in a very good position to not just ‘manage’ communications, but help create them.

NOTES

Check Your Progress

1. What does e-mail stand for?
2. Define e-mail.
3. What are the two types of emails that contribute to inbox overload?

ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. E-mail stands for electronic mail.
2. E-mail is described as a way of sending messages and data to other people by means of computers connected together in a network.
3. The two types of emails that contribute to inbox overload are employee-to-employee and corporate e-mail communications.

NOTES

SUMMARY

- The contours of business communication are changing at a rapid pace.
- Telecommunications and computers are driving a change across the world.
- Businesses are metamorphosing. Old ways of doing things are making way for the new and more sophisticated ones.
- A growing number of companies the world over have started investing in networks and e-mail for communications.
- mail stands for electronic mail. 'e' in e-mail stands for electronic. This word can be spelled either email or e-mail.
- Email is described as a way of sending messages and data to other people by means of computers connected together in a network.
- mails are emerging as the fastest system of communication among people across the globe.
- A person wanting to send an e-mail is required to have an e-mail account with any website which provides an e-mail service to its users.
- The e-mail ID is similar to the postal address, which a person must have to receive postal mail or couriers.
- Email is used for both personal communication and business communication. When email messages are sent for personal communication, they tend to be informal communication.
- When it comes to sending business related emails, the rules of good writing are very much relevant.
- Email provides for sending not only messages but also files and lengthy documents.
- Emails are speedy communication. Anyone receiving an email is expected to respond promptly and without any delay.

KEY WORDS

- **Business:** *Business* is the activity of making one's living or making money by producing or buying and selling products (goods and services).
- **Telecommunication:** *Telecommunication* is the transmission of signs, signals, messages, words, writings, images and sounds or information of any nature by wire, radio, optical or electromagnetic systems.
- **Internet:** The *Internet* is the global system of interconnected computer networks that use the *Internet* protocol suite (TCP/IP) to link devices worldwide.

SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on e-mail.
2. What is the process of creating an e-mail id?
3. What are the advantages of using e-mail?
4. What are the ways to overcome problems in e-mail communication?

Long-Answer Questions

1. What do you understand by information overload? How can one declutter his or her inbox?
2. Discuss the types of e-mails that contribute to inbox overload.
3. How can organizations channel internal communications?
4. How can one write e-mails effectively? Discuss.

FURTHER READINGS

- Madhukar, R.K. 2018. *Business Communication, 3rd edition*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.
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NOTES

UNIT 11 BUSINESS PRESENTATION

NOTES

Structure

Introduction
Objectives
Oral Communication
Business Presentation
Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
Summary
Key Words
Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
Further Readings

INTRODUCTION

Oral communication is, by far, the most common method of communication in use. Ever since man learnt the use of languages, oral communication has developed myriad forms. Talking, conversation, speaking, telephone talks, interviews, discussions and presentations are all forms of active and direct communication. Business-related success as well as career-related progression of individuals is influenced substantially by oral communication skills. Good speakers, more often than not, carry the day. Sound oral communication skills are imperative for becoming effective leaders. The world of business relies much more on oral communication than on written communication. Spoken communication being an integral part of everyday business life, good speakers command a premium.

Speaking with colleagues, business associates, customers, superiors, prospects and various other sections of public in an unambiguous and convincing manner is indeed a fine skill. Spokespersons, good negotiators, people with persuasive skills, counsellors, people with good presentation skills and those who have mastered the art of public speaking command great value and are much sought after in a variety of business organizations and institutions. In the entertainment industry in particular, there is a growing demand for accomplished speakers as anchors, presenters, panelists, moderators, radio jockeys, compères and masters of ceremonies (MCs). There are even professional speakers who are often in great demand.

Research carried out decades ago has shown that an average person spends about 30 per cent of his or her time speaking and about 45 per cent of his or her time listening. These findings relate to the period prior to the onslaught of television and the advent of computers in a big way. The time spent would have undergone some change in the recent years. Nevertheless, the importance of spoken communication, both at the personal level and at the professional level, can hardly be underestimated. Good speaking and good listening are both vital aspects of

effective verbal communication. As members of the family, society, community and business, men and women spend much of their time in oral communication. What they need to do, they must learn to do well.

The spoken word has assumed such great significance that people who learn the art of saying the right thing at the right time get ahead in life. In the context of management, the art of managing the mouth carries a premium. Speaking only when required, to the extent required, refraining from speaking when the situation so demands and speaking without revealing too much are aspects of managing the mouth that call for a good understanding of the role of oral communication in varied business situations. Good speakers and orators who can win over and mesmerize the audience with their mastery over the language, depth of the subject, power of expression, fluency and style are in great demand in seminars, conferences, workshops, negotiations, brainstorming sessions, presentations and other interactive forums.

Speaking well is indeed an art. An art means a skill that is especially gained through practice. Maybe, there are people for whom the gift of the gab or the ability to speak with ease is a God-given gift. All the same, it is also true that most others develop the art of speaking through sustained and conscious efforts. No one is a born speaker. Practice, observation and hard work over a period of time can turn an ordinary speaker into a great speaker. Like many other business-related skills, they acquired oral communication skills over the years. In the following pages, we will be discussing at length how one learns and masters the art of good speaking and effective presentation skills.

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OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the skills of oral communication
- Discuss the techniques and purpose of oral business presentation
- Recollect the steps of making a presentation
- Discuss how to deliver a presentation effectively

ORAL COMMUNICATION

Oral communication refers to the spoken word. It takes the form of sounds and words. Starting out as a struggle by the early man, oral communication has had a long journey. It has developed across different regions, cultures, countries and continents. The development of numerous languages across the world has empowered oral communication.

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Oral communication plays a vital role in everyday life, both for individuals and organizations. It is, indeed, the most commonly used method of communication both at the social level and at the organizational level. Everyone makes copious use of oral communication in their transactions and interactions. For the individual, talking and speaking provide a very dependable means of communication within the family and in social groups. Oral communication is also extensively and gainfully used within organizations and business entities as well.

Oral communication is also referred to as verbal communication. It takes place between individuals with the help of words. Oral communication takes place in many ways—casual and serious, formal and informal, structured and unstructured. Oral communication encompasses conversation, monologue, dialogue, talk, speech and chat. Some of these are pre-meditated and some are not. Formal speeches are pre-planned and well structured, whereas informal ones are unstructured and often loosely worded.

As already noted, oral communication can be both structured and unstructured. It can also be formal or informal. In other words, oral communication comprises of both small talk and big talk. Small talk is informal and unstructured. You simply talk. Small talk is often casual. On the other hand, big talk is both formal and structured. It is a serious talk with particular concern for its impact and effectiveness. Big talk calls for planning and organizing. Small talk usually refers to conversations, chats, gossiping and the like where the speakers talk without much concern for the consequences. They are casual and often described as friendly chat, idle talk, common gossip, and so on. Figuratively speaking, when we say, “we indulged in small talk before getting down to business”, it means that we did some casual talking before discussing business. Big talk comprises of giving a speech, making a presentation, participating in a meeting, handling a negotiation, counselling, dealing with a crisis, attending an interview, making a sales talk, strengthening customer contact, discussion as a panel member, and a host of other talks which are now an integral part of the business world. Small talk may not always be aimed at achieving anything specific. It, nevertheless, helps in building rapport and paving the way for big talk. Big talk, however, is always goal oriented. Big talk is done with specific objectives. Big talk aims to inform, influence, educate, convince, promote, resolve, motivate, and attain several such objectives. Big talk, to be effective, calls for tremendous skills and persistent efforts. The world of business especially looks for those people who are good at big talk.

Direct person-to-person communication plays a very useful role in any organization, essentially in work situations, where there are employer-employee, superior-subordinate and service provider-customer interactions. Oral communication is a speedy two-way process. The message conveyed through oral communication is instantaneous. The messages can travel back and forth without any loss of time. It is possible for the receiver of the message to respond immediately to the sender making the process highly interactive. The messages between the

sender and the receiver can go back and forth, with role reversals taking place, till the objective is achieved.

There are many businesses and groups where spoken word carries considerable weight. There are businesses where, for various reasons, not much is documented or reduced to black and white. The verbal contracts are taken as seriously as the written ones and are faithfully fulfilled. A promise made is a promise kept. Likewise, in organizational situations, oral instructions, appeals and messages are seldom disregarded. Oral communication, besides being interactive, can also be quite persuasive.

Another noteworthy merit of oral communication is that it can be supplemented and complemented by non-verbal communication for greater impact. When a speaker speaks, the message is conveyed not only through the spoken words, but also by body movements and actions. When a person is talking or speaking or counselling, the warmth or otherwise of the person's feelings is also expressed through the body language. It is, however, worth noting that if this language is not used consciously to reinforce the verbal messages, it may lead to confusion and even contradiction.

Notwithstanding its several merits, oral communication gets constrained by various physical factors. It works well in small groups—at counters, in classrooms, in meetings and conferences, in counselling and persuasive sessions. A major drawback of oral communication is that it cannot be erased. There is a sense of finality concerning the spoken word. Any word uttered by the speaker travels swiftly and reaches the target. Any slip of the tongue can create an embarrassment and an unintended hurt. The moment a wrong or unintended word is delivered, the damage is done. Effective speakers are acutely conscious of this factor. More so, when they make extempore speeches. Recognizing this limitation, while resorting to any form of oral communication, one should learn to make a careful choice of words. Until the fine art of speaking with restraint is developed, it would be desirable to make the speeches and interventions, structured and well thought out rather than spontaneous and extempore. Whenever the oral communication is intended to achieve an important objective, extra care should be taken with the choice of words.

In personal as well as organizational communication, several channels or tools are regularly used. These include the telephone, the cell phone, the microphone, the radio, the amplifier and the loudspeaker. To the extent they are well chosen and well maintained, they facilitate smooth and effective flow of communication. If care is lacking while using them, they may prove to be a hindrance rather than an aid.

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Table 11.1 Merits and Demerits of Oral Communication

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Merits	Demerits
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It can be readily used. 2. It is instantaneous. 3. It can be persuasive. 4. It is cost effective. 5. It facilitates effective person-to-person exchange. 6. It works very well in small groups. 7. It can be supplemented by non-verbal messages. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is not very effective when the target group is spread out. 2. It is constrained by language, accent and vocabulary. 3. It is also constrained by noise and other physical barriers. 4. It is not normally recorded or documented. 5. It does not permit repeated reference. 6. It cannot be erased. 7. It is often dependent on memory.

Check Your Progress

1. Define oral communication.
2. Mention any two merits of oral communication.

BUSINESS PRESENTATION

Presentations constitute an extremely popular method of interactive communication, especially in the world of business. Presentations are so much a part of the business world today that it is hard to think of a profession or business that does not make use of presentations. Speeches and presentations have become an integral part of business transactions and relationships. The ability to make a good speech and an effective presentation adds value to a professional or anyone associated with the world of business. Both speeches and presentations are a part of oral communication and are often used interchangeably. However, while a speech refers to an act of speaking, a presentation relates to the act of presenting. In that sense a presentation is, generally speaking, a more formal act. It is done with much preparation and there is nothing casual or sudden about it. More importantly, a presentation relates to oral communication with the help of audio-visual aids.

A presentation is described as an act of showing, explaining or describing something to a group of people. Its objective may be to inform, explain, convince or win over the audience. It is an important communication skill that must be mastered for professional and business success.

Since a presentation, like a speech, is also a method of oral communication, most of the aspects which we have already covered under good speaking would be valid for a good presentation as well. All the three aspects relevant to a speech, viz., verbal, visual and vocal dimensions impact any presentation. A presentation should also be structured like a speech to cover three main parts, viz., introduction, body and conclusion. The choice of words, appropriate use of jargon, fluency of language, presentation style, audience analysis and such other concerns relevant in

connecting with and engaging the audience are also very relevant for an effective presentation. Without repeating what we have already covered under speeches, we shall now discuss aspects specific to understanding and acquiring presentation skills.

Presentations are made in classrooms, seminars, conferences and to groups of persons on certain scheduled topics. The topic for presentation is predetermined and there is nothing rambling or disorganized about it. Presentations have a specific objective. Quite often, the objective is not just to inform, but more importantly to influence, persuade, motivate and amplify. The verbal message is supplemented with the help of audio and visual aids for greater impact. Seeing plus hearing has greater impact than mere hearing. The objective of a presentation is to present all relevant details to the interested target audience on a specific topic or concept or area of interest in a participative manner. Any good presentation is well structured, properly packaged and presented to create high impact.

Presentations are of various kinds. Whenever a presenter feels that he has to reach out to an audience, influence their thinking and create an impact to achieve a certain objective, he may gainfully make a presentation. The presentations may range from a simple classroom presentation to amplify a concept or idea to a sales presentation to a very high-level strategy presentation. The venue for a presentation may be as varied as a classroom or a conference room or an executive cabin or even a boardroom. Apart from concept or idea presentations, product or sales presentations and strategy presentations are very common in the world of business. During any presentation on products and services, demonstrations covering the functioning and operation of new products are also introduced. Let us look at some examples of how presentations are used in business:

- A salesperson makes a presentation on a new product.
- An advertising agency makes a presentation on an advertising campaign to a client.
- A management consultant makes a presentation on organizational restructuring to a large business organization.
- An economist makes a presentation on the impact of global recession in a business seminar.
- An event manager makes a presentation to a chamber of commerce on a major trade fair.
- A CEO makes a presentation to his top management team on their business strategy plan for the ensuing year.

As we can see, these are just some random thoughts and there could be any number of minor and major, short and long, technical and non-technical, routine and path-breaking presentations in business situations. A salesperson or a junior-level person to the chief executive or a highly placed person may be required to make a presentation. Likewise, a presentation may be made by one individual or

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a group of persons. Presentations help when technical as well as non-technical aspects have to be neatly and forcefully presented by means other than mere written or verbal.

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Presentations are emerging as a popular means of communicating various concepts and ideas, features of gadgets, technology-based products, business results, analytical studies, status reports, strategic plans and a host of such items. Presentations help in simplification, amplification, analysis and reiteration. Presentations facilitate putting forth issues in proper perspective. Presentations are extremely useful in covering the subject emphatically within a given time. Presentations are helpful from the standpoint of time management, so crucial in business management.

Keeping in view all these advantages, in most business organizations, presentations, scheduled on various relevant topics, are made to CEOs and top management teams, decision-making authorities and even to board members. Whenever a selection is to be made for any assignment or task, the contenders are normally asked to make a presentation. Based on the presentations, evaluations are made. For example, short listed vendors of any software or hardware product may be asked to make a presentation. Similarly, short listed advertising agencies may be called upon to make a presentation before a panel before a selection is made. Obviously, in all such cases, the quality of the presentation and its impact on the target audience influence the final decision concerning the product or assignment. When such presentations are made, apart from the merits of the product or the proposal, the manner in which it is presented often assumes critical importance. Under such circumstances, presentation skills of the people concerned assume great significance. No wonder, people with good presentation skills are in great demand in the world of business.

Let us now look at the skills relevant for making a good presentation. The person keen on making an effective presentation has to necessarily develop various types of interactive skills:

- Essentially, one should be a good communicator and should learn to express oneself clearly and forcefully.
- He or she should be comfortable in facing the target audience and should build requisite confidence.
- The communicator should be familiar with the various techniques for holding the audience's attention.
- The presenter should be well versed in presenting various types of audio-visual aids to heighten the impact of presentation.
- The person should be able to synchronize the verbal delivery or narration with the visual message.
- The presentation should not appear rehearsed or stereotype. The person should make the presentation within the allotted time.

- The presenter should be looking at the visual message as well as the audience and should not miss eye contact with the audience.
- The presenter should develop good fluency of language and also use familiar and appropriate words.
- The presenter should know which parts of the visual message or slides should be emphasized or elaborated and which should be skipped or rushed.
- The person should be alive to the response from the audience and know how to sustain it.
- The presenter should also know how to make effective use of the vocal and visual aspect of body language to make the presentation effective.
- Good presentation skills thus constitute good speaking skills plus effective use of visual and other aids to create a total impact.
- The person making the presentation should know how to manage the Question and Answer session effectively.

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Steps in Making a Presentation

Good writing is a three-stage process covering pre-writing, writing and revising. Similarly, good presentation consists of three stages, viz., planning, preparation and delivery. Making a formal presentation is a serious business. It calls for an organized effort. Any faux pas or embarrassing blunder in public speaking or formal presentations will adversely affect the standing or credibility of not only the speaker but also the institution which he or she represents. Good presentations do not happen by accident. Although good presenters make their presentations look effortless, a great deal of effort actually goes into it. Effective presentations are the result of a three-stage process comprising of planning, preparation and delivery.

1. **Planning the Presentation:** Planning the presentation essentially involves four steps, viz., audience analysis, setting the objective, defining the topic and mind travelling.

Any speech or presentation is meant for the audience. It is the group of listeners who constitute the very purpose of the communication. Ultimately, the presentation is good or bad depending on how the audience or target group receives it. That is why audience analysis constitutes the starting point of any presentation. The target audiences are indeed very diverse and varied. They may not necessarily be a homogeneous and a highly attentive group. They may be heterogeneous and disinclined. In terms of the level of knowledge, ability to understand, receptivity, proficiency of language, kind of expectations, and a host of such factors, there could be very significant variations among the audience groups and batches of listeners. What works well with one group need not be equally effective with the other groups. There cannot be one-size-fits-all approach in making presentations.

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Depending upon the audience, the presentations have to be tailor-made. A good presenter should always be conscious of audience-related differences and plan and organize his or her presentation to suit the specific target group.

The next step in planning the presentation would be to set the objectives. Business communication, we have already noted, must be goal oriented. Any presentation, formal speech, letter, memo or meeting has a purpose. The objectives of presentations would be varied – to inform, to influence, to amplify, to simplify, to educate, to motivate or to persuade. At the planning stage, the presenter should take care to cover all the objectives in structuring the presentation.

Every presentation will have a topic or a subject to be covered. This topic could be the one selected by the speaker or the one decided by the audience or organizers of the seminar, conference, study group, committee, as the case may be. The planning process has to ensure that the topic so assigned or chosen is adequately covered in the presentation. At the planning stage, the person should ensure that the subject is covered with clarity and completeness, and there is no room for ambiguity and misinterpretation. Unless that is taken care of, the very purpose of the presentation may get defeated.

The fourth step in the planning process is what is called mind travelling. Mind travelling relates to building a vision of the presentation you are going to make. It relates to organizing our thoughts – what to say, how to say, what style to adopt, where to emphasize, where to pause, where to bring in humor or present statistics, and so on. Mind travelling covers the broader areas such as the dream, or imagination or foresight involving the presentation. In doing so, a good presenter makes sure that audience analysis, setting of objectives and delineation of the topic are all in place.

Presentations cannot be forceful, effective or persuasive, if the speaker is not focused. If he or she wanders or is disorganized, the presentation flounders. Those presentations which don't follow a clear path to a concrete call for action fail to deliver results. The planning should be such that the key message and call for action come through clearly. Effective planning ensures that the outcome of the presentations is on the expected lines. Good planning ensures that the structure of the presentation is clear, logical and result-oriented.

- 2. Preparing the Presentation:** Preparing any presentation involves four steps, viz. collecting relevant information, organizing the content, selecting the visual and other aids, and composing the presentation. Good speakers and presenters take pains to prepare their speeches in advance. The time spent on preparation would depend upon the familiarity of the topic, the nature of audience, the length of the presentation and such other relevant factors.

The essence of any presentation is the content or the subject matter. In other words, content counts. All the relevant facts and figures should be necessarily covered in the presentation. In gathering the factual details, we should note that there are basically two sources of data – primary and secondary. Similarly, the data sources could be both internal and external. Good presenters take care to collect requisite data from authentic and reliable sources. They use updated and duly verified data. Inaccurate and stale data are likely to be questioned and challenged during presentations. It is said that, in general, there are no bad audiences, but only bad speakers. The speaker should always assume that the audience consists of good, thoughtful and responsive persons. They are attending the presentation because they may not be as familiar with the subject as you are and are keen to know more. Any good presenter should put in the content so as to enrich the audience's understanding of the topic.

Having collected all the relevant information, the next step is to organize the material. The material should be arranged in proper sequence. Apart from the subject related facts and figures, quotations and examples, tables and charts, humorous anecdotes and such other aspects which add spice to the presentation should be collected and kept ready. Keeping in view the wide variety of presentations, it would be useful to bring in logical, ethical and emotional appeals, as well as a variety of evidence to support your argument.

The next step is to select the visual and other appropriate aids. In today's context, presentations are done, more often than not, with the help of audio-visual aids. Visual aids in any presentation include slides, flip charts, pictorial presentations and the like. While organizing the presentation, the presenter would get a fair idea about which stage and at which point during the presentation, he or she would be needing these aids. Accordingly, the speaker has to select, check the working condition and keep ready the visual aids.

All that we have discussed so far is akin to collecting the raw material. Composing the presentation is somewhat like assembling the final product. Composing the presentation means to combine together to form the whole. In terms of content and coverage, any presentation would cover three distinct aspects – introduction, body and closing.

The speaker starts with a greeting, covers the preliminaries and introduces the topic. This is the introductory part. What is important here is to capture the audience's attention and to give them a reason to listen. You should get the audience hooked by telling a story or illustration, referring to a disturbing event or information, asking a rhetorical question or telling something that at once arouses interest. In introduction, the speaker tells the audience what he or she is going to present and how it would benefit them. In the introductory part, the speaker sets the proper tone. The introductory part normally consists of giving your credentials as a speaker and telling clearly

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what you are going to say. Since the initial words spoken by the presenter are heard very attentively by the listeners, the speaker should take extra care to make them appealing. What the speaker says by way of introduction will influence the attentiveness of the audience. The speaker must make every effort to catch attention, arouse curiosity and keep the opening remarks promising. The speaker may also mention during the introductory remarks when the listeners may ask their questions and get doubts clarified.

Next comes the body of your presentation. Moving to the body part of the presentation, the speaker covers all the main points of the subject, puts in all the supporting material and ensures complete coverage. All the evidence and logical arguments are covered in the body of the presentation. The audience attends the presentation with the expectation that the speaker will enrich them on the topic. The audience expects the speaker to inform, elucidate, amplify, enlighten and cogently cover the subject so that it becomes worthwhile for them to listen to the speaker. The speaker may consult his notes or the visual aids and comprehensively bring out all the relevant facts and figures. The speaker may refer to the supporting material and provide illustrations and examples in support of the points made. In view of its significance, about two-thirds of the time spent on any presentation is allotted to the body of the presentation. The main points are enumerated, emphasized and amplified, so that the audience gains clarity about the subject covered.

The third and final part of the presentation is the closing of the presentation. The closing or conclusion quickly sums up the main points and emphatically makes the final point. Good speakers know that their final words can create a lasting impression on the listeners. They take care to avoid weak ending. This part of the presentation, they know, is crucial. They make sure to reiterate the theme of their opening statement, sum up the key points and the main message they have brought out. They end the presentation by calling for action. Good speakers make the conclusion stand out. They know how to close the presentation on a strong note. The closing should be such as to leave behind a positive and lasting impression on the audience.

It is worth repeating that good presentations and speeches are the result of hard work and meticulous preparation. Even the best of speakers prepare their speeches, although not elaborately as a beginner or a novice. To quote Mark Twain, 'It usually takes more than three weeks to prepare a good impromptu speech'.

Further, since presentations normally end with Question and Answer sessions, during the preparation, the presenter should also anticipate the likely questions and be in readiness to deal with them. The questions asked need not necessarily be simple and familiar which means the preparation should provide for even tricky and difficult questions. For any presentation to be successful, speakers should anticipate different scenarios and prepare well. Inability to answer questions leaves behind a poor impression about the

speaker, his or her team and the organization. Thorough preparation enhances the chances of a successful presentation.

3. **Delivering the Presentation:** Delivery relates to the actual manner in which the message is communicated. Effectiveness of any speech or presentation depends not only on what is said, but also on how it is said. When the speaker is not experienced, he or she is bound to suffer from speech anxiety. This anxiety causes weak knees, low voice and sudden memory loss. Practicing, especially in front of a small group, helps overcome such anxiety. Great speakers attach particular attention to various aspects of the delivery of the presentation. Delivery of a presentation should also take cognizance of four aspects, viz. practice, non-verbal aspects, time management, and building confidence.

Practice is very essential for any effective oral communication, and a speech or presentation in particular. Practice here refers to the rehearsal of the presentation. In the practice session, you make sure that the vocal, verbal and visual aspects are in sync to create the desired impact. You ensure that the presentation can be completed within the time allotted, even after providing for some interruptions to seek clarifications. By practice, the speaker ensures that all aspects of the presentation are duly factored in. No amount of planning and other preparation is, in itself, any guarantee to a good presentation. One must practice in front of a mirror or, better still, in front of a familiar group of persons. To use a cliché, practice makes a man (and a woman) perfect. Until a speaker practices the actual delivery of the speech, it is only hope or conjecture. Practice also helps a speaker overcome his or her anxiety. The more one practices, the more confident he or she becomes.

Some communication experts believe that it is unrealistic to aim at a 'perfect' presentation. One should feel happy if the presentation is clearly organized, well documented and effectively delivered. Expecting every presentation to be perfect puts extra pressure on the speaker and adds to his or her nervousness. As a training expert puts it, 'Practice only makes you better, but perfection doesn't exist. The goal is to become so comfortable with what you are saying, it will roll off your tongue with minimum effort.'

Another important aspect for ensuring great delivery relates to the non-verbal aspects. The visual and the vocal features do play a significant role and may either supplement or distort the verbal messages. Every speaker and intending presenter should be cognizant of the non-verbal aspects not only during the preparation stage, but also at the actual stage of delivery. He or she should consciously cultivate good body language which includes a smile, good postures and gestures, pleasing facial expressions, required voice modulation, eye contact and mannerisms, and behavior. Awareness relating to these aspects, especially during the delivery of presentations, is vital for presentations to be effective.

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Time management constitutes another essential requirement for presentations to be effective. In the world of business, time means money. Audiences relating to business presentations are mostly people who value their time. The speaker must learn to complete the presentation well within the allotted time. Moreover, in seminars, conferences, etc., speakers are normally slated one after the other in consecutive time slots, and if one speaker overshoots the allotted time, it will disrupt the subsequent sessions. Similarly, completing the presentation much before the allotted time is also not desirable and indicates poor planning and inadequate preparation.

In this context of ensuring effective time management, an important point to be reiterated is the transmission rate. Transmission rate refers to the number of words spoken per minute. Speakers speak, on an average, at the rate of 150-175 words per minute. Those who speak fast may achieve a speed of about 200 words per minute. It is said that most listeners are capable of comprehending 500 words per minute. Good presenters should mind this transmission gap and make conscious efforts to keep their audience engaged. Appropriate eye contact, body movements, pauses and gestures, voice modulation, recourse to visual aids and such efforts to keep them engaged would become essential.

Finally, it should be emphasized that good speaking and effective presentations call for a high level of confidence. Key communication skills are cultivated over a period of time through hard work, conscious efforts and a series of ups and downs. There could be many moments of failures and under-performance. Nevertheless, with sustained efforts, even a mediocre speaker or presenter can certainly work his or her way up and become not just an effective presenter, but in fact a great presenter. It is worth noting here that all great speakers of today were mediocre or even poor speakers sometime in the past. Building confidence is something every good communicator has to do step by step.

Check Your Progress

3. Why is the ability to make a good speech and effective presentation important?
4. Define presentation.

ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Oral communication refers to the spoken word. It takes the form of sounds and words.
2. The message conveyed through oral communication is instantaneous. The messages can travel back and forth without any loss of time.

3. The ability to make a good speech and an effective presentation adds value to a professional or anyone associated with the world of business.
4. A presentation is described as an act of showing, explaining or describing something to a group of people.

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SUMMARY

- Oral communication is, by far, the most common method of communication in use.
- Oral communication refers to the spoken word. It takes the form of sounds and words.
- Oral communication plays a vital role in everyday life, both for individuals and organizations.
- Oral communication is also referred to as verbal communication. It takes place between individuals with the help of words.
- Presentations constitute an extremely popular method of interactive communication, especially in the world of business.
- A presentation is described as an act of showing, explaining or describing something to a group of people.
- Presentations are emerging as a popular means of communicating various concepts and ideas, features of gadgets, technology-based products, business results, analytical studies, status reports, strategic plans and a host of such items.
- Good writing is a three-stage process covering pre-writing, writing and revising.
- Planning the presentation essentially involves four steps, viz., audience analysis, setting the objective, defining the topic and mind travelling.
- Preparing any presentation involves four steps, viz. collecting relevant information, organizing the content, selecting the visual and other aids, and composing the presentation.
- Delivery relates to the actual manner in which the message is communicated.
- Some communication experts believe that it is unrealistic to aim at a 'perfect' presentation. One should feel happy if the presentation is clearly organized, well documented and effectively delivered.

KEY WORDS

- **Interview:** An interview is a conversation where questions are asked and answers are given.

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- **Presentation:** Presentation refers to a speech or talk in which a new product, idea, or piece of work is shown and explained to an audience.
- **Oral communication:** Oral communication is the process of expressing information or ideas by word of mouth.

SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on oral communication.
2. What are the merits of oral communication?
3. How can one plan a presentation?
4. 'Practice is very essential for any effective oral communication.' Comment on the statement with reference to the context.

Long-Answer Questions

1. How do presentations constitute an important method of interactive communication?
2. How are presentations used in business? Discuss with some examples.
3. What are the steps in making a presentation?
4. Define oral communication. What are the demerits of oral communication?

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BLOCK - IV
MEETINGS, SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT
COMMUNICATION

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UNIT 12 MEETINGS

Structure

Introduction
 Objectives
 Types of Meetings/Business Meetings
 Importance of Business Meetings
 Conducting Meetings
 Common Mistakes Made at Meetings
 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
 Summary
 Key Words
 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
 Further Readings

INTRODUCTION

Formal or informal deliberative assembly of individuals called to debate certain issues and problems, and to take decisions. Formal meetings are held at definite times, at a definite place, and usually for a definite duration to follow an agreed upon agenda.

In this unit, we will learn about the importance of meetings, the types of meetings and the important points to remember while conducting a meeting.

OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the different types of meetings
- Understand the importance of business meetings
- Discuss ground rules of establishing meetings
- Identify the common mistakes made at meetings

TYPES OF MEETINGS/BUSINESS MEETINGS

There are different types of meetings. Each type requires a different supports, structures and a different number of participants. For instance, a status (feedforward)

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meeting has no limit to the number of participants while a decision-making meeting produces results faster with a small number of participants.

The first step towards planning a meeting is defining what type of meeting it is. While every meeting is unique, being familiar with the six most common types of meetings will help you identify the goals, structure, and activities best suited for your meetings.

Six General Types of Meetings

- Decision Making Meetings
- Innovation Meetings
- Status Update Meetings
- Problem Solving Meetings
- Team Building Meetings
- Information Sharing Meetings

Decision making meetings

The vast majority of business decisions are made by groups in meetings. While small decisions are made in all kinds of meetings, the more important decisions often get their own dedicated meetings. There are different types of group decision making processes, and care should be taken to choose a process that best matches the situation. A decision making process can include group processes like information gathering and sharing, brainstorming solutions, evaluating options, ranking preferences, and voting.

Problem solving meetings

Problem solving meetings are perhaps the most complex and varied type of meetings. Whether the meeting is addressing an identified problem, or it is focusing on creating strategies and plans to navigate the future, there are a rich arsenal of group processes that can be used. Scopes and priorities need to be defined, opportunities and threats need to be identified, and possible solutions should be brainstormed, evaluated, and agreed upon.

Status update meetings

Status update meetings is one of the most common meeting types. This category includes regular team and project meetings, where the primary goal is to align the team via updates on progress, challenges, and next steps. Commonly found group activities in these kinds of meetings are problem solving, decision making, prioritization, and task assignment.

Information sharing meetings

Presentations, panel debates, keynotes, and lectures are all examples of information sharing meetings. The primary goal of these meeting is for the speakers to share information with the attendees. This could be information about things like upcoming changes, new products and techniques, or in depth knowledge of a domain. Visual communication tools, like slides and videos, are powerful tools for making the shared information more memorable.

At information sharing meetings the attendees have historically been passive listeners. With new technologies like MeetingSift they can use their smart devices to go from passive spectators to active participants, making the meeting more engaging and productive for all.

Innovation meetings

Innovation meetings and creative meetings often start with thinking outside the box, by brainstorming, associating, and sharing ideas in a broad scope. Meeting participants can then use various techniques and processes to reduce the diverse pool of ideas to a more focused short list. Through ranking, evaluations, and decision making the most suitable idea, or ideas, are identified, and recommendations and tasks can be assigned based on this.

Team building meetings

All meetings should contribute to team building, strengthening relationships and corporate culture. However, now and then team building activities should be the main focus for a meeting. This category include meetings like include all-hands meetings, kick-off meetings, team building outings, and corporate events. Have participants feel like essential parts of their unit, team, department, branch, and company has all kinds of positive impact on their engagement, performance, and satisfaction.

12.2.1 Importance of Business Meetings

One of the most important advantage of business meetings is that they provide a platform to share information. Be them the business meetings held within the office among staff to meetings between a company and its client they always provide an opportunity to share information. This could be as simple as sharing updates on financials or recognizing new employees to more complex issues, such as contract negotiations, new client presentations or addressing problems with an account. An actual meeting pinpoints a time and place to have in-depth discussions without other distractions or work getting in the way.

Business meetings are the perfect environment for encouraging teamwork, be it among staff or between client and account manager. It provides a forum with which to set team goals and brainstorm ways to meet them, considering input from everyone in the meeting, versus just one person. When the meeting is between client and company rep, the teamwork may happen in the form of feedback, when the client may suggest certain things, to which the other party may respond and go back and forth in a dialogue until a consensus is reached.

Check Your Progress

1. What are the different types of meetings?
2. Mention any one advantage of business meetings.

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CONDUCTING MEETINGS

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Agenda

Agenda is the list of items to be taken up for discussion during the meeting. It provides the reason for calling a meeting. It should be ensured that there are adequate numbers of worthwhile issues which need deliberation at the meeting. All topics and issues that will be taken up at the meeting call for advance efforts. The items stated in the agenda should be relevant and appropriate, keeping in view the purpose of the meeting and the expertise of the members who will be participating in the meeting. If the agenda is not properly drawn up, the meeting may not serve any useful purpose. The agenda should be such that an adequate number of issues that merit the attention of members are listed for deliberation so that the duration of the meeting is gainfully spent. Calling a meeting for the sake of it, without any serious agenda, or just to ensure that the predetermined periodicity is met, entails a waste of time and resources.

Background Papers

Every meeting of some importance will have a set of background papers, which are sent in advance to the members who will participate in the meeting. These background papers relate to the items listed in the agenda, and provide glimpses of the issues involved. Background papers are normally prepared by the concerned functionaries or departments seeking a decision on the issue or a deliberation on the subject matter. Background papers should cover all relevant details that are germane to effective deliberation. This would normally include facts, figures, different views, expert opinion and the latest position. Minutes of the previous meeting are also sent along with the first lot of background papers since they are always the first item on the agenda. They are taken up for confirmation before proceeding to the other items. Background papers ensure that deliberations are focused and cover all relevant dimensions of the subject under discussion.

Background papers should clearly state what is expected of the meeting and members. Board notes and office notes put up for meetings should state clearly whether the note is submitted for 'consideration and orders' or for 'information'. It is also a common practice to state the 'resolution' covering the type of orders sought to ensure abundant clarity. The board or the committee, in its wisdom, will decide whether the resolution has to be passed as it is, or with any modifications.

Background papers, it should be noted, are to be sent to all the members and invitees well in advance to enable them to come prepared with their views and suggestions. In fact, if the subject matter is of a serious nature and if sufficient time has not been provided for advance consideration, there is every likelihood of the agenda item being deferred by the committee for consideration in the next meeting.

At the same time, it is worth noting that whenever there are some important developments which are to be brought before the committee members, or when there are urgent decisions called for, and the matter is so urgent that it is not desirable to wait till the next meeting, there is a system of submitting what are called 'table items'. Such items are tabled at the time of the meeting and are not sent in advance. If the chairperson and members agree, such items are also taken up for deliberation at the day's meeting. As a general rule, however, table items should be put up as an exception and only when warranted.

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Whom to Invite

To be effective, deliberations at the meeting should involve all the concerned functionaries. Regular members of the committees, wherever formally constituted, will have to be invariably invited. At the same time, in the absence of a formal list, it would be essential to identify people whose presence would be of significance when subjects are taken up for deliberation. In some cases, senior functionaries will have to be necessarily invited to lend authority to the decision-making process, whereas some junior-level functionaries and subject matter specialists will have to be present to provide technical details and other relevant papers. Persons to be invited to the meeting, wherever not specifically stated, are best decided in consultation with the chairperson and other senior functionaries on whose behalf the meeting is convened.

Invitation for the meeting is to be clearly drawn up indicating the day, date, time and venue of the meeting. Invitations have to be sent well in advance to ensure that outstation participants have sufficient time to make appropriate travel plans. Meeting notices will have to clearly indicate who should attend the meeting. Sometimes people in organizations receive notices, which do not clearly indicate whether they are sent as an invitation or just as an intimation. The addressee, in this case, is likely to be confused and will have to start making enquiries. More so, when one is not a formal member of the committee or has had no prior intimation about it. The meeting notice should also state, wherever appropriate, whether the addressee may bring one or two other colleagues dealing with the subject or, in the alternative, if one is not in a position to attend, whether someone else can be deputed on one's behalf. Though most of these requirements look obvious, they are often overlooked.

Timing and Venue

Care should be taken in fixing up meetings in a manner that is convenient to most of the members or participants. A notice, well in advance, will ensure that participants get adequate opportunity to schedule or reschedule their engagements. The date and time should be fixed taking into account holidays, other important events and functions which may clash with the meeting dates and time, and make it difficult for the members to choose between one and the other. It is generally expected that

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the person convening the meeting will take some trouble to ensure that most of the members, if not all, are in a position to attend and contribute. While it may not be possible to totally avoid overlapping in all cases, some advance planning and enquiries will certainly help achieve better attendance at meetings. Indication of the duration of the meeting will also be helpful so that participants would know how much time they have to allot for attending the meeting. Further, details such as arrangements made, if any, for breakfast, lunch, accommodation and travel need to be mentioned.

It is pertinent to mention here that while a reasonable advance intimation for any meeting facilitates better attendance, any notice sent too much in advance will have to be necessarily followed up with subsequent reminders. It is desirable to remind the members and ascertain their participation on the day of the meeting or a day prior to the meeting. This becomes even more essential when formal, structured meetings need to have a quorum or minimum number of members.

The venue of the meeting should be fixed up well before the meeting notices are dispatched. With so many meetings taking place in organizations, there is bound to be considerable demand for meeting halls and conference rooms. The meeting venue should have all the required physical facilities—fans, air conditioners, microphones, projectors and toilets that ensure minimum comfort for the members and facilitate uninterrupted deliberations. As we have seen in the earlier chapters, physical barriers such as non-availability of sound systems, extraneous sounds, cramped seating and stuffy rooms hinder the effectiveness of communication. It is not uncommon in organizations to come across instances where the availability of the venue is not confirmed, or there is some misunderstanding in the date or time, as a result of which either meetings are delayed or participants are made to move from one venue to the other. A little extra care will avoid embarrassment and inconvenience at the time of the meeting.

There are occasions when the chief executive or other senior functionaries may decide to convene impromptu or emergency meetings with very short notice, in which case the availability of the venue, physical facilities and other arrangements for refreshments will have to be attended to on priority. Any meeting where the deliberations have concluded, and yet refreshments or lunch is not ready, speaks of poor planning and has to be assiduously avoided. The participants' time, it is to be noted, is valuable and cannot be taken for granted.

Punctuality

Starting the meeting on time is an area that calls for conscious effort. Keeping the venue open and ready well in time, reminding the chairperson and other members, ensuring that all papers have reached the participants, making sure that the table items are placed and that the conveners and organizers are at the venue well before the scheduled time are all a must in making meetings time-bound and purposeful. A situation where the convener is still in consultation with the chairperson

of the meeting well past the scheduled starting time, while the participants are waiting in the venue, unattended and not knowing when and if at all the meeting would start, is the kind of situation that speaks of indifferent attitude towards the meeting and must be avoided.

Time Management

Time management is of essence in ensuring the effectiveness of meetings at all levels. Meetings, which start on time, end on time and provide adequate time for purposeful deliberation of all the listed items, ensure cost effectiveness. On the contrary, meetings that start with undue delay, take up items which are not on priority and run out of focus, entail waste of time and effort and prove to be costly to the organization. One can, indeed, assess the level of efficiency of the organization in terms of effectiveness of the meetings conducted at various levels. In an exhibit/box item shown above, we have noted that executives tend to spend much of their time in attending meetings. Unless every effort is made to make the meetings business-like and focused, organizational effectiveness gets impaired.

At the planning stage of the meeting itself, the Chairman/Secretariat should estimate how long it may take to discuss each item on the agenda, and add extra time for the unexpected yet relevant issues that might come up during the discussion. Advance assessment of time for various agenda items would not only help in time management, but also in keeping the meeting focused. People invited to make presentations should be told in advance the time allotted for their presentation. It would be meaningless to call for a full day meeting, if the business can be completed by lunch time. Similarly, convening a half a day meeting and extending it till evening would thoroughly inconvenience the participants. Time required for the meeting should be properly assessed and adhered to.

Breaks are an essential part of the time management exercise. The organizers should decide when and for how long the breaks should be allowed. Lengthy meetings held without breaks may not be desirable, because people are normally known to concentrate well for about forty-five minutes or so. Breaks are required for refreshments and rest room visits. At the same time, frequent and long breaks may hinder effective deliberations and come in the way of continuity of deliberations.

Meetings are often criticized for the reason, "Meetings keep minutes, but waste hours." Similarly, J.K. Galbraith remarked, "Meetings are indispensable when you don't want to do anything." Business communicators responsible for meetings should give no room for such adverse comments. Any meeting is an investment in time. More the number of participants, greater the man-hours spent. This investment pays out only when meetings become productive. Business meetings, if not properly administered, can lead to indiscriminate wastage of time. For meetings to be a success, effective time management and productive utilization of available time are a must.

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Common Mistakes Made at Meetings

Although meetings can and do serve a very useful purpose in the world of business, and have therefore become very ubiquitous, they are not always effective or productive. In a survey conducted by Microsoft some time back, it is noted that 69 per cent of 38,000 respondents claimed that the meetings they attended were unproductive. Meetings can become unproductive and wasteful for various reasons. Some of the reasons are given below.

- When meetings are convened even when the issues can be decided over telephone or email.
- When the amount spent on convening the meetings is disproportionate to the value of the deliberations and decisions.
- When the meeting is seen by the participants as unnecessary and wasteful.
- When agenda is not clearly drawn up and objectives of the meeting are unclear.
- When the chairperson and the key members fail to attend.
- When unconnected persons are in majority.
- When the chairperson and the convener fail to exercise control over the deliberations and let the members discuss unlisted items and subjects.

To be successful, meetings should be need-based, properly planned and effectively conducted. The participants should find it worthwhile and useful. Apart from the chairperson and the convener, all the participants too should work for the success of the meeting. If the objective can be achieved by video-conferencing or tele-conferencing, convening a face-to-face meeting at a fixed venue can be avoided. If the objective is only to share information, it can be accomplished by issuing a memo or making a few calls. Meetings become really relevant when there is need for interaction and threadbare deliberations.

To conclude, it is worth reiterating that meetings, when conducted effectively, can bring substantial benefits in resolving even sensitive matters through collective wisdom. They can be a very cost-effective means of intense interaction. When participants learn to talk, listen and interact in a responsible manner, meetings can be really result oriented. At the same time, it should be borne in mind that although the people participating are knowledgeable, they may or may not speak out freely and contribute to the deliberations. Sometimes, some of the more vocal participants may tend to dominate the deliberations, not giving an opportunity to others to express themselves. In all such cases, the chairperson or the convenor should intervene. After all, the very purpose of inviting people is to get their views and suggestions, and meetings have to be highly participative within the given context. In other words, it takes conscious effort, attention to details, and deft and authoritative steering of deliberations to make meetings effective.

Check Your Progress

3. Define agenda of meeting.
4. What should background papers cover?

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ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. The different types of meetings are decision making meetings, problem solving meetings, innovation meetings, team building meetings, status update meetings and information sharing meetings.
2. One of the most important advantage of business meetings is that they provide a platform to share information.
3. Agenda is the list of items to be taken up for discussion during the meeting.
4. Background papers should cover all relevant details that are germane to effective deliberation.

SUMMARY

- There are different types of meetings. Each type requires a different supports, structures and a different number of participants.
- The first step towards planning a meeting is defining what type of meeting it is.
- The vast majority of business decisions are made by groups in meetings. While small decisions are made in all kinds of meetings, the more important decisions often get their own dedicated meetings.
- Problem solving meetings are perhaps the most complex and varied type of meetings.
- One of the most important advantage of business meetings is that they provide a platform to share information.
- Business meetings are the perfect environment for encouraging teamwork, be it among staff or between client and account manager.
- Agenda is the list of items to be taken up for discussion during the meeting. It provides the reason for calling a meeting.
- Every meeting of some importance will have a set of background papers, which are sent in advance to the members who will participate in the meeting.
- Background papers should clearly state what is expected of the meeting and members.

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- To be effective, deliberations at the meeting should involve all the concerned functionaries.
- Care should be taken in fixing up meetings in a manner that is convenient to most of the members or participants.
- Time management is of essence in ensuring the effectiveness of meetings at all levels. Meetings, which start on time, end on time and provide adequate time for purposeful deliberation of all the listed items, ensure cost effectiveness.

KEY WORDS

- **Meeting:** Meeting refers to an assembly of people for a particular purpose, especially for formal discussion.
- **Agenda:** An *agenda* is a list of meeting activities in the order in which they are to be taken up, beginning with the call to order and ending with adjournment
- **Client:** A client refers to a person or organization using the services of a lawyer or other professional person or company.

SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What is information meeting sharing?
2. Why are business meetings important?
3. Write a short note on agenda of a meeting.
4. How should one decide the time and venue of meeting?

Long-Answer Questions

1. What are the different types of meeting? Discuss.
2. What are the different factors to be taken care of while conducting meetings?
3. Why is time management important in a meeting?
4. What are the common mistakes made at meetings?

FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 13 READING SKILLS

NOTES

Structure

- Introduction
- Objectives
- Effective Reading
- Approaches to Reading/Reading Styles
- Fast Reading Approach/Style
- Slow Reading Approach/Style
- Reading Process
- Essentials of Effective Reading
- Selective Reading
- Reading Rate Adjustment
- Note Taking
- Employment Communication
- Resume
- Cover Letter
- Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- Summary
- Key Words
- Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- Further Readings

INTRODUCTION

The process of communication, as we have noted earlier, encompasses all facets of human life. Every human being is almost always a member of three units—family, profession or occupation and society. Most of one's life is spent in interacting with other members associated with these spheres. An important segment of business communication, therefore, deals with career-oriented or job-related communication. From the individual's personal point of view, no other correspondence is perhaps more important than employment related correspondence.

To be able to get a job and embark on a career, two things need to happen. First, one must get an opportunity by way of an Interview call. Second, when the chance does come along, he or she should perform well on the given day. In the previous chapter, we have already noted how to prepare for the given day and make the interview a success. In this chapter, we shall deal with the first part viz. how to get the opportunity. Your letter of application, cover letter and resume are areas that need most careful treatment, for they constitute the first step in getting an employment.

OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the purpose of reading
- Discuss the types of reading
- Know about the techniques of effective reading
- Describe the guidelines of writing good resume and cover letter

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EFFECTIVE READING

Before actually beginning to read, it is important to know the purpose of reading, that is, why the reading is being done. Knowing the purpose greatly enhances the effectiveness of the reading. Also, knowledge of the purpose can help one adopt a style of reading best suited for the purpose. Some of the main purposes of reading are mentioned below:

- Pleasure and enjoyment
 - Practical application
 - To obtain an overview
 - To locate specific information
 - To identify the central idea or theme
 - To develop a detailed and critical understanding
- (i) *Pleasure and enjoyment*: This is probably the best reason to read anything. You have chosen the material for the purpose of enjoying yourself. Reading entertains you, even relaxes you. However, this will rarely be the purpose behind the reading one needs to do for academic purposes.



Fig. 13.1 Reading for Pleasure

- (ii) *Practical application*: Here the purpose is to gain information that you can apply or use in a practical situation. Books such as laboratory manuals, computer manuals, instruction booklets and *recipe books* are all texts that you would consult with the purpose of gaining specific information.

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Fig. 13.2 Practical Application of Reading

(iii) *To get an overview:* The point here is to get a general feel for the material, to determine whether it is relevant, useful, up-to-date, and to get a sense of how the topic is treated by the author. This is likely to be the main purpose behind your reading when:

- You are given an extensive reading list for an assignment.
- You are doing initial library research for an essay, tutorial, research report or similar assignments.
- You need to decide which texts are most relevant or useful for your assignment.



Fig. 13.3 Reading to Get an Overview

(iv) *To locate specific information:* Sometimes you know what you are looking for but do not know exactly where to find it. For example, you might be looking for any of the following:

- A specific quotation
- Evidence to support a particular argument
- Details about a specific person or event
- A map
- A diagram
- A statistic or table of statistics



Fig. 13.4 Reading to Gain Information

To find this sort of information might mean that you have to consult several books or sources. In these circumstances, you will be reading with the aim of zeroing in on the information you are looking for.

- (v) *To identify the central idea of theme:* The purpose here is to extract the essence of what the written material is trying to convey. For example, you might want to identify the major finding in an experimental article in a journal, or the core issue of a discussion paper.
- (vi) *To develop a detailed and critical understanding:* On many occasions, you will need to master fully the material in a book, journal article or manual so that you can evaluate its arguments, perspective, and/or evidence. This will require you to:
 - Read the material thoroughly.
 - Make effective and relevant notes.
 - Keep an open mind by being aware of your own ideas and opinions regarding the issues involved.

APPROACHES TO READING/READING STYLES

After one is aware of the purpose of reading one has to decide on the style that needs to be applied to best suit the purpose and the reading material. The approach to reading determines the basic question—‘How to read?’. There are two approaches to reading:

- Fast reading approach/style
- Slow reading approach/style

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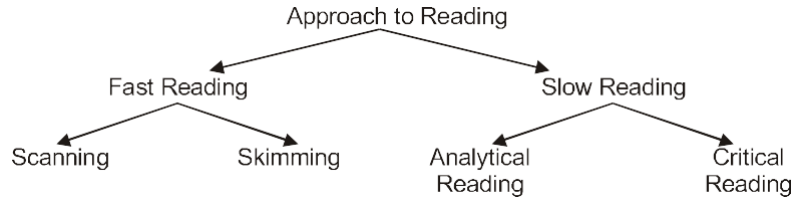


Fig. 13.5 The Various Reading Styles

To be an effective reader, one needs to use a mixture of the above techniques; varying the type of reading you employ, and the speed at which you read.

Fast Reading Approach/Style

This approach is best suited when the purpose of reading is to:

- Select the relevant material from a large quantity of reading material.
- Get an overview of what is contained in the reading material.
- Look for certain specific words, information, dates, and so on.
- Identify the core theme or message being conveyed.

Scanning and skimming are two techniques which can be used for fast reading so as to serve one or more of the purposes of fast reading.

(i) *Scanning*: Scanning is a fast reading style in which the reader examines the text to look for specific information. This type of reading is usually done for searching information through a list of numbers, addresses and supplies for a specific one. It is usually done very quickly. You just have to see the words on the page and not actually read. In fact, some people do not consider scanning as a reading technique but as a search technique. It involves merely spotting the required key words or numbers.

Scanning is extensively used while browsing the web pages to look for specific information. The following are the steps involved in the scanning process.

1. Look at the table of contents and look for the information in the chapter titles or subtitles.

INTRODUCTION	
UNIT 1 DECISIONAL RESEARCH AND RESEARCH DESIGN	3-26
Meaning of Decisional Research	
Methods of Research Design	
UNIT 2 COLLECTION AND ORGANIZATION OF DATA	27-66
Important and Scope of Statistics	
Approaches to Organization of data	

Fig. 13.6 A Table of Contents

2. If the information is not found in the chapter, titles or subtitles go to the index at the back of the book.
3. Search for the relevant topics or keywords in the index.

4. Once you find the relevant topic/keyword either in the table of contents or in the reference index at the back of the book, go to the specified page/section and read the appropriate paragraph.
5. Ascertain whether what you have read is relevant to what you need. It may be helpful to read the preceding and succeeding paragraphs as well.

Scanning also includes spotting of keywords. Spotting of keywords means looking for keywords in the given passage or paragraph. Keywords are those words which are relevant to the subject of your search. While searching for keywords pay particular attention to

- Opening paragraphs
- Subheadings
- Underlined/ Bold/ Italicized words

It is suggested to move your eyes in a ‘Z’ shaped fashion to locate the keywords, that is, begin from the top left hand corner of the page and move from left to right as you move down.

- (ii) *Skimming*: This type of reading is done when you want to identify the core/main idea of the material. It provides a broad overview of what is primarily contained in the material. It is useful for selecting relevant material which can later on be read in detail. It saves a lot of time by not spending too much time on reading what is of no relevance to the reader. It is also suitable when a lot of material has to be read in a limited amount of time. Here, one does not read word by word. It should be kept in mind that skimming is, by no means, a substitute for thorough reading; skimming should be used only to locate material quickly. No in-depth understanding of what is being read is required. Generally, it involves going through the chapter headings and subheadings, introduction and summaries.

Two basic skimming techniques have been identified:

- Start finish technique
- First sentence technique

1. *Start finish technique*. This technique involves reading the beginning and ending of each chapter, section or subsection. This technique is based on the assumption that written material is structured in three parts—introduction, body and conclusion. Also, the central theme will briefly appear in the introduction and the conclusion and will be discussed in detail in the body of the text.

It needs to be mentioned that to read the starting and finishing paragraphs, one may have to resort to the slow reading style so as to get a thorough understanding of the central theme.

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2. *First sentence technique:* This technique involves reading the first sentence of each paragraph. This technique is based on the assumption that the first few sentences or the opening sentence of each paragraph introduces the main points that will be discussed in that paragraph. Thus, reading the first sentence of each paragraph gives a fairly clear understanding of the major contents and structure of the material being read.

Slow Reading Approach/Style

Reading is an enjoyable activity but at times it becomes tedious, especially when a person reads in a language in which he is not yet familiar or fluent as his attention gets divided between the content of the message and the language itself.

Research also indicates that decoding a message is also very important, as without decoding the message the reader fails to ‘understand’ it. This is usually the case when children read without understanding what they are reading. It is only after decoding the message that learning can take place. Slow reading is required for an in-depth thorough analysis and understanding of the material. It involves paying attention to detail.

This style is best suited when the purpose of reading is to remember what has been read, analyse what has been read, follow technical instructions, to gain an in-depth understanding or to critically evaluate the material. It is used when the material being read is comparatively difficult to understand and requires to be carefully analysed. It is suitable for technical material, text containing unfamiliar words, and so on.

Analytical reading and critical reading are two slow reading techniques. **Analytical reading** involves active reading in which the reader gains an in-depth understanding of what he is reading by simultaneously analysing it.

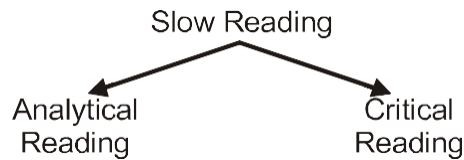


Fig. 13.7 Two Slow Reading Techniques

Critical reading involves evaluating the arguments presented by the writer.

To gain a deeper understanding of concepts it is useful to critically read the text. Critical reading provides an answer to the following questions:

- Are the arguments logical?
- Are the statements backed by adequate evidence?
- Are both sides of the case presented evenly?

Thus, a critical reader tries to answer the question of whether he agrees with the writer and if not what is his argument to counter the writer's point of view.

Check Your Progress

1. Mention the two approaches to reading.
2. Define scanning.

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READING PROCESS

One of the popular methods of reading is the known as the **SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recall, Review)** method. It involves the following steps:

1. **Survey:** This is, in fact, a pre-reading step where you survey the material prior to your actual reading by scanning the title, headings and any summaries or abstracts. Before you actually begin reading the material, skim the entire reading material. Understand the organization of the reading material by going through the title page, table of contents, preface, appendix, bibliography, and so on. Next, survey each chapter, that is, go through the chapter objectives, chapter summary, headings and subheadings. Also go through the illustrations, tables, graphs, charts, and so on. All this will help in getting an idea about what the author is trying to convey.
2. **Question:** Before reading put down specific questions you would like to have answers to. This not only clarifies your purpose of reading, but also helps you focus and remember what you have read. Turn headings given in chapters into questions. The five cardinal questions—who, why, what, where and how—need to be answered. While reading, think of these questions as this will help you concentrate on reading. At the end of the reading, again think of these questions to get an idea of how successfully they have been answered. Use the same questions during revision to help you remember what you have read.

Be an active reader. Question the author's thoughts and ideas. Read critically and do not passively accept what the writer is presenting in the text. A questioning attitude also facilitates learning.

- There are three stages in reading:
- The first is the information that is being presented on the page for all to read. This stage is called **literal recognition** because it just involves drawing literal meaning from the words of the writer.
- The second stage is **reading between the lines**, that is, inferring what the author is trying to convey through the text. This is called interpretative recognition. It involves understanding what the writer means, that is, the writer's interpretation of the text.

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- The final stage is going beyond the text and generating new and creative thoughts based on the reader’s previous knowledge, learning and experience. This is called **connective recognition**. It results in generating new ideas, solutions, looking at things with a new perspective or a change of views. Try to move to this final stage while reading so as to actually benefit from the reading.
3. **Read:** Read the material twice. Read the first time without making notes. Also compare the diagrams and illustrations with the written text. Re-read parts that are not clear. This may reduce your speed of reading a bit though. On your second reading, start to take notes, look for important details, supporting evidence and examples.
 4. **Recall:** Try to recall what you have read by closing the book and making notes of what you remember of the book. Recalling will help the reader to commit them to long-term memory. You must recall at regular intervals to check your understanding of the material.
 5. **Review:** Check to see that you have answered all the questions you wrote down at the beginning. Note down any other point that you think is important.

Reading Process

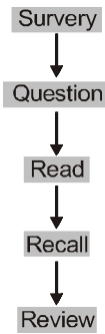


Fig. 13.8 Stages of the Reading Process

ESSENTIALS OF EFFECTIVE READING

There is a plethora of information available to us which needs to be read. To gain a competitive edge over others, one needs to know more than others and for this effective reading is vital. It is important to read quickly and also to remember and understand the information read. Some of the activities which contribute towards better reading have been summarized in the following sections. These include

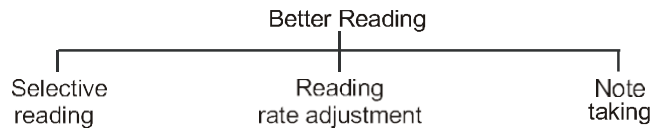


Fig. 13.9 Activities that Facilitate Better Reading

Selective Reading

Since a lot of information is available to us it is important to be selective, and thus choose only the material that is relevant to us. One of the strategies of selective reading is layered reading.

Layered reading strategy involves four stages—overview, preview, read and review.

- *Overview*: Spend about 5–10 minutes looking at the entire reading material rapidly and getting an idea about its organization, structure and contents. Overview determines whether you would want to read the material further or not.
- *Preview*: Preview each chapter at a rate of approximately 4–5 seconds per page. Mark out the relevant sections that you wish to read.
- *Read*: Read the relevant portions at a speed that you think is appropriate depending on the kind of material and the purpose.
- *Review*: After reading each chapter or section, review what you have read. This helps in better retention and understanding.

Reading Rate Adjustment

One of the keys to gaining efficiency in reading is to adjust the rate of reading as you read along depending on the difficulty level of the material and the purpose. The rate is maximum when the reading material is easy, familiar and interesting or when the material needs to be scanned or skimmed. It is at the minimum when the material is technical, difficult, unfamiliar in content and language or when it needs to be critically evaluated, analysed or retained.

There are two kinds of reading rate adjustments which may be required to be done by the reader:

- *Overall adjustment to the article as a whole*: This establishes the basic rate at which the article needs to be read depending on various factors like purpose, difficulty, level and familiarity.
- *Internal adjustment in the article*: This establishes necessary variations in the rate of reading for sections and subsections of the reading material.

One needs to decrease the rate of reading in the following situations:

- When the text contains unfamiliar words or technical jargon
- When the text has a difficult sentence and paragraph structure
- When the text consists of detailed technical information
- When the text comprises material you need to recall or retain
- When the material is in a language you are less familiar with
- When the text contains an explanation of some complicated concept

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- On the other hand, one can increase the rate of reading in the following situations:
- When the material is simple and easy
- When the text comprises familiar concepts
- When the text consists of unnecessary illustrations and examples which are not needed
- When the text contains summarization of what is contained in the previous paragraphs
- When the text contains detailed elaboration of concepts you are already familiar with

Thus, an ability to vary the rate of reading both from article to article and also within a given article is essential to become an effective reader.

Note Taking

Note taking is an important component of reading. The purpose of taking notes while reading helps you to remember what you read. It not only improves retention of the read material but also enhances understanding. In fact, good notes can save you the trouble of having to read the text again. Some points to be kept in mind while taking notes are:

- (i) Note the library classification number as well, if relevant.
- (ii) Notes should be taken down clearly and legibly because you will need to refer to them again.
- (iii) Highlight or underline the keywords as this helps in better recall. You can also underline some important sentences. However, be selective in what you underline. Only underline what is essential.
- (iv) Marginal note taking is also an effective technique. This involves writing the keywords or the central idea pertaining to each paragraph in the margin next to the text.
- (v) Avoid taking notes the first time you are reading the material. First read a part of the material and understand it. Locate the main idea and then paraphrase it in your own words.
- (vi) Avoid copying the text directly from the reading material.
- (vii) Review the notes to ensure they are logical, comprehensible and that they convey what is intended.

EMPLOYMENT COMMUNICATION

Employee Communication is perhaps one of the most important aspects in the running of day-to-day business. The success of any business depends on

communicating the right content and information to its employees to drive them towards the common goals set for the business.

Definition of employee communication

Before we delve deep into the subject, we have to ask ourselves – what is employee communication? Communication is defined as the exchange of information, feelings and ideas. Employee communication by definition in the business world, involves the communication or exchange of information, ideas, opinions and feedback with and among employees to collaborate in a work environment to achieve the desired results as set by the management and the employee.

Importance of employee communication in an organization

One can never underestimate the importance of employee communication in any organization. When employees are integral to the working of an organization, their understanding of the organizational vision, mission, goals, practices and their collaboration among each becomes key to the success of the organization.

Organizational management

An organization is its employees and therefore the effective management of the organization comes down to the quality of information communicated vertically and horizontally among its employees. Employee communication is essential for the smooth day-to-day operations of the organization, the enterprise informational system and for better internal control, eventually leading to the success of the organization.

It is equally important to introduce channels that can enable easy and fast internal communication among its employees, as it is important to ensure the quality of the information that is shared.

Resume

A person's resume is probably the first and the most important employment related document. The right resume has the potential to open doors of opportunity. Every person looking for professional success should know how to make it work. A resume is what a candidate sends along with the job application letter. A resume usually accompanies the covering letter and presents all relevant details about the candidate. A resume is also referred to as bio data or curriculum vitae (CV). A resume or a CV is a short account of one's career and qualifications typically prepared by an applicant for a position. A resume is also understood as a personal datasheet that presents the academic qualifications, job-related experience, skills and strong points of a person seeking a job.

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What a good resume achieves?

While preparing a resume, it is important to know what a good resume can achieve. A good resume helps project the person in proper light. It makes the first right impression on the employer. A good resume helps bring out the basic strengths of the individual in terms of academic achievements, job-related skills, attitude and aptitude and other relevant details in order to hold the attention of the receiver/ employer. A good, neatly prepared and a strong resume reinforces the candidate's confidence. It helps the candidate put his or her best foot forward. A good resume vies for attention and gets noticed. A good resume makes an impression even at a cursory glance. The demand and supply position in the job market being what it is, any application letter or resume competes with numerous others and only those prepared with care and elegance succeed in kindling the interest of the prospective employer. Above all, a good resume helps you get an interview call and move closer to getting the job you are seeking.

Essentials of a good resume

We have seen how crucial it is to have a good resume that gets noticed and takes the candidate closer to an interview call. Let us now look at various essentials to be kept in mind while preparing a good resume.

First and foremost, a resume will have to stand out in terms of its neatness. The presentation of details in the resume will have to be in an organized and orderly manner. Unless your handwriting is exceptionally good, it is desirable to get the resume neatly typed. Smudging, overwriting, uneven lines, ill thought out font variations and unwarranted folding will have to be eschewed. Use a good paper, pen, envelope and a superior format. Take care to do a neat job and avoid careless mistakes. A resume presents an outline and is not a detailed record. Therefore, instead of using lengthy sentences, it would be desirable to use short phrases.

Remember, your resume has to create a favorable impression. It is the first opportunity you have to impress your prospective employer. The second essential for a good resume is adequacy or completeness. The resume should cover all relevant details about the candidate which the employer will be looking for and yet it should not be loaded with too many details. The recipient will most probably be looking at hundreds or even thousands of resumes and the candidate should try to make it easy to the reader by making it brief and focused. The desirable length of a resume would perhaps vary depending on the qualifications and experience of the candidate and the nature of the post applied for. Freshers and just out-of-the-university candidates may not have much to cover, as compared to those who have had varied exposure and experience over several years. In any case, the recipient would be comfortable with a resume that does not exceed about two to four neatly typed pages. Shorter the resume, greater the chance of its being noticed and read.

In preparing a resume, a candidate is well advised to mercilessly leave out trivial or insignificant details about achievements. The resume writer has to resist the temptation to go overboard by packing the resume with too many details. Those who are just out of college may not have much to state in terms of experience and therefore will have to make a pitch in terms of their potential and employability.

Another requirement towards ensuring a good resume is accuracy of facts and figures. All details furnished in the resume should contain correct and updated information about the candidate. Care has to be taken to mention correct dates and years, names of the institutions, organizations and designation. Equally important, spelling mistakes have to be carefully avoided. Whether it is the designation of the person or the name of the organization, correctness has to be ensured.

Re-check your resume and covering letter for any grammatical and spelling errors. Also, make sure that the dates and years are accurate. Make sure that the resume is updated to cover the latest developments. Honesty and sincerity are very important ingredients of any good resume. Be truthful about your qualifications and achievements. Do not lie. Take care to project your natural self, the real you. Do not make tall claims or overstate your strengths. Any seasoned HR functionary, who keeps going through numerous resumes regularly, can easily detect an insincere and dishonest presentation of false facts and figures.

Any good resume should clearly bring out the strong points of the candidate. For doing so, the applicant should learn to look at the resume from the employer's standpoint. When a job is advertised, the employer is trying to fill up a specific vacancy or position. The position carries a certain job profile with its underlying needs. Every employer looks at the resume and tries to assess it in terms of meeting certain specific needs. The candidate's strength lies in highlighting one's own qualification, experience, skills and attitude such that it appeals to the prospective employer. Considering what the job demands, the candidate should endeavour to suggest how the candidate is equipped to add value to the job. Obviously, no employer would be keen on just offering you or anybody a job. At the same time, every employer would be keen on getting the right candidate or ensuring the right fit for the vacant post. Are you Mr Right or Ms Right? If so, try to highlight it in your resume.

Finally, make sure that the resume is appealing and distinctive. Do not use a standard pattern. Make it stand out in a crowd. Be imaginative, in terms of letterhead, presentation style, statement of objectives or understanding of employer needs. Fine-tune the presentation keeping in view the nature of the organization and the job expectations. The manner of presentation will vary depending on whether it is a public sector undertaking or a multinational company, whether it is a marketing job or an accounts job and whether it is an academic job or an administrative post.

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Finally, make sure that the resume is appealing and distinctive. Do not use a standard pattern. Make it stand out in a crowd. Be imaginative, in terms of letterhead, presentation style, statement of objectives or understanding of employer needs. Fine-tune the presentation keeping in view the nature of the organization and the job expectations. The manner of presentation will vary depending on whether it is a public sector undertaking or a multinational company, whether it is a marketing job or an accounts job and whether it is an academic job or an administrative post. In fine-tuning your resume, use keywords that go well with the job description. Use language specific to the industry or functional responsibility. At the same time, give your resume a personal touch. Take your time and make it a thorough job. Make sure that all the vital contact information such as name, mailing address, phone number and e-mail address are furnished prominently on the top right-hand corner of the covering letter/resume.

Gather and present all relevant details in a clear, correct, honest and visually appealing manner. There are indeed many ways in which resumes can be presented by job seekers. The candidate has to use discretion in selecting the details to be covered and the headings to be used. In deciding the length of the resume, sequencing of data, choice of headings and emphasis on strengths and achievements, the candidate should be guided by (1) what the advertiser specifies, (2) nature and level of the position, (3) degree of competition and (4) the level of qualification and experience of the candidate. If the occasion demands a one-page bio data rather than a detailed resume, the candidate should take care to condense the resume and present the most significant details within one page. On the other hand, where the application is for a senior position or where it calls for a relatively high level of academic or research achievements, the resume needs to cover the details in a more elaborate manner. Similarly, when the candidate is fresh out of the university or without much job experience, academic achievements and other relevant features will have to be duly highlighted.

As you add new experiences, qualifications and accomplishments, your resume has to be necessarily updated. When things change, you cannot do with the outdated resume. Constantly update your resume with new additions. In doing so, however, do not take the easy way and make hand written additions and alterations. This shows carelessness and makes your resume shabby and half-hearted. Don't ever give the impression of being lazy, clumsy and lacking in enthusiasm. Take care to reorganize and redo your resume. You should submit a new print which looks fresh, neat and professional. The impression it creates is worth the extra effort you put in. As already noted, resumes should be customized depending upon the job requirements. For that purpose, the job applicant should emphasize those facts and accomplishments which are particularly relevant for the particular job.

As one moves up the career ladder and gains varied exposure and experience, one would have acquired substantial values which have to be imaginatively packaged in the resume. Whichever format or style the candidate uses, it should clearly bring out the strong points. While bringing out the academic qualifications, all significant achievements, such as ranks, scores and grades as well as merit scholarships, if any, will have to be properly highlighted. On the other hand, if the grades or scores are not very impressive, the candidate should underplay them without resorting to conspicuous omissions.

Types of resumes

Resumes are prepared in different formats. Broadly speaking, they may be chronological or functional, or a combination of these two. Chronological resumes present the details in a historical order, in a timeline. They follow a linear approach. Traditionally, they would proceed in a progressive manner starting with the early history or beginnings and move on to the current position. The more common approach, however, is the reverse chronological resume, where you start with the latest or present position and move backwards. Achronological resume is desirable when the person has progressed gradually over a period of time.

Functional resumes do not follow any timeline approach and instead focus on skills and responsibilities. A functional resume is also referred to as a skill-based resume. Functional resumes are useful when several skills have been acquired or several positions held within a short period of time. The combination resume follows a mixed approach highlighting skills and experiences and also providing work experience during different periods. Depending upon the length of experience, career advancements, academic study, skills, achievements and responsibilities, the type of resume should be decided.

The headings or captions under which details are furnished could be many and varied. While some of them covering personal details and academic qualifications would be common to most of the resumes, the other headings may or may not be relevant, depending upon the age and experience of the candidate and the nature and responsibilities of the post.

Make a List of All Items Before you start writing your resume, it would be a good idea to put together all relevant aspects about yourself. Start from the beginning and move up to your latest position. The list you draw up should cover:

- (a) Academic achievements including the schools and colleges attended
- (b) Areas of study and specialization
- (c) Marks scored, grades achieved and distinctions, if any
- (d) Extra-curricular activities and sports
- (e) Computer skills

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- (f) Languages known
- (g) Hobbies and special interests
- (h) Special studies and courses taken
- (i) Employment details and work experience
- (j) Career related contributions and achievements
- (k) Core competencies
- (l) Skills and expertise acquired
- (m) Technical competencies
- (n) Professional education
- (o) Professional accreditations, licenses and certificates
- (p) Memberships and affiliations
- (q) Seminars and workshops attended
- (r) Awards and honors
- (s) Publications, papers and research
- (t) Consultancy and speaking assignments
- (u) Prominent training programs and institutions
- (v) Hobbies and interests
- (w) Personal details and contact address
- (x) Community service and
- (y) References.

Career related contributions and achievements would find expression in the resumes as follows:

1. Have brought new high value/ corporate customers
2. Have introduced several cost-cutting measures
3. Have contributed to improvements in productivity and operational efficiency
4. Have developed a product development team
5. Have contributed research papers to prominent journals
6. Have trained several batches of new recruits.
7. Have led a team of software developers

This attempt at drawing up an exhaustive list ensures that nothing of importance is left out. Of course, the number of items to be included from this list for each candidate would vary depending upon the level of experience, professional standing and breadth of accomplishments. This wealth of information would certainly

help in picking up relevant items and customizing the resume keeping in view the job description.

Further, a comprehensive list prepared and kept ready would also be helpful in preparing application forms and also while preparing for the interview. This list acts as a worksheet. In preparing the final resume, however, the communicator should pick up only relevant details, rearrange the order and priorities, convert facts into accomplishments/ substance statements and highlight the most important ones.

A word of caution in this context about personal details is essential. Although in the Indian context, the resumes provide personal details such as age, date of birth, marital status, etc. , in some countries abroad such details are to be avoided. For example, if the resume is meant to be used in applying to a position in the USA, such details have to be omitted. Essential facts such as email address, mailing address and contact numbers, and other professionally relevant details should be included in the resume. It is also worth noting that in the U.S, even during the interviews, the interviewers refrain from asking questions about age, marital status, religion, etc.

A suggested list of captions or headings appropriate for resumes in general is given below:

1. Personal details
2. Academic qualifications
3. Academic distinctions
4. Work experience
5. Areas of specialization
6. Career-related achievements
7. Seminars and workshops
8. Papers and publications
9. Membership of boards and committees
10. Guest faculty
11. Consultancy
12. Computer/Technical skills
13. Languages known
14. Marital status
15. Hobbies and interests
16. References

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DOs and DON'Ts of Resume Writing

Dos

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1. Make your resume stand out. Clearly bring out your strong points.
2. Your resume creates your first impression. Make it neat, error-free and professional.
3. Keep your resume short. Should not normally exceed 2-3 pages.
4. Make a comprehensive list of your qualifications, experience, competencies, skills, etc. before writing your resume.
5. Choose headings that reflect your strength and match the employer needs.
6. Make your resume factually accurate and up-to-date.
7. Choose the right format and keep your font professional and appealing.
8. Re-check your resume for grammatical errors and inconsistencies.

Don'ts

1. Do not boast or exaggerate. Never insert lies.
2. Don't use big and pompous words. Use key words used in the profession.
3. Don't use lengthy sentences. Use catchy phrases.
4. Don't give the contact numbers or a mailing address on which you cannot be reached.
5. Don't use words, fonts, colors and styles which make the resume gaudy and unprofessional.
6. While updating don't just squeeze in additions. Rewrite and reprint.
7. Don't make critical comments on your previous job/superiors.
8. Don't highlight achievements which you cannot substantiate.

Cover Letter

It is very important to include the cover letter while sending your resume/CV. Such a letter introduces you and explains your purpose. It introduces the major points in your CV. It makes it easier for the employer to take action. Since it is your introduction to the employer, it is important that the covering letter is impressive. A cover letter should be customized to suit the particular position you are applying for.

Cover letters, also referred to as application letter, are of two types:

- Solicited application letter
- Unsolicited application letter

A solicited application letter is written when you are sending your CV in response to an advertised vacancy, that is, when applications have been called for by an organization.

An unsolicited application is written when you are sending your CV for an unadvertised job position in an organization.

Purpose of the cover letter

- (i) A cover letter is essential because of the following reasons.
- (ii) A cover letter gives a personal touch to the CV.
- (iii) A cover letter helps the reader focus on your strengths, experience and qualification.
- (iv) A cover letter reflects basic professional courtesy and, thus, creates a positive impact of you as a professional.
- (v) Sometimes you may be sending a CV in response to a telephonic or face-to-face conversation you had with the concerned person. In such a case, the cover letter acts as a reminder of the conversation. It is also possible that the envelope containing your CV will be opened by someone other than the person you have spoken to. In such a case, a cover letter ensures that the CV reaches the right person.

Format of the cover letter

The length of a cover letter has to be limited to a single page. The most commonly used format for a cover letter is 'Full Block' format. There are four main components of a cover letter:

- Address and salutation
- An opening to catch the attention
- The main body
- A closing that induces action

Address and Salutation

In the case of solicited applications, the application letter is addressed to the person mentioned in the advertisement. In the case of a blind advertisement, that is, when only the Box Number of the address is mentioned and the name of the organization is not disclosed, you have to address the letter to the newspaper/magazine in which the advertisement appeared and use a generic salutation like 'Dear Director'.

However, in the case of unsolicited applications, address your letter to an individual and not to the organization. Try and find out the name of the individual to be addressed rather than addressing an individual by his designation. Use the

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correct spelling of the name and the correct designation. In the salutation, use Dear Ms/Mr/ Dr followed by the person's last name.

Do not address a person by his first name. If you are a fresher or are entering the organization at a comparatively junior position you may use the salutation "Dear Sir".

Opening

The opening has to catch the attention of the reader. For a solicited application, use a direct approach wherein you mention the position for which you are applying and give the reference of the advertisement in response to which you are applying. For unsolicited applications, you may begin by mentioning why you are applying for the position. In case there is a reference involved, mention that.

Body

The body consists of one or two paragraphs. It gives information about your current job and summarizes in a couple of lines your qualification and experience. It mentions your strengths and your suitability for the position you are applying for.

Closing

Close the letter with a request for an interview. Mention that you are enclosing the CV. It is a good practice to mention your contact phone number, address as well as your email address in the last paragraph or below your name at the close of the letter. Use standard complimentary close such as 'sincerely'. Do not forget to sign your name using a black or blue pen. Also mention the enclosed documents (CV and other documents if any).

E-mail cover letter

It is increasingly becoming the practice to send the CV through e-mail. While applying for a position through e-mail, copy and paste your cover letter in the e-mail message. Like printed cover letters, an e-mail cover letter should have a formal salutation and closing. It serves the same purpose as the print cover letter, only the mode of sending it is different. Therefore, it needs to possess all the characteristics of the print cover letter.

However, in the case of the e-mail cover letter, one needs to clearly mention the subject line which should include the job position you are applying for.

Send your CV as an MS Word attachment. Do not forget to attach your CV. This is a very common mistake. Some employers do not accept attachments. They ask you to paste the CV on to your e-mail message. In such a case, keep the formatting of the CV very simple so as to make it readable.

Use the spell check to check the grammar and capitalization. There is a tendency to be informal in e-mail communication. But it is important to ensure that you maintain a formal tone

Guidelines for writing a cover letter

The following are some of the guidelines to be followed while writing a covering letter:

- (i) Address it to the relevant person in the organization. It is desirable to personalize the letter by addressing it to the individual by name rather than to the department or organization in general. Ensure the correct spelling of the name, title and address.
- (ii) Specify clearly that your aims, qualifications and experience meet the requirements of the post.
- (iii) Specify the position advertised, the date of the advertisement and the name of the publication in which the advertisement was printed.. If someone has referred you, name that person.
- (iv) Emphasize and elaborate your strong points especially those relevant to the job.
- (v) Maintain a formal approach in the cover letter.
- (vi) Be concise and clear.
- (vii) Keep your letter neat, well-spaced and in short paragraphs.
- (viii) Check the spelling and grammar of the letter.
- (ix) Confine your letter to the one-page, A4, white-colour paper.
- (x) Give your full name in the cover letter and remember to sign the letter.
- (xi) Keep a copy of the cover letter for your future reference.

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Check Your Progress

3. Define communication.
4. What is a resume?
5. What are the two types of cover letter?

ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. The two approaches to reading are fast reading approach and slow reading approach.
2. Scanning is a fast reading style in which the reader examines the text to look for specific information.
3. Communication is defined as the exchange of information, feelings and ideas.

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4. A resume or a CV is a short account of one's career and qualifications typically prepared by an applicant for a position.
5. The two types of cover letters are solicited application letter and unsolicited application letter.

SUMMARY

- After one is aware of the purpose of reading one has to decide on the style that needs to be applied to best suit the purpose and the reading material. The approach to reading determines the basic question—'How to read?'
- Scanning is a fast reading style in which the reader examines the text to look for specific information. This type of reading is usually done for searching information through a list of numbers, addresses and supplies for a specific one.
- Skimming is done when you want to identify the core/main idea of the material.
- Reading is an enjoyable activity but at times it becomes tedious, especially when a person reads in a language in which he is not yet familiar or fluent as his attention gets divided between the content of the message and the language itself.
- Research also indicates that decoding a message is also very important, as without decoding the message the reader fails to 'understand' it.
- One of the popular methods of reading is the known as the SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recall, Review) method.
- To gain a competitive edge over others, one needs to know more than others and for this effective reading is vital.
- Layered reading strategy involves four stages—overview, preview, read and review.
- Note taking is an important component of reading. The purpose of taking notes while reading helps you to remember what you read. It not only improves retention of the read material but also enhances understanding.
- A person's resume is probably the first and the most important employment related document. The right resume has the potential to open doors of opportunity.
- Resumes are prepared in different formats. Broadly speaking, they may be chronological or functional, or a combination of these two.
- It is very important to include the cover letter while sending your resume/ CV. Such a letter introduces you and explains your purpose. It introduces the major points in your CV.

KEY WORDS

- **Scanning:** Scanning is reading a text quickly in order to find specific information, e.g. figures or names. It can be contrasted with skimming, which is reading quickly to get a general idea of meaning.
- **Skimming:** *Skimming* is reading a text quickly to get a general idea of meaning. It can be contrasted with scanning, which is reading in order to find specific information, e.g. figures or names
- **CV:** A summary of a job applicant's professional experience and educational background, along with other relevant information regarding the candidate's qualifications.

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SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What are the main purposes of reading?
2. What are the steps involved in scanning?
3. What are the essentials of effective reading?
4. Write a short note on cover letter.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the different approaches to reading.
2. What are the steps involved in SQ3R reading?
3. What are the essentials of a good resume? Discuss.
4. Explain the Dos and Don'ts of resume writing.

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UNIT 14 EMPLOYMENT COMMUNICATION

NOTES

Structure

Introduction
Objectives
Importance and Factors Involved in a Job Interview
 Factors Involved in a Job Interview
Job Interview Process/Techniques
Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
Summary
Key words
Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
Further Readings

INTRODUCTION

Interviews consist of yet another significant facet of social and business communication. Interviews take place between individuals, or individuals and organizations, and are always goal oriented. Interviews relate to a meeting, often on a formal note, where some kind of an information gathering and assessment takes place. The objective of any interview is to find out as much as possible/necessary about a person or an event. There are two parties to any interview—the interviewer and the interviewee. The interviewer elicits information with a view to making an assessment of the interviewee through the interview process. The objective of an interview, in its broader sense, is to gather details and elicit relevant information by talking to the interviewee, and thereafter making an assessment, appraisal or evaluation about the suitability of the candidate for the offer or position available with the interviewer. Although most interviews take place through formal meetings and discussions, there are also occasions when there are no personal meetings, like in the case of a telephonic interview.

Interviews are always goal oriented. The need for interview arises because there is a choice. The need for interview arises because there is competition, and because there are limited vacancies for a large number of aspirants. The purpose of the interview is to assess suitability and make a selection and get the most suitable candidate. The purpose of the interview is to meet, talk, discuss, evaluate, counsel and sort out.

OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the importance of job interview

- Discuss the manners and etiquettes to be maintained during an interview
- Know about the questions commonly asked during interview

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IMPORTANCE AND FACTORS INVOLVED IN A JOB INTERVIEW

A job offer is also a potentially life-altering event that needs careful deliberation. Job interviews provide an opportunity for you and your potential employer to decide how well your skills align with the company's needs. Job interviews allow you to get better acquainted with prospective colleagues and obtain information to help you decide if that job is the right one for you.

The interview's function is to confirm two important things, both for the organization and for the candidate him/herself:

1. If the candidate is capable to do a job successfully?
2. Does the candidate align with the organization and the job?

14.2.1 Factors Involved in a Job Interview

Hitherto we have looked at the process of interview largely from the interviewee's perspective. Let us now move to the other side of the table and look at the interview process from the interviewer's perspective. Over a period of time, the job-seeking interviewee gets a job, gains experience and moves up the career ladder. The person then becomes a manager, an executive, a faculty member, an HR functionary or a subject matter specialist, and gets an opportunity to be a part of the interview panel and conduct interviews. Moving up further in the hierarchy, on attaining a senior level position, he or she gets designated as the chairperson of the interview committee. Conducting any interview efficaciously is a valuable skill for any career-oriented person. Likewise, people who are good at interviewing are also frequently called upon to serve as members of the interview panel. The following guidelines may be kept in view while conducting an interview.

Be Well Informed

The interviewer should be well informed about the organization, the nature of the post, the number of vacancies, the number of candidates being interviewed and other such relevant information that is so essential for making the interview worthwhile. In particular, the interviewer should be quite clear about the job requirements and traits that are very essential for carrying out the duties and responsibilities associated with the post. The interviewer should also have a fair idea about the job market and the demand-supply position.

Homework Helps

By homework, what is meant in this context is the preparatory reading concerning the assignment. It would mean reading the advertisement calling for applications in

order to know the relevant details. It would mean knowing what kind of screening has already taken place before sending interview call letters to the candidates. It would also mean taking a quick look at the resume or biodata of the candidates being interviewed.

Understand Your Role

If you are the only interviewer, the role is well defined. If you are a member of the interview panel or the interview committee, then it is essential to know what is your specific role. Are you the chairperson or a member of the committee, legal expert, economist, IT expert, etc.? If you are a subject specialist, your questions will be confined, by and large, to your area of specialization. The chairperson and other members will normally expect you to ask questions that will bring out conceptual clarity, depth of understanding and technical competence of the candidates. If you are the head of the department where the candidate on selection will be posted, you will have to particularly assess the candidate's suitability to meet the specific job requirements.

As the chairperson of the interview panel, however, you have the overall responsibility of ensuring that the interviews are time bound and result oriented. You have to coordinate the efforts of the other members on the panel. You have to do the balancing in such a way that every candidate gets to answer an appropriate mix of questions. You have to take the initiative and be in command of the situation. You will have to talk to the other members of the panel beforehand and arrive at a consensus, as regards the modalities of conducting the interview. You will have to greet the candidates as they come in and help them settle down. You will have to pass the baton to the other members. You will have to moderate the interview by intervening as and when desirable.

At the end, it is the chairperson who conveys to the candidate that the interview has concluded. After the interview, the chairperson of the committee consults with colleagues and draws up the final list of candidates based on the interview performance. The chairperson takes the responsibility of conducting the interviews and finalizing the results thereof.

Put Them at Ease

The interviewer has to put the candidate at ease before shooting off questions. The candidates can be asked some preliminary personal questions that will help them settle down and establish a wavelength with the interviewer/interview panel. If need be, refer to the resume and seek details and clarifications. Any interview is an interactive process and can progress well when both the parties are comfortable with each other.

Test Knowledge, Not Ignorance

The interviewers should focus on testing the knowledge of the candidate and not the level of ignorance. The knowledge level of any person can only be limited. In

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any interview, it is possible to ask questions that leave the candidate baffled and demoralized. Questions must, however, be asked with a view to bring out the expanse of understanding and depth of knowledge relevant to the job on offer. At the same time, too many unrelated questions, especially when the candidate pleads ignorance, are best avoided. One good way of testing the knowledge is to make the questions progressively tougher. Start with the easier ones and move on to the searching questions.

Supply of Questions

Interviews comprise questions aimed at bringing forth the knowledge, understanding, aptitude, preparedness, attitude and suitability of the candidates. In order to facilitate asking relevant questions, the interviewer also should be equipped adequately. A mental note should be made, or if need be a written list, of questions that would be appropriate for the interview. This exercise will be of help in many ways. First, the interviewer will have an adequate supply of questions which can be put to the candidates till the end without resorting to repeat questions. Second, the interviewer will be in a position to have a vast expanse covering all important areas germane to the specific interview. More importantly, as the questions are pooled together in advance, the interviewer also thinks up the correct answers, which makes the evaluation easy. After all, if 30 candidates have to be interviewed for about 15-20 minutes each, there has to be a ready supply of a fairly large number of relevant questions available on tap.

Listening Skills

Like it is for the interviewee, for the interviewer too, good listening skills are relevant. The interviewer will be facing a host of candidates during the course of the day. These candidates may come from different economic and social backgrounds, geographical regions and language groups. They may have varied accent, pronunciation and speaking style. They may or may not be well organized and articulate. The interviewer, therefore, will have to be quite focused to comprehend what the candidates are stating and prompt them as and when required. By active listening, the interviewer contributes to the success of this interactive process.

Follow a Process of Elimination

In respect of most of the interviews, the number of candidates appearing for the interview is quite large in relation to the jobs available. In order to do justice to the interview process, the interviewer will have to choose the most suitable candidates; this is also termed as the final selection zone of candidates. In other words, the interviewer will have to consciously eliminate all those candidates falling short of the qualifying zone. When the candidates are many and the number of posts limited, the final selection can be a very challenging task. Limiting this final number by eliminating the non-qualifiers would be of great help.

Finalize the Performance Rating Matrix Beforehand

After every interview, there is an evaluation. This evaluation has to be done taking into account all the relevant parameters. The selection or performance rating matrix should be clearly defined before the interview commences. In doing so, due consultations should take place among the interview panel members themselves, as also between the interviewers and the organization/department for which recruitment is taking place. In the ultimate analysis, selection is a matching process. The job profile and the candidate profile should agree with each other. Mismatches should be avoided. In order to achieve this, the interview evaluation sheet has to be finalized in advance, clearly stating the parameters and their relative weightages. All parameters may or may not carry equal marks. Both would vary depending upon whether it is an entry-level job or a senior position, customer-oriented job or a file-pushing job or a technical job or a managerial job. Relevant attributes and requirements would be evaluated.

Performance rating parameters would generally include:

1. Academic qualification
2. Knowledge
3. Personality
4. Experience
5. Publications
6. Age and fitness
7. Family background
8. Motivation
9. Emotional strength
10. Attitude
11. Communications skills
12. Teamwork
13. Computer literacy
14. General knowledge

It should also be kept in mind that quite often interview performance is only one of the criteria and not the sole criterion for the selection. Interview evaluation sheet, therefore, should contain only those parameters which can be evaluated through the interview. Other details would constitute background information to the interviewers.

Conduct with Dignity

Interviewers generally have the responsibility of ensuring that the interviews are conducted in a purposeful and orderly manner. Inordinate delays, whimsical questions, questions that get too personal or which carry sexist bias, statements

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which denigrate candidates, impertinent jokes, temperamental outbursts and other such undesirable indulgences have to be strictly avoided. The candidates often look upon members of the interview panel with respect and admiration and hence they have to live up to that image. Interrupting the other colleague, argumentation, boastful statements and the airing of unconnected personal views should also be eschewed while conducting the interview. On the positive side, every effort must be made to ensure that the interviews are a pleasant experience for both the parties.

The Ultimate Test

Interviewers should be conscious of the fact that any interview carries with it an onerous responsibility. It has implications on the future of the organization as well as on the aspirations of the candidates. Also, the organization concerned is reposing faith in the interview panel in making an objective and merit-based recommendation. The interview process has to measure up in terms of justice and fair play. The candidates appearing for the interview should perceive it to be fair, objective and unbiased. The ultimate test for any interviewer is an affirmative answer to the question, 'Do the best of the candidates make it?'

In sum, any job interview is a sensitive and interactive goal-oriented communication process. The organization concerned as well as the interviewers on the one hand, and interviewees on the other, have to put in their earnest efforts to make the process fair and effective.

Characteristics of a job interview

1. Come to the interview well prepared with background knowledge of the subject, familiarity with your recording equipment, a consent form that the interviewee will sign giving you permission to use the tape recorded interview for research purposes.
2. Make the narrator as comfortable as possible; polite, friendly behavior will put your interviewee at ease. Interviews should not begin abruptly.
3. Take time to find a quiet spot in which to conduct the interview.
4. Begin the interview with a few simple questions that the interviewee can answer easily and comfortably.
5. Ask questions one at a time and do not rush the interviewee to respond. Allow the interviewee time to think and respond.
6. Speak clearly so that the interviewee can easily understand and hear you.
7. Ask as many open ended questions as possible. These questions encourage the interviewee to tell stories rather than providing yes/no responses.
8. When constructing your questions, write them in clear, plain English. Remember that your interviewees are not academics.
9. Respond appropriately to the interviewee. Pause or say something like "that must have been difficult" if the interviewee describes a painful memory.

Also, if the interviewee is clearly overcome by emotion, ask if they would like to take a break and/or stop the interview and return to it later.

10. Do not contradict or correct your interviewee and keep your personal opinions to yourself as much as possible.
11. Do not rush the end of the interview. Have a good closing question that helps the interviewee summarize or come to a conclusion.

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Check Your Progress

1. What are the factors that an interviewer should be informed about before taking an interview?
2. Mention any two performance rating parameters of an interview.

JOB INTERVIEW PROCESS/TECHNIQUES

Job interviews constitute the last leg of the career selection process for any candidate. Job seekers would have probably completed the following steps in their quest for jobs before getting a call letter for the interview.

1. Identifying the job opportunity
2. Sending an application
3. Resume or Biodata
4. Testimonials
5. References
6. Group discussions

Since choosing the right career is very important for every individual, conscious efforts have to be made in every aspect of the job-seeking effort cited above. The final selection would be a culmination of all these efforts. A good resume, strong testimonials, appropriate references and effective participation in the group discussions together facilitate a high level of confidence as the candidate faces the interview.

Interviewers are normally provided the biodata, testimonials, references and brief report on their performance in the group discussion as reference material for the interview. Any extra care the candidate takes in these areas would certainly provide that welcome edge in facing the interview panel.

Given the significance of performing at one's best at the interview, the preparation has to start well in advance and should cover many areas. The knowledge-related and subject-specific inputs apart, success in the interview calls for a positive orientation, high level of self-confidence, active listening, effective communication, pleasing disposition, noticeable interpersonal skills and the right temperament.

In the following paragraphs, we look at the various aspects that need keen attention prior to, during and after the interview.

Manners and Etiquettes to be Maintained during an Interview

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1. Do Your Homework

Preparation for the interview starts with good homework. Try to learn as much as you can about the organization. What is its line of business, track record, strengths and weaknesses, hierarchical structure, values and future plans? Then find out the details about the job on offer—number of vacancies, place of posting, remuneration package, work culture, job description and attributes sought and so on.

Make sure that the job on offer is what you are looking for, or at least what you will settle for. You should ask yourself the following questions. Are you qualified? Do you possess the skills required to take up the job on offer? Are you confident that you will measure up to the expectations of the company? Suitability for the job is very essential. In essence, the interview panel would be looking for candidates who match the job profile. Make sure that you collect the relevant details about the organization and the job on offer and that it fits your aspirations. If yes, start your preparation in right earnest. If not, do not waste your time and the interviewers' time. When the job on offer matches your expectations, seize every opportunity to provide the most important information about yourself and clearly show your enthusiasm and inclination.

2. Anticipate Questions

After learning the basic facts about the organization and the job, get ready to face the interviewers' questions. Put yourself in their shoes and try to anticipate questions. Questions will be of different types. They may be general or specific. They may be fact-related or opinion-related. They may be personal or professional. They may be knowledge oriented or attitude oriented. They may be primary or first time questions or follow-up questions. They may be hypothetical or leading questions. They may be easy or tough. They could even be tricky and provocative. The questions may cover the details you have mentioned in your application and resume. Think of all the likely questions and the right way of answering them. It would be a good idea to write down answers to questions you anticipate and expect to answer.

Broadly speaking, interview related questions fall into certain major categories as below:

1. Education and Academic Study
2. Work Experience
3. Job Knowledge and Skills
4. Self-Assessment
5. Personality and Temperament
6. Organizations or Employers
7. General Knowledge and Awareness.

Some Questions Commonly Asked During Interview

*Employment
Communication*

Some typical questions are as follows:

1. What would you like to say about yourself? Describe yourself.
2. Why do you consider yourself suitable for this job?
3. Why are you leaving your present job?
4. Why have you changed so many jobs?
5. What kind of a career are you seeking?
6. What will you do if you get a better offer?
7. What are your strengths and weaknesses?
8. Which are your noteworthy failures? What lessons have you learnt from those failures?
9. Are you prepared to work in any place?
10. Given your qualifications and experience, should you not be looking for a higher level position?
11. Why are you not seeking a job in line with the subjects you have studied?
12. In which extra-curricular activities have you excelled?
13. Describe your greatest accomplishment in college.
14. What significant contribution have you made in your previous jobs?
15. Why should we prefer you over somebody who has more experience?
16. Tell us three good reasons as to why we should hire you.
17. This job calls for high levels of initiative and hard work. Can you measure up?
18. How good are you in working under pressure? Can you handle stress?
19. How tech savvy are you? Are you comfortable working in a computerized environment?
20. How well can you work as a member of a team? Tell us how you have demonstrated your team working abilities.
21. What are your career goals? Where do you see yourself in the next 5 or 10 years?
22. Why have you been without a job for so long?
23. Are you willing to work if we offer you a different/ lower level position?
24. What kind of books do you read, music you like and what is your favourite pastime?
25. What do you know about our organization?
26. Who are your role models? Why?

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These are just some examples. Depending on the type of organization and nature and level of position you are seeking, the questions can get more penetrating. There could be questions based on your answers. The questions would normally cover your (1) academic qualifications, (2) work experience, (3) extra-curricular activities, (4) personal contribution, (5) subject knowledge, (6) general business awareness, (7) management concepts, (8) health and fitness (9) likes, dislikes and biases and (10) ability to cope with higher responsibilities and stress.

Remember, while it is helpful to anticipate the probable questions and prepare the answers, it is prudent to be in readiness to face unanticipated questions.

3. Don't Get Worked Up

It is very necessary that the candidate keeps his/her cool when getting ready to face the interview. While some legitimate concerns are perhaps unavoidable considering what is at stake, getting unduly worked up should be consciously avoided. This is true of all important interviews, be they job interviews, promotion interviews or assignment selection interviews. Too much of tension and edginess starts showing up and gives a wrong message to the interviewer. The candidate should not get unduly worried about the type of preparations made by other competitors. Similarly, the candidate should not get tensed up about areas which have not been covered during the preparation. If you are composed and in control of yourself, you will think of the right reply. Try to be at ease with yourself. It helps you become more attentive, listen well and organize your thoughts better as you face the panel.

4. Reach on Time

Reach well in time for the interview. This is an obvious, yet very essential requirement. It gives you sufficient time to find the exact venue, get used to the ambience and be comfortable. Arriving late for the interview may lead to guilt feelings and put you at a disadvantage, besides creating an unfavourable impression on the interviewer. If the place of interview is in a city/area with which you are not very familiar, make sure to either visit the place earlier or start sufficiently early. Reaching late and entering the hall sweating profusely gives you a bad start.

5. Physical Appearance

Any interview is much more than a question-and-answer session. For the candidate, it is actually the challenge of marketing oneself. Given this reality, the overall impression a candidate makes on the interview panel assumes significance. The candidate makes the first impression on presentation of oneself. It is axiomatic that attire oft proclaims a man/woman, especially in a serious appointment like an interview. It is very necessary, therefore, that the candidate dresses well for the occasion. It may be a suit, a tie, a full sleeve shirt and other accessories that make the candidate look smart. Being well dressed for the interview gives the message that one is keen on creating the right impression. After reaching the venue, the

candidate should look at the mirror and make sure that he or she is presentable. Although what dress is appropriate for the particular interview may depend on the nature of the organization, category of the post, the climate and such other factors, it is very essential that the appearance is not casual.

There is one more reason why a candidate should dress well for the interview. That is on account of the level of confidence it generates for the candidate. Imagine an interview for a senior post where most of the other candidates are in a suit and you are in your slacks. May be if you are really smart, you may still do well, but then it all depends on how the interviewer interprets it. It is important to be self-confident. It is always desirable to avoid the feeling that you are likely to be at a disadvantage for being under-dressed for the occasion. If you are not comfortable and at ease with a suit or a tie, get used to it by practising it well in advance. At the same time, if somebody is better dressed than you, let it not deter you from making your best effort. How you feel about yourself is what matters. Feed your self-confidence.

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6. Appropriate Body Language

Looks apart, there are several dimensions to body language. The candidate for the interview should be conscious of them. Right posture, alert look, firm handshake, not looking nervous, confident and clear voice and appropriate eye contact help create the right impression. Slouching, drooping, sitting with a hunchback, fidgeting, blinking and shaking the legs create a negative impression. When you are facing an interviewer, avoid negative body language and distracting gestures. Scratching your head, pursing your lips, staring at your palms, examining your nails, picking your nose, and rolling your tongue are all best avoided. More than anything else, it is important to wear a smile. A smile projects as well as reinforces confidence.

7. Build a Rapport

Try to build a rapport with the interviewer or the members of the interview panel. This can be done by looking confident, smiling, greeting and a firm handshake. This should be done not just with the chairman of the interview panel, but with the other members as well. Establish eye contact with and reply to the person who has asked you a question. Be conscious of your mannerisms. Refrain from making statements such as 'You have got me wrong', 'You have not understood me', 'What you are saying is not correct', 'It is impertinent' and the like. Don't look either grim or casual. Do not interrupt them when they are speaking to each other.

8. Understand the Question

Make sure that you have understood the question. This is possible when you are attentive. Active listening is very essential. Let the interviewer complete the question. Do not be in a hurry. Do not interrupt. If you do not interrupt, there is a possibility that the interviewer will give you some hints of what he/she is driving at. However, after the question has been put forth, if you are not clear about it, feel free to seek

a clarification. In doing so, be polite. State what you have understood and seek a confirmation. For example, ‘Sir, as I understand, you want me to...’.

9. Reply Earnestly

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Organize your thoughts quickly and give earnest replies. State whatever you know with confidence. Give correct facts and figures. Avoid mixing up figures. State clearly the lakhs, millions, the crores, the dollars or any other statistics unambiguously. Bring out not only your knowledge or depth of understanding of the subject, but also your attitude and concerns. As far as possible, use positive words. Use bright, sharp and appropriate words relevant to the discipline or profession. Be assertive, but avoid extreme positions. There are some questions in which it is possible to hold different views, which means that a very rigid, ‘anything else is incorrect’ type of statement is to be refrained from. Keep balance. Make your reply as brief or as long as the interviewer expects. For this, take the clue from the way the question is worded. When questions are tricky, take your time in organizing your thoughts.

10. Confidentiality

There are occasions when working in an organization, the employee comes into the possession of confidential information. Such information – whether it is product related, process related, performance related or client related – should not be leaked out to outsiders, especially competitors, for it harms the interest of the organization. Most companies ask their employees to sign a confidentiality agreement. Even otherwise, when an employee works for any organization, there is always an implicit promise of confidentiality. This promise of confidentiality, whether explicit or implicit, should not be breached. That means, in answering the interview questions, the interviewee should protect the interest of the current/previous employer and refrain from disclosing such confidential information. All ethically minded interviewers/ organizations do appreciate that and do not expect the interviewee to disclose any information that is organization-specific and confidential in nature. That apart, there would be a natural presumption that an employee who cannot keep things confidential for his current or previous employer is unlikely to do so about the future employers too. The candidate’s credibility or trustworthiness takes a beating. The trick, therefore, lies in answering questions in a manner that reflects the candidate’s experience and accomplishments without leaking out confidential matters or offending the interviewers.

11. Be Sincere, Truthful and Well Mannered

Answer what you know for sure with confidence. State when you are in doubt. Don’t ever tell a blatant lie, hoping that it will go undetected. Admit that you don’t know the answer, if that is the position. If you know part of the answer, state that in clear terms and if you are guessing the rest, state so. The interviewer accepts that you know some and do not know some, but no interviewer will accept deliberate lies. Credibility is important. Some interviewers will even encourage

you to make false statements so that you talk yourself into a trap. Be sincere and truthful.

Impress the interviewer with your good manners. That is very important. Especially so when you are just out of the college and are facing your first job interview. Good manners counts a lot in dealing with colleagues, superiors, customers and other business associates. Manners make a man or woman look pleasant.

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12. Do Not Offend the Interviewer

As an interviewee one should conduct oneself in such a way that the interviewer is not, for any reason, offended. Argumentation should be avoided. Be assertive without being offensive. If you disagree with the interviewer, or if you hold a diametrically opposite point of view, bring it out as your experience or understanding. Never ever unnecessarily correct the interviewer's observations or challenge statements. Remember, you are not keen on winning the argument if it means losing the interview.

If you want to create the right impression, do not interrupt your interviewer. Wait till he finishes talking, even if he has interrupted you. You create a good impression by being a good listener. A good listener allows the other person to finish what he or she starts telling. You stop talking when the interviewer starts to speak even when you are not finished.

13. Do Not Brag

Do state your achievements, contributions and strong points, as and when called for, but keep it in perspective. Avoid loud mouthing and pompous or boastful statements. Braggarts, or those who blow their own trumpets, do not find favour with the interviewers. Do not overstate your achievements. Gracefully accept your shortcomings and weaknesses. State the efforts you are making to overcome them, if there is an opportunity. Give due credit to the teamwork, favourable circumstances and such other factors that helped you perform well. Honest self-assessment always carries a favourable impression. At the same time, don't miss the right opportunity to mention your high points.

14. Avoid Long Pauses

Take your time to organize your thoughts and give your replies. When you are asked a question, you are not expected to reply immediately. A small pause as you mentally formulate your reply, in fact, results in well thought out answers. When you take some time to collect your thoughts, the interviewer appreciates your earnestness. All the same, avoid long pauses. Long pauses lead to communication breakdown and result in an awkward situation. Keep the conversation going. Sometimes the panel members will offer hints and tips which will be of help in collecting your thoughts. Make the best use of such gestures. Know when and how to keep the conversation going from your side. For example, there are some open-ended questions where the answer should be much more than a yes or a no.

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15. Open-Ended Questions

- Do you think you are suitable for this job?
- Are you good at team work?
- You do not have the experience for this job.
- You have changed your jobs frequently.
- Women are less likely to take up such jobs.

Obviously, in all such cases, the interviewer will be looking for some positive and logical back-up statements rather than just a mere affirmation.

16. Grab Opportunities

Interviewers generally follow a set pattern. They start with the candidate's academic and professional background before coming to job-specific and knowledge assessment questions. Quite often, the questions get progressively tougher. Every candidate is very likely to get a mix of easy and tough questions. The candidate should grab the opportunity and make it a point to score more on the easy questions. Among the panel members too, some ask general questions while some others persevere and ask probing questions. The candidate should be alert enough to take advantage of the opportunities as and when they show up. There may be breaks in between on account of tea breaks, telephone calls and consultations among the panel members. The candidate can make gainful use of such breaks to review earlier replies and especially what was missed out. The candidate may elaborate on the earlier replies and make such additional points as are to his or her advantage when the interview resumes. An alert candidate makes it a point to grab any such opportunity.

As an interviewee, it is your responsibility to clearly bring out how your academic background, job related knowledge and skills, and expertise and experience can add value to the organization. Seize every little opportunity to make it easy for the interviewer to appreciate your suitability and enthusiasm. Just because something is already mentioned in your resume, do not presume that the interviewer has read that. On your part, highlight your strengths and capabilities with reference to the job requirements and interviewer expectations.

17. Use Wit and Humor

Interviews need not necessarily be very serious affairs. Interviewers are normally required to conduct interviews of numerous candidates in a time-bound manner. This results in certain tedium or wariness for the interview panel, especially towards the end. A candidate who, even while answering the questions well, uses wit and humour naturally scores high in the interview. In doing so, however, proper discretion is called for. A candidate should avoid telling irrelevant jokes and anecdotes, and maintain decorum and seriousness associated with an interview process. Humorous anecdotes associated with great personalities like Mark Twain or Bernard Shaw which are appropriate for the occasion may, however, add some lighter moments.

Similarly, if opportune, the interviewee may also mention some relevant quotes of famous personalities to lighten the atmosphere and show his or her wit and presence of mind. Remember, however, that this is not a must. Don't spoil your chances by using a bad joke or stale humour.

Kinds of Interviewers

Every interview has a human dimension. Like the interviewee, the person on the other side is an individual and, as such, it would be desirable to be informed about various kinds of interviewers. They too constitute a mixed lot—some are friendly, some are tough, some focus on positives, some on negatives, some are easily satisfied, some are much more demanding, some look for concepts and theories, some are more into specifics, some focus on knowledge, some on ignorance, some lead you into the right answers, some into traps, some are soft, some are a bully. The interviewee has to be conscious of the many faces of an interviewer. One should learn to make a quick assessment and learn to deal with each kind of them. The saying 'Different strokes for different folks' holds true in this case. Every candidate facing an interview should learn to understand and evaluate the kind of person the interviewer is and respond appropriately. It would be imprudent to always expect an interviewer who makes it easy for the interviewee to give one's best. It would be wise to be prepared to face the tough and difficult interviewer. The real challenge for any candidate is to face a very tough interview panel and emerge successful.

Interviewer's Perspective

Appreciating the various kinds of interviewers, it is also advantageous for the interviewee to look at the interview process from the interviewer's perspective, i.e., to understand what the panel is looking for. The interviewer is essentially trying to identify and select the most suitable candidate for the post. The interviewer is trying to match the job profile with that of the candidate. He has several questions in his/her mind. Will the candidate deliver the goods on the job? Will the candidate measure up to expectation? Will the candidate find the job exciting and stay on? Will the job measure up to the candidate's expectations? If not, the entire exercise will become futile. Whether the selected candidate quits after appointment or whether the organization finds the selected candidate not up to the mark on the job, the end result is the same. Any interview panel is always conscious of the time, effort and resources involved in organizing the interviews and the consequent imperative of making them worthwhile.

As a candidate for interview, one should put oneself in the interviewer's shoes and try to assess what the organization is looking for. The interview panel normally decides beforehand the various qualities or attributes appropriate for the job, and the relative weightage for each of them. Depending on whether the job is that of a generalist or a specialist, a line job or a managerial position, a customer contact job or otherwise, the weightage to skills and qualifications sought would vary. Each member of the interview panel would be provided with a score sheet

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where they will note down the marks scored by each candidate during the interview under each major parameter. While some interviewers would give numerical scores for each parameter, others would settle for a gradation—A+, A, B+, B, etc., or qualitative remarks—excellent, very good, good, satisfactory, poor, etc. Some relevant parameters based on which final selection of the candidate is made are:

- (1) academic qualifications
- (2) previous experience
- (3) attitude and temperament
- (4) communication skills
- (5) interpersonal skills
- (6) subject knowledge
- (7) general awareness
- (8) age
- (9) extra-curricular activities
- (10) motivation and
- (11) health and fitness.

Apart from the intelligence quotient or IQ, emotional quotient or EQ also assumes significance when the jobs carry high levels of stress and responsibility.

Interview Score Sheet

Name of the candidate

	A+	A	B+	B	C+	C
Appearance						
Subject Knowledge						
Conceptual Clarity						
Logical Thinking						
Attitude						
Motivation						
Communication Skills						
Interpersonal Qualities						
General Knowledge						
Initiative						

Although the table above lists some of the more common qualities on which the evaluation takes place in most interviews, there are bound to be some differences depending upon the nature of the post and the position in the hierarchy. All these parameters do not always carry equal or identical weightage. For example, in a marketing job, appearance and communicative skills are given higher weightage. In a specialist or R&D job, subject knowledge and conceptual clarity have greater weightage. In positions of leadership, interpersonal skills, communication skills and initiative are accorded higher weightage.

18. Try to Be Distinctive

In an interview, any candidate is obviously competing with a host of other candidates. All of them have been called for the interview after the usual process of screening, which means that all of them meet the minimum eligibility criteria. Given this reality, those candidates who are distinctive and try to stand out from the rest of the candidates are more likely to be successful. Within the short span of time, they try to make their presence felt. They leave behind an impression on the interview panel members. This is done in many ways—noticeable appearance, depth of understanding of the subject, confident conduct, quick responses, command over the language, positive attitude, optimistic approach and so on. In the ultimate analysis, impressions do matter. Be conscious of the need to create the right impression.

19. Concluding the Interview

You have had your interview—may be for 10 minutes or 30 minutes—and it is time to conclude. The chairman of the interview panel in consultation with others suggests that your interview has come to an end. At that time, sometimes, you may be asked, ‘Anything else you want to say?’ or you may on your own venture to add, if the conditions are right, something which you have not had the opportunity to say. Make good use of any such opportunity. Say something which puts you in an advantage. If necessary, seek details about the organization and the position without being too inquisitive. It could be anything that suggests that you are interested. At the same time, assess the mood. Do not say something if that is not welcome and, more so, if it is likely to detract the favourable impression you have already put up.

Be Discreet and Restrained You complete your interview, say ‘thank you’ to the chairperson and other members of the panel and walk out of the room. Immediately, you start evaluating your performance. You may feel you have done very well, reasonably well, not so well or very bad. Just keep it to yourself. You don’t have to advertise and talk about your performance to people waiting outside, especially if you feel you have not done well. First, it is only your impression. Second, what matters is relative performance—how you fare vis-a-vis your competitors. Moreover, any interview is an intense process. How you really perform depends not only on your knowledge and sense of preparedness, but also on a host of other factors over which you have no control. It may start with a delay. You may not get the right questions or adequate time. One of the interviewers may be hostile. It may start off on a wrong note. By the time you get your turn, the interviewers may have got fatigued. Remember: It is desirable to be well prepared for the interview. Take all essential steps as described in the earlier paragraphs. Yet, notwithstanding all your preparedness, it is likely that the delivery and the final outcome during the interview may not be the way you wanted. Learn to take it in your stride.

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20. After the Interview

After the interview, as you wait for the results, learn to keep the anxiety level low. The outcome can be either way. May be you have done well. But there may be others who have done better. May be you have done very well in the interview, but there may be other requirements which have not been met. In most cases there are few posts and many competitors. Keep your sense of equanimity.

Further, it is also desirable that no direct contact is made with the interviewer/ interview panel members to know the results. Not only are such requests generally not entertained, but also such attempts are considered improper. Although this seems appropriate in most cases, there are authors who opine that immediately after the interview, as a matter of common courtesy, a thank-you letter should be sent to the interviewer. It will work in favor of the interviewee by reminding the interviewer about the candidate. On this, the candidates should take a call depending on the nature of the organization and sense of propriety.

21. Do Not Blame Yourself

You faced the interview boldly, did quite well and yet you receive a regret letter. There is, of course, the initial disappointment. But, nevertheless, do not indulge in self-pity. Do not blame yourself. It will take you nowhere. It is not always your fault that you lost the opportunity. Moreover, it is not the end of the world. As the saying goes, 'Tomorrow is another day.' Gather your spirits and strengthen your resolve. Accepting rejection or failure, whatever be the reason, is an important trait for any person seeking success in career and business. It helps build resilience or the ability to cope with failure and spring back to action. Those who know how to cope with failure are more determined than before to seek success. Introspect and learn the right lessons from the experience. In what ways can you position yourself better to meet such challenges in future? Believe in your ability. Think positive. If it can happen to Dr AP J Abdul Kalam, past President of India, it can happen to anyone. The incident quoted below is indeed an eye opener.

Check Your Progress

3. Mention any two categories of interview-related questions.
4. What are the physical factors that help in creating the right impression during an interview?

ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. The interviewer should be well informed about the organization, the nature of the post, the number of vacancies, the number of candidates being interviewed and other such relevant information that is so essential for making the interview worthwhile.

2. Two performance rating parameters of an interview are academic qualification and knowledge.
3. Two categories of interview-related questions are work experience and education.
4. Right posture, alert look, firm handshake, not looking nervous, confident and clear voice and appropriate eye contact help create the right impression.

NOTES

SUMMARY

- A job offer is also a potentially life-altering event that needs careful deliberation. Job interviews provide an opportunity for you and your potential employer to decide how well your skills align with the company's needs.
- Over a period of time, the job-seeking interviewee gets a job, gains experience and moves up the career ladder.
- The interviewer should be well informed about the organization, the nature of the post, the number of vacancies, the number of candidates being interviewed and other such relevant information that is so essential for making the interview worthwhile.
- The interviewer should be well informed about the organization, the nature of the post, the number of vacancies, the number of candidates being interviewed and other such relevant information that is so essential for making the interview worthwhile.
- The interviewer has to put the candidate at ease before shooting off questions.
- The interviewers should focus on testing the knowledge of the candidate and not the level of ignorance.
- Job interviews constitute the last leg of the career selection process for any candidate.
- Preparation for the interview starts with good homework. Try to learn as much as you can about the organization.
- It is very necessary that the candidate keeps his/her cool when getting ready to face the interview.
- As an interviewee one should conduct oneself in such a way that the interviewer is not, for any reason, offended. Argumentation should be avoided.

KEY WORDS

- **Employment:** *Employment* is a relationship between two parties, usually based on a contract where work is paid for, where one party, which may be a corporation, for profit, not-for-profit organization, co-operative or other entity is the employer and the other is the *employee*.

NOTES

- **HR:** *Human resources* is used to describe both the people who work for a company or organization and the department responsible for managing resources related to employees
- **Personality:** *Personality* is defined as the characteristic set of behaviors, cognitions, and emotional patterns that evolve from biological and environmental factors

SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What do performance rating parameters include?
2. Mention the different characteristics of a job interview.
3. What are the things that an interviewer should avoid while taking an interview?
4. Write a short note on the importance of job interview.

Long-Answer Questions

1. What are the factors involved in job interview?
2. Explain the process of job interview process in detail.
3. What are the questions that are typically asked in a job interview?
4. What are the factors that an interviewee should consider before going for an interview? Discuss.

FURTHER READINGS

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