Chapter 20
Communication

Chapter Outline

I. Communication and the Manager’s Job
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   B. The Communication Process
II. Communicating Among People
   A. Communication Channels
   B. Communicating to Persuade and Influence Others
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III. Organizational Communication
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   A. Barriers to Communication
   B. Overcoming Communication Barriers

Annotated Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, students should be able to:

1. *Explain why communication is essential for effective management and describe how nonverbal behavior and listening affect communication among people.*

   Communication is defined as the process by which information is exchanged and understood by two or more people, usually with the intent to motivate or influence
behavior. Communication means to share, not just to speak or to write. This distinction between sharing and proclaiming is crucial for successful management. Managers spend at least 80 percent of every working day in direct communication with others. The other 20 percent of a manager’s time is spent doing deskwork, most of which is also communication in the form of reading and writing.

Nonverbal communication refers to messages sent through human actions and behaviors rather than through words. Managers are watched, and their behavior, appearance, actions, and attitudes are symbolic of what they value and expect of others. Major parts of the shared understanding from communication come from the nonverbal messages of facial expression, voice, mannerisms, posture, and dress. Nonverbal messages convey thoughts and feelings with greater force than do our most carefully selected words. When verbal and nonverbal messages are contradictory, the receiver will usually give more weight to the nonverbal than verbal message.

Listening involves the skill of grasping both facts and feelings to interpret a message’s genuine meaning. Only then can the manager provide the appropriate response. Listening requires attention, energy, and skill. A good listener finds areas of interest, is flexible, works hard at listening, and uses thought speed to mentally summarize, weigh, and anticipate what the speaker says. The listener is responsible for message reception, which is a vital link in the communication process.

2. **Explain how managers use communication to persuade and influence others.**

Managers use communication to sell employees on the vision for the organization and influence them to behave in such a way as to accomplish the vision. Managers can enrich their communication encounters by paying attention to the language they use as well as the channels of communication they select to convey their messages. To persuade and influence, managers connect with others on an emotional level by using symbols, metaphors, and stories to express their messages.

3. **Describe the concept of channel richness and explain how communication channels influence the quality of communication.**

Managers have a choice of many channels through which to communicate to other managers or employees. Channels differ in their capacity to convey information. The channels available to managers can be classified into a hierarchy based on information richness. Channel richness is the amount of information that can be transmitted during a communication episode. The richest channel is face-to-face talk and the leanest channel includes bulletins and standard computer reports.

4. **Explain the difference between formal and informal organizational communications and the importance of each for organization management.**

Formal communication channels are those that flow within the chain of command defined by the organization. Organization-wide communications typically flow in three directions, downward, upward, and horizontally. Downward communication is
CHAPTER 20 Communication

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information sent from top management to subordinates in a downward direction. The major problem with downward communication is the distortion or loss of message content. Upward communication includes messages that flow from the lower to the higher levels in the organization’s hierarchy. Horizontal communication is the lateral or diagonal exchange of messages across peers or co-workers. The purpose of horizontal communication is not only to inform but also to request support and coordinate activities.

Informal communication channels exist outside the formal channels and do not adhere to the organization’s formal structure. Two types of informal channels used in many organizations are management by wandering around (MBWA) and the grapevine.

5. **Identify how structure influences team communication outcomes.**

Research into team communication has focused on two characteristics: the extent to which team communications are centralized and the nature of the team’s task. In a centralized network, team members must communicate through one individual to solve problems or make decisions. In a decentralized network, individuals can communicate freely with other team members. Members process information equally among themselves until all agree on a decision.

6. **Explain why open communication, dialogue, and feedback are essential approach to communication in a turbulent environment.**

A recent trend that reflects managers’ increased emphasis on empowering employees, building trust and commitment, and enhancing collaboration is open communication. Open communication means sharing all types of information throughout the company, across functional and hierarchical levels. Open communication runs counter to the traditional flow of selective information downward from supervisors to subordinates. New voices and conversations involving a broad spectrum of people revitalize and enhance organizational communication.

Dialogue is a group communication process in which people together create a stream of shared meaning that enables them to understand each other and share a view of the world. People may start out at polar opposites, but by talking openly, they discover common ground, common issues, and shared goals on which they can build a better future.

In the new workplace, feedback occurs when managers use evaluation and communication to help individuals and the organization learn and improve. Feedback enables managers to determine whether they have been successful or unsuccessful in communicating with others. It also helps them develop subordinates.
7. **Identify the skills managers need for communicating during a crisis situation.**

The sheer number and scope of crises has made communication a more demanding job for managers since organizations face small crises every day. Charges of racial discrimination, a factory fire, or a flu epidemic, bombings, and kidnappings---these crises continue to increase. Managers can develop four skills for communicating during a crisis:

- **Maintain your focus**
- **Be visible**
- **Get the awful truth out**
- **Communicate a vision for the future**

8. **Describe barriers to organizational communications and suggest ways to avoid or overcome them.**

Barriers to communication can be categorized as those that exist at the individual level and those that exist at the organizational level. Individual barriers include problems with emotions and perceptions held by employees. People with different backgrounds or knowledge may interpret communication in different ways. Selecting the wrong channel or medium for sending a communication can be a problem. Semantics often cause communication problems. Semantics pertain to the meaning of words and the way they are used. Sending inconsistent cues between verbal and nonverbal confuses the receiver. Individual skills in overcoming communication barriers include active listening, selecting a rich channel, and understanding others’ perspectives.

Organizational barriers pertain to the organization as a whole and include the problem of status and power differences. Low-power employees are reluctant to communicate with high-power managers. Differences across departments in terms of needs and goals interfere with communications. The communication flow may not fit the organization’s task. The absence of formal channels reduces communication effectiveness. The most important organizational action managers can do for the organization is to create a climate of trust and openness. Managers should develop and use formal information channels in all directions. Managers should encourage the use of multiple channels, including formal and informal communications. The structure should fit communication needs.

**Lecture Outline**

**Suggested Opening Remarks**

Patrick Charmel, CEO of Griffin Hospital, described in the chapter opening, showed his commitment to open and honest communication when the FBI asked him to keep quiet about a possible case of anthrax poisoning at the Derby, Connecticut, hospital. Charmel proved himself to be a master of communicating in a crisis. His primary concern was for the safety of his employees and of the larger community. He immediately scheduled
informational meetings with employees throughout the hospital to let them know about the possible case of anthrax and review guidelines and procedures for handling such a crisis. Prior to making the information public, Charmel gathered as much information and data as he could and sought the counsel of trusted advisors. Ultimately, he decided honesty was the best policy. Rather than shunning publicity, Charmel welcomed reporters.

Along with members of his management team and several physicians, Charmel kept the media and the public up to date on what was happening with the case throughout the night and into the next day, when the diagnosis was confirmed, and Mrs. Lungren died. Most news stories related to anthrax poisonings in organizations such as the U.S. Postal Service, newsrooms, and the U.S. Congress focused on the failure of these organizations to adequately deal with the crisis. The news stories of Griffin Hospital, instead, looked to the hope and strength that comes from putting people first and meeting challenges with honesty and openness. “Our concern,” said Charmel, “was for the patient, the employees who work here, and the health of our community.”

1. **COMMUNICATION AND THE MANAGER’S JOB**

   *Exhibit 17.1*

   ➢ *How important is communication?*

   Managers spend at least 80 percent of their work time in direct communication with others.

   The other 20 percent of their time is spent doing deskwork, most of which is communication in the form of reading and writing.

   Managers have the crucial role of communication champions; they gather information from inside and outside the organization and distribute it to others who need it.

   Managers’ communication is *purpose-driven*; it directs everyone’s attention toward the vision, values, and desired goals and influences people to achieve the goals.

   Managers facilitate *strategic conversations*, dialogue across boundaries and hierarchical levels about the vision, strategic themes, and values.

   Managers use many communication methods, including selecting rich channels of communication, facilitating upward, downward, and horizontal communication.

   Managers also use nonverbal communication and build informal communication networks that cross organization boundaries.

**Discussion Question #11:** Assume you have been asked to design a training program to help managers become better communicators. What would you include in the program?

**Notes**

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UNLOCKING CREATIVE SOLUTIONS THROUGH PEOPLE

JetBlue CEO Walks His Talk---Up and Down the Airplane Aisles

On a recent flight, passengers on JetBlue were served by the CEO Neeleman, who took hours to get through plane because he stopped and chatted. Neeleman tries to come on flights and talk to customers at least once a month. He says it’s where he gets his best ideas for JetBlue. Serving as a flight attendant also strengthens communication with employees; his action serves as a symbolic, nonverbal communication to employees of the importance of customer service. Another advantage of Neeleman’s efforts is that it facilitates and improves upward communication because employees like the chance to talk to him informally and feel that he understands what’s happening on the front lines.

A. What Is Communication?

Communication is defined as the process by which information is exchanged and understood by two or more people, usually with the intent to motivate or influence behavior.

Communication is not just sending information; it means to share, not “to speak” or “to write.”

Management communication is a two-way street that includes listening and feedback.

B. The Communication Process

Communication is complex with many opportunities to send or receive the wrong message.

Two common elements in every communication are the sender and receiver.

The sender wishes to convey an idea or seek information from others; the receiver is the person to whom the message is sent.

The communication process consists of the following steps:

- The sender encodes the idea by selecting symbols to represent the message, the idea that is sent to the receiver.
- The message is sent through a channel, the communication carrier.
- The receiver decodes or translates the symbols to interpret the message.
- Feedback occurs when the receiver responds to the sender’s communication with a return message.

Without feedback, the communication is one-way; with feedback, it is two-way.

Discussion Question #2: Describe the elements of the communication process. Give an example of each part of the model as it exists in the classroom during communication between teacher and students.
II. COMMUNICATING AMONG PEOPLE

**Exhibit 17.3**

*Why does communication breakdown?*

Communication can breakdown if sender and receiver do not encode or decode language in the same way.

Many factors can breakdown communications—the selection of communication channel, noise and interference, the listening skills of both parties, and nonverbal behavior.

Managers must understand how perception, communication channels, nonverbal behavior, and listening enhance or detract from communication.

A. Communication Channels

Managers have a choice of many channels through which to communicate; research shows that channels differ in their capacity to convey information.

Channels can be classified in a hierarchy based on information richness.

*Channel richness* is the amount of information that can be transmitted during a communication episode.

Face-to-face communication is the richest medium; telephone conversations are next in the richness hierarchy; and standard computer reports are the lowest in richness.

The capacity of a channel is influenced by the ability to handle multiple cues simultaneously, facilitate rapid, two-way feedback, and establish a personal focus for the communication.

Electronic messaging, such as e-mail and instant messaging, is increasingly used for messages once handled via telephone.

Instant messaging (IM) allows users to see who is connected to a network and share information instantly; IM alleviates miscommunication through immediate feedback.

Organizations are using interactive meetings over the Internet, adding video capabilities to provide visual cues and greater channel richness.

It is important for managers to understand that each communication channel has advantages and disadvantages, and that each can communicate effectively if used appropriately.

**Discussion Question #1:** *How can electronic media such as e-mail improve communication in today’s organizations? How might it also lead to poorer communication?*
MANAGER’S SHOPTALK

Make Your E-Mails Count

Here are some Dos and Don’ts for effectively using electronic mail.

Do:
• Keep e-mail messages short and to the point
• Use e-mail to set up meetings, recap conversations, or follow-up
• Slow down and take time to read your message before sending it.

Don’t:
• Use e-mail to mock the boss or lambaste a colleague.
• Hire and fire via e-mail.
• Use Profanity.
• Use e-mail to start or perpetuate a feud.

Channel selection depends upon the message being routine or nonroutine.

Nonroutine messages typically are ambiguous, concern novel events, and have great potential for misunderstanding; they are characterized by time pressure and surprise. Channels high in richness should be used for transmission of nonroutine messages.

Routine messages convey information managers already agree on and understand; they can be communicated through a channel low in richness. The key is to select a channel to fit the message.

The choice of a communication channel can also convey a symbolic meaning to the receiver; in a sense, the medium becomes the message.

B. Communicating to Persuade and Influence Others

Communication is used not only to convey information, but also to persuade and influence people; yet some people find interpersonal communication difficult.

Communication apprehension is an individual’s level of fear or anxiety associated with interpersonal communications.

With training and practice, managers can overcome their communication apprehension and become more effective communicators.

To persuade and influence, managers connect with others on an emotional level by using: symbols, metaphors, stories to express their messages.
Stories tap into people’s imaginations, helping managers make sense of fast-changing environments in ways people can understand and share.

**Discussion Question #3:** Why do you think stories are more effective than hard facts and figures in persuading others?

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**Notes**

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C. Nonverbal Communication

*Nonverbal communication* refers to messages sent through human actions and behaviors rather than through words.

It represents a major portion of the messages we send and receive and consists of items such as: facial expression, voice, mannerisms, posture, and dress.

Nonverbal messages convey thoughts and feelings with greater force than do our most carefully selected words.

Nonverbal communication occurs mostly face-to-face.

One researcher found three sources of communication: the *verbal*, which are the actual spoken words; the *vocal*, which include the pitch, tone, and timbre of a person’s voice; and *facial expressions*.

When verbal and nonverbal messages conflict, the receiver will be confused and more apt to believe the nonverbal.

Nonverbal messages and body language often convey our real thoughts and feelings with greater force than do our most carefully selected words.

Managers can learn to coordinate their verbal and nonverbal messages and be sensitive to what peers, subordinates, and supervisors are saying nonverbally.

D. Listening

*Listening* involves the skill of receiving messages, accurately grasping facts and feelings, and interpreting the message’s meaning.

Most executives now believe important information flows from the bottom up, not the top down, and managers had better be tuned in.

The listener is responsible for message reception, which is vital in the communication process.

Listening requires attention, energy, and skill.

- *What constitutes good listening?*

Good listening means shifting from thinking about self to empathizing with the other person and thus requires a degree of emotional intelligence.

Some organizations have created a culture that emphasizes active manager listening; Proctor & Gamble learned how listening to employees translates in to business success.
Discussion Question #10: *Is speaking accurately or listening actively the more important communication skill for managers? Discuss.*

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III ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION  
Exhibit 17.5

➢ *Why does management communication concern the organization as a whole?*

Organization-wide communications typically flow downward, upward, and horizontally.

Managers are responsible for establishing formal communication in three directions; they also use informal communication channels by mingling with employees.

A. Formal Communication Channels

*Formal communication channels* are those that flow within the chain of command or task responsibility defined by the organization.

Within organizations, communications flow mainly downward and upward; however, many organizations emphasize horizontal communication.

Electronic communication such as e-mail and instant messaging, have made it easier than ever for information to flow in all directions.

1. Downward communication

*Downward communication* refers to messages and information sent from top managers to subordinates in a downward direction.

Managers can use speeches, messages in the newsletter, information leaflets, material on bulletin boards, and procedures manuals.

Downward communication encompasses these topics:

- Implementation of goals, strategies, and objectives
- *Job instructions and rationale*
- *Procedures and practices*
- *Performance feedback*
- *Indoctrination*

The major problem with downward communication is information *drop-off*, the distortion or loss of message content.

Information drop-off can be reduced by using the right communication channel, consistency between verbal and nonverbal messages, and active listening.

2. Upward communication
Upward communication includes messages that flow from the lower to the higher levels in the organization. Employees need to air grievances, report progress, and provide feedback to management. Information communicated upward includes:

- Problems and exceptions
- Suggestions for improvement
- Performance reports
- Grievances and disputes
- Financial and accounting information

Mechanisms include suggestion boxes, employee surveys, open-door policies, MIS reports, and face-to-face conversations between workers and managers.

One entrepreneur, Pat Croce instituted the Five Fifteen, all employees take 15 minutes to write progress reports and forward them to their supervisors.

Barriers to accurate and upward communication exist; managers may resist hearing about employee problems, or employees might not trust managers to push information upward.

Innovative companies look for ways to ensure that information gets to top managers without distortion.

**Discussion Question #8:** Some senior managers believe they should rely on written information and computer reports because these yield more accurate data than do face-to-face communications. Do you agree?
UNLOCKING CREATIVE SOLUTIONS THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

Amazon.com Keeps Track of Employees “Pulse Rate”

How do managers at Amazon.com keep in touch with employees’ opinions and feelings about company decisions? By taking the organization’s collective pulse twice a week. Amazon.com works with eePulse to electronically poll employees biweekly on their opinions and attitudes about various developments within the company. The electronic survey and communications tool uses a question format and asks employees to rate their “pulse” or energy level. These quick e-mail surveys, which take about two minutes to complete, provide feedback on a regular basis, enabling managers to collect information and assess how things are going in real time. Some people even enjoy regularly keeping tabs on the survey results and finding out what their co-workers are saying about their jobs and the company.

3. Horizontal communication

*Horizontal communication* is the lateral or diagonal exchange of messages across peers or co-workers.

The purpose of horizontal communication is to request support and coordinate activities.

Horizontal communication includes:

- *Intradepartmental problem solving*
- *Interdepartmental coordination*
- *Change initiatives and improvements*

Horizontal communication is particularly important in learning organizations, where teams of workers are continuously solving problems and searching for new ways of doing things.

At Chicago’s Northwestern Memorial Hospital, two doctors created a horizontal task force to solve a serious patient health problem.

**Discussion Question #7:** *What is the relationship between group communication and group task? For example, how should communications differ in a strategic planning group and a group of employees who stock shelves in a grocery store?*

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B. Team Communication Channels

Exhibit 17.6

Team members work together to accomplish tasks; the team’s communication structure influences both team performance and employee satisfaction.
Research in team communications has focused on the extent to which team communications are centralized and the nature of the team’s task.

In a *centralized network* team members must communicate through one individual who makes all decisions.

In a *decentralized network* individuals can communicate with other team members.

Members process information among themselves until all agree on a decision.

A centralized network achieves faster and more accurate decisions on simple problems; a decentralized network achieves faster and more accurate decisions on complex problems.

The implication is that in a highly competitive global environment, organizations use teams to deal with complex problems.

When activities are complex and difficult, all members should share information in a decentralized structure to solve problems.

Teams need communication flows in all directions.

**C. Personal Communication Channels**

*Personal communication channels* exist outside the authorized channels and do not follow the organization’s hierarchy of authority.

These are informal communications that coexist with formal channels but may skip hierarchical levels, cutting across vertical chains of command to connect online.

Three types of personal communication channels are personal networks, management by walking around, and the grapevine.

1. Developing Personal Communication Networks

*Personal networking* refers to the acquisition and cultivation of personal relationships that cross departmental, hierarchical, and organizational boundaries.

Informal communications may connect virtually anyone in the organization.

The value is that people who have more contacts have greater influence in the organization and get more accomplished.

Tips from one networking expert include:

- **Build it before you need it.** Managers should not wait until they need something to start building a network of personal relations.
- **Never eat lunch alone.** Those who excel at networking are visible and connect with as many people as possible.
- **Focus on diversity.** The broader your base of contacts, the broader your range of influence.

2. Management by wandering around (MBWA).
Management by wandering around (MBWA) is a communication technique where managers talk directly with employees to learn what is going on. MBWA works for managers at all levels; when managers fail to take advantage of MBWA, they become aloof and isolated from employees. Both downward and upward communications are enhanced.

**Discussion Question #9:** Why is management by wandering around considered effective communication? Consider channel richness and nonverbal communications in formulating your answer.

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3. The Grapevine.

The *grapevine* is an informal, person-to-person communication network of employees that is not officially sanctioned by the organization.

The grapevine links employees in all directions.

The grapevine will always exist in an organization and tends to be more active during times of change, excitement, anxiety, or sagging economic conditions.

From 70 to 90 percent of the messages in the grapevine are accurate.

About 80 percent of grapevine communications pertain to organizational-related topics.

Smart managers understand the company’s grapevine; they recognize who’s connected to whom and which employees are key players in the informal spread of information.

**Discussion Question #4:** Try to recall an incident at school or work when information was passed primarily through the grapevine. How accurate were the rumors and how did people react to them? How can managers control information that is processed through the grapevine?

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**IV. Communicating During Turbulent Times**

- *Why is communication even more important during turbulent times?*

To build trust and promote learning and problem solving, managers incorporate ideas such as open communication, dialogue, and feedback and learning.

A. Open Communication.

*Open communication* means sharing all types of information throughout the company, across functional and hierarchical levels.
Open communication runs counter to the traditional flow of selective information downward from supervisors to subordinates.

By breaking down conventional hierarchical barriers to communication, the organization can gain the benefit of all employees’ ideas.

Open communication builds trust and a commitment to common goals, which is essential in organizations that depend on collaboration and knowledge-sharing.

B. Dialogue.

*Dialogue* is a group communication process in which people together create a stream of shared meaning that enables them to understand each other and share a view of the world.

A use way to describe dialogue is to contrast it with discussion, which has the intent of delivering one’s point of view and persuading others to adopt it.

A discussion is often resolved by logic or “beating down” opponents; dialogue asks participants to suspend their viewpoint so that a deeper level of synthesis can evolve.

Both forms of communication—dialogue and discussion—can result in change; however, dialogue leads to group unity, shared meaning, and transformed mindsets.

As new and deeper solutions are developed, a trusting relationship is built among team members.

C. Crisis Communication

Recently, the sheer number and scope of crises has made communication a more demanding job for managers; organizations face small crises every day.

Charges of racial discrimination, a factory fire, or a flu epidemic, bombings, and kidnappings continue to increase; managers can develop four skills for communicating:

- **Maintain your focus**
- **Be visible**
- **Get the awful truth out**
- **Communicate a vision for the future**

D. Feedback and Learning

*Feedback* occurs when managers use evaluation and communication to help individuals and the organization learn and improve.

Feedback enables managers to determine whether they have been successful or unsuccessful in communicating with others.

Successful managers focus feedback to help develop the capacities of subordinates and to teach the organization how to better reach its goals.

Feedback is an important means by which individuals and organizations can learn from their mistakes and improve their work.
The U.S. Army’s feedback system promotes whole-system learning by communicating about the consequences of field operations and simulated battles.

Discussion Question #5: What is the difference between a discussion and a dialogue? What steps might managers take to transform a discussion into a constructive dialogue?

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V. MANAGING ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Many of the ideas in this chapter pertains to barriers to communication and how to overcome them; the model lists major barriers and techniques for overcoming them.

A. Barriers to Communication

Barriers to communication can exist within the individual or as part of the organization.

1. Individual Barriers

There are interpersonal barriers that include problems with emotions and perceptions held by employees.

If a person’s mind is made up before communications start, communication will fail; people with different backgrounds may interpret communication differently.

Selecting the wrong channel for sending a message can be a problem.

Semantics pertain to the meaning of words and the way they are used, often causing communication problems.

Many common words have an average of 28 definitions; communicators must select words that accurately encode ideas.

Language differences can also be a barrier in today’s organizations.

Sending inconsistent cues between verbal and nonverbal communications will confuse the receiver.

2. Organizational Barriers

Problems of status and power differences between lower and higher levels in the organization are barriers pertaining to the organization as a whole.

Differences across departments in terms of needs and goals interfere with communications.

The absence of formal channels reduces communication effectiveness. Organizations must provide upward, downward, and horizontal communications.

The communication flow may not fit the group or organization’s task.
A related problem is poor coordination, so that different parts of the organization are working in isolation without knowing and understanding what other parts are doing.

B. Overcoming Communication Barriers

Designing an organization to encourage effective communication involves both individual skills and organizational actions.

1. Individual Skills

The most important individual skill is active listening, which includes feedback to the sender to complete the communication loop.

Individuals should select the appropriate channel for the message.

Senders and receivers should make a special effort to understand each other’s perspective.

Managers should practice MBWA (management by wandering around), getting out of the office and checking communications with others.

2. Organizational Actions

The most important thing managers can do to overcome communication barriers is to create a climate of trust and openness.

Managers should develop and use formal information channels in all directions.

Managers should encourage the use of multiple channels including formal and informal communications.

The organizational structure should fit communication needs.

Discussion Question #6: What do you think are the major barriers to upward communication in organizations? Discuss.

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Lecture Example File

ASSESSING STUDENT WORK FOR LEARNING

Prepare students for assessment:

Review with students what the requirements of the assignment are (when and where to hand it in, what procedure will be followed for assignments handed in late, etc.).

Review with students what the expectations are for the assignment (without "giving away" answers) (length, topic, sources, writing quality, presentation style, etc.).

Structure feedback for learning:
Comment on what is good:
- So students continue to do it
- So they feel positive and encouraged about their work
Be clear, specific, personal, and honest.

Comment on what needs work:
- So students know what and why they need to improve
- So students know how to improve
Be specific, constructive, kind, and honest.

End with an encouraging word:
- So students do not feel deflated after reading your feedback
- So they approach the next assignment with enthusiasm and optimism
Be encouraging, specific, and honest.

Answers To End-Of-Chapter Discussion Questions

1. *ATI Medical Inc. has a “no-memo” policy. The 300 employees must interact directly for all communications. What impact would this policy have on the organization?*

   This policy should help to clarify communications. After all, it is difficult to ask questions when reading a memo. It is also difficult to see emotion, facial expressions, and other types of body language. These are all benefits to be gained. There are also some drawbacks, however. Face-to-face verbal communications often take longer. It may be more difficult to find the person you need to talk to or to set up a meeting. Even using the telephone is no guarantee of being able to reach the party, and one often ends up playing “telephone tag”—leaving messages for each other to return the call. There is also no written record of communications to refer to in the future.

2. *Describe the elements of the communication process. Give an example of each part of the model as it exists in the classroom during communication between teacher and students.*

   The communication process begins with the encoding of an idea into a message, which is then sent through a channel to a receiver. The receiver decodes the message to interpret its meaning and may respond with feedback to the sender. In the classroom, encoding occurs when the professor conceives of an idea and translates it either into spoken words or into writing on the blackboard. The spoken or written words are the symbols that comprise the message. The channel is the spoken voice that is heard by the receiver or the writing that is interpreted visually by the receiver. The receiver decodes the symbols to interpret the message. Feedback occurs when students ask questions. Noise occurs when the flow of messages is disrupted. This could occur because someone is talking in the classroom, because the professor does not speak clearly, or because the handwriting on the blackboard is illegible.
3. Why do you think stories are more effective than hard facts and figures in persuading others?

Stories are more effective than facts and figures because using symbols and stories helps managers make sense of a fast changing environment in ways that members throughout the organization can understand. Managers help inspire desirable behaviors for change by tapping into the imaginations of their subordinates. Presenting hard facts and figures rarely has the same power as telling vivid stories. Evidence of the compatibility of stories with human thinking was demonstrated by a study at Stanford Business School. The point was to convince MBA students that a company practiced a policy of avoiding layoffs.

4. Should the grapevine be eliminated? How might managers control information that is processed through the grapevine?

No, the grapevine should not be eliminated. The grapevine provides information to employees during periods of change, anxiety, and poor economic conditions. Most information carried over the grapevine is business related. The grapevine provides information that is not processed through formal information channels. Managers can control information through the grapevine by maintaining open communications through official channels. If managers solicit input from employees and provide full information to them about organizational activities, the grapevine is less needed and will be used less frequently. When formal information is not available to employees, the grapevine increases in use.

5. What do you think are the major barriers to upward communication in organizations? Discuss.

Students may have a number of ideas about barriers to upward communication, so there is no single correct answer to this question. The chapter mentions two major problems—status and power differences and lack of formal channels. The problem of status and power differences means that lower employees are under the control of managers. They may feel uncomfortable providing negative information to people who have power over them. Employees want to look good and may distort or limit information passed upward. Moreover, the organization may not have formal channels to solicit information. Employee surveys, open-door policies, and management by walking around can all be used to encourage the upward flow of communication.

6. What is the relationship between group communication and group task? For example, how should communications differ in a strategic planning group and a group of employees who stack shelves in a grocery store?

The general relationship is that when a group task is difficult and complex, decentralized communication is required. Members of the group must be free to process information in all directions among themselves. Thus, in a strategic planning group all employees should be encouraged to talk to any other employee as needed.
to solve problems, make decisions, and complete the strategic plan. When the group’s task is routine, centralized communication is appropriate. Communication can be between each member of the group and a single supervisor. Widespread communication in all directions is not required. Most of the time employees who stack shelves spend can be spent doing work other than communicating. Occasional communications will be directed to the supervisor, who will make a decision to solve the problem and then communicate the results back to group members.

7. Some senior managers believe they should rely on written information and computer reports because these yield more accurate data than do face-to-face communications. Do you agree?

Written information and computer reports do provide accurate, precise data, but these data are not rich. Managers can rely on written information and computer reports about well-specified, routine events such as production volume and budgeted expenses. However, they should use face-to-face communications when problems are difficult and ambiguous. They can use feedback and nonverbal cues to help clarify the situations and reach mutual understanding. If managers rely exclusively on written information and computer reports, they will be out of touch with aspects of the organization that are not easily communicated through these less rich channels.

8. Why is management by wandering around considered effective communication? Consider channel richness and nonverbal communications in formulating your answer.

Management by wandering around enables the manager to “be there” and see firsthand what is happening in the organization. It is a rich channel that utilizes face-to-face communications. Moreover, managers send nonverbal communications by wandering around. They communicate to employees an interest in and concern about their welfare. By taking the time to visit with employees directly, they signal that employee concerns are important and that they want to learn what is happening. Management by wandering around is an effective form of communication that can be used by virtually any manager.

9. Is speaking accurately or listening actively the more important communication skill for managers? Discuss.

This question is designed to stimulate student thinking, and there is no single correct answer. Speaking and writing are both important, but the chapter emphasized listening. To be effective, the manager must have an accurate interpretation of the organization, and effective listening is important. Managers should listen actively, resist distractions, show interest, be nonjudgmental, establish eye contact, and listen for central themes when other people are talking. Listening is the manager’s way of building an accurate, cognitive map of the organization and its problems. On the other hand, communication is a two-way street. Managers must be able to speak effectively to provide other people with a correct understanding of what the manager
wants to accomplish. Both are important, and this question provides students an opportunity to consider the relative strengths of each.

10. Assume you have been asked to design a training program to help managers become better communicators. What would you include in the program?

This question is designed to stimulate student thinking, and there is no single correct answer. Students will want to consider many of the topics covered in this chapter including communication channels, nonverbal communication, listening, and informal communications such as management by wandering around. These topics would help managers understand communication skills and acquire practice and efficiency with the techniques. The communication training program might also consider organizational barriers to communication and how to overcome them. Students may have ideas of their own for training managers in additional communication areas such as speech making, writing, using organizational surveys, open-door policies, and other techniques for enhancing organizational and personal communication.

**Teaching Note for Experiential Exercise**

**Listening Self-Inventory**

If students are honest with themselves as they respond to this questionnaire, many if not most will find they need to improve their listening skills. This is true of everyone, even practicing managers and college professors. Communication is a two-way process. For too long, communications models have emphasized the role of the sender. However, the listener has an equal responsibility for communication effectiveness. Many times a sender effectively transmits a message; however, the effectiveness of the communication is low because of problems on the receiving end. Since communication is such a big part of everyone’s life, we easily get complacent about it. We need to somehow remind ourselves that complacency often results in mistakes and ineffective communications. For example, complacency often results in listeners becoming impatient with a sender and/or allowing their attention to stray from the communication. With awareness and practice we can all improve our listening effectiveness.

**Teaching Note for Ethical Dilemma**

**The Voice of Authority**

Achieving and supporting diversity in a firm is not easy, but it is essential in today’s world. There will always be cultural and language barriers when employees of different nationalities are working together. Beatrice Werner believes Rasinghe will eventually be an asset to the firm, and she should provide him the opportunity to grow and learn. Working with a manager like Cathy Putnam will not provide that opportunity. Werner
should place Rasinghe with another account manager who is more tolerant, enjoys the teaching role, and is willing to spend the time needed to help the new employee develop. If possible, she could lessen the manager’s case load somewhat as well. Rasinghe appreciates the job and seems more than willing to please; he is not going to resent strong guidance. In addition, working with a more encouraging and supportive manager will help Rasinghe grow in self-confidence, which will in turn help him be more assertive with clients. Sticking Rasinghe in a dead-end job that does not involve customer contact is a waste of his potential, and Werner has already assured him he has opportunity for advancement.

Surf the Net

1. **E-mail.** Depending on the Web site visited, student responses will vary; however, a strong recommendation would be the new skills to be learned are the following: E-mail is cheaper and faster than a letter, less intrusive than a phone call, and less hassle than a FAX. Using E-mail, differences in location and time zones are less of an obstacle to communication. There is also evidence that E-mail leads to a more egalitarian information structure. This is not a document on the mechanics of sending E-mail - which buttons to push or how to attach a photograph. Those details are different for every different E-mail software package and are better handled by manuals for the program. The focus on the content of an E-mail message: how to say what you need to say. This is not E-mail etiquette (commonly called netiquette) because the guidelines merely show you how to be a nice person. These guidelines show you how to be more efficient, clear, and effective. This is not dogma. There will be people who disagree on specific points. But, if there was only one right answer, there wouldn't be a need to write this guide. Hopefully, this guide will make you examine your assumptions about E-mail, and thus help you maximize your E-mail effectiveness. Then you can write to reflect your own personality and choice.

2. **Group Presentations.** Student responses will vary based on their input in responding to the self examination on group presentations.

   1. Do you think of a presentation as a form or torture?
   2. Can you be the same person when delivering a presentation that you are in a conversation?
   3. Are the results of your presentations what you expect?
   4. Do you find it difficult to stay within the time allotted for your presentation?
   5. If you ask an audience member what message they received from your presentation, would the received message match what you intend?
   6. Is preparing a presentation so overwhelming that you find excuses (however legitimate they may be) to put it off until the last minute?
   7. Are you able to sum up the essence of what you are going to present in a concise sentence or two?
   8. Does it seem like the audience has more control over your presentation than you do?
   9. Do you find it easy to talk to one person but almost impossible to talk with many?
10 Are you able to put your passion and commitment into your message?

3. **Listening.** Student responses will vary as to becoming a better listener; however, it is important every manager must develop improved listening skills.

“Listening well is as powerful a means of communication and influence as to talk well”-John Marshall.

There must be a lot of frustrated people out there, a lot of people who feel like they aren’t listened to, a lot of people throwing up their arms and saying, “You just don’t get it, do you?”

There seems to be a growing realization of the importance of solid listening and communication skills in business. After all, lack of attention and respectful listening can be costly-- leading to mistakes, poor service, misaligned goals, wasted goals, wasted time, and lack of teamwork.

This is why all of our coaching programs start with a foundation of listening skills. You can’t sell unless you understand your customer’s problem; you can’t manage unless you understand your employee’s motivation; and you can’t gain team consensus unless you understand each team member’s feelings about the issue at hand. In all of these cases, you must listen to others.

However, listening is less important than how you listen. By listening in a way that demonstrates understanding and respect, you cause rapport to develop, and that is the true foundation from which you can sell, manage, or influence others.

**Case for Critical Analysis Solution**

**Inner-City Manufacturing, Inc.**

1. **What techniques increased Rich Langston’s communication effectiveness? Discuss.**

Rich Langston used the open-door policy to improve communication. His effectiveness was increased through more effective upward communication. He felt this would give him a way to get early warning signals that would not be filtered or redirected through the formal chain of command. Rich Langston and Leroy’s manager demonstrated the ability to listen carefully to the problems Leroy was experiencing. Through active listening they were able to identify the problem and outline the procedures to correct this imbalance.

2. **Do you think that an open-door policy was the right way to improve upward communications? What other techniques would you suggest?**

The open-door policy was the right communication technique to use to address this problem. It encourages individuals to address concerns and should be used with other communication techniques such as top down, bottom up, and horizontal
communications. These are all formal communication techniques that should be utilized to stimulate interest on the part of employees.

3. *What problems do you think an open-door policy creates? Do you think many employees are reluctant to use it? Why?*

Problems of an open door policy and procedure include an outcome such as the rash statement that Rich Langston made to Leroy: “Have you considered leaving the company?” A statement such as this creates a barrier to communication and can discourage employees from coming in and discussing their problems. In order for an open door policy to work effectively, it must encourage employees to become active listeners. Active listening is an important precursor for the improvement of two-way communication.