

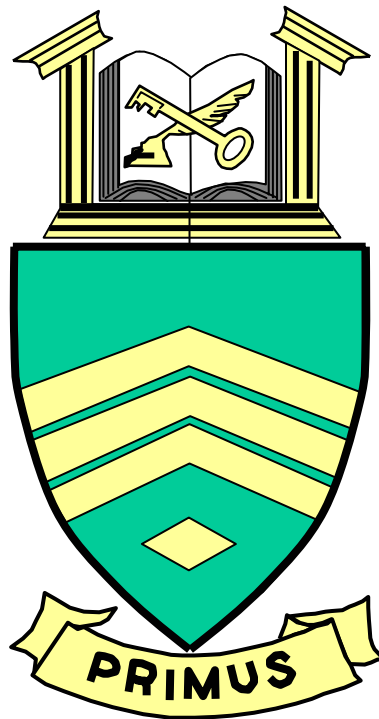
ARMY SERGEANTS MAJOR ACADEMY (FSC-TATS)

C651

JUN 06

COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY

PRERESIDENT TRAINING SUPPORT PACKAGE



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PRERESIDENT TRAINING SUPPORT PACKAGE (TSP)

TSP Number / Title	C651 / COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY
Effective Date	01 Jun 2006
Supersedes TSP(s) / Lesson(s)	C651, Communicate Effectively, Jun 05.
TSP Users	521-SQIM (DL), First Sergeant Course
Proponent	The proponent for this document is the Sergeants Major Academy.
Improvement Comments	<p>Users are invited to send comments and suggested improvements on DA Form 2028, <i>Recommended Changes to Publications and Blank Forms</i>. Completed forms, or equivalent response, will be mailed or attached to electronic e-mail and transmitted to:</p> <p>COMDT USASMA ATTN ATSS DCF BLDG 11291 BIGGS FIELD FORT BLISS TX 79918-8002</p> <p>Telephone (Comm) (915) 568-8875 Telephone (DSN) 978-8875</p> <p>E-mail: atss-dcd@bliss.army.mil</p>
Security Clearance / Access	Unclassified
Foreign Disclosure Restrictions	FD5. This product/publication has been reviewed by the product developers in coordination with the USASMA foreign disclosure authority. This product is releasable to students from all requesting foreign countries without restrictions.

PREFACE

Purpose

This Training Support Package provides the student with a standardized lesson plan for presenting instruction for:

Task Number

Task Title

158-100-1340

Communicate Effectively as a Unit or Staff Leader

This TSP
Contains

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COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY
C651 / Version 1
01 Jun 2006

SECTION I. ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

All Courses Including This Lesson

<u>Course Number</u>	<u>Version</u>	<u>Course Title</u>
521-SQIM (DL)	1	First Sergeant Course

Task(s) Taught(*) or Supported

<u>Task Number</u>	<u>Task Title</u>
158-100-1340	Communicate Effectively as a Unit or Staff Leader

Reinforced Task(s)

<u>Task Number</u>	<u>Task Title</u>
None	

Academic Hours

The academic hours required to teach this lesson are as follows:

	<u>Distance Learning Hours/Methods</u>
	40 mins / Practical Exercise (Performance)
	1 hr 10 mins / Study Assignment
Test	0 hrs
Test Review	0 hrs
Total Hours:	2 hrs

Test Lesson Number

	<u>Hours</u>	<u>Lesson No.</u>
Testing (to include test review)	3 hrs	E651 version 1

Prerequisite Lesson(s)

<u>Lesson Number</u>	<u>Lesson Title</u>
None	

Clearance Access

Security Level: Unclassified
 Requirements: There are no clearance or access requirements for the lesson.

Foreign Disclosure Restrictions

FD5. This product/publication has been reviewed by the product developers in coordination with the USASMA foreign disclosure authority. This product is releasable to students from all requesting foreign countries without restrictions.

References

<u>Number</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Additional Information</u>
FM 22-100	ARMY LEADERSHIP	31 Aug 1999	Developmental Reference
TSP 158-D-1340	COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY AS A UNIT OR STAFF LEADER	1998	SH-1

Student Study Assignments

- Study SH-1.
-

Instructor Requirements

None

Additional Support Personnel Requirements

<u>Name</u>	<u>Stu Ratio</u>	<u>Qty</u>	<u>Man Hours</u>
MSG, FSC graduate, ITC, and SGITC graduate (Enlisted)	1:14	1	2 hrs

Equipment Required for Instruction

<u>Id Name</u>	<u>Stu Ratio</u>	<u>Instr Ratio</u>	<u>Spt</u>	<u>Qty</u>	<u>Exp</u>
None					

* Before Id indicates a TADSS

Materials Required

Instructor Materials:
None

- Student Materials:**
- TSP.
 - Pen or pencil and paper.
-

Classroom, Training Area, and Range Requirements

None

Ammunition Requirements

<u>Id</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Exp</u>	<u>Stu Ratio</u>	<u>Instr Ratio</u>	<u>Spt Qty</u>
None					

Instructional Guidance

None

**Proponent
Lesson Plan
Approvals**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Date</u>
McGough, Elliott T.	GS09	Training Specialist	
Smith, Sandra	SGM	Chief Instructor, FSC	
Graham, Kevin L.	SGM	Chief, FSC	
Collins, Curtis R.	SGM	Chief, SMC	
Lemon, Marion	SGM	Chief, CMDD	

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SECTION II. INTRODUCTION

Method of Instruction: <u>Study Assignment</u>
Technique of Delivery: <u>Individualized, self-paced Instruction</u>
Instructor to Student Ratio is: <u>1:14</u>
Time of Instruction: <u>5 mins</u>
Media: <u>None</u>

Motivator

You can trace some of the greatest blunders in history to communication failures. In extreme cases, miscommunication can result in extensive loss of life and property and in an organization or interpersonal sense, can lead to disastrous outcomes. Webster's II New Riverside Dictionary, Revised Edition, defines communication as "The exchange of ideas, messages, or information." Yet, as organizational leaders, we frequently do a notoriously poor job of communicating. In this lesson, you will examine how communication between individuals takes place and what factors affect the quality of that interaction. You will see how differences or similarities between people affect the process and whether the nonverbal component of communication influences the transfer of meaning. As a leader, you will examine the aspects of the communication process that will help make you a more convincing communicator. Finally, you will learn how active listening can help you, as a leader, to communicate effectively with others.

Terminal Learning Objective

At the completion of this lesson, you [the student] will:

Action:	Determine the communication skills required of a unit or staff leader.
Conditions:	As a first sergeant in a self-study environment given SH-1.
Standards:	Determined the communication skills required of a unit or staff leader IAW SH-1.

Safety Requirements

None

Risk Assessment Level

Low

Environmental Considerations

NOTE: It is the responsibility of all Soldiers and DA civilians to protect the environment from damage.

None

Evaluation

At the end of your Phase I training and before entering Phase II, you will take an on-line, multiple-choice examination. It will test your comprehension of the learning objectives from this and other lessons in Phase I. You must correctly answer 70 percent or more of the questions on the examination to receive a GO. Failure to achieve a GO on the examination will result in a retest. Failure on the retest could result in your dismissal from the course.

**Instructional
Lead-In**

In this lesson, you will review the fundamentals of effective communication and their relationship to organizational effectiveness.

SECTION III. PRESENTATION

A. ENABLING LEARNING OBJECTIVE

ACTION:	Identify the components of the Cybernetic Communication Model.
CONDITIONS:	As a first sergeant in a self-study environment given SH-1.
STANDARDS:	Identified the components of the Cybernetic Communication Model IAW SH-1.

1. Learning Step / Activity 1. The Components of the Cybernetic Communication Model

Method of Instruction: Study Assignment
Technique of Delivery: Individualized, self-paced Instruction
Instructor to Student Ratio: 1:14
Time of Instruction: 10 mins
Media: None

To complete this learning step activity, you are to--

- Read the above ELO.
- Read SH-1, pp SH-1-1 thru SH-1-4.

2. Learning Step / Activity 2. The Components of the Cybernetic Communication Model

Method of Instruction: Practical Exercise (Performance)
Technique of Delivery: Individualized, self-paced Instruction
Instructor to Student Ratio: 1:14
Time of Instruction: 10 mins
Media: None

Try to complete the questions in this practical exercise without referring to the student handout. Write your answers in the spaces provided.

- This is a self-graded exercise.
- It should take you approximately 10 minutes to complete the questions.
- Complete questions 1 thru 3 in PE-1, p C-2.
- Compare your responses with the solutions on pp C-4 and C-5.
- For any incorrect responses, review the appropriate reference/lesson material.

CHECK ON LEARNING: The practical exercise (questions 1 thru 3) serves as a check on learning for ELO A.

B. ENABLING LEARNING OBJECTIVE

ACTION:	Identify the factors that distort meaning in the communication process.
CONDITIONS:	As a first sergeant in a self-study environment given SH-1.
STANDARDS:	Identified the factors that distort meaning in the communication process IAW SH-1.

1. Learning Step / Activity 1. Distorting the Meaning of a Message

Method of Instruction: Study Assignment
Technique of Delivery: Individualized, self-paced Instruction
Instructor to Student Ratio: 1:14
Time of Instruction: 10 mins
Media: None

To complete this learning step activity, you are to--

- Read the above ELO.
- Read SH-1, pp SH-1-5 thru SH-1-10.

2. Learning Step / Activity 2. Distorting the Meaning of a Message

Method of Instruction: Practical Exercise (Performance)
Technique of Delivery: Individualized, self-paced Instruction
Instructor to Student Ratio: 1:14
Time of Instruction: 10 mins
Media: None

Try to complete the questions in this practical exercise without referring to the student handout. Write your answers in the spaces provided.

- This is a self-graded exercise.
- It should take you approximately 10 minutes to complete the questions.
- Complete questions 4 thru 6 in PE-1, p C-2.
- Compare your responses with the solutions on p C-5.
- For any incorrect responses, review the appropriate reference/lesson material.

CHECK ON LEARNING: The practical exercise (questions 4 thru 6) serves as a check on learning for ELO B.

C. ENABLING LEARNING OBJECTIVE

ACTION:	Identify the communication paths in an organization.
CONDITIONS:	As a first sergeant in a self-study environment given SH-1.
STANDARDS:	Identified the communication paths in an organization IAW SH-1.

1. Learning Step / Activity 1. Communication Paths in an Organization

Method of Instruction: Study Assignment
Technique of Delivery: Individualized, self-paced Instruction
Instructor to Student Ratio: 1:14
Time of Instruction: 10 mins
Media: None

To complete this learning step activity, you are to--

- Read the above ELO.
- Read SH-1, pp SH-1-11 thru SH-1-14.

2. Learning Step / Activity 2. Communication Paths in an Organization

Method of Instruction: Practical Exercise (Performance)
Technique of Delivery: Individualized, self-paced Instruction
Instructor to Student Ratio: 1:14
Time of Instruction: 10 mins
Media: None

Try to complete the questions in this practical exercise without referring to the student handout. Write your answers in the spaces provided.

- This is a self-graded exercise.
- It should take you approximately 10 minutes to complete the questions.
- Complete questions 7 thru 9 of PE-1, pp C-2 and C-3.
- Compare your responses with the solutions on p C-5.
- For any incorrect responses, review the appropriate reference/lesson material.

CHECK ON LEARNING: The practical exercise (questions 7 thru 9) serves as a check on learning for ELO C.

D. ENABLING LEARNING OBJECTIVE

ACTION:	Identify common communication problems in an organization.
CONDITIONS:	As a first sergeant in a self-study environment given SH-1.
STANDARDS:	Identified common communication problems in an organization IAW SH-1.

1. Learning Step / Activity 1. Communication Problems in an Organization

Method of Instruction: Study Assignment
Technique of Delivery: Individualized, self-paced Instruction
Instructor to Student Ratio: 1:14
Time of Instruction: 10 mins
Media: None

To complete this learning step activity, you are to--

- Read the above ELO.
- Read SH-1, pp SH-1-14 thru SH-1-19.

2. Learning Step / Activity 2. Communication Problems in an Organization

Method of Instruction: Practical Exercise (Performance)
Technique of Delivery: Individualized, self-paced Instruction
Instructor to Student Ratio: 1:14
Time of Instruction: 10 mins
Media: None

Try to complete the questions in this practical exercise without referring to the student handout. Write your answers in the spaces provided.

- This is a self-graded exercise.
- It should take you approximately 10 minutes to complete the questions.
- Complete questions 10 thru 12 of PE-1, p C-3.
- Compare your responses with the solutions on p C-6.
- For any incorrect responses, review the appropriate reference/lesson material.

CHECK ON LEARNING: The practical exercise (questions 10 thru 12) serves as a check on learning for ELO D.

E. ENABLING LEARNING OBJECTIVE

ACTION:	Identify the factors that make a message convincing.
CONDITIONS:	As a first sergeant in a self-study environment given SH-1.
STANDARDS:	Identified the factors that make a message convincing IAW SH-1.

1. Learning Step / Activity 1. Factors that Make a Message Convincing

Method of Instruction: Study Assignment
Technique of Delivery: Individualized, self-paced Instruction
Instructor to Student Ratio: 1:14
Time of Instruction: 10 mins
Media: None

To complete this learning step activity, you are to--

- Read the above ELO.
- Read SH-1, pp SH-1-19 thru SH-1-23.

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SECTION IV. SUMMARY

Method of Instruction: <u>Study Assignment</u>
Technique of Delivery: <u>Individualized, self-paced Instruction</u>
Instructor to Student Ratio is: <u>1:14</u>
Time of Instruction: <u>5 mins</u>
Media: <u>None</u>

Check on Learning

The practical exercise serves as the check on learning for this lesson.

Review / Summarize Lesson

Not only are leaders responsible for developing their own competence in using effective communication techniques, but also in their subordinates. Employing effective communication techniques has a tremendous impact on unit effectiveness. Leaders who invest the time and energy in developing their communication techniques are investing in the future of their subordinates and their unit.

Transition to Next Lesson

The concepts utilized in “Communicating Effectively as a Leader or Staff Member,” are applicable to other leadership topics. As you progress through the leadership and communication lessons, look for places to apply concepts and build links to other leadership topics.

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SECTION V. STUDENT EVALUATION

**Testing
Requirements**

At the end of your Phase I training and before entering Phase II, you will take an on-line, multiple-choice examination. It will test your comprehension of the learning objectives from this and other lessons in Phase I. You must correctly answer 70 percent or more of the questions on the examination to receive a GO. Failure to achieve a GO on the examination will result in a retest. Failure on the retest could result in your dismissal from the course.

**Feedback
Requirements**

NOTE: Feedback is essential to effective learning. Please complete the student questionnaire and mail to USASMA.

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STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE C651

Directions

- Enter your name, your rank, and the date you complete this questionnaire.

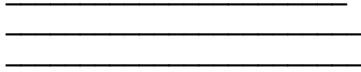
Rank: _____ Name: _____ Date: _____

- Answer items 1 through 6 below.
- Fold the questionnaire, so the address for USASMA is visible.

Print your return address, add postage, and mail.

NOTE: Your response to this questionnaire will assist the Academy in refining and improving this course. When completing the questionnaire, answer each question frankly. Your assistance helps build and maintain the best curriculum possible.

Item 1	Do you feel you have met the learning objectives of this lesson?
Item 2	Was the material covered in this lesson new to you?
Item 3	Which parts of this lesson were most helpful to you in learning the objectives?
Item 4	How could we improve the format of this lesson?
Item 5	How could we improve the content of this lesson?
Item 6	Do you have additional questions or comments? If you do, please list them here. You may add additional pages if necessary.



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Appendix A - Viewgraph Masters (N/A)

Appendix B - Test(s) and Test Solution(s) (N/A)

Appendix C
PRACTICAL EXERCISE 1

Title	COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY						
Lesson Number / Title	C651 version 1 / COMMUNICATION						
Introduction	None						
Motivator	None						
Terminal Learning Objective	At the completion of this lesson, you [the student] will:						
	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%;">Action:</td> <td>Determine the communication skills required of a unit or staff leader.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Conditions:</td> <td>As a first sergeant in a self-study environment given SH-1.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Standards:</td> <td>Determined the communication skills required of a unit or staff leader IAW SH-1.</td> </tr> </table>	Action:	Determine the communication skills required of a unit or staff leader.	Conditions:	As a first sergeant in a self-study environment given SH-1.	Standards:	Determined the communication skills required of a unit or staff leader IAW SH-1.
Action:	Determine the communication skills required of a unit or staff leader.						
Conditions:	As a first sergeant in a self-study environment given SH-1.						
Standards:	Determined the communication skills required of a unit or staff leader IAW SH-1.						
Safety Requirements	None						
Risk Assessment	Low						
Environmental Considerations	None						
Evaluation	None						
Instructional Lead-In	None						
Resource Requirements	Instructor Materials: None Student Materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pen or pencil and writing paper. 						
Special Instructions	Answer questions 1 thru 12 below. Compare your answers with those in the solution following this exercise. If you do not score 70 percent or higher, you should review the material on pp SH-1-1 thru SH-1-24.						

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Procedures

1. Define the following communication terms:

- a. Sender _____
- b. Communication _____
- c. Encoding _____
- d. Decoding _____
- e. Receiver _____
- f. Symbol _____
- g. Feedback _____
- h. Noise _____
- i. Message channel _____

2. Explain what we mean when we say that during the communication process, the feedback becomes the new message. _____

3. The NCO said "I knew you'd do it that way!" He said this with a raised voice and a pointed finger. Interpret what was said. How would the message change if he smiled? _____

4. Peter Drucker stated, "communication is the act of the recipient." What did he mean? _____

5. We can better understand the complexity of communications if we consider the following statement, "No two people view the world in exactly the same way." What does that mean in terms of the communication process? _____

6. Explain how you can increase the agreement between the source and receiver about the meanings of symbols. _____

7. In an organization, communication flows upward, downward, and laterally. The leader is in a "linking-pin" position in the organizational communications flow. What does this mean? _____

Procedures,
continued

8. List at least three purposes of downward communication. _____

9. Why does downward communication have the greatest potential for misinterpretation? _____

10. Define data overload. Briefly describe what happens to the communication process in cases of data overload. Summarize four ways that you, as a leader, can account for data overload and reduce its influence on your communication efforts. _____

11. What is message distortion? Discuss how each of the approaches listed below (a-e) can help you, as the leader, overcome message distortion. _____

a. Subordinate knows organizational goals/objectives. _____

b. Subordinate knows where he/she fits into the organization. _____

c. Subordinate participates in policy formulation. _____

d. Redundancy. _____

e. Brief back. _____

12. What is the most important thing that a leader can do to foster the type of feedback desired? _____

Feedback
Requirements

None

**SOLUTION TO
PRACTICAL EXERCISE 1, C651**

1. Define the following communication terms:

a. Sender: The originator of the message or communication effort.

Ref: p SH-1-3

b. Communication: The process of transferring information from one person to another.

Ref: p SH-1-3

c. Encoding: Putting the intended message into commonly accepted symbols, which he believes the intended receiver will understand.

Ref: p SH-1-4

d. Decoding: What the receiver does upon receipt of a message--mentally sorts out symbols and interprets them.

Ref: p SH-1-4

e. Receiver: The person who receives the intended message.

Ref: p SH-1-3

f. Symbol: In this context, something which stands for something else.

Ref: p SH-1-4

g. Feedback: The receiver responds in some way, thereby providing feedback to the source as to how he receives, interprets, and acts on the original message.

Ref: p SH-1-4

h. Noise: Distortions, disruptions, and breakdowns that are part of the transmission process.

Ref: p SH-1-4

i. Message channel: Composite of all the symbols as the source assembles and processes them to convey the intended thought or idea.

Ref: p SH-1-4

2. Explain what we mean when we say that during the communication process, the feedback becomes the new message.

The sender encodes the intended message in symbols which he/she thinks the receiver will understand. The sender sends the message through the selected channel and the receiver interprets that message through his/her own physical and psychological realities. The noise which occurs between the sending of the message and the receipt of the message will distort the message. The sender wants to know if the receiver accurately receives his/her message. The only way that he/she can know if the receiver got the message accurately is through the feedback received from the sender. Thus, the feedback from the receiver is a new message to the sender which provides the sender with information about the message which the receiver actually received. The feedback is a new message from the original receiver to the original sender.

Ref: p SH-1-4

3. The NCO said, "I knew you'd do it that way!" He said this with a raised voice and a pointed finger. Interpret what he said.

The raised voice typically indicates that the individual speaking is not happy with something. A pointed finger most often indicates that the speaker is making a definite point or emphasizing what he/she is saying. Given this context, it appears that the message is a strong correction to the receiver and that the sender is not happy with something done previously.

How would the message change if he smiled? If the NCO smiles, the receiver would take the smile as an indication that the sender is happy with the results. The smile would probably negate any negative impression sent by the words, voice, and finger.

Ref: p SH-1-4

4. Peter Drucker stated, "communication is the act of the recipient." What did he mean?

It is a warning that the communication process is not complete unless the intended receiver understands the meaning.

Ref: p SH-1-5

5. We can better understand the complexity of communications if we consider the following statement, "No two people view the world in exactly the same way." What does that mean in terms of the communication process?

It means that our perceptions are unique to us and reflect the sum total of the experience that constitutes our reality. In turn, what others see or hear is likewise bound by their experience.

Ref: p SH-1-6

6. Explain how you can increase the agreement between the source and receiver about the meanings of symbols.

If you want to communicate with others having different experiences, you need to enhance the common experiences. Couch the message in terms and experiences to which the recipient can relate.

Ref: p SH-1-6

7. In an organization, communication flows upward, downward, and laterally. The leader is in a "linking-pin" position in the organizational communications flow. What does this mean?

The leader is in a position affected by and one that affects the communications flow from any direction: upward, downward, and laterally.

Ref: p SH-1-11

8. List at least three purposes of downward communication.

Downward communication provides instructions, guidance, direction to subordinates, and may also disseminate rules, procedures, and routine information for administrative housekeeping.

Ref: p SH-1-11

9. Why does downward communication have the greatest potential for misinterpretation?

The relative speed of the communication process is faster and leaves less time and opportunity for adequate feedback.

Ref: p SH-1-11

10. Define data overload. Briefly describe what happens to the communication process in cases of data overload. Summarize four ways that you, as a leader, can account for data overload and reduce its influence on your communication efforts.

Data overload is when the leaders receive so much data input that they cannot adequately identify the relevant information. Data overload can lead to confusion, poor decisions, frustration, and, in extreme cases, a complete breakdown of the communication process. There are several steps which the leader can take to help reduce the effects of data overload. First the leader can funnel data to the correct person protecting those who do not need the data from data overload. Second, the leader can use gatekeepers to filter and summarize incoming data and make routine decisions. This action releases some of the potential for leadership data overload. Third, the leaders can “que” information. This involves postponing low priority communications until a more convenient time. Fourth, the leader can review the need for compiled data and eliminate the data requirements not relevant to the organization.

Ref: pp SH-1-14 thru SH-1-16

11. Define message distortion. Discuss how each of the approaches listed below (a-d) can help you, as the leader, overcome message distortion.

Message distortion is a difference in the intended and perceived meanings of the message.

Ref: p SH-1-16

a. Subordinate knows organizational goals/objectives. Knowledge of organizational goals and objectives helps the subordinate interpret a directive properly if he/she can see how the information fits into the larger organizational picture.

Ref: p SH-1-16

b. Subordinate participates in policy formulation. Personnel who participate in the formulation of policy better understand the policy and are less likely to misunderstand messages related to the policy.

Ref: p SH-1-16

c. Redundancy. Can help reduce distortion. Sending information several times over the same channel or simultaneously over several parallel communications channels increases the likelihood that the intended receiver will receive and properly interpret the information.

Ref: p SH-1-16

d. Brief back. A brief back is an effective way to reduce distortion. Requiring a brief back allows the leader to determine if there is confusion about points in the priority message he/she disseminated and provides an opportunity for the leader to resolve any miscommunications.

Ref: p SH-1-16

12. What is the most important thing that a leader can do to foster the type of feedback desired? Probably the most important thing that a leader can do to foster feedback is to reduce the defensiveness normally existing in an organizational climate.

Ref: p SH-1-17

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Appendix D

HANDOUTS FOR LESSON 1: C651 version 1

This appendix contains the items listed in this table--

Title/Synopsis	Pages
SH-1, Extracted Material from TSP 158-D-1340, Communicate Effectively as a Unit or Staff Leader	SH-1-2 thru SH-1-23

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Student Handout 1

Extracted Material from TSP 158-D-1340, Communicate Effectively as a Unit or Staff Leader

This student handout consists of 22 pages of extracted material from the publication listed below.

TSP 158-D-1340, Communicate Effectively as a Unit or Staff Leader, 1998.

Disclaimer: The training developer downloaded the extracted pages from the General Dennis J. Reimer Training and Doctrine Digital Home Page. The text may contain passive voice, misspellings, grammatical errors, etc., and may not be in compliance with the Army Writing Style Program. The pages and page numbers do not appear as they do in the actual source document.

DIRECTIONS

The reading material for this lesson is in this student homework packet. You are to read the material and answer the questions in the practical exercises (Appendix C). You should try to answer the questions *without referring* back to the reading material. You will find the correct answers immediately following each practical exercise. You should strive to score a minimum of 80% on PE-1. If you do not score 80%, you should go back and review the material you missed. Each answer will refer to the appropriate page in the student handout. The material covered here, will be the basis for the Phase I final examination.

Communication

Examples of communication failures and the effects of these failures can be found throughout history. In these extreme cases, miscommunication can result in extensive loss of life and property.

Introduction

In an organizational or interpersonal sense, miscommunication can often be no less disastrous in terms of intended organizational outcomes.

Communication has been described as the "thread that holds the various interpersonal parts of an organization together." Yet, as organizational leaders we frequently do a poor job of communicating.

The leader's job cannot be accomplished without effective communication with subordinates peers and superiors. This makes us ask what we can learn about the communication process that can help us be better communicators.

We begin by examining how communication between individuals takes place and what factors affect the quality of that interaction. We will discuss how differences or similarities among the people involved in communication affect the process and whether the nonverbal component of communication influences the transfer of meaning to the extent suggested in popular literature.

Then we will examine the organizational environment to determine how it limits or enhances the effectiveness of communication. We will take a close look at selected strategies to help the leader respond to specific organizational communication problems. We will examine some aspects of the communication process that help make the leader a more convincing communicator.

The final section of the paper is concerned with active listening and how active listening can help you, as a leader, communicate more effectively.

The Cybernetic Communication Model

"That's not really what I meant!"

"But, I told them to. . ."

"You must have been mistaken."

"I thought you meant. . ."

All of these common phrases serve notice that something has failed in the communication process.

Leader Implications

Such miscommunications can be inconvenient when they occur in casual conversation. However, they can have far-reaching implications for the leader if such problems occur in your unit. With this problem in mind, we will look more closely at the possible sources of communication problems that we encounter in our units.

Definition

Communication can be defined as the process of transferring information from one person to another.

Three Basic Elements

Each transfer of information involves at least three basic elements:

- a SOURCE (or sender) of the communication,
- a MESSAGE to be transmitted,
- a RECEIVER--either a subordinate, a senior, or a fellow [S]oldier the source feels needs the information.

The source or sender is the originator of the message or communication effort.

The message, of course, is influenced both by the content of the communication (the information to be transmitted) and the means of transmitting the content (voice, written, picture, or so on).

The receiver is the audience for whom the message was intended or the person who receives the information.

Each of these elements is a potential source of communication failure.

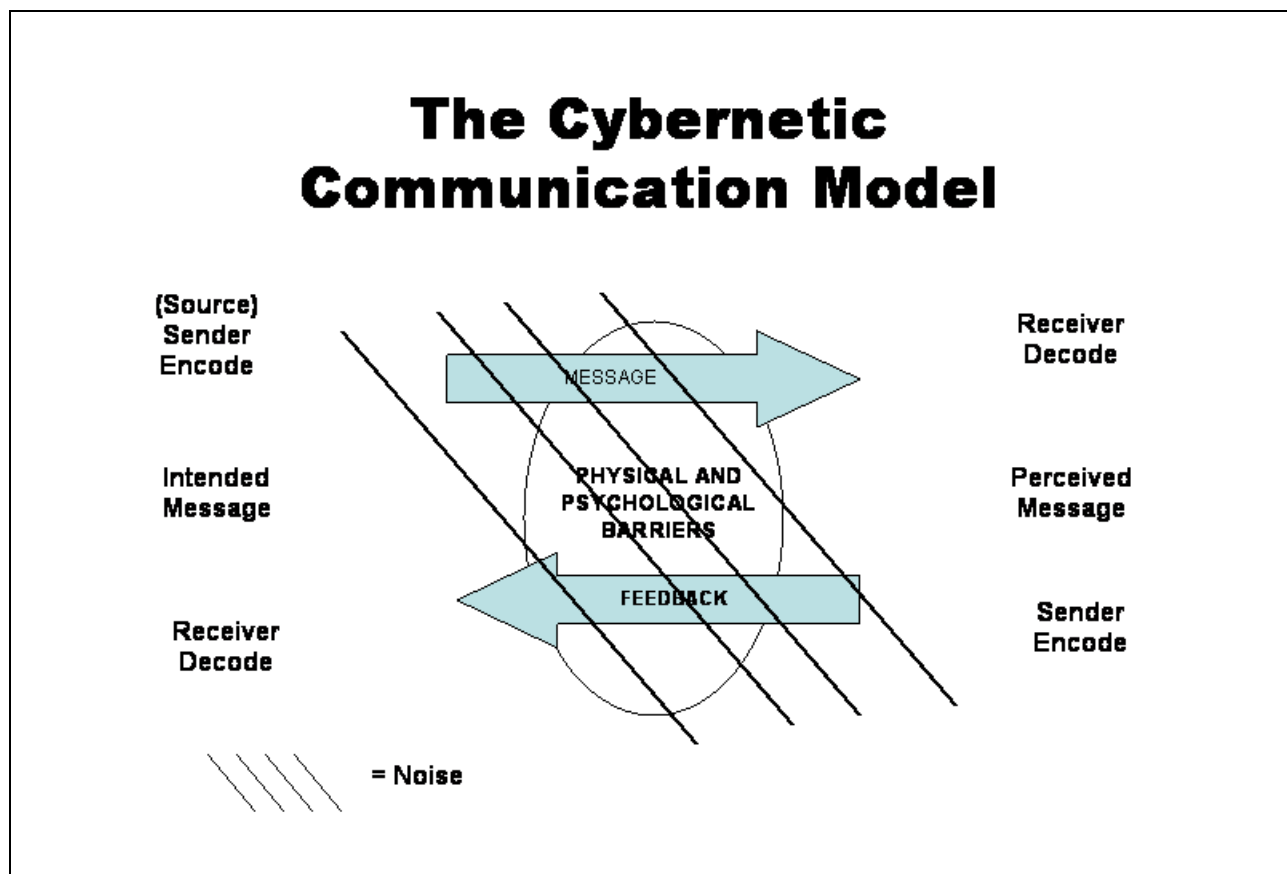


Figure 1, The Cybernetic Communication Model

The Model, Discussion

The simple communications model above shows the chain of events that takes place when the source initiates a communication. According to this diagram, the process begins with an intended message (something which the source feels needs to be communicated to another).

Encode

To add substance and meaning to the intended message, the source must encode this message into commonly accepted symbols, all of which, are thought to be understood by the receiver.

Symbols

In this context, a symbol merely means something that stands for something else. Selected words or phrases, expressions, and tones are all examples of symbols a source uses to encode a message.

For instance, the words: "You messed up!" coming from a superior may be symbolic of the message that the subordinate failed to satisfy the expectations of the superior.

A pointed finger may be a symbolic emphasis to that statement, while a raised voice may symbolize added emphasis.

Message Channel

The message, then, is the composite of all the symbols as they are assembled and processed by the source to convey the intended thought or idea. The source consciously or unconsciously selects the message channel with which to convey the message: face-to-face, written, telephonic, or whatever the sender deems most simple or appropriate. Sometimes the channel is dictated by such events as distance, status, or organizational procedures.

Decode

Upon receipt of the message, the receiver decodes it by mentally sorting out the often conflicting symbols and interpreting them. For instance, the above communication (exclamatory comment, pointed finger and raised voice) accompanied by a smile on the sender's face may be interpreted as a joke rather than a reprimand.

In putting all of the symbols together within the constraints of the particular psychological environment, the **perceived message** is received.

Feedback

To complete the process, the receiver responds in some way, thereby providing feedback to the source as to how the original message is received, interpreted, and acted upon. In the case of our sample communication, the feedback may be a quizzical look, a nervous gesture, or some type of verbal acknowledgment. In actuality, this feedback completes the cybernetic (or self-correcting) loop for the sender, who may now respond to the feedback received. Feedback also constitutes a process reversal in which the sequence just described begins again. That is, with feedback the receiver becomes the source, encoding and sending a message back to the original source.

If the receiver of our sample communication returns a message of disgust or lack of appropriate concern, or if the receiver misinterprets the source's smile, this would probably stimulate another message from the source to clarify or add more emphasis to the communication.

Noise

The sequence as described thus far is rather simplistic. When we consider the noise in the system (distortions, disruptions and breakdowns that are part of the transmission process), do we begin to recognize the true complexity of the communication process.

Noise, which results primarily from source/receiver differences and unintended supplemental nonverbal communications, takes communication out of the realm of common sense.

We will discuss communication noise further in the next section.

The Distortion of Meaning

If a leader is to be a successful communicator, the interpersonal nature of the communication process must be understood. Too often we concern ourselves solely with how we send a message and ignore the reception of the message.

As organizational leaders, little is accomplished if we send instructions, which are not accurately received and implemented. Peter Drucker, a noted management consultant states that in reality, "communication is the act of the recipient."

This statement forewarns us that communication is not complete unless the *intended meaning is understood by the intended receiver*.

Source/Receiver Differences

We can understand better the complexity of the communication process if we recall the following point:

"No two people view the world in exactly the same way."

To put it another way, our perceptions are unique to us and reflect the sum total of the experience that constitutes our reality. In turn, what others see or hear is likewise bound by their experience.

Symbols and Meaning

This issue has significance for communication when we recall that the source selects and arranges symbols to construct a message that represents a thought or idea. In doing so, the source usually presumes that the receiver attaches the sender's meaning to each symbol and therefore will interpret the message exactly as the sender intends.

Common Symbols

As [S]oldiers, we are able to overcome many of our communication difficulties on a technical level because we have a common vocabulary, or a common set of symbols. If I tell a [S]oldier to meet me at his tank in the motor pool, I have every expectation that he will be standing by a tank in the motor pool; not by his car in the parking lot.

We share the same meaning for "tank" and "motor pool".

We also use the 24 hour clock to tell time, which eliminates another potential communication problem. With the 24 hour clock, we have only one 12 o'clock noon each day. This is also the reason we attempt to standardize terms among our allies.

Common Vocabulary

A common vocabulary reduces the possibility of communication problems resulting in battlefield tragedies. In reality, unless you take special steps, individual differences in the experiences and background of the source and the receiver rarely allow a one-to-one correspondence between the intended message and the perceived message.

If reality has different meaning for each individual, how are we able to communicate at all? How do we achieve any agreement on the meaning of the symbols we use in structuring our messages?

Common Experience

Communications theorists point out that while each experience is unique to the individual, you will enhance communication to the degree that there is common experience among people. It seems reasonable, then, that if we want to increase our ability to communicate, we will look for ways to increase the commonality between ourselves and the receivers.

For example, in attempting to explain the effect of psychological stress on a human being to a person who has limited knowledge of the functioning of the human body, we may experience considerable difficulty.

Yet, if we can draw on some common frame of reference, such as an experience of faintness or depression following some particularly disturbing news, or the effect of extending a rubber band beyond its limits of elasticity, we may increase the transfer of meaning considerably.

Differences Between Senders and Receivers

What are the differences between source and receiver that are particularly troublesome to communicators? Researchers in the field of communications have classified individual differences into five general categories: differences in:

- self-identity,
- role,
- value,
- mood,
- motive.

We will examine each of these more closely.

In studying the individual it is apparent that differences exist in the way people view themselves and the challenges presented to them. Consider the following case.

A leader with a high need for achievement sends a message to a subordinate, presuming that the message will be received with enthusiasm, since it presents an exciting challenge.

Self-Identity

The leader may fail to effectively communicate merely because the subordinate, who has a low need for achievement, perceives the message as a threat and thus reacts negatively to it.

Clearly such self-identity factors can have significant influence on the transfer of meaning. Source/receiver differences in the manner in which they perceive their roles can also have a complicating effect.

Role

For instance, a leader may send a message to a subordinate requiring him to perform a duty the leader believes is part of the subordinate's overall responsibilities. On the other hand, the subordinate, perceiving the role of subordinate differently, may consider the requirement to exceed his responsibilities.

Values

The ambiguity that results from this situation may lead to various unintended consequences. The subordinate may think:

"Why is he having me do this?" or

"What did I do to deserve this?"

In addition, differences in value systems may exist between the source and the receiver which lead to different interpretations of the same message.

Motive

The middle-aged subordinate with 15 years invested in the organization and a person with less than a year on the job may react differently to a request for support requiring personal sacrifices. If the leader presumes equal values (loyalty to the organization), the communication may fail again.

Clearly, differences in motive of the source and receiver can also cause miscommunication.

For instance, the leader, being in a “linking-pin” position, may appreciate pressure from above and therefore respond to the organization’s need for compliance with a certain directive. Subordinates removed from such organizational pressures, and perhaps less committed to organizational goals, may respond differently to the same message.

Mood

Mood differences may also alter meaning between sender and receiver.

The level of stress experienced by the sender and receiver will affect the interpretation of the message. A priority message might be received as merely routine.

Other Factors

In addition to these more formally defined criteria, there may also exist:

- socio-economic,
- political,
- religious,
- cultural, or even
- age differences

that affect the way in which the source and receiver interpret or attach meaning to various symbols.

Normally, combinations of these differences will add to the variation between the intended and perceived meaning of a message. A common response to a failed communication is:

“Oh, I didn’t know that’s what you meant.”

Conclusion

Although we cannot do away with these individual differences, awareness of their existence is the first critical step in reducing problems caused by them. A prudent leader might ask a series of questions, such as:

- “Do I have the same motives as my subordinates?”
- “Might our value differences affect how they interpret a directive?”
- “Can I mentally put myself on the receiving end of my messages and see how I might react, say, as a 19 year-old whose world does not revolve totally around this organization?”
- “Because of my age or education, do I use terminology which is inappropriate to the intended receiver?”
- “Do differing role expectations between my subordinates and me cause different interpretations of the same message?”

A leader who can assess the potential differences between source and receiver is better able to complete and transmit messages in such a way as to reduce the possible gap between the intended and perceived message.

Nonverbal Communications

Differences between intended and perceived meaning of a message often result from the complexity of the message channel itself. Recall that the sender chooses various symbols to represent thoughts and ideas and tries to arrange these symbols in a way that makes sense and will be accurately perceived by the receiver.

Components of the Message

Too often we think of the message only in terms of the words we use. Actually, the verbal portion of a message constitutes only a small portion of the total message content. Albert Mehrabian, an authority in the field of nonverbal communications, has investigated the relative significance of different components of a message and finds that the total impact of an oral communication is:

- 7% verbal,
- 38% vocal,
- 55% facial.

Written

In written communication such as this text, the words we select and how we group the words are extremely important, as they stand alone in terms of message content. The reader:

- can go back and reread passages,
- stop and think about the content and,
- make notes or underline key ideas.

Face-to-Face

In face-to-face communication, however, the actual words themselves constitute only a small portion of the total content. The way in which we arrange and present these words:

- in terms of tone,
- rate, inflection,
- pauses and,
- facial expression

actually provide most of the message's content for the receiver.

Non-Verbal

Sometimes, words themselves cannot stand alone and are dependent on nonverbal components for true intent. "Isn't this just great," is a statement that could be an honest expression of joy or happiness over a given event. On the other hand, with appropriate tonal inflection, it could be loaded with sarcasm and meant instead to convey disgust or contempt over a distasteful situation.

In this case, the source's intent is almost totally dependent on the nonverbal components that accompany the words.

The study of nonverbal communications has given us some interesting insights into how we communicate with others and what our actions actually convey.

Non-Verbal Cues

There are several nonverbal cues that help transmit our intended meaning. Among these are cues of:

- proximity or spatial distance,
- posture,
- facial expression,
- vocal tone and,
- appearance or dress.

Spatial Distance

Spatial distance between communicators, for instance, is an important indicator of attitude between source and receiver. In conversation, we tend to stand farther away from people we do not know or do not like; and closer to those we do know or do like.

Also, we tend to maintain more distance between ourselves, and a person we perceive as higher in status. A person of high status maintains greater personal territorial access.

Posture

Posture also may indicate either liking or status.

We tend to relax (lean forward, maintain an open arm posture or have direct body contact) with those we like.

However, we tend to become rigid and tense around those of greater status or those whom we perceive as threatening.

We tend to relax only to a moderate degree around those whom we consider our peers.

Those who perceive themselves as higher status generally are much more relaxed in posture than lower status persons.

Strutting, expansiveness, standing (when others are sitting) and hands on hips are all nonverbal cues of high status persons.

Facial Expressions

In addition, we reflect our responsiveness in a communicator interchange through spontaneous gestures, by shifting position and by moving closer to the other person. Under facial cues, eye contact can also indicate the degree of liking as can a positive facial expression.

We tend to maintain eye contact with those we like and avoid contact with those we dislike. Further, high status persons exhibit less eye contact than lower status persons. Also, we can transmit cues of responsiveness by an expressive face.

Vocal Cues

Vocal cues also send messages of liking, status and responsiveness. Lower status persons tend to have lower voice volume than do higher status persons.

Dress

In addition, our dress usually sends a powerful nonverbal message. High status persons may display appropriate ornaments, as in the military, or outward signs such as the current executive style of clothing.

The terms "white collar" and "blue collar" reflect relative status in an organization.

In the communication process between two people these nonverbal indicators are critical. Although often unaware, we actually look for these indicators as we listen to the message.

Congruence Between Verbal and Non-Verbal

If the nonverbal component of a message supports the verbal portion, it can reinforce the intended meaning of the message and assist the receiver in properly decoding the message.

However, if we say one thing, but nonverbally transmit another, the receiver tends to give more credence to the nonverbal components. The leader who in an apathetic monotone voice exclaims: "This is important," clearly betrays his intended message.

Credibility

A source that frequently sends contradictory messages, will lose credibility with subordinates.

Leaders can use nonverbal communications to enhance communication by consciously manipulating:

- spatial distance,
- posture
- eye contact

to reinforce the content of an intended message.

By practicing appropriate gestures, meaning can be reinforced for the receiver. Also, an awareness and critical self-analysis of the nonverbal aspects of communications by the source of the communication reduces the message ambiguity to the subordinates.

Non-Verbal Impact

In discussing how to improve communication skills, we normally concentrate on the behavior of communication sources. Of equal or even greater importance, however, is the impact of the nonverbal communications on the leader as a receiver in the communication process.

The leader who is an ineffective receiver may fail to gather critical feedback and thus reduce the ability to control the communication process. For instance, when a subordinate responds to a question by stating that "things are fine," but does so in a monotone voice, with head down and a slight frown, this should trigger a response.

The Total Message

Is the nonverbal portion of the communication undermining the reassuring words? In communicating orally with others, we need to focus attention on the total message--

- the words,
- the tone,
- the inflection,
- the pauses,
- the eye contact.

Doing this, however, is hard work.

Active Listening

Active listening includes total mind and body involvement. In fact, an active listener will sense increased pulse rate, perspiration and other indications of physical stress. In addition, actively responding to messages received by returning appropriate nonverbal communications demonstrates that we are listening and receiving messages.

Head nods, eye contact, the absence of distracting activity (such as the shuffling of papers, finger tapping, looking at the time) all are nonverbal signs which provide feedback of active listening and interest.

COMMUNICATION IN ORGANIZATIONS

We have discussed the extent to which noise (barriers to communication), in the form of source/receiver differences and nonverbal communications, can influence the communication process.

We are now ready to focus on the organization itself as the principal environment in which the leader must communicate. What is there about the organizational environment that facilitates or hinders the communications process?

In any organization, communication can flow in one of three directions:

- downward (toward subordinates),
- upward (toward seniors) and
- laterally (toward peers).

It is important to recall here that the “linking-pin” position of the “leader”, places the leader in a position to affect and to be affected by each of these three communication flows. Not only does the leader send communications in each of these directions, but also receives communications from subordinates, superiors and peers.

We will consider each form of communication in some detail.

Downward Communication

A typical organization chart will show the flow from senior to subordinate along a predetermined chain of authority. Downward communication is intended to provide:

- instructions,
- guidance, and
- direction to subordinates to assist them in meeting organizational objectives, and to
- disseminate rules,
- procedures, and
- routine information necessary for administrative housekeeping within the organization.

As such, *downward communication is primarily authoritative in nature*. It may consist of formalized written documents, routine briefings or meetings, or one-way, face-to-face verbal exchange between senior and subordinate. Generally, downward communication is rapid.

However, if we define communication effectiveness in terms of the accurate transfer of meaning from one person to another, **downward communication has perhaps the greatest potential for misinterpretation.**

Speed of Communication

For one thing, the relative speed of downward communication is usually accomplished at the expense of sufficient opportunity for feedback. As a result, the communicator may not know whether the intended meaning of the communication is understood in a way that results in appropriate action.

Shortcomings

This shortcoming of downward communication can be reduced to the extent that there is overlap or commonality between the source and the intended receiver. As discussed earlier, such commonality comes in part through shared experiences.

Where Speed is Essential

In organizations where rapid downward communication is essential to goal accomplishment, such as in the emergency work of military police or in the combat role of the military, *the longer people train and work together the less chance there is for misinterpreted downward communication.*

Commonality

Commonality enables the leader to know which subordinates can respond effectively to rapid downward communication, and which cannot. The leader also learns which subordinates will feed back cues of misunderstanding and which will not.

Until we have achieved a sense of commonality the exclusive use of downward communication can be a hazardous means of communication for a leader.

Upward Communication

In terms of the cybernetic model of communication, upward communication may constitute the feedback (verbal or nonverbal) which the leader receives from the subordinate, or it may be an intended message initiated at the lower level.

Like downward communication, upward flow can result from direct face-to-face verbal exchange between leader and subordinate, more formal meetings and briefings, or written documents.

Many studies have shown that upward information flow produces more effective organizations. As apparent from the cybernetic model, feedback adds the dynamic element that allows the leader to reassess and adjust guidance to subordinates on a continuous basis.

Need for Accuracy

Unless there is accurate information concerning subordinate performance and reaction, the leader cannot adequately supervise. Two-way communication, where feedback flows both up and down leads to greater effectiveness in task performance, greater acceptance, and higher motivation on the part of subordinates.

Why, then, is effective upward communication within organizations so often unsatisfactory?

Degree of Satisfaction

For one thing, the difference in status among various levels within the organization seems to ensure that downward communication is much more prevalent than upward communication. When people differ in organizational status, communication tends to flow more easily from the high status to the low status person.

In fact, the direction of communication helps define status.

Also, the decision making level has a significant impact on the amount of upward communication which takes place within an organization. Centralizing decision making at higher echelons may result in less upward communication concerning organizational goals and tasks.

By contrast, where participation is sought in decision making, greater upward communication will naturally occur.

Accuracy

Studies also show serious problems associated with the accuracy of upward communications. Understandably, there is a significant lack of upward negative feedback.

That is, we tend to tell our superiors what we want them to hear--those things which reflect favorably on us--and omit or downplay the importance of negative aspects of our performance.

We also tend to tell people what we feel they want to hear. Why? The answer in both cases no doubt stems from the status and power differences built into the organizational structure in which the superior has the power to administer rewards and punishments.

If rewards are based only on positive feedback, then negative feedback soon disappears.

Exposure and Feedback

One study graphically summarizes findings which further illustrate the salient differences between upward and downward communication in organizations. It depicts the incidence of leader exposure and feedback in an organizational setting.

Exposure, in this context, refers to the leader's willingness to open up to others, to be honest about feelings and emotions. Feedback, on the other hand, refers to the leader's willingness to seek information from others.

Leaders are less willing to expose themselves with superiors than with subordinates, but they seek more feedback from superiors than from subordinates. More effective communications probably would result from the reversal of these tendencies.

Exposure, in this context, refers to the leader's willingness to open up to others, to be honest about feelings and emotions. Feedback, on the other hand, refers to the leader's willingness to seek information from others.

Lateral Communication

Lateral, or horizontal communication, is that flow which moves between positions of relatively equal responsibility and authority in the organizational structure. The interaction of the leader with peers provides a good example of such lateral flow.

Frequency

Coordination of actions by staff personnel assigned to different functional departments or agencies is another example. Lateral communication flow is somewhat more frequent in organizations than vertical flow since the flow is usually viewed as less threatening, and normally not as associated with rewards and punishments as upward communication is.

Less Distortion

Further, since peers generally have a more common frame of reference, lateral flow is normally less subject to distortion than upward or downward flow. *In terms of our model of communication, there are fewer confounding differences between source and receiver.*

A strict hierarchical structure tends to discourage lateral communication. Theoretically, information should flow up the chain to a common superior and then back down to the appropriate level.

The excessive use of vertical communication may result in the opportunity for message distortion, not to mention the loss of time. An informal communication network within the organization often arises in response to the limitations of vertical communications.

Impact of Technology

Researchers have suggested that as technology becomes more complex and coordination between organizational elements more important, organizations must readjust their communications systems to make direct lateral communications at lower levels in the organization more acceptable.

The Grapevine

Lateral flow of information also exists in another form, sometimes called the grapevine. In the grapevine, communication flow across organizational lines, following the informal nets and groupings which exist within the organization.

The grapevine is normally more rapid and more flexible than formal flows, since it need follow no distinct organizational pattern or sequence. The use of the grapevine depends to a large extent on the relative effectiveness of the formally defined communication networks.

If information is readily available through formal channels, people tend to be less dependent on informal sources. *On the other hand, where formal lines are inadequate, people turn to the grapevine as a major source of information within the organization.*

While the grapevine follows no prescribed pattern, it tends to flow more along horizontal than vertical lines, with staff personnel tending to be more active than line personnel.

Just as the leader needs to be aware of the informal groups and the potential benefit or harm they may have on the organization, so should the leader realize the existence and possible impact of the grapevine.

Power can be related to access to information. The secretary who has access to sensitive organizational information can wield a great deal of power in the informal organizational structure.

Awareness of the grapevine can help the leader to augment the effectiveness of more formal communications flows.

STRATEGIES FOR SOLVING ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS

Our description of the communication flow has already underscored some of the problems that occur in organizational communications. Here we will focus on specific communication problems that seem to be prevalent in existing organizations, specifically addressing data overload, message distortion, and incomplete feedback.

In reality, of course, these problems seldom exist in isolation. They are all interrelated, each affecting the other within the context of the organizational structure. Also, there are few, if any, magic tricks to more effective communication.

Many of the strategies we suggest here may appear to be little more than common sense. However, the evidence is overwhelming that few leaders are effective in using even these simple solutions to communications problems.

Data Overload

(Data overload is a serious combat issue for the leader and deserves careful study.)

In a data overload condition, leaders receive so much data they cannot adequately identify the relevant information.

In the moderate case, data overload can lead to:

- confusion,
- poor decisions,
- frustration.

In the extreme case, overload may result in complete system breakdown.

Technology

Much data overload occurs as a direct result of the dizzying growth in technology with its increasing output of complex and technically-oriented data. From 1960 to the present day, the number of computers installed for use worldwide has increased twenty-fold.

Personnel memos and minutes of recent meetings, the in-basket contents of an earlier day, are now buried under a mountain of computer printouts that provide constant updates on almost everything.

Leader Functions

Simple leadership functions, such as summarizing, analyzing, and setting priorities, all become increasingly difficult tasks for the leader under data-overload conditions. How can a leader manage data in order to avoid overload and yet retain sufficient data to make intelligent decisions?

Leaders at all levels are in ideal positions not only to funnel data, but also to filter it, sifting and sending only those data which need to be sent. An effective leader protects subordinates from overload, warding off the mass of data and passing only data that are meaningful, relevant, and necessary for subordinates.

An organizational policy which allows the leader to disseminate data on a "need to know" basis does a great deal to reduce data overload.

Use of Gatekeepers

Leaders can also reduce the extent to which they are exposed to data overload by the judicious use of gatekeepers--staff personnel whose function is to filter and summarize incoming data and make routine decisions.

Gatekeepers, however, may also keep important data from the decision-maker if allowed to filter in an uncontrolled fashion.

Queing

Queuing, a technique used to reduce overload by postponing the processing of low priority communications until the peak period recedes, is sometimes useful. The traditional hold box is a rudimentary method of queuing.

Diagnostic Systems

While technology may be a major culprit in creating data overload, organizational leaders can also use technology to their advantage by being more creative in developing and using diagnostic systems which provide critical decision making information in a simple, straightforward fashion.

Note for example the development of instrumentation on automobile dashboards. As sophistication in automobile technology increased, we have moved to a very simple system where a flashing red light gives a warning to the driver that a problem exists in some mechanical system.

For instance, instead of requiring the driver to remember that water at the boiling point is dangerous (as a gauge would show) it is sufficient to be warned, by a red light, that there is a dangerous condition in the cooling system.

Leaders can also use this type of critical indicator to simplify or reduce the data inputs that they need to facilitate decision making.

Review the Need for Data

Perhaps the best organizational response to overload is to review methodically the need for compiled data. The organizational leader can seek input from lower level leaders regarding what constitutes critical information at their level and what appears to be "make-work."

Perhaps the report that sits unnoticed in the leader's hold box should be the first one eliminated. In requiring reports from subordinates, the leader should ask: "What would we do if we did not have these data?"

Message Distortion

Throughout this chapter, we have discussed factors which can result in distortion between the intended and perceived meaning of the message.

On an organizational level, the leader can do several things to minimize message distortion.

Leader Actions

In a very fundamental way, the leader can ensure that organizational goals- and objectives are more clearly defined and that, where necessary, the relative priority of these goals and objectives is clearly known.

Further, subordinates will be more likely to interpret a directive properly if they can see how it fits into the larger organizational picture. Along the same lines, the more subordinates participate in policy formulation; the less likely they are to misunderstand messages related to that policy.

Redundancy

Redundancy can also help to reduce distortion. A message can be sent several times over the same channel or transmitted simultaneously over several parallel channels.

Prioritize

The leader can assess the priority of a message and determine which channel or combination of channels may be appropriate. Studies have shown that subordinates filter out message traffic they do not consider important.

Routine messages passed verbally throughout the organization often do not reach the bottom. Knowing this, the leader may want to disseminate high priority messages verbally, using written messages on the same topic to provide redundancy.

On the other hand, it may be more effective to provide written notice of routine message information in summary form.

Back Briefs

Requiring a brief back on priority messages can also be effective in reducing distortion. Routinely, the briefing of a plan is followed by a period during which the receiver may ask questions.

Misunderstandings and Leader Awareness

Unfortunately, this approach only clears up those points about which the receiver knows there is confusion. Left unresolved, to surface at a later time, are misunderstandings of which the receiver is unaware.

A way to discover those issues is to have the receiver immediately repeat (brief back) the communication, as he or she understands it; or at least important portions of the communication. Such a technique can be employed easily by leaders at all levels.

The delays that can be prevented in the later implementation of a plan may make the initial cost in time worth the effort.

Incomplete Feedback

The last major problem we will discuss is incomplete feedback. This encompasses several problems associated with both downward and upward communication within an organization.

Downward Feedback

A continuous two-way flow of communication with feedback going in both directions is needed to create a dynamic framework of understanding. Downward feedback should include honest, meaningful information on subordinate performance that the subordinate can use to improve.

It should be constructive and motivate the subordinate toward accomplishment of organizational objectives and goals. Feedback coming up the chain must present an accurate picture for the leader of what is taking place at subordinate levels so that the leader will have information needed to make rational decisions.

As we have seen in discussing the dominant characteristics of various communications flows, however, feedback of the nature we have just described is generally uncommon.

Leader Actions

There are some specific things leaders can do to foster the type of feedback desired. Probably the most important is that the leader can work to reduce the defensiveness normally existing in organizational climate.

Defensiveness

Defensiveness tends to cause subordinates to hold back comments, find ways to conceal their mistakes in an effort to be seen more favorably, enter into win-lose confrontations, and attempt to dominate, impress and escape.

A supportive climate, on the other hand, tends to encourage the opposite behaviors. Such a climate fosters openness, a willingness to take risks, innovation and a willingness to confront issues objectively.

Transforming the Climate

A defensive climate can often be made more supportive merely by altering the means by which the leader communicates with subordinates. One researcher has identified several dimensions along which the leader can control the degree of defensiveness. Among these dimensions are:

- the degree of evaluativeness on the part of the leader,
- the degree of control by the leader,
- the degree of spontaneity in communication,
- the degree of empathy of the leader, the degree of equality between leader and subordinate,
- the degree of certainty on the part of the leader.

We will address each of these several dimensions as to their impact on communication. Although they will be discussed separately, the effect on climate in an organization is cumulative.

Degree of Evaluativeness

The existence of an evaluative climate, where communication is frequently directed at evaluating the work of subordinates, tends to contribute to defensiveness. Consider the response of a leader to a report submitted late by a subordinate.

“Why didn't you finish the report on time?”

In response to this evaluative question, the subordinate is forced to explain his actions—that is, be defensive.

On the other hand, the leader might comment,

"I noted that you didn't finish the report on time"

is a statement which is merely descriptive of the situation that exists. The latter tends to generate less defensiveness, but still addresses the issue—a late report.

Degree of Control

Consider the following response by a leader as a result of an improperly submitted report: *"You completely missed the point. Go back and do it again."*

This statement tends to generate defensiveness on the part of the subordinate in that the subordinate has been attacked and no guidance is given to help correct the situation. Consider the statement:

"Can we look at some of the other critical issues bearing on this problem?"

In the first case, the subordinate must be unusually open in order to learn what the leader is looking for in terms of outcomes.

In the second case, the invitation is made available by the leader in a problem-oriented manner, thus reducing defensiveness.

Degree of Spontaneity

An air of spontaneity in communication will tend to reduce defensiveness compared with a method that suggests a carefully planned communication strategy or a hidden motivation.

Spontaneity can be generated by the comment:

"If either of us sees a problem that needs to be addressed as we work on this issue, let's have a meeting."

Compare the subordinate response to this statement with:

"We will have a meeting each week until the project is complete."

Scheduled meetings cause the subordinate to be prepared even when timing may be inappropriate.

Degree of Empathy

Empathy and concern expressed in communication as opposed to confrontation, evaluation or even efforts to maintain neutrality will normally reduce defensiveness on the part of subordinates.

A statement such as:

"Did you have some problem which made you late for work?"

tends to generate less defensiveness than,

"Why were you late for work?" or even *"I noticed that you were late for work."*

a neutral statement.

Degree of Equality

Attempts by the leader to reduce the explicit hierarchical nature of the organization can also reduce defensiveness. A statement by the leader that

"I have a good idea for a solution,"

can stop subsequent discussion in that the subordinates would probably not want to confront the boss on the issue or point out that the leader's solution is perhaps not the best one.

On the other hand, a statement such as,

"I have some thoughts on the subject, but I would like to hear your ideas,"

tends to produce more openness in that the subordinate is on a more equal basis.

Degree of Certainty

Essentially, the less certain the communication by the leader, the less defensiveness will be aroused in the subordinate. For instance, the statement:

"There is no question in my mind what is causing the trouble,"

may arouse more defensiveness than a provisional statement such as:

"I have some thoughts as to the cause of the problem, but I am willing to consider others."

Those leaders in an organization concerned with the long-term development of their people, and willing to accept certain levels of "error-trusting", will build confidence in their subordinates.

When those errors are the result of making an honest effort, people will learn and grow from the experience. Sometimes this is referred to as allowing the freedom to fail.

In such a climate, subordinates are less prone to hide mistakes and to squelch negative feedback.

In a sense, a leader is taking a risk by opening up to subordinates with feelings, opinions, and attitudes. However, studies have shown that when the leader exhibits such openness, subordinates are more prone to disclose their own feelings and attitudes for the betterment of organizational outcomes.

Along the same lines, we have already noted that feedback is more accurate when rewards are based on accurate, rather than favorable, feedback.

As already mentioned, many of the communication strategies discussed in this section seem relatively simple courses of action for the leader.

Yet, as common sense as these appear on the surface, evidence suggests that they are generally not well executed by leaders. Routine, meaningful interface between leader and subordinate is necessary to foster good communication flow.

It is also a key ingredient of a supportive climate. A sound performance appraisal system, combined with appropriate counseling techniques, can help considerably to engender effective upward and downward feedback.

MAKING THE MESSAGE CONVINCING

Up to this point, we have developed a general communication model, discussed several factors that contribute to the distortion of meaning, and identified several strategies for solving specific organizational communication problems.

All of this has been designed to help us understand more clearly how we can accurately transfer meaning from one individual to another. For the leader, however, there is another dimension of communication that is important—using communication to stimulate people to act in a particular way or to change their attitudes toward some aspect of the communication.

As a final point, therefore, we will briefly discuss those elements of the Cybernetic Model of communication as they pertain to making communication more effective in persuading others.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SOURCE

One of the most reliable findings from studies in persuasive communication is that the credibility of the sender of the message greatly influences the persuasion attempt.

Status of the Source

In one experiment, each of two randomly selected groups of people heard the same message. For one group, the message was attributed to a well-known expert in the field, while in the other group the same message was attributed to a lesser-status source.

As might be expected, the message attributed to the high-status source, even though the message was identical, there was much more attitude change in members of the group.

Think of your own experience. Who are you more likely to listen to on a technical matter? A personal matter? One way for the leader to increase credibility is to demonstrate expertise in a particular area of concern to the subordinates.

By communicating from a position of expertise, the leader may gain an added bonus in attempts to persuade subordinates.

Intention of the Source

Which message would you more likely believe—a formal briefing by members of the organizational hierarchy, or a discussion of the same topic between your supervisor and a chief assistant that you overhear?

Persuasion

People are generally less apt to be persuaded by communications which they perceive as being intended to persuade them, perhaps because it lowers the credibility of the source. In one case the organization may be perceived as providing carefully orchestrated material designed to meet several goals, while in the other the supervisor may be viewed as voicing inner most private thoughts on the subject.

The less apparent it is that the source is attempting to change attitudes, the more likely the receiver will be influenced by the communication. From this conclusion, the prescription for the leader is fairly clear.

Leader Actions, Consistency

First, it is important that the leader's publicly stated views and opinions are consistent with "off-the-cuff" remarks and behaviors. If they are inconsistent, the latter will probably bring about greater results, often to the detriment of organizational goals and leader credibility.

Second, the leader needs to understand that "command performances" often have limited effect on subordinate attitudes—particularly when quoting the "the party line".

The more effective strategy may be to influence subordinates in more subtle, informal forums.

Liking and Similarity

There is a relationship between the source being liked, respected, or seen as similar, to the previous two factors.

Internal Consistency

In order to understand this, we need to remind ourselves of the need for internal consistency. Much research suggests that people have a need for their world to be predictable and consistent. When they receive input from the environment that is inconsistent with their existing attitudes, cognitive mechanisms take over to bring the elements into alignment.

Cognitive Dissonance Theory

One particular explanation for this phenomenon, cognitive dissonance theory, specifically predicts that when people's beliefs, attitudes and behaviors are inconsistent, one or the other must be modified in order to reduce cognitive dissonance.

This theory has relevance for persuasive communications. For instance, what happens if a person you like or respect makes a statement that does not fit comfortably into your existing belief pattern?

According to cognitive dissonance theory you are faced with a dilemma. If you cannot disregard the message, you must either change your existing belief pattern or change your attitude toward the person making the inconsistent statement.

If you like, respect or see a person as being similar to yourself, the tendency is to change your belief to be more consistent with the new information.

Leader Actions

Consider a leader attempting to convince a group of subordinates that they should support an unfavorable personnel action passed down from a higher organizational authority.

What change in attitude toward the personnel action would you expect if the leader was liked and respected?

What if the leader was disliked or not respected. The attitude toward the disliked personnel action would probably be very different based solely on the relationship with the leader who was attempting to persuade.

Application of Theory

According to cognitive dissonance theory, in the first case, unless the subordinates are willing to downgrade the source of the communication (the liked leader) they must develop a more positive attitude toward the action or they will probably not change in a more positive direction.

There is an advantage for the leader if subordinates will internalize attitudes supportive of the organizational policy.

We tend to like those whom we perceive as similar to ourselves. One complication of a leader-subordinate relationship, however, is that subordinates usually perceive their leaders as markedly different from themselves.

Accordingly, liking, in the traditional sense of the word, is difficult to obtain for an organizational leader, particularly early in the association. The leader who is aware of these encumbrances can take actions to enhance respect.

By building up credits in the minds of subordinates the leader may be able to compensate for initial lack of similarity or liking in the senior-subordinate relationship and thereby increase the likelihood that an attitude change attempt will be effective.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MESSAGE

If someone makes a statement, which is widely divergent from our own views, it is usually much easier to reject that statement than if it is relatively close to our own view. Often, we tend to exaggerate existing discrepancies.

Discrepancy From Current Position

That is, we tend to see moderately discrepant messages as farther from our own views than they really are. The problem for the leader is that an easily rejected message will fail to persuade.

Evidence has shown that people generally have a zone of acceptance around a given attitude. Within this zone, we are more likely to accommodate or assimilate the new position presented.

Outside this zone of acceptance (which varies for individuals), the message will be rejected. An obvious implication of this phenomenon for the leader is that, given a desired end state, several incremental changes in attitude, as opposed to a single major (thus easily rejected) attempt, is more likely to be accepted without resistance.

Structure of the Message

In order to persuade effectively, should we tell both sides of the story, or only our side? Should a conclusion be stated or not?

Empirical data show that most often, two-sided communication is more effective in changing attitudes than the one-sided communication. This is particularly true for listeners of higher intelligence.

One possible explanation for this finding is that a two-sided communication causes the source to be perceived as more honest and open, more credible, and less overt in initiating change. Leaving the conclusion unstated appears to have the same effect. In effect, the speaker is saying, "Here are the data on both sides of the issue. You decide for yourself." People tend to feel less manipulated and more in control of themselves under circumstances of implied choice.

Novelty of the Information

We attend more to novel stimuli in our environment. This is also true in communication. In a typical experiment, two groups of students are exposed to the same message.

One group is told prior to hearing the message that it will contain some new information on the topic, while the other is told that it will merely be a review of the material.

Even though the same message is heard by both for the first time, more attitude change occurs in the group which thinks the material is novel. If people hear an argument or logic that is contrary to their current position, they tend to reject it if they have heard it before and have already considered it in forming their opinion.

If, however, novel information is included in the persuasion attempt, people may rethink the problem and be more prone to change their attitudes as a result.

Thus, the more novel the approach in an attempt at persuasion, the more likely that the receiver will change attitudes.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RECEIVER

In order to be effective, the message must be both received and understood. The phenomenon of arousal seems to influence the extent to which this occurs. People must be sufficiently aroused in order to attend to a given message.

Arousal

On the other hand, a high state of arousal may interfere with a person's ability to properly handle new stimuli. Studies on the effects of arousal caused by fear and aggression are consistent with this observation.

This is particularly important to the leader who believes that threats of punishment are effective in persuading subordinates. In fact, a series of studies indicate a marked increase in attitude change at stages of low to moderate fear, and little or no change at high levels of fear arousal.

Personality

Personality characteristics influence perceptions. Several personality factors have also been shown to influence propensity for attitude change.

For example, people with low self-esteem are more easily persuaded than people with high self-esteem, and people with high self-esteem are more likely to make persuasion attempts.

People with an internal locus of control are generally more difficult to persuade than are people with an external locus of control. Intelligence, although not directly related, interacts with some of the other personality variables discussed.

For example, as previously stated, the two-sided argument without stating a conclusion works best if subordinates are sufficiently intelligent to follow the logic and arrive at the conclusion on their own. People of lesser intelligence may be befuddled or overwhelmed by such arguments and thus unable to act appropriately.

Commitment and Volition

The final factor we will discuss is the effect of the degree of commitment, and the level of choice offered to subordinates. Two things appear to be operating in this area—overt behaviors and public statements.

Recall the concept of cognitive consistency addressed earlier—that is, people have a need for their world to be consistent. Thus, it is difficult for a person to act one way and yet believe another.

Once people act of their own volition, they are much harder to move from a position that supports their actions. Similarly, making a public statement of intent appears to harden a person's resolve to act in a given way (Alcoholics Anonymous and similar organizations operate on the principle of public commitment).

In a series of experiments, people were offered either \$20 or \$1 to perform a distasteful, embarrassing task. Measures of liking and satisfaction for the task, taken after the task was performed, showed that the low paid group had a greater liking for the distasteful task than the higher pay group.

Why would this be? According to cognitive dissonance theory, the low paid group, having made a commitment by performing the noxious task, was forced to think to themselves, "Anyone doing this task for so little money must really enjoy it. I did it, therefore I must have enjoyed it."

By the same logic, the highly paid group could rationalize their behavior by saying that they only did it for the money. Therefore, there was no attitude change required in order to maintain internal consistency.

Thus, if the leader can convince subordinates to perform a desired course of action of their own volition or make a public statement of intent or support of a given course of action, the probability of a change in attitude in the desired direction is much higher.

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