
UNIT 13 TECHNOLOGY ENABLED BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

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13.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the application of technology in communication;
- Identify the technology-based tools:
- Analyse the impact of technology enabled communication; and
- Discuss the criteria for the selection of appropriate technology for communication.

13.1 INTRODUCTION

We are in the era of information and communication technology. Many revolutionary changes have taken place day in and day out in technology around the world, more so with communication technology. Every business organization whether it is large or small is trying to incorporate the latest

communication technology to improve the effectiveness of communication within the organization as well as outside the organization. Technology tools can enhance the ability of human beings to communicate. However, the degree of effectiveness depends upon how a person uses the technological tools. It requires to create messages as well as to select appropriate technology for communication. The technological tools are useful in selection of the information, coding the information, organizing and developing a message and transmitting the same to the receiver. Communication to be effective should be two ways communication. It is also helpful in collecting feedback from receivers. The technology is facilitating us to transmit and exchange information by email, fax and voice mail for the conduct meetings internally as well as with customers. It is also used now for conducting tele-conferencing and video conferencing. Use of presentation software is common to make business presentations. The evolution of the World Wide Web (www) erased the boundaries of the world and made the world accessible to all the people sitting before the computer with internet connection. The internet is now widely used for collecting information, serving customers and promoting the products and services. Retail organizations need to establish innovative and dynamic relationships with consumers and therefore, use of, technology-enabled business communication assumes significance. Not only for the external connectivity, technological tools enhance the efficiency of internal communication but also communication with the people connected to back-end operations such as operations with suppliers, logistics, storage and other services connected to the organization. Technology adoption in the communication ensured speedy and accurate communication. Technology in communication has made distance communication easier and faster. In this unit you will learn about technology-based communication tools, audio and video conferencing, web conferencing and electronic mail. You will further learn about positive and negative impact of technology enabled communication and the criteria for selection of communication technology.

13.2 TECHNOLOGY BASED COMMUNICATION TOOLS

There are several technological tools used in business communication. The advancements in technology contributed for the development of new tools and improvement of existing tools in recent years. The following are some existing tools in recent years. The following are some of the most used technological tools in business communication.

13.2.1 Telephone and Voice Mail

Telephone is the widely used technology for internal as well as external communication. Many types of telephones are available due to the technology advancements over the years, providing many utility options. Wireless telephone is also available. It facilitates mobility within the demand

area, so that one can avoid missing calls. Initial days telephone used to be quite expensive and it used to take a long time of five years to get the land-line connection. But nowadays it has become very much convenient and affordable. We have to choose an instrument whether it is a standard fixed line or wireless phone depending upon our communication needs.

Voice mail is a hi-tech version of the answering machine. It allows us to leave a message at any point of time and the receiver can take the message in our own voice just as we are communicating orally with that person. There will not be any omissions or distraction in the message through voice mail. This facility expanded the scope of application of telephone in communication. Voicemail made it quite easier to convey the message to the recipient and one need not to chase the person to communicate, just compose the message and send it. The respective recipient will get the message at his or her own convenience.

13.2.2 Mobile/Cellular Phones

Mobile phones revolutionised person-to-person communication throughout the world. It has expanded the communication accessibility through mobile service. It is very easy to contact people; the only condition is that the other person should also have phone connectivity. If the persons have mobiles, this contact is much more -easier. The increase in the mobile phone users year by year is making this tool very powerful. The retailers can communicate directly to the customers about various sales promotion programmes. Customers also can enquire about their information needs with the retailers effectively by mobile phones.

Another important feature is that the mobile phone offers 'Short Message Service' (SMS). SMS is used very widely and effectively to advertise business to the consumers. SMS is a written message and unlike oral communication, the customer can store and retrieve whenever he/she feels the information is useful. The cost of SMS is very less compared to direct calls through either telephone or mobile. Initially mobile phone calls used to be very much expensive and only a limited no. of people were using it but the huge competition among the telecom companies made it quite affordable even for a common man. Now day a even a rickshaw wala is also use mobile phone.

13.2.3 Faxes

Fax machine has been available for many years and is used to send printed pages to the destinations connected. This machine scans the page and converts it into a signal and then transmits the signal over a telephone line to the receiving fax machine. This machine helps to send the written record immediately to the destination crossing time zones and international boundaries. Over the years Fax machine technology increased significantly and now many models with varied options are available. The fax machines

are useful to the retailers to send information to the business customers, to receive business orders, to place orders to suppliers and to communicate with various parties with clarity and authenticity.

13.2.4 Computers

Computer is an electronic device capable of solving problems by accepting data, performing described operations on the data and supplying the results of the operations. It has components like input unit, memory storage, arithmetic unit, output unit, etc. Application of computers to the business communication processes is a major break-through in the development of communication processes. World-wide, computers are widely used by all the organizations irrespective of the size and volume of operations. Computer tools for constructing written messages can be associated with every stage of the written communication process. They are useful in planning and collecting information, analysing and organizing information, writing and rewriting processes. Computers are used in almost all the processes of retail organizations including back-end operations, merchandise management, billing and other processes.

There are basically three models of computers. They are Desktop, Laptop/Notebook and Personal digital assistant. Desktop is the most common type of computer, which has to be set-up to operate in the office. The laptop computer is a portable one. Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) are handheld computers. These can be a palmpilot operating system or pocket PC operating system.

The working of the computer, irrespective of the model, depends upon the software that is used in the operating system. Software packages are fast changing and expanding the utility scope of computers for the business. No modern business can think of running their business without the use of computers. It has become an inseparable part of the business, helping in storing business data and records for unlimited time periods, sending and receiving emails. It is one of the strongest modes of communication

13.2.5 Internet

The internet has provided accessibility with the target audience to all business organizations and more particularly to the retail organizations. The internet can be used at the basic level, for research and e-mail. It is now used more comprehensively as a channel for selling products and services. The sellers could reach the customers directly through the internet. Web shopping and interactive communication are now the facilities being exploited by millions of consumers. Internet communication is considered to be the cheapest among all communication means. Efforts are being made on to make it more effective than other form of communication.

Online shopping is a trend now, a retailer who is not present in the online can-not compete with its competitors. Therefore, the internet facilitate the

retailers to make an online presence. A retailer can create their own website to promote products online and provide the opportunity to shop for anywhere and at any time. The whole world witnessed the power of internet when people were shopping online for their essential commodities during the pandemic. How to use the internet in business communication is up to the business organization. The retail organization may develop a web site of its own to communicate to the target market what all it wants to. It may use the internet as a sales channel or it may use it to advertise the service package or to contact customers through e-mail or to build, maintain and enhance customer relationships. The utilities are many more. The retail organizations shall decide the usage of internet to the organization while taking into consideration, the scope of business, the internet accessibility to the market and the business strategy

13.3 AUDIO AND VIDEO CONFERENCING

When you want to discuss an urgent and important matter with your team members who are involved in work at various locations within the city, or outside or within the same structure at different floors, we need not assemble them in a conference room to discuss the matter. Audio and Video conferences provide you with the remedy.

Audio Conference helps to bring together the team members or clients or colleagues or any group of people without person-to-person physical contact. It also uses audio streaming to reach hundreds of individuals across a wide area simultaneously. Audio conferencing can be done by using conventional telephonic equipment. It not only saves time and communication but also provides some opportunity to review the progress of the work from time to time and to integrate the work process. All telephone conferencing networks have an inbuilt time-lapse framework, which is also called store-and-forward. If conference members are not available when a call is made, this facility provides for recording of the message for replying as like a telephone answering machine. The members who are absent when the call is made can open the message when they are on job and respond as per convenience. This facility provides freedom to receivers by allowing them to decide when to communicate. Audio conferencing is very useful for the big retail houses having a very wide network through-out the country. They can use this technology to communicate promotion programmes, to review the progress of sales in various categories, to take suggestions to solve unexpected problems, to manage inventory and so on, without causing serious disturbance in work and without losing time for taking decisions and making adjustments to improve service efficiency.

Video Conferencing provides for face -to -face communication which is considered to be the most effective communication medium. It not only provides you to interact with people located at various destinations, but also provides for reading the non-verbal clues in response from the contact

parties. The scope of operations of video-conferencing is similar to that of audio-conferencing but the benefits are little more in video conferencing. This is a very useful tool to conduct an interview of the candidate located at a far distance. Without meeting him or her personally this saves a lot of time and money for the interviewer as neither of them need to meet. During the pandemic most of the educational institutes were conducting classes online through video conferencing. Advancements in computer technology enabled the integration of audio as well as video data into the computing environment. We can have video conferences now by adding software on a standard desktop computer. Video conferencing systems can be broadly classified into three groups i.e., Room based systems; Role about systems; and Desktop based systems.

Room Based Systems are also called studio systems. They are designed for the use of a small group or a large group. It requires the presence of the people at the designated places and at the, specified time to conduct the conference. The source personal or group will interact from a room connected with a camera and audio system and computer with required software and provides for transmission of inward and outward messages.

Role About Systems are designed for the use of a small group. The systems are portable and all the members of the group should carry the systems for interaction.

Desktop Based Systems are used to contact individuals or a small group. The members are required to sit before the desktop system. The basic hardware components required for desktop video conferencing include:

- Camera usually attached to the top of the monitor.
- Microphone
- Speakers even where speakers are built into a workstation, external ones will provide better quality audio. Alternatively, headphones may be useful, particularly in a shared office.
- Video board to capture the signal from the camera and convert it to digital form.
- Network card is usually an Ethernet card for connection to the LAN or as ISDN card.

13.4 WEB CONFERENCING

It is also called a computer conference. It refers to such a system that allows a large number of users to connect through a network to send e-mail messages and to receive message from others through e-mail. Thus, web conferencing provides for interactive communication that takes place between people with networked computers in which data is shared. The interactive persons can share the data in the form of Audio, Text, e-mail, Video conferencing, etc. The advantage of this type of conference is that the message appears as they

are being typed to the parties' concern without any change or distortion. Web conferencing can be done in several forms. The groups may be formed on the basis of project, function, event or any special need based. Computer conferencing facilitates interactions and discussions between persons and groups located at different geographic areas by means of text, graphics and audio messages. This technology helps the retailing organizations in many ways. The prospects can watch the live demo of the products of various categories and ask questions directly to the sellers. This convenience enables the sales team to immediately address the concerns of the consumers and make a sale quickly without losing time. Web conferences not only saves time but also are less expensive compared to the cost of travelling for face-to-face meetings. It is a real time communication in such a way that it provides users to meet and collaborate with viewing and sharing documents electronically.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Explain your experience in using the internet for communication.

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- 2) Observe Web-conferencing and Report.

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13.5 EMAIL

In the changing competitive scenario, the need for high-speed communication and information transfer cannot be overemphasized. Electronic mail, commonly known as e-mail, has evolved as an effective, low cost and quick method of communication to reach people spread over the world. Due to its efficiency, it has become the official mode of written communication of almost every organisation irrespective of the size of the organisation. Initially it was used by the US army to convey messages and communicate, later it has been adopted by every-one. This is a very secure form of communication and an unauthorized person cannot see the message until or unless the sender or receiver wants it. E-mail is quick and easy to use. It allows you to send a message to a person without making a direct contact or even not knowing

when the person takes the message. e-mail can be accessed on a system that has a facility to transmit.

With email, messages are keyed into a computer workstation and then transmitted to the recipient. A single message may be sent simultaneously to many recipients. A lot of time and effort is saved in producing formal, printed memos, but of course you may still print out a copy of e-mail message, if required.

Many email messages are short and may be deleted after a few days or weeks. If the messages are longer and more important, they may be retained on the electronic file for a longer period of time.

The advantages of e-mail are:

- High speed send/receive cycle
- Direct input and retrieval from keyboard
- Virtually instant dispatch/retrieval
- Simultaneous circulations to pre-selected groups
- Other files (e.g. created on Word, Excel) can be attached to e-mail message for recipient to download easily
- Instant responses can be sent.
- Can be sent to an enormously large group of people in one go.
- It is a very cost effective
- Can be used for marketing called “email marketing”
- Can be used as self-identity

We have to write the email id of the receiver against 'To' and your email id against 'From.' The date and time generate automatically. It is always desirable to write the subject heading to provide an idea to the receiver about the content of the message.

The common symbols of emotions used in e-mails are:

- Happy
- Wink
- Sad
- Indifference
- Perplexed
- Shocked or Surprised

Business organizations are rapidly embracing communication by email. Research studies are indicating that Emails have replaced telephone as the most frequently used business communication tool. E-mails are used to contact consumers as well as business customers. Retailing organizations

may use emails to communicate to the customers the information relating to new products, new price offers, special events, thanks and also to suggest ways to enhance their shopping as well as buying experience when they visit the retailing outlet. It can be used to take orders, to get feedback and to seek suggestions for improving consumer service. Emails are used mostly to interact with business customers, as the customers are used to follow emails regularly. Since it is used by the customer and the business both to communicate with each other. It has become a very important tool to improve the customer services to a large extent

13.5.1 How Can You Give Email Message Effectively

Development of an effective e-mail message is not a child's play. It is necessary to be very clear with the purpose of communication. The knowledge about the receiver is very important in developing an e-mail message. The following are the important areas to be taken care of in developing an e-mail message.

- 1) **Accuracy:** The message should consist of accurate information, data and commitment. Care should be taken to avoid exaggerated or false information in the e-mail message. It is better to communicate the exact time required for delivery like before 6 PM tomorrow, before 20h September, 2007 etc., rather than writing the shortest possible time' or 'in a few days' or 'shortly, etc. An inaccurate message will create, huge confusion in the mind of the receiver and can easily mis-lead. The body of the email must describe the subject line of the email or there should not be any discrepancy between the subject line and the body of the email.
- 2) **Brevity:** Business communication should not be unnecessarily lengthy. The time of the receiver is precious and should be respected by the sender. The important points should be briefly presented to make the message more effective rather it should be to the point covering all the relevant points to be conveyed to the receiver
- 3) **Genuity:** The receiver along with the composition of the message reads the motive behind the message. You should see that the message conveys your interest and focus on building interpersonal trust. In order words, the message should reflect the honesty and integrity of the sender.
- 4) **Correctness:** The language used in the e-mail message should be correct in terms of spelling, grammar and punctuations. The mistakes may create misunderstandings and can hamper the reputation or image of the sender in front of the receiver
- 5) **Clarity:** Clarity of thought is a prerequisite for wiring email messages. If you are clear with what is to be communicated, you can identify appropriate codes and check whether the message conveys really what you wanted to convey. A clear message encourages the receiver to go

through the entire email with keen interest and reply promptly if it is required

- 6) **Empathy:** The message should focus on the interests and benefits of the receiver rather than the sender. The receivers' point of view should be the basis for the development of the message.
- 7) **Completeness:** The message should be complete. It should cover all points the sender wants to communicate to the receiver. The five stages of the writing process such as exploring and planning, organizing, writing, rewriting and proofreading shall be followed to ensure the completeness of the message. An incomplete message will defeat the purpose of sending the email and will lead to the wastage of time and efforts. Because the receiver will read and respond to the email as required.
- 8) **Organization:** The message should organize sequentially to provide clear understanding to the receiver. Mixing two different issues or unrelated issues creates confusion for the other party. In other words, it should follow the chronology while jotting down the points and the correct sequence. It is always better that a different email should be sent for the different issue. Rather than putting different issues in the same email.
- 9) **Timing:** The message should reach the receivers at the time that is beneficial to them. Time is valuable in business. Minor laps may create major losses. Therefore, development of the message to time and transmitting timely are of vital importance. One can schedule the email as per the requirement. Let's say the sender wants the receiver to receive the email after a time gap may be an hour later or a day or two etc. In this case the sender sends the email but the email is delivered at the set time by default
- 10) **Presentation:** Presentation of the message is also an important one, because the effectiveness of the message mostly depends upon the way in which the message is presented. Use of symbols, pictures, graphics, Caps, bold letters, nice font of the text etc. at appropriate places in a meaningful way improves the effectiveness of the message.

13.5.2 Precautions in Using Email

To be effective in using the email as a communication channel, it is necessary to take the following precautions.

- 1) Check the email id of the receiver and make sure it is correct
- 2) Use the language of the receiver
- 3) Remember your email is likely to be passed to other persons also
- 4) Check your signature block to make sure your details are given completely

- 5) Make sure links within your email display or clickable and the receiver can go to the exact desired page.
- 6) While sending attachments make sure the receiver has the software to download
- 7) Double check before clicking the send button.
- 8) Subject line of the email should be mentioned.
- 9) Greetings to the receiver should be used like (Dear/respected) etc.
- 10) Always thanking the receiver at the last

13.6 POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ENABLED COMMUNICATION

Technology has positive as well as negative impacts wherever it is used. It is like a double-edged knife. The impact depends upon the user's ability in applying technology to the business purpose. Technology enabled communication has many positive effects if properly used and exploited. However, the negative impact can-not be ruled out when adequate care and caution is not taken in using the technology. Let us discuss the positive and negative impact of technology.

13.6.1 Positive Impacts of Technology Enabled Communication

- The developments in technology in communication facilitate greater accessibility of interacting with people effectively.
- The barriers of physical distance in communication have been removed.
- It provides information support to qualitative decision making.
- Personal contact can be replaced by face-to -face communication.
- One can reach the world without moving out from his/her place.
- Communicating simultaneously with group members located at different places is easy
- Distractions and filtration in communication can be reduced or eliminated.
- It facilitates speedy communication and also time value to the information significantly.
- It provides more information access to the employees of the organization and helps in knowledge enrichment.
- It provides instantaneous feedback.
- It provides for collecting the data, storing, classifying and analysing and facilitates for fast and right response.
- Information sources can be expanded to have the right choice of information to communicate.

- Information coding and organization can be made effective.
- A powerful message can be developed.
- It makes the communication safe and secure and unauthorised access is not possible.

13.6.2 Negative Impacts of Technological Enabled Communication

Though there are many advantages in technology enabled communication, there can be some negative impacts if it is not used properly. The following are some of the negative impacts.

- Information overload: 'information is support to the decision making. Where the information is overloaded, the people will drown in to the information and as a result the decision making is likely to be delayed and become ineffective
- Too much information may lead to physical, social as well as psychological problems and may create huge confusion in the mind of the receiver
- Over dependence on technology has reduced the person-to-person physical interactions and therefore disturbing the social climate and interaction. It will definitely hamper the communication process in case of the technology failure.
- The people are 24 hrs. connected to the job every day because of the possibility of worldwide connectivity. As a result, the dividing line between work life and personal life is missing. Consequently, it increases the stress level of the employee to many folds.
- Too much connectivity is taking a lot of working time away from the individual. For example, checking emails and answering them is taking significant time away from work life. And adversely affecting the productivity, and output of the employee

Although the technology adaptation in communication has many adverse effect, but the advantages of technology in communication are incredible and cannot overrule the benefits of the technological enabled communication.

13.7 CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Selection of appropriate communication technology is important. The technology should be suitable to the organization and should enable it to accomplish the organization's communication goals. The following criteria may be adopted for the selection.

Purpose: It is important to identify and define clearly the common needs of the organization. The current needs as well as further needs also should be

taken into consideration. A comprehensive and thorough analysis of the purpose of communication is the first step in identifying the right technology for communication. It is necessary to identify different types of information to be communicated to different audiences in different locations. The frequency of communication is also an important dimension to be assessed properly. In other words, that an organisation should use multiple types of technology enabled communication to offer flexibility to communicate without any hassle.

Speed: The speed and the information that needs to be processed and delivered to the right person with speed, is another important criterion for the selection of communication technology. Time is valuable, a considerable delay in the delivery of the communication can defeat the purpose of the communication therefore while selecting the types of communication one should consider the speed of the technology

Cost: Cost is always an important element in deciding the communication technology. The cost of technology is compared with the benefits. The technology can be provided to the organization or to the persons who use it. The technology selected should be cost effective and affordable

Information Load: How much information has to be received, processed, displayed or transmitted is yet another, criteria for the selection of technology. If the information load is more high-capacity divisor have to be preferred and vice versa.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Discuss the benefits of e-mail

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13.8 LET US SUM UP

Developments in technology are revolutionizing the communication system and process. Business organizations are exploiting the benefits of technology in improving their business prospects. The traditional media has been overtaken significantly by electronic media by offering speed, reach, flexibility, accuracy and many more advantages. The development in the technology of transferring information in the form of data has been so remarkable that the present time is called the age of information technology (IT). Web conferencing, and electronic mail are some important tools of IT. Retailing is a high people connectivity business. The support of technology in interacting with a large number of customers is imminent. Technology

enabled communication helps the retail organization to improve the efficiency of internal processes and also the external connectivity. However, the retailers are to be careful in using the technology as it has both positive as well as negative impacts on performance. It is necessary to select appropriate technology depending upon need and applicability.

13.9 KEY WORDS

Audio and Video Conferencing: Using Audio-Video equipment to conduct conferences.

Desktop Based Systems: These are used to contact individuals or a small group.

E-mail: Electronic mail.

Internet: It's a world-wide website (WWW.).

Voice Mail: R is a hi-tech version of the answering machine.

Web Conferencing: It refers to such a system that allows a large number of users to connect through a network to send email messages and to receive the message from others through email.

13.10 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

- 1) Explain the importance of Technology in improving the effectiveness of communication.
- 2) Discuss the applicability of Technology based communication tools in retailing.
- 3) Web-conferencing and Audio-Video conferencing are appropriate for managerial effectiveness.' - Discuss.
- 4) Discuss the Positive and Negative Impact of Technology Enabled Communication.
- 5) How to use email in retail communications?
- 6) What are the criteria for selection of Communication Technology?

Further Readings

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