
UNIT 15 ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Structure

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15.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

In this unit, you will know about the basics of organisational process. After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- understand the important elements of communication process;
- Explain different factors affecting organisational communication;
- Understand communication flow in an organisation;
- Discuss different forms of organisational communication;
- Get an idea about media associated with organisational communication; and
- Identify barriers in organisational communication and steps to improve organisational communication.

15.1 INTRODUCTION

Communication is an essential process for the survival and growth of any society. Communication flow mostly focuses on building relationships and interacting with internal organisational members and interested external

publics. Conventionally communication flow inside the organisation is called as organisational communication but if we look at the modern understanding of organisational communication, then we will find that the communication that is used by an organisation to communicate with internal and external people is called as organisational communication. The role of organisational communication is similar to the role of central nervous system for growth and sustainability of any organisation. It helps in decision making, working for achieving organisational goal and managing relationships. It helps in crisis management, creating goodwill towards organisation. At the same time, it helps in achieving organisational goal and preaching the organisational philosophy and ideology to its people. Thus, every organisation feels the need of an effective organisational communication.

15.2 ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION AND ITS IMPORTANCE

Communication as a tool, helps people in getting connected with each other. Each organisation tries to develop, sustain and it wants to make the growth process faster. To achieve this goal, the organisation wants a better relationship among the individuals associated with it and at the same time, it wants to create a better image of itself among the people associated with it. Thus, it wants its' people to come together and it wants them to share their ideas with each other. It wants a proper coordination among its people to make the organisational spirit stronger for organisational goal achievement. Similarly resolving conflicts, issues and for finding suggestions for development, Organisations need to communicate to people associated with it. Thus organisational communication becomes a necessity for the existence, growth and survival of the organisation

15.3 CONCEPT OF COMMUNICATION

The word communication has taken birth from the Latin word 'Communis', and it means common.

- a) Communication is a process of understanding and sharing of ideas, facts, feelings etc., with one another.
- b) It helps in interacting with each other and helps in establishing and maintaining relationships between individuals.
- c) It is a process by which various people are linked to achieve a common goal.

The above-mentioned concept of communication applies to all types of communication including organisational communication.

15.4 COMMUNICATION PROCESS

Communication as a process helps in carrying messages from the sender to the receiver to create meaningful exchange of ideas, beliefs and thoughts.

However, the process of communication depends on various elements. According to the Schramm Model of communication, the process has following elements and works in the following manner.

Source: The source or sender is the element from which the process of communication originates. It is the source which sends the idea or information in form of a message to the receiver by coding it in a proper manner. The source can be an individual or an institution.

Message: Message is the information which is sent by the source to the receiver in a coded manner. It is an important element upon which the response of the receiver depends.

Channel: Channel or medium works to carry the messages from the source to receiver. Like a truck carries the goods from one place to another place, in the similar manner channel or medium carries the message from the source to receiver.

Receiver: Receiver is somebody to whom the message is sent. The receiver decodes the message sent by the source to create a meaning out of it.

Feedback: The receiver after receiving message from the source, decodes it to get the meaning and at the same time, after understanding the message it also reacts to it. Such reaction he encodes in the form of a message and sends to the source as a reply. This reply is called as feedback. For a communication process to become complete, feedback is highly necessary. Feedback also tells about the receiver's understanding of the message. Feedback helps in understanding the effectiveness of communication process.

Encoding: While discussing about the source it is already said that source sends the message in a coded manner. This coding or encoding done by the source refers to the presentation of ideas into a set of symbols.

Decoding: It is already told that the receiver decodes the message to get the meaning out of it. This decoding refers to the process by which the receiver interprets and translates the message sent to him by the source.

Noise: Noise is the disturbance or obstacle that occur when we communicate through the medium or channel. This prevents the effectiveness of communication process.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Write your answer in the space provided.

ii) Compare your answer with those given at the end of the unit.

1) Explain the importance of Organisational Communication.

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15.5 COMMUNICATION FLOW

In a communication process, the source initiates the communication. It encodes the information in the form of a message and such message travelling through the medium, reaches to receiver. The receiver then decodes the message and interprets it to get the meaning out of it. After understanding the message, the receiver then encodes his response in the form of a message and sends it to the source which the source after receiving, decodes and interprets to get the meaning. In the complete process, the disturbance that occurs in the medium is called as the noise. Proper Communication flow in an organisation is highly necessary for making organisational communication effective to achieve organisational goals. However, communication flow in an organisation always do not become effective. At certain cases it becomes ineffective also. Such effectiveness or ineffectiveness are the resultants of various factors. The factors play a very important role to determine the communication flow in an organisation.

15.6 FACTORS INFLUENCING COMMUNICATION FLOW IN ORGANISATION

Important factors which affect organisational communication and communication flow in the organisation are:

- 1) Organisational structure
- 2) Channels of communication used for communication flow in the organisation
- 3) Types of Communication flow in Organisational communication channels

15.7.1 Organisational Structure

Organisational structure is the arrangement of organisational elements in an organisation. It talks about the power distribution and guiding principles for it. The organisational structure affects the flow of communication in an organisation. The guiding principles or philosophy and distribution of power in an organisation, determines the efficiency of communication flow in an organisation.

There are different types of structures of organisations. For example, under bureaucratic or structure of organisation, the communication flow occurs following the written principles or guidelines. As the principles are found in a written manner, that is why they are quite rigid by nature and ultimately result in less flexibility in communication flow and such constraints at cases make communication flow ineffective. Similarly, under hierarchical structure all the instructions flow from the top and reports and information move upward. Communication becomes more efficient when it takes place between people of same workgroup but the efficiency decreases when it takes place between people of different workgroups.

Unlike the organisational structure, communication channels in an organisation, also affect the communication flow in an organisation. Different channels affect the flow of communication differently.

15.6.2 Organisational Channels of Communication

Communication flow in the organisation takes place in two types organisational channels. They are formal and informal channels. The formal channel is more rigid in comparison to the informal channel. Thus, communication flow in the informal channel becomes faster. However, in the informal channels as the communication takes place through oral communication, that is why there remains a possibility of information gap or miscommunication in the informal channels of communication.

Informal channels of communication

Communication in the Informal channels of communication takes place through interpersonal communication among work groups. The informal communication through personal relationships plays an important role in reaching organisational goal as it starts spontaneously, and moves faster in organisation. Individual gossips during tea breaks, discussions among people at canteens or communication between individuals during leisure hours fall under this category. It is not controlled by any official guidelines or these are not written forms of communication. Informal structure of communication is mostly responsible for spreading rumours.

Formal channels of Communication

In an organisation, communication flows both in formal and informal channels. Communication in formal channels flows through notices, official letters, office orders, emails, house journals or annual reports. These are written documents and communication flow through the formal channels follow a particular protocol.

15.6.3 Types of Communication Flow in Organisation

According to communication flow in the organisational hierarchy, communication can be vertical, horizontal or diagonal communication type.

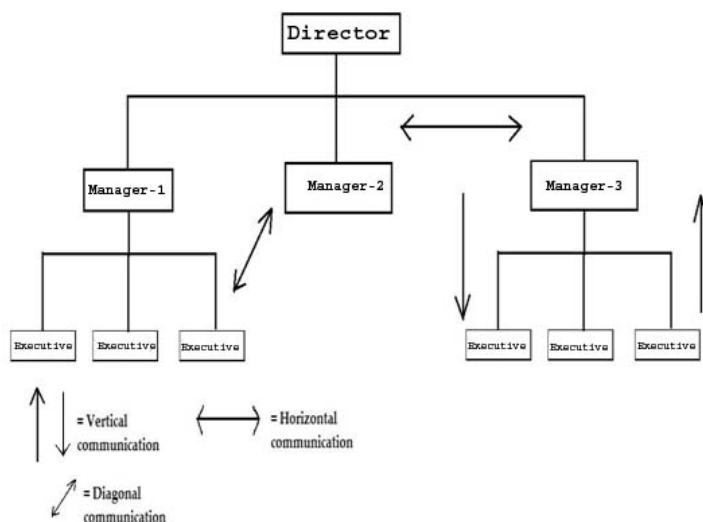


Fig. Vertical, Horizontal and Diagonal Communication

Vertical Communication

Vertical communication in an organisation flows either from top to bottom or from the bottom to top. This communication occurs between people at different levels of the organisation. This helps in the flow of information among people of different level in an organisation.

Downward Communication

Downward communication refers to flow of communication from upper levels to lower levels in the organisational hierarchy. The message passes through various levels till it reaches the bottom level. The downward communication is useful because:

- It helps in providing orders and instructions about job requirements to the employees at lower level to make the work faster and smoother.
- It helps the employees at lower level to understand the organisational functioning and brings a clarity of understanding among them.
- It helps employees to understand organisational procedures and practices.

In an organisation communication takes place through various media of communication. Letters, rule-books, telephone and the meetings are used for downward communication. In most of the cases written materials are not properly read and understood by the members of organisation. Thus to know the effectiveness of downward communication, it is essential to have proper a feedback system. The downward communication is often filtered by managers and only the required information is passed on to the sub-ordinates.

Upward Communication

Upward communication flows from employees at lower level to employees at higher level. It is mostly from subordinates to supervisors. Such communication includes reports on performance of subordinates, problems associated with work, issues in organisational practices, opinions and feelings of subordinates relating to organisational policies, different rules and innovative ideas and solutions to problems. The fear of punishment hinders free flow of information in upward communication. Due to lack of proper support of organisational hierarchy and data filtering by middle managers information flow faces obstacles. The middle managers try to hide unfavourable information from superiors and that crates roadblocks in this type of communication. Due to such reasons upward communication is not spontaneous by nature. In many organisations, different steps are taken to improve upward communication. Organisations adopt suggestion box, different grievance methods, complaint systems, union of employees, opinion surveys, different committees and informal gatherings.

Horizontal Communication

Horizontal communication is the sideways flow of information among people of same organisational levels in same as well as different departments. The

direct communication between members of same level helps in improving understanding and achieving co-ordination for attaining organisational goals. The horizontal communication improves human relationship among members of organisation. This informal communication in organisational setting is also called grapevine. The grapevine is composed of several informal communication networks in the organisation and connects various members of the organisation regardless of their rank or hierarchy.

Diagonal Communication

Diagonal communication is the cross-functional communication between employees working at different levels of organisation. If the marketing manager sends an e-mail to the production manager asking when a product will be available for market, that will be an example of horizontal communication. Similarly, if a production executive e-mails the marketing manager for some organisational information transaction or the marketing manager sends a mail to him for information transaction, then diagonal communication takes place. Whenever information is transmitted from one department to another department, the sender's manager should be made part of the communication loop. A manager may face an unwanted situation and may appear incompetent if he isn't made aware of things happening in his own department. This may put questions on his obligations towards his responsibilities. Trust may be lost and careers may get spoiled for not paying attention to proper communication protocols.

- Diagonal communication is becoming more common in organisations. As it is playing a key role for the following purposes.
- Developing good relationships between senior-level and lower-level employees from different parts of the organisation.
- Encouraging a better flow of information in the organisation.
- Decreasing noise in communication flow and minimizing the chance of a message being distorted by going through additional filters.
- Reducing the workloads of senior-level managers.

15.8 MEDIA OF ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Organisational communication takes place in various forms like oral, written, visual, non-verbal communication. Each form of communication uses different media for the purpose of communication. In present times advances have taken place in communication technology to promote the use of electronic devices. Organisational communication can occur in following forms and they use media accordingly.

Oral Communication

Oral method of communication is important and instant form of communication in the organisational communication. This form of

communication in organisations is frequently used to communicate instructions or for explaining things or enquiring about them. Similarly, oral communication also plays a crucial role in the informal type of communication in organisations. This communication is mostly informal by nature. Oral communication helps us to communicate and receive feedback immediately. It strengthens individual relationships and offers opportunities for clarification of difficult points and helps employees to understand different issues. This form of communication can be not an appropriate choice for larger audience size. Similarly, the possibility of noise increases if the same message is communicated to different groups by different people through oral communication. It commonly uses oral methods of communication like meetings, interviews and telephonic communications.

Written Communication

Written documents are a popular and important form of communication in organisations. As they provide records and references, they are a trust worthy and reliable form of communication. This form of communication help in transferring message with uniformity, accuracy. It is also a very cost-effective way of communication. Written documents and materials are used to inform the members of the organisation about organisational ideology, decisions, plans and achievements. Further, it is necessary to document achievement of organisational goals and organisational targets at regular intervals. The disadvantages of written messages are the problems in maintenance of records and files. The written materials may create confusion or may not be properly understood by all members due to problems of poor handwriting and use of jargons. Written communication is rigid by nature. Thus, it has its own disadvantage also. It uses letters, bulletins, periodicals, rule books, emails, annual reports and notice boards for information dissemination in organisation.

Visual Communications

Visual communication is an important and powerful form of communication in an organisation. This brings a better clarity of understanding in an organisation. Being a highly expressive form of communication, visual communication makes things easy for managers while communicating with subordinates. Visual communication takes place through slides, film strips, pictures and photographs. The audio-visual materials come through television and videos. They facilitate hearing and seeing. A combination of different audio-visual media is used in organisations for effective communication. The audio-visual communication draws the attention of audience and helps in making efficient communication. The presentation of data in the form of pie charts, graphs and pictures brings a better understanding about facts. Audio visual communication is becoming more popular these days to discuss about different plans and ideas for organisational growth in these days. With the use of advanced computer graphics, organisations are becoming more and more effective in introducing new ideas and innovations into the organisation.

However, the organisations in present days are using more and more visual communication to communicate with the external and internal public.

Non-verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication is the communication using facial expressions, gestures and body movements. The non-verbal communication generally supports verbal communication and it helps in making the communication effective and authentic.

Computerized Communication

Computerized communication system has brought a big change in the modern organisational communication system. These days, the computer mediated communication has made communication faster, smarter and attractive. With the use of graphic illustrations, charts, graphs and proper use of computer graphics organisational communication has become more effective. However, the computerized communication system plays two important roles in organisational communication system

- i) Information management
- ii) Information dissemination

Information Management

The technical advancements in the computerized communication system have made the job of managers easy. Data maintenance and data management have gone easy and assigning proper responsibilities to people in a computerized environment with the support of MIS system have become easy. The burden of managers have reduced a lot due to the use of computerized communication system. MIS, is essential for every organisation. It can be defined as a systematised pattern of communication which helps in providing management with accurate and timely information. It helps to take proper decisions and helps in planning effectively for monitoring and evaluation of different organisational activities. At every stage of the management process, from planning to reporting information is needed to make effective decisions. MIS plays a major role in information management to catalyze organisational growth by helping in planning and execution.

Information Dissemination

Information dissemination is highly important for any organisation. Quick and planned information dissemination removes confusions and guides the organisation in a planned manner. Thus, emails have become an essential aspect of organisational communication. Similarly, for presenting itself in a better and transparent manner, organisations in this cyber era, are using websites and social media pages. Such social media pages and websites are a big source of information for organisations. Facebook pages or twitter handles of organisations are becoming highly useful for organisations to talk about their achievements, innovations and to oppose confusions and

conspiracies against them. The social media as a platform of new experiences has become highly useful for organisations to express themselves in a transparent manner.

Mobile Mediated Communication

After the information technology revolution and growth in use of mobile phones, this change also has affected organisational communication. For instant communication these days, managers have started using social media apps, messaging services and other similar practices have come to exist. Similarly, department specific or goal specific social media groups have become a new trend in organisational practices. The mobile mediated communication has brought many advantages like

- Quick decision making through faster information dissemination.
- Bringing clarity about organisational policies
- Helping in crisis management
- Promoting coordination and better relation among employees
- It is minimizing the information lag and bridging communication gap.

Check Your Progress 2

- Note:** i) Write your answers in the space provided.
ii) Check your answers with model answers provided at the end of the unit.

- 1) What do you mean by upward communication in an organisation?
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- 2) Give a brief account on mobile mediated communication in an organisation.
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15.8 PROBLEMS IN ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Communication is a complex process. Organisations have to remove barriers in communication for effective flow of information in the organisational channels. The barriers in communication refer to problems for free flow of communication in any organisation. The communication barriers are related to different factors like organisational structure, poor planning and co-ordination. Different barriers of communication are as follows:

Barriers in Organisational Communication

Seamless flow of communication is necessary for the growth of any organisation. All organisations want effective flow of communication in their organisation but at sometimes it doesn't happen in a desired manner. Different barriers hinder the process of communication in an organisation. The barriers can be categorized as below.

Problems in understanding: People from different cultural backgrounds work in an organisation. As they come from different cultural backgrounds, that is why their perceptions about different issues become different from each other.

Semantic Problems: Problems of encoding and gives rise to semantic barrier as the meaning formulation depends upon encoding and decoding that is why semantic barriers play a major role in creating obstacles in organisational communication. The message, "Meeting will be held shortly" will not provide a clear meaning. In case of such communications people will understand the message according to their own ability and it will create confusing situations.

Unable to express and comprehend Messages: The lack of clarity and use of technical jargon cause difficulties in understanding. Similarly, inability to comprehend messages also act like a barrier.

Psychological Barriers: Psychological factors or emotional factors play a crucial role in effective communication. Factors like motivation, fear, love and jealousy affect behaviours of people at individual level. The receiver's attitude towards source and the content of message affects his perception of a message.

Organisational Barriers: In an organisation, the organisational structure and the types of communication flow always affects the communication flow in an organisation. Decentralisation of power and authority helps in effective flow of communication. Similarly the fear of punishment and other similar aspects hinder communication from the employees which is not good for organisational health. Thus a strong feedback system and similarly effective translation of organisational goals helps in creating a better environment for the organisational growth.

15.10 LET US SUM-UP

In this unit we have discussed the basic process and pattern of organisational communication. Communication is the like the life line of any organisation. Important elements in the process of communication are source, feedback encoding, message, channel, decoding and receiver.

In organisational communication, the nature of organisational structure and the channels of communication and types of communication in organisation are important. There are two major channels of communication in an organisation, viz formal and informal. Formal channels such as notices, emails, letters and others are official by nature and they are administered by executives. Informal channels of communication which are interpersonal by nature are important and they also help to achieve organisational goal. Flow of communication in organisations can be downward, upward and horizontal directions. There are different forms of communication such as oral, written, visual and non-verbal communication are used in an organisation.

We have found that the electronic media such as television, computers, email systems, videoconferencing facilities and computerised system to handle various organisational activities can greatly improve organisational communication.

Major barriers in organisational communication are problems in perception, semantic problems, poor expression of messages, confused assumptions, Emotional barriers, poor communication skills of communicator and organisational obstacles. We have also understood that various steps can be taken to achieve the goal of effective communication. Such steps can be mentioned as: Using simple language without jargons, accepting comments and criticisms, elimination of noise, avoiding delays, developing skills in listening, writing and oral communication, similarly use of modern communication media and equipment is also a necessity.

15.11 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

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15.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1) Communication as a tool, helps people in getting connected with each other. Each organisation tries to develop, sustain and it wants to make the growth process faster. To achieve this goal, the organisation wants a better relationship among the individuals associated with it and at the same time, it wants to create a better image of itself among the people associated with it. Thus, it wants its' people to come together and it wants them to share their ideas with each other. It wants a proper coordination among its people to make the organisational spirit stronger for organisational goal achievement. Similarly resolving conflicts, issues and for finding suggestions for development, Organisations need to communicate to people associated with it. Thus, organisational communication becomes a necessity for the existence, growth and survival of the organisation

Check Your Progress 2

1) Upward communication flows from employees at lower level to employees at higher level. It is mostly from subordinates to supervisors. Such communication includes reports on performance of subordinates, problems associated with work, issues in organisational practices, opinions and feelings of subordinates relating to organisational policies, different rules and innovative ideas and solutions to problems. The fear of punishment hinders free flow of information in upward communication. Due to lack of proper support of organisational hierarchy and data filtering by middle managers information flow faces obstacles. The middle managers try to hide unfavourable information from superiors and that crates roadblocks in this type of communication. Due to such reasons upward communication is not spontaneous by nature. In many organisations, different steps are taken to improve upward communication. Organisations adopt suggestion box, different grievance methods, complaint systems, union of employees, opinion surveys, different committees and informal gatherings.

2) After the information technology revolution and growth in use of mobile phones, this change also has affected organisational communication. For instant communication these days, managers have started using social media apps, messaging services and other similar practices have come to exist. Similarly, department specific or goal specific social media groups have become a new trend in organisational practices. The mobile mediated communication has brought many advantages like

- Quick decision-making through faster information dissemination.
- Bringing clarity about organisational policies
- Helping in crisis management
- Promoting coordination and better relation among employees
- It is minimizing the information lag and bridging communication gap.

Check Your Progress 3

1) Organisational communication can be made effective by taking the following measures.

Use Common Language: In organisational communication, to make communication effective and to avoid unnecessary confusions always try to use communicate with simple and easy language. Similarly, in the process of organisational communication, always try to avoid jargons otherwise those technical words will create difficulty for others to understand orders, instructions or other communications made. Thus, always try to communicate in simple language with short sentences avoiding jargons.

Avoid Delays: It is said that “A stitch in time, saves nine” thus communication made at proper time always helps in saving time, money and energy. A communication made at the right time always helps in organisational growth.

Stop Talking: Unnecessary communication always leads to problems. Thus it is always better to avoid unnecessary gossips in an organisation.

Keep Patience: It is always necessary to keep patience in the process of communication. To listen others properly, you need to have patience and if you do not have patience then ultimately you will not be able to understand others properly and you will not be able to communicate properly. Thus, keeping patience is always necessary to make organisational communication effective.

Accept Comments and Criticisms: For effective decision making and for organisational growth, it is always necessary to pay attention to comments and criticisms. Becoming reactive and repulsive towards comments and criticisms is not good for organisational and professional growth. Thus one must accept constructive comments and criticisms as they are a necessity for organisational, professional and personal growth.