

Communication in the Workplace Essay

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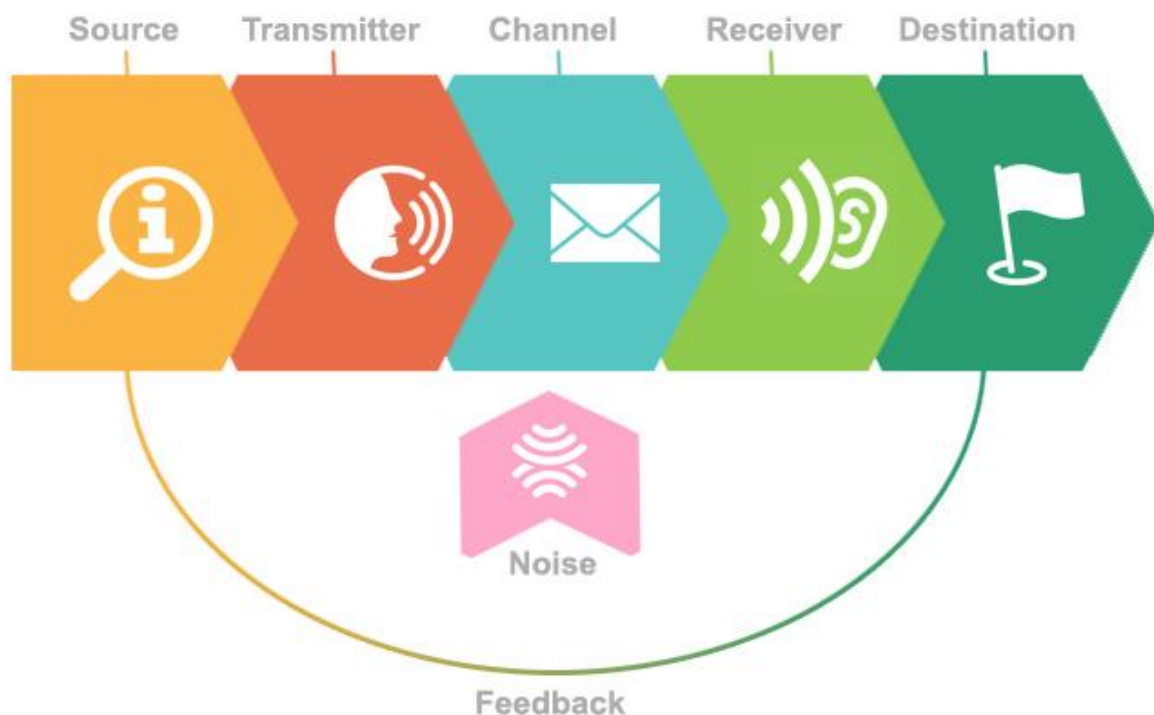
What is Communication?

Communication is the process by which thoughts, information, or ideas are exchanged between two or more parties. There are a range of ways in which people communicate. Verbal communication is the use of sounds and words to express yourself either vocally, or transcribed. This is the most common form of communication, as it is used by almost every person constantly through the day. Examples of vocal communication are face-to-face, telephone, video call, and examples of written communication are letters, e-mails, social media, books, magazines. Non-Verbal Communication is the use of body language to communicate, such as somebody's body language, gestures, postures, or how they dress or act. It is a far more subtle form of communication, as it does not directly convey information, and can be used by the sender subconsciously. It is also a good way to create emphasis when combined with verbal communication. The desired outcome of any communication is mutual understanding although misunderstanding can occur at any stage of the process.

At least three things which are required to communicate: A sender, a receiver, and a message which is transmitted using a communication method, and begins as an idea in the mind of the sender, who then decides on the most appropriate method with which to communicate it (pictures, gestures, words, etc), so that the receiver can interpret the message accurately. Transmission of the message from the sender to the receiver can be affected by a range of things, such as emotions, culture, or method of communication.

There are two main theories relating to communication. One of these is the Shannon & Weaver model.

Shannon & Weaver Model of Communication



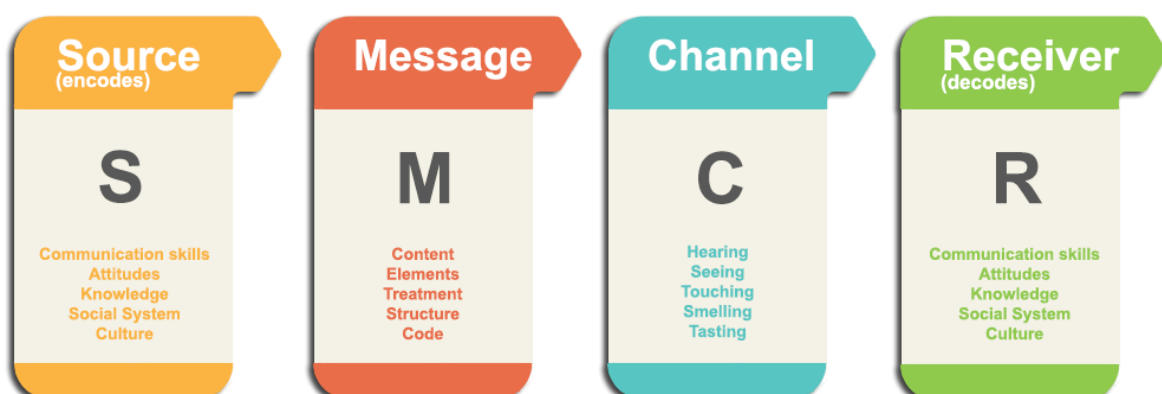
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As you can see in the above diagram, Shannon & Weaver believed there were four stages of communication: Information source, Transmitter, Receiver, and Destination. The Information Source (sender), is the person who creates and then sends the message. The Transmitter (encoder) is the way in which the message leaves the sender. The Channel is the way in which the message goes from the Transmitter to the Receiver. The Receiver (decoder) is how the Destination obtains the message, and the Destination is the person who the message is intended for. Noise is a way to describe any disturbances that may impact the receivers ability to collect or comprehend the message. A good way to explain this is to use a face to face conversation. A brain would be the sender and would send the message to the mouth (transmitter). This would then send the message through the air (channel), to another person's ear (receiver), which would pass it on to their brain (destination). The destination brain could then formulate correct feedback to return to the original sender by the same, or different channels. Feedback is a vital part of this model, as it is what gives the original sender confirmation that the message has been passed on successfully, and whether the information has been understood or not. Without it, confusion can arise as both parties believe they understand each other, when in reality they are thinking different things. The noise would be anything in the environment that could interfere with the transmission of the message, for example actual noise, or any objects in the way.

Shannon, as an engineer, developed the model to help improve technical communication, predominantly for telephonic communication and was made to maximise telephone capacity with minimum noise. Weaver then later applied it for different kinds of communication to develop more effective communication.

According to the Shannon & Weaver model, there are three potential problems in communication. Technical problems are issues that may arise in the channel. This could be something along the lines of a drop in phone signal, or a very loud or crowded room, where a message could be lost. Semantic problems are when the message is received, however the meaning of misinterpreted or received differently. This can be impacted by incorrect tone or odd body language when face to face. It occurs often when communicating over SMS or web chat, as there is a lack of non-verbal cues. Effectiveness problems are how effectively the message is received. This can be impacted by lack of interest, attention, or distractions.

Berlo's SMCR Model of Communication



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David Berlo developed his Sender – Message – Channel – Receiver (SMCR) model of communication in 1960, based on the Shannon & Weaver model mentioned before. In it, he describes the factors affecting each component in communication, and what makes it more efficient. The components of Berlo's model are Sender, Message, Channel, and Receiver.

He says that the Sender can improve the effectiveness of the communication through several areas. The attitude of the sender helps to create the effect of the message. A bad attitude can negatively impact how it is received, and therefore the effectiveness of the message. It is important to seem passionate about a subject when communicating in order to encourage its reception. Knowledge is another factor. If the sender is more knowledgeable, they can better communicate the point they are trying to make, by being more confident and garnering more engagement from the receiver. These areas can also be improved in the Receiver of the message, to help improve effectiveness.

According to Berlo, another way to improve the effectiveness of communication is to ensure the message itself is well constructed. If the message has good content, then it better relays the information intended to be communicated. It is also important to partner good contented verbal communication with. This helps to create emphasis and better put across the point being made. Like subject knowledge before, it also helps to encourage engagement. After content, possibly the second most important factor in message quality is the structure. A solid structure ensures the message is read and understood correctly.

There are some criticisms of Berlo's model of communication. Others argue that the lack of feedback loop hinders the effectiveness of the communication, as the sender does not know whether they have been effective in conveying the message they intended. It also does not mention any barriers to communication, so therefore ignores any issues that may arise, such as noise, which is not even mentioned. There is also the issue in this model that it works on the assumption that all involved parties are on equal footing. It does not allow for one party to be more knowledgeable than the other for example.

Communication is arguably the most important area needed in a successful workplace. It allows employers to tell their employees what needs to be done, to help motivate them, and discipline. It also helps companies to market to customers and draw in business, and it allows employees to better assist their employers, and customers.

The way in which managers talk to their employees is complicated. There must be a good balance of both force and friendliness. If a manager speaks to his staff aggressively, it may lead to increased productivity in the short term, through fear, but in the long-term resentment will rise and lead to reduced moral and work quality. If a manager is too friendly and laid back, staff make take advantage of this, and not get anything done. Neither of these situations are ideal, so managers must find the equilibrium. The best way in my experience for a manager to communicate is by matching concise, direct requests in verbal form, while having a slightly friendlier non-verbal stance. This means that staff are engaged by the calm non-verbal communication but are clear on the message being transmitted by the verbal communication.

In my job at Tesco, communication is a tool we use daily. This can be between management and staff, or between staff and customers. We have several methods of communicating. Like most shops with many members of staff, at Tesco we have many face to face interactions with colleagues and customers. This is the fastest way to communication information while on the shop floor and is the most effective method of getting tasks done. It is also the only way staff are able to communicate

with customers who are in the store. We also use third party messaging platforms and phone calls to communicate between staff when not on duty. This is used to pass on information such as scheduling, or sickness/absence. This allows information to be communicated effectively in real time, even across large distances. There are however some instances where this is not the case, and information can be missed or not send correctly. On some occasions a message is not read in time, so staff members do not see when they are supposed to be working, so shifts are not attended. This leads to problems between staff members.

Communication is one of the areas where problems occur in my store. Either the manager/team leader is not clear on instructions, or customers and staff misunderstand each other, leading to complaints. Clarity and wording are major areas in which communication could be improved at Tesco. This would eliminate a large portion of mistakes and lead to a more productive shop. By having a clear and concise chain of communication, staff members would be fully prepared for their shifts, and have a full understanding of what is required of them when undertaking tasks. To improve communication between staff and customers would be to have clear signage in the stores, showing which aisles contain which items. This is available in larger Tesco stores, however at some smaller express stores, such as my own, this is not installed. This would mean that customers would not have to ask the staff where items were on such a regular basis, avoiding confusion through misunderstanding, and also allow the staff to be more productive, as they would not have to stop what they are doing to help customers as much. An improvement could be made between colleagues by introducing headsets for real time communication. This would allow someone on the shop floor to talk to another person quickly and simply in the stock room, and inform them which items need restocking, or ask for assistance on the till. This would cut time wasted by having to walk to the back of the store every time something was needed, and reduce customer waiting time, leading to happier customers, and increased business. This shows just how important communication is to the running of a business.

To conclude, Communication is not only a key part of running a business or workplace, but also a massive part of life. Without it, humans could not co-exist, and problems would go unresolved. Both Verbal and Non-Verbal communication are essential to running a shop such as Tesco and can be used to improve productivity and staff morale, and increase business by giving customers a better shopping experience.

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In-class Exercises

MARIA and

PEDRO

Pedro works on a building site and Maria is his wife.

One day Maria phoned Pedro.

'Hello, Pedro, when you're coming home, see if you can get me a chicken.'

'Okay,' replied Pedro.

When he got home, Pedro took off his boots and coat and went into the kitchen.

'Maria, where are you?' He said.

'Here – in the sitting room,' she said.

When Pedro went into the sitting room, Maria said, 'Where is the chicken?'

'What Chicken?' Asked Pedro.

The one I asked you to get on your way home.'

Oh, no! I thought you said when I come home I will see you in the kitchen!

Q: Why do you think Pedro misunderstood Maria?

Q: Whose Model of Communication explains this confusion and why?

Q: How could this have been prevented?

Q: Whose Model of Communication explains how it could have been avoided?

MARIA AND PEDRO

Pedro could not understand Maria due to the loud working environment (building site).

Schramm-Weaver's original communication model explains the misunderstanding between Pedro and Maria as the "feedback" is missing.

This could have been prevented by simply making sure Pedro understood correctly Maria's request and asking her to repeat herself or moving to a quieter place.

Schramm's communication model explains that communication without receiver's feedback is pointless. This is why his model would be the most appropriate to solve this issue.

The professor and the village people

THE PROFESSOR and THE VILLAGE PEOPLE

Lloyd b. 7/19

A Professor of English at a well-known Welsh University lived in a large house not far from a little village. He never went into the village, but shopped in the town near the University because he had nothing in common with the village people, who were largely uneducated and did manual jobs.

One night, the professor fell asleep while smoking his pipe and the pipe fell onto the carpet and started a fire.

When the professor awoke and saw the house on fire, he rushed into the village, screaming:

'The edifice is being consumed by a great conflagration!'

'The edifice is being consumed by a great conflagration!'

The village people looked at him and continued doing what they were doing

'Don't you understand?' He said. 'The edifice is being consumed by a great conflagration!'

They ignored him.

When the Professor returned home, he saw that his house had been destroyed. He sat down on the ground and wept.

The next day, he went into the village crying. 'Why, oh why didn't you help me? My home has been destroyed by the fire. I came and begged you last night.' He wept.

'But Professor, why didn't you say that your house was on fire? We would have helped.'

Q: Why didn't the village people help the Professor?

Q: What should he have done to get them to help him?

Q: Whose model of communication do you think can explain this situation?

Q: Why?

THE PROFESSOR AND THE VILLAGE PEOPLE

The village people did not help the professor because they were too uneducated to understand the professor's vocabulary.

The professor should have considered the village people's level of education and used simple words instead.

Berlo's communication model explains this situation.

Berlo explains that there can be a huge difference of knowledge, communication skills, education between sender and receiver. In this situation the problem was the village people's education was very different from the professors.