

**Certificate in Higher Education in Skills for the
Work place**

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Effective Team Working and Communication

Models of communication

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Introduction

What is communication? Is it just speaking to someone else? Is it a phone call? A conversation between husband and wife? A business meeting? A smile, a gesture, the tone of your voice? What do the experts in the field regard as communication? And what about us? Do we really know how to communicate effectively with our peers?

Confused? Do not despair.

This report analyses the most very basic concepts, models and real life cases to make clear what are the different ways of communication.

1A. Models of Communication from the Academics perspective. Shannon and Weaver.

Shannon and Weaver were two academics, a mathematician and a scientist. They wrote an article published in the Journal Bell System Technical. The article title was “A Mathematical Theory of Communication”.

What Mathematics have to do with communication if we think of communication as speaking or similar means?

The Shannon and Weaver model falls more on the technical side. These are the main characteristics of this model:

- Sender: The sender is the individual that creates the message, decides what vehicle of transmission will use and sends the message.
- Encoder: It is when we use a machine to convert our message to other signals such as radio frequencies, computers data etc.
- Channel: It is the forum, the vehicle we use to send the message.
- Decoder: It is the machine or person that process raw data into readable or understandable language. Ex; binary data converted by a computer to text. A person translating a foreign language to our mother tongue.

- Receiver: The receiver is us or the place where the message is intended to go. If we think of it from a technical perspective, we get the message and act according to its instructions.

- Noise: All the noise in the environment including; electromagnetic waves form other frequencies, people, traffic etc, etc. This noise does not allow the message to be decoded (read) on its full capacity.

How the model works?

Using a mobil phone to send a tex message as example, we (**the sender**) type the characters in the key pad machine (**encoding**), then press send (**channel-medium**), our friend's machine receives the data (**receiver**), decodes the characters into language we can read (**decoding**), and in this case there would be minimal **noise** or interferences.

Shannon and Weaver believed that there could be some potential problems and disadvantages associated with the method:

1. Technical. Potential problems with the channel (radio frequency waves).
2. Interpretation of the message received.
3. How effective the message would be to cause the desired reaction.
4. It applies more to an interpersonal communication rather than a group or the general public.
5. The sender is the active part and the receiver the passive one.
6. More of a technological method rather than real time human interaction.

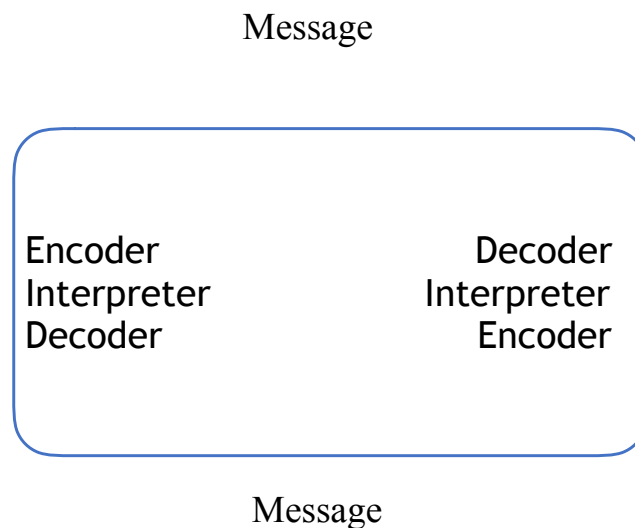
There are also advantages from this model;

1. Low levels of noise.
2. This is a two ways model of communication. It can be transferred to general methods of communication.
3. It can be measured.

1B. Schramm model of communication.

This model of communication has a more basic and simplistic approach such as two people interacting-communicating with each other.

It is regarded as a cyclical pattern with a sender, a receiver and a message. The sender can become the receiver and vice versa, that is why it is defined as cyclical model.



1C. Berlo's SMCR model of communication.

This model of communication consists of four elements:

1. Sender. 2. Message. 3. Channel. 4. Receiver.

David Berlo took the original model of Shannon and Weaver and expanded it.

The final outcome or interpretation of the message will be affected by the communication skills of the sender and the receiver.

Not only that, but also cultural differences, attitude and knowledge of the subject will have an effect on how we encode a message before we send it and also as receivers, how we decode or interpret it.

If we want our audience (receivers) to interpret our message the way we want it, we must take into consideration the following elements:

- Content. What we need to include in our message to our targeted audience.
- Elements. Depending on the channel we are using we must take into account other methods of communication such as non verbal a.k.a; body language.

- Treatment. This is the format we will chose to send our message.
- Structure. How we will structure our message before we send it.
- Code: Text, verbal, video, body language, audio etc.
- Channel: Hearing, visual, touching, smelling, tasting.

In theory this model of communication seems smooth and easy on paper but in reality there are factors that slow down and interfere the communication.

Factors such as “loss or distortion”, (*Janse, 2019*), which makes the message being changed or diluted if it is passed on a few times from person to person within a group or even from sender to receiver depending on the interpretation the receiver gives to the message.

Noise is another factor to take into consideration since technological interferences such as poor signal and servers bad service can delay, delete or halt the message from reaching the receiver. Also background noise can make difficult to hear an audio message properly.

Berlo’s model also brings in two more factors which we could include in the noise category, these are synchronicity and asynchronicity. If two people are face to face communicating this is considered as they are in synchronicity because even if there are some differences such as language and culture, they can always adjust and clarify any doubts or questions that arise from the conversation or intended message.

On the other hand, when sender and receiver are not in direct contact, it is more difficult to adjust or to clarify any miss understanding.

As *Janse. B* says in his article ‘*Berlo’s SMCR model of Communication*’ (*Janse, 2019*), “*Communication skills play a crucial role in this*”.

Lets take a closer look at those communication skills and see how they affect and influence the process of communicating.

2. Communication skills.

According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), “*Verbal communication skills are ranked first among a job candidate’s must have skills and qualities*”. (NACE 2018).

If communication skills are essential to find a job, they can also be transferred to other aspects of our life such as;

- Our personal life.
- Businesses and within organisations.

How can we improve our communication skills?

Reflecting on our success and failure communicating with others is a good point to start off. This is regarded as Interpersonal Communication Skills. Differences in culture, academic and family education play important roles on how we interact with others when communicating.

Verbal communication can be speaking or writing. The words we use when we speak will have different effects depending on other factors involved such as the tone of our voice, short and simple sentences and also **non verbal communication** such as body language including facial expression.

According to skillsyouneed.com in the article ‘*Communication Skills*’, “*Reflection and clarification are both common techniques used in verbal communication to ensure that what you have heard and understood is what was intended*”.

Asking questions for clarification when we do not understand something is an important part of communication techniques.

Surprisingly, **non verbal communication** such as gestures, body language, facial expression, the tone of our voice and also physical appearance play a bigger role on the effect of the message sent.

According to the famous research conducted by Doctor Albert Mehrabian in 1971, on a face to face interaction, body language will have 55% of the desired effect on our message (Mehrabian 1971).

Listening is another factor to work on to improve our communication skills. In order to decode the message effectively, we must pay attention and listen attentively so we can collect all data.

There are more communication skills that are as important as the ones we have seen so far and not very often are paid the attention they deserve.

One of these skills is **Presentation Skills**. One could think that if you are not in business or you are a lecturer-teacher, you do not need this set of skills but nothing could be further from the truth. Yes, presentation skills will be essential to present information in a meeting or in a class, but it is not only standing in front of an audience big or small and go through a set of slides. The presenter will have to be able to catch the attention of the audience not only speaking, but using the appropriate tone, speaking too fast or too slow, body language, eye contact, moving or static and gestures. All these attributes or skills will make the information more attractive and the presenter will not lose the audience.

Also to consider are **writing skills**.

Writing clear and direct messages, emails, letters, reports and other texts is key to good communication.

A non clear and direct written message could induce to confusion or miss interpretation, and clarification is delayed or even non existent unless the other party asks for it.

And last but not least our own Personal Skills will help us communicating with others.

A healthy body and mind will give us more confidence and will elevate our self stem, this will make us believe in ourselves and to speak and communicate more effectively in front of an audience big or small.

3. Analysis of poor communication case study.

Steve is a construction operative from a foreign country. He is sent to a new construction site to work in the renovation project. The construction site Manager Neil is an old school local man from the town with many years of experience as a builder.

Neil gives tasks to Steve but with poor and not clear and specific instructions on what and how he wants the job to get done. Steve asks questions for clarification but Neil gets upset and frustrated and he is rude to Steve. This slows down the job tremendously since Steve has to find out for himself where tools and materials are located in order to do the job he has been asked.

Now Steve has a poor opinion about Neil, their relationship has been decimated and he is not motivated to do a good job.

4. Suggestions for improvement.

Taking our previous case as example, what can be done to improve the communication between Steve and Neil?

- A communication skills course would be highly appropriate for both parties.
- Neil as a Manager should have been trained on how to manage people. A customer service course is a great option to begin with.
- Cultural differences are a key point to consider. Being patient and considered with others is essential to improve communication.
- A generous and caring mindset to help other humans regardless of their background should be essential in all aspects of our life.

Conclusion

As we have seen on this report, communication is not as easy as it looks on paper. Many factors are involved in the process and all parties must be involved in order to improve it.

References

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