

# **BUSINESS COMMUNICATION**

# C O N T E N T S

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## **BLOCK I**

### **BASICS OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATION**

Communication skills have emerged as the most powerful set of skills to possess for accelerating one's career trajectory and speed of accomplishment in every walk of life. To prepare yourselves for a rewarding career in the broad field of management, it is even more essential to acquire, practise and exhibit high levels of communication skills in normal and crisis situations. Effective communication skills provide the ladder to the managers and leaders for rapid progression in their careers.

This block focuses on the basic concepts of communication and how relevant they are to budding managers and leaders. It covers the followings:

Unit 1	Significance of Business Communication
Unit 2	Overcoming Barriers to Communication
Unit 3	Strategic Relevance of Communication

# **UNIT 1      SIGNIFICANCE OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATION**

## **STRUCTURE**

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Scope of Communication
- 1.2 Types of Communication
- 1.3 Communication 24 x 7
- 1.4 Significance of Communication Skills
- 1.5 Communication Process
- 1.6 Process at Communicators' End
- 1.7 Process at Communicatees' End
- 1.8 Communication Model
- 1.9 Summary
- 1.10 Keywords
- 1.11 Self Assessment Questions
- 1.12 Suggested Further Readings

## **1.0      OBJECTIVE**

After perusing this unit, students should be able to:

- Appreciate the vast scope of communication in modern world
- Distinguish between the process of communication and exercise of power
- Understand that one-way flow of information is a part of the overall process of communication
- Identify different types of communications
- Grasp the importance of communication skills in the life of an individual and enterprise
- Recount the dividends that accrue from acquiring effective communication skills
- Understand the sources that lead to multiple interpretations of oral and written communication

## **1.1      SCOPE OF COMMUNICATION**

Communication as a subject of study has a very vast canvas. To different people, communication implies various areas of study, research and application:

- (1) It is a means of transportation from one place to another viz., moving men, machines, materials etc by surface transport like railways, roadways or by air or by sea. It is not uncommon to describe a region or a country backward in terms of means of communication because it is not serviced or well connected by railways, roadways, airways or seaways.

- (2) It also relates to means of sending / receiving messages, packets or parcels through post, telephone, telegram, radio, wireless or Internet. These means of communications have undergone rapid changes during the last few decades. Postal services have been revolutionized by courier services – same-day delivery, next-day delivery etc. Telephone services have become commonplace – one can talk to a person anywhere even one orbiting in a satellite without shouting. The mobile telephony and use of Internet has changed the way people talk and communicate with one another. They are changing the way business is done.
- (3) Communication is a major focus of attention for artists – singers, dancers, actors, painters, sculptors etc are all trying to communicate with their audiences. They endeavour to win their attention and appreciation so as to secure attractive returns for their efforts.

In managerial or business context, it is the science and art of communicating. Etymologically, communication as a word is derived from the word ‘common’ in English or ‘Communis’ from Latin. It means ‘shared by’ or ‘concerning all’. Thus communication is a process of ‘influencing others’ to achieve common, shared objectives. These goals could be that of individuals, families, teams, departments / functions and companies.

Communication has emerged as a very powerful personal skill that individuals must acquire to be able to perform their duties and become efficient managers and effective leaders.

### **(1) Communication and Power**

Communication is also the most powerful input resource in an enterprise. The various resources, just to recount, are as below:

- 1 Men
- 2 Money
- 3 Materials
- 4 Machines
- 5 Methods
- 6 Management
- 7 Measurement
- 8 Message covering both information and communication flows
- 9 Motive Power
- 10 Motivational Leadership

Messaging has emerged as the most important resource for, without it, nothing can be transacted anywhere. It is the lifeline of any society. It is the glue that holds companies, communities and countries together.

There is another process that is also used to influence others – it is the use of authority or power. They say if person has power it shows because it quickly shows his influence or hold on others’ opinion. However, it must be understood in its proper perspective. Power has been described as ‘a process of influencing others to do some

thing that, left to themselves, they will not do'. This process is, then, quite different from that of communication where we influence others as equals - members of the family, members of the inter-departmental teams or customers or fellow members of an association. The process of communication is greatly dependent on the skill of individuals who, as equal members, are in a position to influence others so as to compel, propel or impel them to work together to achieve common goals!

## **(2) Communication as a two-way process**

Communication is a complete process - it starts with communicators sending messages to receivers, the 'communi-tees'. An experienced sender of message, whether oral or written, would think of the audience as his customer. He would try to gauge or guess the kind of level of communication the receiver is comfortable with. Thereafter, he would craft his message in a manner and in the language, words, phrases and idioms that the receiver is familiar with. Each receiver of message is really a customer whose needs and wants should be as well known to the sender as it happens in a market place. Obviously, like the sender who chooses words, phrases and idioms from his vocabulary depending on own learning, experience and exposure, receiver also has his own mental filter that is the product of his learning, experience and exposure. To absorb the message in his mind, he does the abstraction of the message in to words, phrases and idioms that he is familiar with or has command over. This leads to his formulating his response to the message received. Once again, it goes through the mind filter and ultimately comes out of the communi-tee and starts its return journey to the sender of the message. It conveys back what is understood by the receiver.

A sensitive speaker is able to judge the reaction of his audience from the gestures, sounds and expressions of the audience – the way they sit, the way they yawn or the way they twitter their fingers etc. It is thus a complete cycle because it is a two way process. Until the full process has been gone through the process of communication is considered to be incomplete.

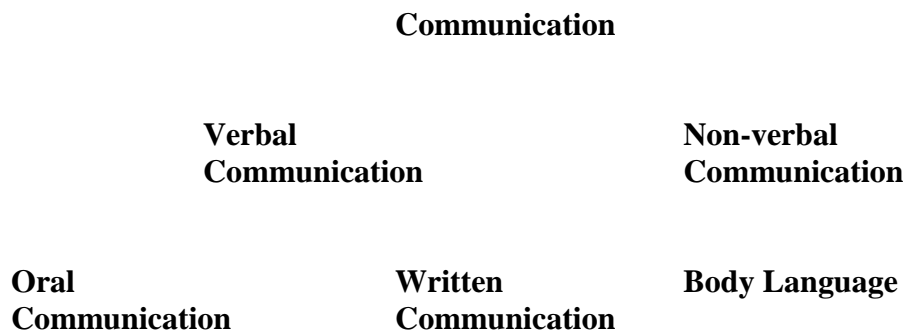
## **(3) Information as a one-way process**

Information flow is another related process. Information is knowledge; it comes from the processing of raw data which records the events as they take place in every miniscule of an organization or an institution. Knowledge is power. The flow of information is considered to be an extremely powerful tool at the disposal of men at all levels of a business enterprise.

However, difference between communication and information flows must be understood clearly. Whereas communication is a two way process, information is a one-way process. It is, therefore, half of the process. Yet it is used very extensively in organizations. As businesses grow in size, complexity and dynamics, it is very difficult to ensure two way process all the time. Much of the time, information flows one way – downwards, upwards or horizontal along formal lines of command. These lines of command become the channels of information flows and serve as the cornerstones of communication, coordination and control.

## 1.2 TYPES OF COMMUNICATION

Communication can be classified as below:



### (1) Verbal communication

Verbal communication happens through the use of words. It must be understood that communicator has to depend on the language that has been designed, developed and propagated by humans. As a result, it suffers from a lot of limitations despite the fact that some languages of the world are very developed and command a vast vocabulary.

Verbal Communication, in turn, can be further divided in to two groups:

#### (i) Oral Communication

Oral communications are the messages that come through words, phrases and idioms from the mouth of the speaker. His appearance, mannerism, body language and the way he throws his voice can make significant difference in impacting the audience, their attitude and performance.

It is a very convenient form of expression and presentation. It is almost instantaneous, quick and least expensive.

#### (ii) Written Communication

This requires preparation and can be thought out properly before committing in writing. It takes time and is expensive. However, it is more accurate and is the norm for technical, legal and most diplomatic communications.

With increase in the size of organizations, their complexity and dynamism, many a times written communication is the only way to communicate. With technological advancement in our ability to send / receive emails, fax messages, short messaging service (SMS) on mobile phones, instant messaging etc, written messages have become very common and popular.

Ability to send online reports across continents has won the race against time and distance. It is significantly influencing the way people shall do business in the twenty-first century.

## (2) **Non-verbal communication**

Non-verbal communication uses signs, signals, gestures, expressions and sounds. It is God-made language and, as a rule, should not suffer from any limitations excepting the fact that our knowledge about the language is limited by our lack of understanding of nature's ways of communication! In common parlance, non-verbal communication is also called **body language**. As a rule, it does not lie or mislead unless someone has mastered the art of deceit or camouflaging. It is the richest language known. During the last few decades a lot of research has been done to identify and isolate all the signs, signals, gestures, expression and sounds among humans.

The non-verbal communication has changed the way we look at the subject of communication. We seem to be communicating all the time through gestures, expressions, sounds, signs and signals.

Every one can recall the personal experience they would have gone through when they had to ask for a favour from mother, father, elder brother or even boss. When they went to speak to the person on the appointed date and time, one quick look at the person made them change their mind, thinking that the day and time was not propitious for seeking favour because of the mood he was emoting. The interaction would have been very upsetting but they could avoid it because they could observe from the body language of the person that the response would not be favourable.

Similarly, it is said that we emote even when we are asleep! We have also read a story in Mahabharata that Abhimanyu, son of Arjun, had picked up the art of entering a kind of warfare known as Chakarvyu while in the womb of his mother. It has been thought to be rather unbelievable phenomenon. The recent advances in medical history confirm that a child has already well developed five senses and mind as early as the seventh week of its conception when even mothers may not have become aware of their pregnancy!

Another thing students must appreciate is the body language is not man-made; it is God's own creation. Studies are directed to observing those gestures, expressions, sounds etc and record their meaning for its students to understand the language. Body language rarely lies and if one can master it, it will propel them on fast track to become good communicators.

Another well-known story common in India is that good voids of ayurvedic medicines were able to diagnose the type of ailment from the feel of the pulse and general examination of their patients!

### **1.3 COMMUNICATION 24 X 7**

Knowledge and understanding of the subject of communication is growing very rapidly. Considering that people communicate all the time, round the clock or at least during their waking hours, they must learn how to use this abundant resource for business, personal life and society to their greatest advantage. By doing so, they shall be able to achieve their objectives proactively.



In business, this ability, if harnessed fully, will help managers / leaders understand their customers, colleagues and competitors better and will enable them to reorient their strategies, policies and tactics in every day working.

As a result national economy and global market shall benefit considerably, enabling them to take the benefits of economic development to the remotest and the most disadvantaged segments of our planet.

**ACTIVITY**

The readers must pause and think of a time when they wanted to seek a personal favour from dad or mom or teacher or boss and decided to do that on a particular morning. However, when they went to see him / her, they came back without asking for the favour.

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Think what happened and why they changed their mind for seeking favour.

**1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

Conversing and corresponding with people around is such a common activity that most of individuals are so pre-occupied with their daily routine that they do not stop and ponder over the immense advantages that business enterprises can derive from mastering the art and science of communication. Following payoffs are only suggestive:

**(1) Communication is the life blood of an organization**

Organization cannot function without people interacting, conversing or corresponding with one another. All enterprises require human beings working for it or with it, to:

- Interact and react
- Make assumptions about future or forecast future events
- Plan or draw up a rough blueprint for the future
- Organize / design a format of how to get resources together to achieve the plan
- Staff or gather / recruit people and get them to desired locations
- Lead or direct people, and devise their jobs so as to adhere to the plan
- Exchange information, ideas, plans and proposals
- Measure and monitor
- Coordinate and control

Communication has been described as the ‘glue’ that holds the entire organization together as one entity. Without communication, managers / leaders are not able to influence the attitude and behaviour of people to achieve the common objectives.

## **(2) Internal communication**

Before the end of nineteenth century, businesses were small; they started growing in size from the beginning of twentieth century. Contemporary business enterprises are very large and have not only become multinational but also transnational in character. Besides, they have grown in complexity in terms of a wide array of products and services they deal in and the number of countries and continents they are operating in. Also, arising from liberalizing of many national economies, global competition has intensified and the rate of change in market place has accelerated. Market forces have also become very dynamic, almost verging on chaos.

With business becoming very large in size, complex in nature and rapidly changing dynamics, enterprises must put in place effective internal communication so that every one can be kept informed of happenings within the large corporation. It is the only way managers / leaders can build understanding among people located in far off communities, countries and continents – stringing them together in to a beautiful necklace that everyone can be proud of.

## **(3) External communication**

As a business enterprise in the modern society, it has to interact, pro-act or react to happenings in other institutions viz.

- Government bodies, statutory / regulatory agencies, municipal authorities etc
- Distributors, dealers and retailers
- Customers, community and society at large

Reputed organizations are concerned about their public image, goodwill and trust. In order to further reinforce their reputation, they participate in a number of activities:

- Public speeches by senior executives
- Tactful responses to comments and criticisms in the media
- Preparation and distribution of informative pamphlets about the firm
- Marketing communications or advertisement / publicity
- Production and dissemination of product catalogues, videos etc

Because of their importance, these activities are centralized in the Public Relations and Corporate Communications department of large corporations. These activities have emerged as specialist skills of critical importance to the well being of the company. Successful messaging can:

- Eliminate unnecessary correspondence
- Save time and expense
- Build favourable impression in public mind
- Enhance reputation and goodwill
- Help increase company profits and profitability

## **(4) Communication skills as vital job requirement**

Human beings are communicating all the time. Ability to express powerfully and influence the attitude and behaviour of people for giving better performance on their jobs, has emerged as a job skill of critical importance for managers / leaders at all levels of management. Thus all employees are expected to:

- 1 Write good correspondence
- 2 Be good in oral conversation
- 3 Develop and cultivate powerful body language
- 4 Be able to sell ideas and products effectively
- 5 Be very good in weaning away customers from competitor and retaining them

It is now increasingly understood that even specialists like accountants, engineers, technicians etc should have good communication skills. In the present day knowledge society, competitive advantage of acquiring excellent communication skills cannot and perhaps need not be emphasized!

#### **(5) Communication skills essential for promotion**

Communication skills have emerged as the most critical prerequisite for promotion to senior executive positions in the industry. Consequently, managers at lower rungs of organizations should also have good command over the spoken and written language of the business. As a general rule, managers should have the ability to make their communications heard, read or understood.

Individuals who have had quick rise to senior level positions, attribute it to their being good in conversation and in articulating topical issues besides being very good in written communications - be it in writing persuasive letters or producing concise and compelling reports.

#### **(6) Communication skills aid problem solving**

A person can become a good communicator only when he is a clear and systematic thinker. Acquiring effective communication skills adds to one's self esteem and confidence. This helps managers to be able to collect relevant information and get around people quickly that are essential prerequisites for any problem solving effort.

#### **(7) Communication skills ignite enthusiasm**

If a person is able to articulate viewpoint of the group he belongs to, it enthuses him because he becomes the automatic choice as their representative. The person becomes more spirited and involved and his group activities increase manifolds. People rally around such persons more readily and they progress in to more important roles.

#### **(8) Communication skills enhance motivation**

People who have good oral or written communication skills usually develop into very good listeners. Listening to others leads to added learning that influences their attitude and behaviour. It goes a long way in re-orienting their mindset towards work and enhancing their performance. Such persons become more aligned to firm's objectives and are motivated to accomplish them.

**(9) Communication skills are advantageous in personal life**

As private citizens, individuals take part in a lot of activities like sports, club work, social work, community work etc. People also participate in other social, cultural and religious activities. If they are good communicators, they get noticed quickly and can be appointed or nominated to many such activity groups. Before long, they become well-known and prominent member of the community.

**(10) Communication skills hone leadership traits**

From the foregoing discussions, it is easy to understand that all leaders in business, industry or political arena, have notably better skills in communication. They are able to deliver informative and persuasive speeches to audience at large. They are able to draw up, compose and distribute most effective posters, banners and circulars. Thus effective communication skills propel them to positions of leadership.

**(11) Dividends from effective communication skills**

Communication skills have come to be recognized as integral part of one’s upbringing and personality. His choice of words and phrases and their use is quite unique to him and can directly give clues to his personality.

In the modern age of knowledge society when education, training and skills are being formally taught, communication skills have become of critical importance in every day life. It is said that it is no use having brilliant ideas if one cannot put them across properly, accurately and lucidly. Following illustration highlights the strategic importance of role and importance of communication skills:

**Effective Communications**

**Enhance**

**A. WILL TO WORK**

- (1) Improves attitude
- (2) Improves involvement
- (3) Improves values
- (4) Improves morale
- (5) Improves motivation

**B. SKILL TO WORK**

- Improves information
- Improves knowledge
- Improves training
- Improves education
- Improves self esteem

**C. THRILL TO WORK**

- Improves teamwork
- Improves belongingness
- Improves loyalty
- Improves enthusiasm
- Improves spirits

**Employees**

- Enjoy working
- Get satisfaction
- Get happiness

## ACTIVITY

Think of persons around you in school, office or social circle. Readers would always be able to spot some persons who have above average communication skills – some might be very good in speaking and others have a winning style of writing. They often exhibit a sign of confidence within and outside their circle of friends. They project an image and are liked better by friends / relatives who appreciate their accomplishment.

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.....

Think objectively about them. They are liked by their classmates and peers. They are the ones who are appointed as captains, prefects and leaders although they may not be more intelligent than many others around.

## 1.5 COMMUNICATION PROCESS

In order to develop a deep understanding of the subject of communication, it is important that everyone understands the complete process of communication. Broadly, it has two parts:

- Process at communicator's end (Senders' Part)
- Process at communicatee's end (Receivers' Part)

These have been described below:

## 1.6 PROCESS AT COMMUNICATORS' END (SENDERS' PART)

The process at communicators' end can also be looked at in two halves as below:

### (1) Inward journey

It entails the following steps:

#### (i) As received by senses

A human being perceives the world around him from spoken words, written words, visuals and cues from body language in terms of sounds, gestures, expressions, signs, signals etc through the five human senses of seeing, smelling, hearing, tasting and touching.

These are the external five senses – our antennas. However, ultimately senses only capture feelings, images etc and convey them to the human brain which is main receptacle of what is perceived by the five senses. That is why it is said that it is not the eyes that see but the brain; it is not the nose that smells, it is the brain; it is not the ears that hear, it is the brain; it is not the tongue that tastes, it is the brain and it is not the skin or hands that feel, it is the brain.

All that is captured by the human senses from environments are far from ideal i.e., without noise or distractions. On the contrary all kinds of distractions intervene and messages transmitted to the brain are far from perfect.

Additionally, there is also the problem of sensitivity of the senses. How sensitized they are varies very widely from one person to another. Someone remembers a scene from a movie very vividly after many years and another person cannot recall the scene from a movie seen a few minutes ago. Some people can detect a smell from long distance while others would not notice it even when they are passing besides its source. Some singers can hear a small variation in a note very clearly while others cannot. Thus this process of perceiving is very heavily dependent upon the faculty of receivers. Human beings vary widely in their ability to perceive different sensual inputs.

**(ii) Influence of sources of distraction**

If one is hearing music, even a small level of noise can be very disparaging – no wonder, music recording studios are noise proof. Similarly, speech delivered in noisy circumstances can be very difficult to understand and absorb. Noisy classrooms can be lethal for good learning. Even visuals placed in noisy room fail to make the impact they are intended to. Similarly, listeners may miss many cues from the body language that normally forms a major chunk of the message being delivered. A shabbily dressed person cannot make as good an impression as a well-dressed one.

If there are too many distractions behind or besides the speaker, the message may fall flat. The situation is similar to a young man having gone to see a bride at a place where there are many more beautiful girls present, finds very difficult to decide!

**(iii) Receiving information by the brain**

When information arrives at the brain, it passes through a kind of sieve that separates out difficult, strange or awkward words and simplifies them into familiar words. This is a part of the process of abstraction that takes place before the message is classified and stored

**(iv) Searching for similar material in the brain memory**

This is the second part of the process of abstraction that goes on in the brain – it is somewhat like classifying the message before storing. Once this search is completed, the material is stored next to the similar stuff already in the memory. Rarely, one can get identical material and one should be happy to get as near to the one in memory as possible. If it is totally new or alien material, it may not be possible to retrieve it when required!

**(v) Storing the material in the brain**

This is a complex stage. Needless to say that human memory is still the fastest to retrieve and recall. Owing to overload or bounded rationality, there is

always a limit to what and how much can be stored in the human memory. This faculty or capacity to store also varies widely among individuals and has a significant influence on ones' competence to communicate.

## **(2) Outward journey**

When an individual has the need to communicate with others, the process starts with the happenings in the brain of the sender who is already subjected to a lot of experiences, emotions, knowledge and opinions.

### **(i) Retrieval of information from human memory**

This is very much like pulling a file from the filing cabinet. Since it is in response to a need, the file pulled out may not always be the one most appropriate to the stimuli. This may bring in variations in interpreting the message received.

### **(ii) Choosing the right words and phrases**

This stage is highly subjective and is greatly influenced by the mastery of the sender over the language used for communication. Besides, linguistic competence extends to proper use of form of verbs, adjectives, adverbs etc

### **(iii) Delivery of message**

Role of sender continues to be important as the style, speed and manner of speaking decide the impact of the message. The body language and ability of the sender to throw his voice towards the audience form the major part of the message delivered.

### **(iv) Sources of distraction**

Once again, the message passes through a medium that may have one or several sources of distraction, impairing the message as received by the communicatee.

## **1.7 PROCESS AT COMMUNICATEES' END (RECEIVERS' PART)**

The entire process at the communicators' end repeats in two parts:

- Inward journey
- Outward journey

The process follows all the steps as described above.

## **1.8 COMMUNICATION MODEL**

In managerial terms, the process of communication follows the following six steps:

- 1 Sender has a idea to communicate (Conception)
- 2 Idea becomes a message (Encoding)
- 3 Message is transmitted through a medium (Transmission)
- 4 Message is received by the other person (Decoding)
- 5 Message is interpreted by the receivers' mind (Interpretation)
- 6 Receiver responds and give a feedback to the sender (Feedback)

This is illustrated as below:

## **(1) Conception**

### **(i) Mental images**

All individuals are continuously bombarded by information flowing from

- Sights (Scenes)
- Sounds
- Scents

These streams of sensation are conveyed to the human mind. Each individual has a unique 'mental filter' because of own experiences, exposures, emotions etc. The mental filter converts these streams of sensation in to a mental map of the event that becomes the basis of perception of the reality. No two mental images of the observers of the same event will be identical!

All sensations received in the mind go through the process of abstraction and simplification.

### **(ii) Psychological factors**



A person tends to hear what he wants to and rejects what he does not want to hear. This is because of several factors as below:

- Sensory factors
- Demographic factors
- Psychographic factors
- Loyalty of individuals
- Personality of individuals

**(iii) Technical aspects**

These days communication is greatly influenced by the technology and choice of the medium of transmission. Followings should be taken in to account:

- Transmitter
- Transmission process
- Receiver

In most cases, a certain amount of repetition may be desirable to ensure that the message is not mutilated.

**(iv) Role of being logical and systematic**

The message, to be effective, should be logical and conveyed in a systematic manner. Messages suffer from:

- Logical errors
- False analogy
- Concluding from limited data
- Understanding syllogism (Deductive logic)
- Arguing in circles

Usually in such cases, the middle of the message remains undisturbed but most receivers tend to get misled.

**(v) Conclusions**

Arriving at the conclusion from the various conflicting and diverse factors is the real issue. As a rule, four possible conclusions are:

- Valid and true
- Valid and false
- Invalid but true
- Invalid and false

Communicators have to avoid the pitfalls and look for valid and true conclusions.

## **(2) Encoding**

The process of how the mind converts an idea into words is not yet fully understood. Choice of words by the speaker depends up various factors as below:

- Subject
- Purpose
- Audience
- Personal style
- Mood

Besides, length of the message, tone and style are influenced by:

- Content of the message
- Familiarity of the receiver(s)
- Emotional conflicts
- Difficulty of expressing ideas

## **(3) Transmission**

Choice of transmission mode depends upon the followings:

- Message
- Audience
- Need of speed / urgency
- Situation

In all cases, it is important to control the transmission link. This not only ensures its availability but also avoids distortion and level of noise. Also, remember that longer the chain of communication, bigger is the problem of ensuring correct transmission of the messages.

## **(4) Decoding**

The receiver has to read or hear the message before he can understand it. One of the most common barriers to communication is the lack of attention by the receiver. Human mind tends to drift when it is forced to hear something. It is said that mind is like a horse; it is very difficult to control it. Usually, a person's mind has around 6,000 ideas flashing across in one day!

There are many words in all the languages with multiple meanings. To be able to understand the correct meaning in the context of the message or the way sender has used it to convey his intent is quite a challenge.

## **(5) Interpretation**

If the background and the experience of sender and receiver vary considerably, understanding of the message can be very different. Following three diagrams show pictorially the impact on getting the meaning and understanding of the message:

**Little amount of shared experience**

**Average amount of shared experience**

**Large amount of shared experience**

**Dissimilar meaning**

**Similar meaning**

**Very similar meaning**

**Misunderstanding**

**Average degree of understanding**

**High degree of understanding**

## **(6) Feedback**

Communication is a two way process. The communication loop is not complete until the sender of the communication receives a feedback from the receiver. The feedback may be verbal or non-verbal through the body language. Many a times, audience conveys through expressions, gestures or sounds. A sensitive speaker can always understand the feedback from the way the receivers stoop forward or backward, the way they yawn and the way they twitters their fingers. There are a large numbers of cues, signs and signals to pick up and interpret!

## **1.9 SUMMARY**

Communication is a vast subject; it stands for connectivity and networking in its broadest sense. In the context of an enterprise, business communication is the process of influencing others to achieve common, shared objectives. Communication is a two way process and is completed only when the feedback is received by the sender. Information flow is a one way process.

Communication can be verbal covering oral and written form and non-verbal that uses a large number of signs, signals, gestures, expressions and sounds. As learning about the non-verbal communication increases, it is changing the way people look at both the oral and written communications. Everyone seems to be communicating all the time especially during waking hours. By mastering the art of observing and interpreting body language and related aspects of communication, every one can become a better communicator!

Business communication is not only the life blood an organization but also the heart of its internal and external communications. Effective communication skills form vital part of a job requirement, are prerequisite for promotion to higher positions and are essential to all problem solving. They ignite enthusiasm, enhance motivation and hone traits of leadership. Communication skills are also advantageous in personal life and

community work. They enhance will to work, skill to work and thrill to work. They promote joy at work, impart satisfaction and happiness.

A deeper understanding of the process of the inward and outward journey at the senders' and receivers' ends goes a long way in students' ability to draft and deliver effective messages. The six-stage model of business communication would enable them to gain deeper knowledge of the subject and acquire more effectiveness in communication skills – the strategic asset they must possess before they can move in to senior corporate positions.

### 1.10 KEYWORDS

- (1) **Communication** – It is the process of influencing others to achieve common, shared objectives.
- (2) **Power** – It is the process of influencing others to do something that left to them-selves they would not do.
- (3) **Oral Communications** – These are the messages that come through words, phrases and idioms from the mouth of the speaker.
- (4) **Written Communications** – These messages require preparations and can be thought out properly before committing in writing and are more accurate.
- (5) **Non-verbal Communications or Body Language** – These are the messages that humans send out by using signs, signals, gestures, expressions and sounds and convey meanings provided the receiver can learn to understand them.

### 1.12 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- 1 Describe the broad scope of communication and what are the specific areas of knowledge it covers?
- 2 Distinguish between 'communication' and 'power' as the methodologies of influencing other persons.
- 3 Detail the different types of communications and describe them briefly.
- 4 How does communication differ from information and highlight their respective importance and relevance?
- 5 Justify that people seem to communicate all the time especially during waking hours.

- 6 Explain how communication forms the lifeblood of an organization.
- 7 Compare and contrast internal communication with external communication.
- 8 Explain why communication skills should be treated as the essential job requirements at all levels of an organization.
- 9 Justify that effective communication skills propel a person in the progression of his career.
- 10 Explain why good communication skills are necessary pre-requisites for problem solving and decision making in an organization.
- 11 Highlight the importance of effective communication skills in igniting enthusiasm, enhancing motivation, attitude and performance.
- 12 Describe the returns that firms can hope to achieve by actively promoting effective communication skills.
- 13 Describe the communication process and explain it with respect to the senders' part of the communication process?
- 14 Describe the receivers' part of the communication process and comment on its similarities with the senders' part of the communication process.
- 15 Justify with suitable illustrations why everyone's communication process will be similar.
- 16 What are the possible variations at each stage of the communication process?
- 17 Justify how comprehension level of a message varies considerably although everyone has the same communication process.
- 18 Explain with the help of a diagram a typical communication model.
- 19 What are the possible sources of distraction in a typical classroom of a business school?
- 20 What is the role and importance of the stage of interpretation in business communication?
- 21 Can a speech be understood differently? Give reasons in support of your answer.
- 22 Without securing feedback, can we depend upon the content of the message? What are the likely pitfalls of doing business without a feedback?

### **1.13 SUGGESTED FURTHER READINGS**

- 1 Herta A Murphy, Herbert W Hilderbrandt (1991). Effective Business Communications. New York, NY: McGraw Hill Inc.
- 2 Pal Rajendra, Karahalli, JS (1997). Essentials of Business Communication. New Delhi, India: Sultan Chand & Sons.
- 3 Lesikar, Pettit & Flatley (2006). Basic Business Communication. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill International Edition.

## **UNIT 2      OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION**

### **STRUCTURE**

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Overcoming Barriers to Effective Communication
- 2.2 Types of Barriers to Communication
- 2.3 Personal Barriers to Communication
- 2.4 Group Barriers to Communication
- 2.5 Organizational Barriers to Communication
- 2.6 Gateway to Effective Communication
- 2.7 Principles of Good Communication
- 2.8 Summary
- 2.9 Keywords
- 2.10 Self Assessment Questions
- 2.11 Suggested Further Readings

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

After completing this unit, students should be able to:

- Understand the universal nature of barriers to communication
- Identify different types of barriers to communication
- Become aware of the barriers to communication at personal / individual level
- Distinguish barriers to communication in team / group interactions
- Recognize organizational policies, practices and procedures that come in the way to effective communication
- Acquire knowledge of commandments to good communication
- Describe 7 C's and 4 S's of good communication

### **2.1 OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION**

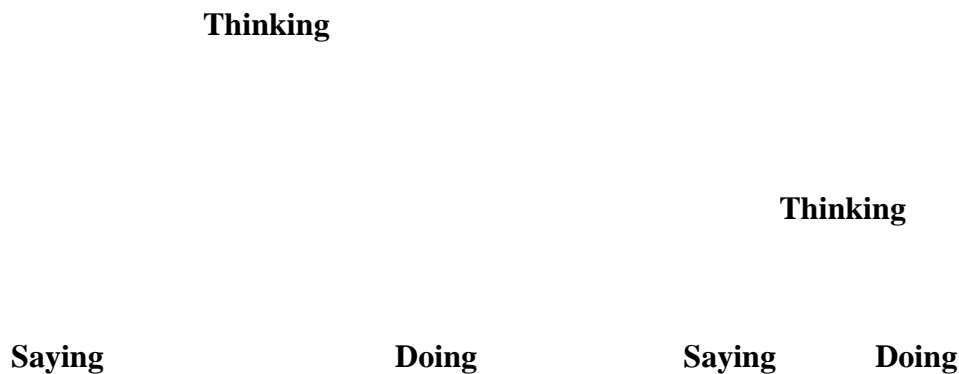
Barriers to communication arise from the inherent process involved in sending and / or receiving messages among human beings. Imperfections creep in from:

- Different levels of thinking of individuals
- Different mental filters arising from individual mental filters conditioned by their knowledge, experience and opinions
- Less than perfect mastery over the language of expression
- Inadequacy of the language
- Limitations arising from bounded rationality

This has been beautifully captured by one of our folklores – there always exists a vicious triangle in each individual so much so that it is an integral part of ones' being. The triangle has three apexes – Thinking (Vichar), Saying (Upchar) and Doing (Achar).

- What we think, we do not say (Human inadequacy, imperfect language and insufficient linguistic capability)
- What we say, we do not do (Semantic and psychological deficiencies)

Just as the apexes of a triangle do not ever meet, this triangle would always exist. However, through better awareness and continual efforts for improving own personal skills, size of this triangle can be reduced as shown below:



If individuals become aware of their deficiencies, they start looking for ways to overcome them.

## 2.2 TYPES OF BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION

Communication capability is a personal skill. Barriers to effective communication within organizations happen at the following three levels:

- Personal barriers to communication
- Group barriers to communication
- Organizational barriers to communication

These have been described further:

### 2.3 PERSONAL BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION

These barriers can be at individual employee level, senior or subordinate levels:

#### (1) Barriers at the individual level

These are the obstructions caused in the process of sending and receiving messages during the encoding or decoding of ideas, words and phrases. In most languages, a word has different meanings, depending upon the context in which it is used. Each word has many synonyms but which one is the most suitable in the given situation, is always an issue. These are known as semantic barriers and may take the following forms:

**(i) Badly expressed message**

- Lack of clarity
- Lack of precision
- Poorly chosen words and phrases
- Careless omissions
- Lack of coherence
- Poor organization of ideas
- Use of jargons
- Inadequate vocabulary
- Awkward sentence structure

**(ii) Assumptions not clarified**

Messages are normally based on some assumptions that, if not communicated to the receiver, may lead to incomplete message or wrong interpretation of the message.

**(iii) Faulty translation**

Messages must use words and phrases that receiver is familiar with so that he can understand and respond to them. This calls for a great mastery and flexibility in the use of language on the part of the sender. In the absence of suitable choice of vocabulary, the message may not invoke the desired response from the receiver.

**(iv) Use of specialist language**

Each specialist uses a lingua that is peculiar to that profession. For example, MBAs use a different language that an engineer and a technician uses a different language that an ordinary workman. Illiterates use a different language that the educated. Similarly, city dwellers use different words and phrases than village folks. These act as roadblocks for effective communication among them.

**(2) Barriers at the levels of seniors**

These could be:

**(i) Attitude of the seniors**

If attitude of the seniors is not helpful either owing to lack of awareness or because of personal agenda, messages will not flow freely to or from them unlike what should happen in a well-lubricated organization structure.

**(ii) Insistence on proper channel of communication**



Some seniors like to stay within the confines of the lines of communication as depicted in a formal organization chart. They do not like bypassing these lines of communication and think that these would amount to thwarting of their authority

**(iii) Fear of challenge to their authority**

Some seniors tend to hoard information going down / up as it may disclose their weaknesses. They may also think if they do not share the information, they would become more important.

**(iv) Lack of confidence in the subordinates**

Some seniors perceive their subordinates to be less competent and do not like the information going downwards for the risk of its leakage and misuse.

**(v) Ignoring communication**

Some seniors ignore the information from their subordinates deliberately in order to maintain their importance. This can create a barrier in the minds of subordinates who may loathe to provide information to seniors.

**(vi) Lack of time**

Some seniors are overburdened with work and consequently have no time to provide information downwards, upwards or horizontally.

**(vii) Lack of awareness**

Some seniors do not appreciate the critical importance and significance of maintaining a smooth flow of information in all directions within and outside of the organization. This also acts as a blocker of flow of communication in the organization.

**(3) Barriers at the level of subordinates**

These are:

**(i) Unwillingness to communicate**

As a rule if an employee feels giving information may be embarrassing, he would not divulge it or would delay its flow as much as possible. They often modify the information so as to protect their interests. Wrong information can be very misleading too. Wrong information is worse than no information.

**(ii) Lack of proper incentive**

Lack of motivation comes in the way of flow of information up or down the lines of command and control. Similarly, if good suggestions from subordinates are ignored or do not evoke enough response or attention, it has a

snowballing effect in the organization. Subordinates do not feel enthused about giving suggestions for improvement of products, processes and systems. This has been the main reason for dismal failure of suggestion schemes in USA, Europe and India.

## **2.4 GROUP BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATIONS**

These are interpersonal barriers to communication. These occur at the level of interaction within a group of employees – members of a section, department or team having members from different specialist functions of the organization.

A few major barriers to communication are:

### **(1) Premature evaluation of the sender**

This happens when the looks, dress or initial introduction to the subject is not impressive or up to the preconceived standard and receivers have done premature evaluation of the sender. This can also happen when the credibility of the sender of message is low. Such barriers stop transfer of information as senders get a sense of futility. Such barriers can be overcome by:

- Senders developing empathy for the receivers and modifying the message to make it more acceptable to them
- Receivers listening to the speakers free from prejudice and commitment

### **(2) Inattentive listening**

If the receiver is preoccupied with some thing else and is concerned with other issues, he may fail to react to the message, talk, bulletin, notice or circular. Since the receiver is not able to give sufficient attention, the message may fail to register in his mind.

### **(3) Loss during transmission of message**

A message that has to pass through several layers of organization structure or many stages before it reaches the target may lose its accuracy. For oral messages, it is estimated that accuracy is lost at every stage of its transmission or relaying. Even in written messages, loss occurs because of differences in interpretation, meanings and translation.

### **(4) Loss of retention**

Retaining messages in the memory is a difficult process. It applies to both oral and written messages that are circulated. However, if a copy of the written message is available, persons can refer to it again and again. It is said that people remember:

- 10 % of what they read
- 20 % of what they hear
- 30 % of what they see
- 50 % of what they see and hear

- 70 % of what they say
- 90 % of what they say as they perform the task

**(5) Undue reliance on written words**

Senders often place undue importance to written message. In spite of the message being well drafted and presented, it may fail to make the necessary impact because of lack of trust and confidence between the parties. Messages, apart from being very good, should be consonant with the organizations' purpose and employees' own interest.

**(6) Distrust of the communicator**

If the person who is sending the message is prone to frequently countermanding, it leads to delayed responses from recipients. Besides, they may not act enthusiastically, perhaps, because they are waiting for amendment to the original message!

**(7) Failure to communicate**

Arising from lethargy or any other reason, managers may fail to inform the concerned person(s). In such cases, even a subsequent message may not invoke the right response because of the missing link!

**2.5 ORGANIZATIONAL BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION**

Organization structures of firms are designed to support company's objectives. Besides, organizations prescribe systems – a set of policies, procedures and norms of behaviour (code of conduct) to reinforce achievement of corporate objectives. These are further supplemented by a comprehensive system of performance appraisals, rewards and punishment. A few major organizational barriers are:

**(1) Organizational policy**

Policies underpin strategy and facilitate their implementation. Organizational policy should support flow of information in all directions – external and internal communication covering downward, upwards and horizontal communications. If flow of communication is not supported by firms' policy, it will not be smooth and adequate for the healthy functioning of the organization.

**(2) Organizational rules and regulations**

Some rules and regulations of the firm may come in the way of free flow of communication and may require provision of proper channels of communication. Such rules and procedures may inhibit the flow of communication and need to be updated to bring them in line with the demands of strategies and their accomplishment.

**(3) Status relationship**

Greater the difference in the level of status of the functionaries, greater is the possibility of breakdown of communication between them. If a person has to be frequently interacting with senior personnel, his job gradation needs to be reviewed.

#### **(4) Complexity of organization structure**

Tall organizations comprising of many layers of organization structure, delay flow of messages from sender to the receiver. It increases the risk of distortion of the message en route. In such firms, usually upwards communication suffers very badly.

#### **(5) Organizational facilities**

Firms must provide facilities for meeting and conference rooms, complaint / suggestion schemes etc. They should encourage open door policies by senior managers and executives. Companies should also organize gatherings for social, cultural and sport activities as they also contribute to better flow of information at both informal and formal levels.

## **2.6 GATEWAY TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS**

Developing a deep understanding of the various barriers to communication must lead the management to devising ways and means of overcoming these barriers. Besides, every communicator must take specific steps to improve conditions and eliminate roadblocks to effective communication.

American Management Association has formulated the following commandments for effective communication:

- 1 Clarifying ideas before communication
- 2 Knowing purpose of communication
- 3 Understanding physical and human environments of communication
- 4 Consulting others in planning communication
- 5 Contents and overtones of communication
- 6 Value of communication to the receiver
- 7 Follow up action
- 8 Importance of communication
- 9 Actions congruent with communication
- 10 Good listening

## **2.7 PRINCIPLES OF GOOD COMMUNICATION**

Communication is directly influenced by the ability to articulate issues concisely and convey to receivers in words and phrases they are familiar with so as to persuade them to the intended course of action. It is, therefore, a powerful skill to cultivate. Following checklist comprising of 7 Cs and 4 Ss should serve as good guideline for budding managers and leaders:

#### **(1) Seven Cs of communication**

**(i) Completeness**

Complete messages achieve the desired results without having to incur additional time and expenses by seeking clarifications and getting piece-meal replies. Complete messages from the sender help to build his image, goodwill and credibility. It saves time and cost. Following guidelines are useful:

- Check 5Ws (What, When, Where, Who and Why) and IH (How) of the message
- Answer all questions raised meticulously
- Give some extra information rather than holding it back

**(ii) Conciseness**

Conciseness is saying message in the fewest words without sacrificing understanding by the receivers. It is the opposite of wordiness or verbosity. By eliminating unwanted words, importance and emphasis of messages is increased. Remember that 'brevity is the soul of wit'. Following guidelines would serve better:

- Omit hackneyed expressions
- Avoid repetition and long winding sentences
- Include relevant facts but with courtesy
- Organize message logically and effectively

**(iii) Consideration**

Always prepare message keeping receivers in mind. Ideally, senders should put themselves in receivers' position and then visualize their needs and wants. Thereafter, they would be able to craft messages that are more in tune with receivers' requirements. One should gift wrap whatever one wants to say or write. This requires an attitude, empathy and human touch. It leads to better understanding of the human nature. Following directions should be useful:

- Focus on 'you' instead of 'I' or 'we'
- Highlight benefits of the message to the receiver
- Emphasize positive and pleasant aspects of facts
- Imbibe integrity in to the message

**(iv) Concreteness**

The message should be specific, definite and vivid. Communicators should conscientiously avoid vague and general statements. Some good rules to follow are:

- Choose vivid and image building words in the message
- Use direct and action verbs
- Use specific facts and figures

**(v) Clarity**

Special efforts are required to see that messages getting across are fully understood by receivers although they may not have identical experience, education and opinions. Every individual has a unique mental filter that gives different meanings to messages although the text is the same. Following tips will be useful:

- Always choose short, familiar and conversational words and phrases
- Endeavour to achieve appropriate lengths for sentences and paragraphs
- Support the message with examples, illustrations and audio-visuals

**(vi) Courtesy**

Courtesy comes from ones' innate desire to respect others. Courtesy brings in new friends and strengthens old friendships. However, one has to develop a 'you-attitude' and being sensitive to others. A few good rules are:

- Omit expressions that hurt, are irritating and be-little
- Apologize in good faith
- Answer mail regularly and properly
- Be appreciative, thoughtful and honestly factual

**(vii) Correctness**

Messages done in a perfect way grammatically may fail to achieve their purpose because receivers found them insulting, humiliating and overbearing. Correctness can be ensured by adopting following rules:

- Using correct level of language in tune with the receivers
- Incorporating only accurate data and evidence
- Choosing the right words, phrases and sentences
- Organizing matter systematically in to paragraphs of appropriate size

**(2) Four S's of communication**

Besides the above, following four principles have become popular:

**(i) Shortness**

Shortness 'economizes' on words. Message should be as brief as possible. Good rules are:

- Avoid high sounding and bombastic words
- Do not use complex words, phrases and ideas
- Use simple, common and popular vocabulary

## **(ii) Simplicity**

Simplicity impresses. There is a famous 'KISS' principle in communication – it says that the message should be kept short and simple. A few golden hints are:

- Choice of simple words and ideas comes from clarity of tellers' thoughts
- Confused persons employ confusing words that leave the reader in a maze
- Clarity of ideas germinate use of simple words and phrases

## **(iii) Strength**

Strength of message 'convinces' receivers about the desirability of the idea(s). Messages should deliver the conviction of the teller. Guidelines are:

- Half-hearted statements add a touch of falsehood to the message
- If sender is convinced, the message carries the strength of his conviction
- Strength of the message comes from senders' credibility

## **(iv) Sincerity**

The quality of sincerity 'appeals' to everyone especially the receivers of messages. If receivers' keen sense of observation senses a situation of make-believe, the entire process of communication would fall through. Adopting the following rules will go a long way:

- A sincere approach becomes evident to receivers
- Sincerity gets reflected in the way they communicate
- Sincerity adds to the credibility of senders

## **2.8 SUMMARY**

Barriers to communication arise from the inherent process of sending / receiving of messages among humans. Invariably gaps exist between individuals' thought, speech and action forming a kind of vicious triangle among three apexes of 'thinking', 'saying' and doing. Smaller the size of this triangle, higher would be the credibility of the individual or the organization. In enterprises, barriers to communication arise at three levels – individual, group and organizational.

At individual level, barriers arise from badly crafted messages, unclear assumptions, faulty translation / interpretation and use of specialist language. Among seniors, barriers manifest from attitude towards people, insistence of proper channels of communication, fear of challenge to their authority or lack of confidence in subordinates. These might also emanate from lack of time or lack of awareness of the importance of communication or ignoring the need to communicate. Among subordinates, barriers may arise from lack of ability, unwillingness or lack of incentive to communicate.

At group level, barriers crop up from premature evaluation of sender, inattentive listening and loss of content during transmission. Barriers also result from loss of retention of content, distrust of the sender and failure to communicate.

Organizational barriers may spring up from policies that do not support upward, downward and horizontal communications, inhibiting rules and regulations, promoting status centric relationships and complex organization structures. Lack of facilities for free and frank interactions on professional, social or cultural issues can add to barriers to communication.

Students should align their communication skills with 7 C's of completeness, conciseness, consideration, concreteness, clarity, courtesy and correctness and 4 S's of shortness, simplicity, strength and sincerity.

## 2.9 KEYWORDS

- (1) **Barrier** – It is anything that holds apart, obstructs or prevents going ahead.
- (2) **Personal Barrier** – It is a shortcoming or a deficiency that is individual, private and peculiar to a person.
- (3) **Group Barrier** – It is the obstacle that crops up when a number of persons are gathered closely together because of common characteristics or community of interests forming a recognizable unit.
- (4) **Organizational Barrier** – It is the fence or wall that is created when a body of persons is organized for some specific purpose reflecting the administrative, personnel and executive structure of business, club, union and society.
- (5) **Attitude** - It is a manner of showing or meaning to show a mental state, emotion and mood. It is showing through acting, feeling or thinking one's disposition, opinion etc.
- (6) **Evaluation** – It is to find, determine and appraise the value, worth or amount and express them in numerical terms.

## 2.10 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- 1 What is the vicious triangle in communication and how can we reduce the gap between thought, speech and actions in an organizational setting?
- 2 Gaps between thought, speech and actions are equally applicable at the individual level. Suggest ways and means of minimizing these gaps.
- 3 Describe the personal barriers to communication and how individuals can overcome them.
- 4 Describe the group barriers to communication and suggest strategies to overcome them.
- 5 Describe the organizational barriers to communication.
- 6 What remedies would you suggest for removing the organizational roadblocks to communication?
- 7 List out the ten commandments of good communication and describe their importance in overcoming barriers to communication at all the levels of the organization
- 8 What are the guiding principles of good communication?



- 9 Describe any five principles of effective communication and support your answer with suitable examples.
- 10 Describe the principles of conciseness, correctness, concreteness and clarity and explain the differences by citing suitable examples.
- 11 Explain the principles of consideration and courtesy for good communications. Support your answer by giving examples.
- 12 Describe the 4-S principles of communication giving appropriate examples.
- 13 Evaluate the role of principle of sincerity for effective communication in ones' ability to influence other persons.

## **2.11 SUGGESTED FURTHER READIINGS**

- 1 Bovee, Courtlaand L., Thill, John V. (1992). Business Communication Today. New York, NY, USA: McGraw Hill Inc.
- 2 Pal, Rajendra, Karlahalli, JS (!997). Essentials of Business Communication. New Delhi (India): Sultan Chand & Sons.
- 3 Kreps, Gary L. (1996) Organizational Communication: Theory & Practice. London, Longman.

## **UNIT 3      STRATEGIC RELEVANCE OF COMMUNICATION**

### **STRUCTURE**

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Becoming a Powerful Communicator
- 3.2 Crafting Effective Communication
- 3.3 Creating and Delivering the Message
- 3.4 Minimizing Noise during Transmission
- 3.5 Facilitating Feedback
- 3.6 Strategic Relevance of Communication
- 3.7 Strategic Framework of Communication in an Enterprise
- 3.8 Communication and Society
- 3.9 Summary
- 3.10 Keywords
- 3.11 Self Assessment Questions
- 3.12 Suggested Further Readings

### **3.0 OBJECTIVES**

After studying this unit, students should be able to:

- Become powerful communicators
- Craft effective communications
- Create and deliver messages effectively
- Minimize noise and distraction during transmission
- Obtain and profit from the feedback
- Appreciate the strategic relevance of communication
- Describe the framework of communication in an enterprise
- Understand that the communication process is integral to the evolution of civilized society

### **3.1 BECOMING A POWERFUL COMMUNICATOR**

Acquiring effective communication skills is a lot of hard work. It requires a complete change in individuals' attitude towards their environments. This change in attitude should be so strong as to impel them to bring about a sea change in their personality. It is now recognized that once persons have acquired good command over their speaking and writing abilities, they feel self-confident, assured and poised. Among others, following five qualities stand out in them:

#### **(1) Perception**

Good communicators are able to predict fairly accurately how their message will be received and whether it would have the requisite impact. They are really good at reading their audience correctly. They constantly modify and adjust their messages to

tailor them to audiences' requirements and prevent any misinterpretation and misunderstanding.

## **(2) Precision**

They create a meeting of minds of the senders and the receivers. When they finish delivering the message, audience shares the same mental picture as they have of the topic being discussed.

## **(3) Credibility**

Good communicators come out as believable persons. Audience has faith in the substance of their message. They trust the senders' information and intention. The message is received rather well.

## **(4) Control**

Good communicators shape response of their audience. In line with the original intent of the message, they can make their audience laugh / cry, calm them down, change their mind and prompt them to act in certain ways as would achieve the purpose of the communicators.

## **(5) Congeniality**

They always maintain friendly and pleasant relations with their audience. They command respect and goodwill. As a result, despite differences, people like to work for them.

### **3.2 CRAFTING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION**

Good messages are like good paintings; they are pieces of art. These are prepared with a lot of care and love for the audience they are meant for. Good communicators are able to overcome barriers to communication and influence audience in a manner that they act in the desired way. This, in the ultimate analysis, helps to achieve the goals set for the message before it was delivered! It involves following three steps:

- Creating and delivering the message
- Minimizing noise during transmission
- Facilitating feedback

### **3.3 CREATING AND DELIVERING THE MESSAGE**

If a person wants the audience to understand and accept his message, he is the only one who can help. He just cannot depend upon others to do it for him! It would, therefore, be useful to learn the correct way to go about it – earliest the better.

#### **(1) First think of the purpose and the audience**

Followings need to be done:

**(i) Purpose**

Define the purpose of the message clearly. Clearer the purpose, clearer will be the thinking and more systematic and logical will be the message. One must start keeping the end in view. Describe why of the message and visualize the outcome in terms of what the audience would do, if convinced.

**(ii) Audience analysis**

Communicators have to learn about the audience:

- Its current position versus the outcome intended to achieve
- Their willingness to understand and accept the message

**(iii) Message as a bridge**

Senders must appreciate that their message is a bridge of words that would move their audience from their current position to the new position, almost identical to their own.

**(2) Telling what you are going to tell**

A communicator is judged by the first few paragraphs in case of written communication and in the first few minutes in case he is doing an oral presentation. A good communicator acts as a guide to the audience in their journey. He provides them with a road map of the territory they are going to cover with him. He tells them what they are getting from the trip. Apart from telling the purpose, he tells them the main topics going to be covered. It helps audience to link and connect the topics with the purpose and get convinced.

**(3) Telling what you want to tell**

Being the body of your presentation, oral or written, it is the most critical part. A few useful guidelines are:

**(i) Using concrete and specific language**

The message may involve difficult, abstract and even boring material. A good communicator must help audience to understand and remember it. Highlight the following steps:

- First state the idea
- Use vivid and concrete examples to help visualization
- Use words that help to create a mental picture including the colours, objects, scents, sounds, tastes etc – they sink in to the memory quickly
- Specific details should also be vivid and attract receivers' attention

**(ii) Sticking to the point**

A good communicator eliminates all the information that does not contribute directly to the purpose. Following guidelines can help:

- Avoid overloading the message – most audience require a few pertinent points either to answer questions or to facilitate decision-making
- A lean or short message is easier to absorb
- By leaving unnecessary details, sender helps receiver to focus on a few important points
- Be brief and discuss three instead of eight points (say) as that may dilute the message
- If an idea is worth including, it is worth explaining properly

**(iii) Connecting new information to existing ideas**

Mind absorbs ideas by categorizing them in to similar mental files. It helps receivers understand and remember if sender indicates how the idea is related to existing files already in the human mind. In the absence of this link, new idea / material may get lost. A few tips are:

- Meaning of new concept is clarified by its relationship to the existing ones
- Receivers have a wealth of knowledge already – all they need is to apply it to the new
- Most fear the unknown – if new idea is similar to what one is familiar with, he becomes confident
- In general, if it is something similar, it is picked up quickly – it is looked at carefully and made a part of own collection / retention

**(4) Telling what you have told**

Recapitulating main points of the message is another good way of helping the audience to understand and remember. This is done by clever use of certain words, phrases and body language:

- When one comes to an important point, it must be so declared.
- Use headlines and bold types in written messages
- Use italics or other means of highlighting the main points
- Reinforce the message by using charts, graphs, maps, diagrams and illustration
- Oral messages use body language and voice power

These have a telling impact on the audience!

Before concluding, restating the main purpose and showing how the main points are supportive enhance the impact of the message.

**3.4 MINIMIZING NOISE DURING TRANSMISSION**

Even carefully crafted messages can flounder if they do not reach the target audience. Therefore, all potential sources of interference during the transmission of the message should be eliminated. Following points are useful:

- Choosing the right channel and media – it helps audience focus on the message
- Written messages should be made physically appealing and easier to read
- For oral communication, eliminate the environmental competition – choose comfortable and quiet location, adequate lighting, good acoustics and eliminate physical distraction(s)
- For oral communication, senders' own appearance is very important.
  1. Face-to-face communication is preferred as it is delivered directly
- Avoid long chain (with many intermediaries) of communication

### **3.5 FACILITATING FEEDBACK**

Ideally when sender is face-to-face with the audience, feedback is direct, immediate and extremely useful. In business and industry, feedback loop is rather complex. A few salient points of importance for obtaining feedback are:

- Feedback is the quickest in oral communication that is face-to-face
- Feedback requires very good listening skills. Listening is more difficult than most people think
- Listening is a part of one's style. An aggressive or submissive communicator is usually not a good listener. Only persons with assertive style of communication are good listeners
- For written communication, feedback is delayed and mixed – it needs a lot of effort to sift through the information before coming to any conclusion.

### **3.6 STRATEGIC RELEVANCE OF COMMUNICATION**

Homo sapiens, as a species, have progressed faster than any other animal species solely because human beings have learnt to communicate and cooperate better for the mutual betterment of mankind. Among the fruits of these unrelenting efforts to improve, human beings have successfully won the challenges of time, distance and speed and have acquired the ability to communicate across communities, countries and continents.

Following ideas, proverbs and quotations provide the proof, if it is needed, to highlight the role of communication in our civilization:

1. Communication is a key to success and advancement
2. Communication is not a quick fix; it is a journey.
3. The verbal edge is the winning edge.
4. What you say or write is you.
5. All progress means war with society.
6. The finest eloquence is that which gets things done.
7. Communication is the glue that holds an organization together
8. Communication is the life-blood of an organization

9. Top executives need to communicate most of the time
10. It is not enough to have a strategy; communicating it to everyone is the real challenge

**(1) Communication skills ‘impress’**

It is a set of personal skills that transform ones’ personality. Effective communication skills enable a person to ‘impress’ as the acronym elaborates:

- I Idea
- M Message
- P Pause
- R Receiver
- E Empathy
- S Sender
- S Security concerns

Thus to impress others especially ones’ subordinates, peers and seniors, managers / leaders have a duty to themselves – to improve their intra-personal communication skills. Only they can help and no one else can undertake this self-improvement regime on their behalf. Experience has confirmed that these skills are largely acquired and are not inborn.

**(2) Communication is key to ‘success’**

Communication skills spell S-U-C-C-E-S-S for everyone including the firm that acquires these skills:

- S Self-awareness
- U Understanding others
- C Caring for others
- C Choosing right words, phrases and idioms
- E Esteem of self
- S Self-confidence
- S Sharing with others

**(3) Poor communication skills push one to ‘failure’**

If a person is not aware of the power of personal communication skills and does not put in sufficient efforts to overcome the deficiencies in his oral and written communication skills, failure faces him in the face:

- F Fear of facing subordinates, peers and seniors
- A Assumptions that are not valid and tested
- I Insensitive to environments and situations
- L Label others in to convenient categories of various prejudices
- U Uncertainty about outcome of the efforts
- R Resentment towards everyone
- E Ego clashes with one and all

## **ACTIVITY**

Students should be given exercises where they can demonstrate their skills in oral and written communications:

- 1 One of the popular introductory topics is that each student speaks about himself to the class for a period of three to four minutes. The introduction should cover major events from their childhood days to the present. Each student should be able to speak from 3 to 4 minutes without break, without faltering and preferably without referring to pre-written speech – only brief notes to aid memory are / may be permitted.
- 2 Another common exercise for written communication is preparing a long summary of a popular book on management (Text books to be avoided). These should be done in long hand to preclude possibility of plagiarism etc.

### **3.7 STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK OF COMMUNICATION**

Communication is the most common denominator that supports all the activities and covers every important aspect of running an enterprise and keeping it both fiscally and physically fit. Without interactions with colleagues, customers and creditors including suppliers, it is not possible to perform ones' job properly, efficiently and effectively. Without communication, managers / leaders cannot accomplish any of the basic processes of management viz., planning, organizing, staffing, leading (directing) and controlling. Further, no planning is possible without making assumptions, forecasts and predictions about the future and none of these can be completed without making good use of communication skills of persons involved.

**ENTERPRISE                  MANAGEMENT**

**IMPLIES**

**SETTING OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES  
AND  
INITIATING PROCESS OF MANAGEMENT**

**PLANNING   ORGANIZING   STAFFING   LEADING   CONTROLLING**

**THROUGH**



**CONVERSATION  
LANGUAGE**

**CORRESPONDENCE**

**BODY**

**INDIVIDUAL  
LEVEL**

**GROUP  
LEVEL**

**CORPORATE  
LEVEL**

**INFORMATION MANAGEMENT**

**DECISION-MAKING**

**ACTION-TAKING**

**MONITORING, MEASURING & COMMUNICATING**

**PRICE (P) QUALITY (Q) RELIABILITY (R) SERVICE (S) TIME(T)**

The above schematic diagram illustrates the crucial role of communication in the running of an organization. This is described, starting from the top, as below:

**(1) Enterprise Management**

Initially, the founder or the owner (later the top professional management team) spells out the purpose of establishing the enterprise. This is mediated through the process of developing corporate values and vision that cascade in to developing corporate objectives and strategy. These processes are not possible without free flow of information and exchange of ideas, thoughts and actions – the three basic pillars of communication in an enterprise.

**(2) Process of management**

Once the corporate objectives have been quantitatively and otherwise specified, the normal process of management takes over. Every step of the process is carried through free flow of communication as described below:

**(i) Planning**

Planning is based on assumptions about working etc, predictions and forecasts that overarch time horizon designated for planning. For strategic planning, time horizon may extend from 3 to 5 years; for tactical planning, time horizon is around one year and for operational planning, it may be three months or even less.

It has been said that managing the future really involves management of information about the future. Thus flow of communication about the achievements in the past, trend analyses and their projection in to the future forms the grist of planning work. Central to any planning is the strategic intent

of the company. Therefore, along with the detailed planning, communication must include the underlying assumptions and strategy underpinning it.

**(ii) Organizing**

Once the overall strategic planning is frozen, design of organization structure must be examined – what changes need be made in the existing design so that it is in tune with the changed requirements of the new strategy.

Every stakeholder of the firm must be communicated properly about the new organization structure, changes brought about and how those changes will take shape. An open, transparent and participative approach in management will go a long way in allaying any fears. Timely and comprehensive communication ensures against gaps, the breeding ground of gossips and rumours.

**(iii) Staffing**

Staffing involves filling up of the positions as per the requirements of the new organization structure. A proper procedure must be followed for recruitment, without ignoring the rightful claim of internal claimants.

A transparent system for filling up any vacancy must be designed and implemented so that internal candidates do not find themselves at any disadvantage to the recruitment from outside sources.

Open communication about staffing policy, procedures and practices ensure a high morale of employees.

**(iv) Leading (Directing)**

The term ‘directing’ is being quickly replaced by leading as the former has been monopolized by statutes referring to members of the board of directors whereas the term ‘leading’ does not suffer from such deficiency. Leadership qualities are required at all levels. Seniors can lead their subordinates in developing efficient and effective methods of doing work.

Good communicators tell their subordinates only ‘what’ to do and their deputies invariably surprise them with their ingenuity by devising ‘how’ those tasks may be performed.

**(v) Controlling**

Management is a profession of control. An average manager spends a great deal of his time in controlling the progress of job against the original planning goals and objectives. This involves progressing and following up during execution, reviewing and monitoring by discussing with the persons concerned with a view to discovering tomorrow’s problems today and doing something about them now.

Measuring and creating reports and communicating them to the concerned persons in a regular manner form the essence of the process of control. Feedback communications become the lines for communication, coordination and control.

**(3) Medium of communication**

Communication provides the vehicle for accelerating the process of management. It ensures that every one concerned with the operations is kept informed through judicious use of oral, written and non-verbal communication. In general, these forms of communications are extremely vital for conveying the vision, mission and strategies of the enterprise. In general, oral communication happens far more often than the written communication. However, the non-verbal communication comprising of the body language, vocal communication, appearances of communicator and many other cues and clues seem to be supplementing the messages all the time.

Managers spend much of their time in communicating about the tasks on hand. The pattern of time spent on different forms of communication varies with the hierarchical level of managers.

An average manager spends following proportion of time on different forms of communication:

Oral communication	- Speaking	30 %
	- Listening	45 %
Written communication	- Writing	09 %
	- Reading	16 %
		-----
		100 %
Non-verbal communication (body language etc)		100 %

**(4) Targets of communication**

Business communication is essentially done at three levels:

**(i) At the individual levels**

This is one to one communication that is mostly carried out orally. In small firms, such oral communications may take place face-to-face but in large corporations, bulk of this communication is oral but not face-to-face. It may be through the use of telephones, mobile or Internet telephony etc

It can also be through written reports – information flows through the organization to the remotest corners in the form of hourly, shift or daily reports. These reports are further summarized in to weekly, monthly and quarterly reports for dissemination at the appropriate levels of the enterprise. Messaging through electronic mail is changing the scenario rapidly.

**(ii) At the group level**

Contemporarily, this has emerged as the most common form of communication as enterprises move from individual way of job design to a more socially accepted form of team working. Every job that is being done is communicated to the team members, located in different departments, different cities and different countries. Experience has confirmed that teamwork ensures better and faster completion of jobs at most levels of working.

Both oral and written types of communication are used extensively. Much of the oral communications take place in meetings, seminars and conferences done by inviting them to a room or through computer based video conferencing.

Similarly written reports are either circulated physically or, as is becoming more common, soft copies are emailed to everyone. As a rule, no hard copies are made. Any one wanting hard copies and authorized to have them, can request the same from the nearest server station of the computer network. This has been the corporate policy followed by Microsoft for almost a decade now. We are still quite far away from the utopian situation of having ‘paper-less, people-less’ offices but there is no doubt that the sizes of the establishments are becoming leaner through downsizing and de-layering of organization structures.

**(iii) At the organization level**

The decisions taken at organizational level need to be communicated to all personnel so that every one is aware of the corporate objectives and devises suitable strategies for long term, medium term and short term action plans for accomplishing the required tasks. At the organizational level, focus is more on communication to external stakeholders – shareholders, investors, financiers, suppliers, customers, competitors and internal stakeholders like employees, managers and directors who are not employees of the firm.

Consequently, public relations and corporate communication play a major role in communication at this level. There are a number of issues that warrant communication to both internal and external agencies. Environmental issues are of interest to the community and society at large and need is to keep them informed of the measures being undertaken by the firm, on proactive basis, to combat pollution and go in for cleaner technologies as a voluntary option rather a compulsion under the laws.

**(iv) Decision-making and action-taking**

Management process cascades in to taking a series of decisions followed by actions at all levels of the organization in fulfillment of their tasks which together combine in to bigger targets or departmental objectives and finally the corporate goals.

Business communications provide the bridge between decision-making and action-taking and emerge as the critical process in the linkage between ‘planning your work’ and ‘working your plan’.

### **(5) Price, Quality, Reliability, Service and Time parameters**

If a job cannot be measured, it cannot be managed. In all jobs, we can organize a detailed system of measurement for at least five of its critical success factors viz., price (P), quality (Q), reliability (R), service (S) and time (T). These five variables account for the most foundational aspects that need to be continually measured and monitored to ensure that the execution is happening as originally planned.

Thus, communication about these five constituents of management (P, Q, R, S & T) at all levels of the organization would form the bread and butter of the management of information flow, highlighting its critical importance in the very functioning of the enterprise. Conversely, if communication is absent among different functionaries of an enterprise, they can neither fix the targets nor measure the actual performance nor even the variance between the target and actual. Such organizations will become babes in the wilderness!

## **3.8 COMMUNICATION AND SOCIETY**

Human civilization has progressed reasonably well so far largely because human beings, as a species of the animal kingdom, have learnt to communicate and cooperate among themselves. There is a consensus that progress would have been faster if cooperation was always willing and with negligible confrontation and more co-existence with divergent views. Wars – hot or cold, always impede progress. Even so, humans have moved towards a greater degree of individual freedom in addition to freedom from hunger, want and illiteracy. Because of reasonably good level of communication achieved among communities, countries and continents, society is already talking of the universal rights of everyone on planet earth. These are stated below:

- 1 The right to be treated with respect
- 2 The right to have and express own feelings
- 3 The right to be listened to and taken seriously
- 4 The right to set own priorities
- 5 The right to say ‘no’ without feeling guilty
- 6 The right to ask for what one wants
- 7 The right to get what one pays for
- 8 The right to get information from professionals
- 9 The right to make mistakes
- 10 The right to choose not to ‘assert’ oneself

A careful examination of the above bills of rights would confirm beyond doubt the strategic importance of communication in the well being of our modern society. Communications form the edifice of evolution of entire human civilization. Human beings as a species have progressed better than other animal species largely because they have learnt to communicate among themselves better. Human beings have

undertaken many projects jointly because they were able to influence other persons to a common viewpoint through better communication skills.

### **ACTIVITY**

Feedback and counseling play a significant role while students practice to acquire and enhance their communication skills especially the skills in oral communication.

.....  
Experience suggests that students should team up with another person in the class and become co-mentors for each other. At the end of a presentation, co-mentors provide feedback and counsel each other on the strong and weak aspects of the presentation by the other person. These teams work well in twos only; third person should not be present during mutual feedback and counseling sessions.

### **3.9 SUMMARY**

Future managers and leaders must strive to become powerful communicators by acquiring good perception of their target audience and being precise in their expressions. They should have good command over the process of reshaping opinion of their audience and remain both friendly and congenial in their disposition.

Crafting effective message is like a painting – the creator of message is like the artist who must first think of the purpose and the audience. He should tell in advance what he is going to tell, follow it by telling it in concrete and specific language, sticking to the point and connecting new information to the existing ideas concisely and finally, wind up by summarizing what he has told. This has a telling impact on the audience. Quality of messaging can be further improved by minimizing noise, distraction and disruption during delivery and facilitating feedback that enables the communicator to monitor and modify the message as appropriate.

In modern business environments, messaging covering both communication and flow of information, has assumed strategic importance as it enhances communicators' persona to 'impress', paves way for their 'success' and prevents 'failure'. Business communications play a crucial role in setting corporate objectives, formulating strategies and facilitating management through well orchestrated planning, organizing, staffing, leading and controlling. The entire process of management is mediated through conversation, correspondence and intelligent use of body language at individual, group and organizational levels for facilitating free flow of information/communication that support decision-making and action-taking. These are then controlled through monitoring, measuring and communicating different aspects of administration relating to price (P), quality (Q), reliability (R), service (S) and time (T) – the five pillars that are 'sine qua non' of management..

Human civilization has progressed faster because they have learnt to communicate and cooperate better. As society progresses further, human beings are on way to evolving the foundational rights of behaviour that should apply to every individual.

### **3.10 KEYWORD**

- (1) **Communicator** – He is a person who participates in sending and receiving messages that may be oral, written or through various forms of body language.
- (2) **Crafting** – It is the process of using special skills, art and dexterity, usually manual and mental, that combines work, skill and practice
- (3) **Feedback** – It is returning a part of the output of a process back to the input side so as to regenerate it.
- (4) **Framework** – It is a skeletal structure that holds the parts together to support something constructed over or around it.

### 3.11 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- 1 What personal traits are required to become a good communicator?
- 2 Highlight the role and relevance of crafting effective communication.
- 3 Explain the steps required to be taken to ensure effective message delivery.
- 4 Explain the role of feedback loop in effective communication.
- 5 Justify that business communications are of strategic importance to the success of an enterprise.
- 6 Explain how good communications ‘impress’ and poor communications can push a person towards ‘failure’.
- 7 Describe with the help of a suitable diagram how communications form the backbone of the entire process of management.
- 8 Describe how all the steps in the process of management are mediated only through communications.
- 9 List out the five fundamental variables for the success of an organization and explain how they are promoted by effective communication skills of managers and leaders.
- 10 What are the universal bills of rights for individual freedom and bring out their importance for inter-personal communications?

### 3.12 SUGGESTED FURTHER READINGS

- 1 Bovee, Courtland L., Thill, John V. (1992). Business Communication Today. New York, NY: McGraw Hill Inc.
- 2 Herta A Murphy, Herbert W Hilderbrandt (1991). Effective Business Communications. New York, NY: McGraw Hill Inc.
- 3 Hamilton, Cheryl, Parker, Cordell (1998). Communicating for Results: A Guide for Business and the Professionals. Washington, USA: Wadsworth Publishing Co.

## **BLOCK II**

### **ORAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

Oral communication is the most common and most powerful form of business communication for influencing others for accomplishing common objectives. Oral communication is largely face-to-face although it may not be so always. For example, telephonic conversation is rarely face-to-face. However, such oral communications are always accompanied by signs, signals, gestures, expressions and sounds of body language.

This block focuses on the different aspects of oral communication as below:

Unit 4	Essentials of Oral Communication
Unit 5	Delivering Persuasive Speech
Unit 6	Successful Meeting Skills
Unit 7	Listening Skills



## **UNIT4      ESSENTIALS OF ORAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

### **STRUCTURE**

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Basics of oral communication
- 4.2 Power of Speech
- 4.3 Characteristics of Good Speech
- 4.4 Traits of a Good Speaker
- 4.5 Advantages of Oral Communication
- 4.6 Styles of Oral Communication
- 4.7 Communication Grid
- 4.8 Elements of Styles of Communication Behaviour
- 4.9 One is as good as one thinks
- 4.10 Assertive Rights of Individuals
- 4.11 Strategies for Assertive Style of Communication
- 4.12 Traits of Assertive Style of Communication
- 4.13 Determining / Changing Style of Communication
- 4.14 Summary
- 4.15 Keywords
- 4.16 Self Assessment Questions
- 4.17 Suggested Further Readings

### **4.0 OBJECTIVES**

Study of this unit will enable students to:

- Appreciate importance of oral communication – speaking and listening
- Understand the power of speech and its characteristics
- Acquire traits of good speakers
- Learn the three basic styles of communication
- Understand individuals' rights for assertive communication
- Grasp strategies of assertive communication
- Determine and modify own style of communication

### **4.1 BASICS OF ORAL COMMUNICATION**

Oral communication connotes words uttered through the mouth i.e., spoken words. It is any utterance of, at or near the mouth, involving resonance of the mouth. It must be distinguished from the nasal resonance – resonance through the nose. Oral communication always conveys an idea or a feeling.

There are two forms of oral communication:

- Speaking
- Listening

Oral communication covers both the forms. Remember the famous saying, 'It takes two to tango'. Like the famous chicken and egg story, it is difficult to decide which one came first. At any rate, it is pointless talking unless someone is listening. One cannot be listening unless someone is speaking or talking. It is said that 'the art of conversation is the art of hearing as well as of being heard'.

### **(1) Speaking**

An average manager speaks for about 30 % of his time. The proportion goes up as one goes up the hierarchical levels. Speaking implies:

- Talking
- Conversing
- Chatting
- Addressing
- Discoursing

### **(2) Listening**

A close synonym of listening is hearing; hearing is any sound that goes through the auditory nerves or sound waves as they enter the ears. An average manager spends about 45 % of the time listening. It should advisably go up as one goes upwards in the hierarchy. Listening is a very powerful trait of leaders.

## **4.2 POWER OF SPEECH**

Spoken words form a powerful medium for influencing people to accomplish tasks. Salespersons make a sort of speech to persuade their customers to buy products they are selling. Travelling salespersons visit dealers and retailers and influence them to place order for the product offerings of the company. Insurance agents persuade their clients to buy life / general insurance of their firm for protection against various kinds of losses to life or possessions like household, car, health etc.

Similarly business managers, industrialists and leaders have to deliver speeches at events relating to product launches, sales conferences and training programmes. Besides, they speak at inaugural events, seminars, meetings of trade associations etc. An organization is an association of people who often organize social, sports and cultural gatherings where managers / leaders are expected to deliver speeches suited to the occasion.

Outside the organization, community and political leaders are called upon to speak on several occasions / functions. Master speakers and orators have been sought to speak on diverse subjects. Powerful speeches can:

- Inspire listeners or make them dispirited
- Build tension on issues or relax tension among the audience
- Incite people to quarrel / fight or induce them to be friendly
- Turn hostile audience in to supportive one and vice versa

- Stir people to rebel / revolt or become docile
- Make people undertake long march or stay at home

It is difficult to visualize what Alexander the Great must have told his soldiers when he stirred them to undertake a long journey from Greece to India in olden days, conquering countries after countries and marching in to India when there were hardly any worthwhile means of transportation and transshipment.

In modern India, people recall nostalgically Jawaharlal Nehru's speech at the midnight of 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1947 of 'tryst with destiny' or later on the death of Mahatma Gandhi, 'the light has gone out'.

Speeches of Late Dr S Radhakrishnan who became the second President of India, had certain magic about them. It was difficult to improve upon the impromptu speeches of Late Swami Ranganathananda of Ramakrishna Mission.

### **4.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD SPEECH**

Listening to a good speech is a very interesting experience. Every one should put in the hard work necessary to acquire skills in speaking as it imparts considerable competitive advantage to the person. Some important aspects are:

#### **(1) Clarity**

The voice of the speaker should be clear, tone should vary and pitch should be pleasant. The ideas, emotions and arguments should come straight from the heart so that audience can grasp it easily. It should register with the listeners and vibrate with their feelings and thoughts.

#### **(2) Informal, personal and conversational**

A good speech should be like a conversation between two good friends – personal, informal and sincere. There should be a rapport between the speaker and the audience.

#### **(3) Concrete, vivid and imagery**

A speech should help build a picture that is easy to visualize and easier to comprehend. It should be furnished by concrete examples that grasp the imagination of the listeners.

#### **(4) Brevity**

It is very difficult to hold the attention of the listeners for more than 15 to 20 minutes. A good speaker should be able to convey his complete message in that period. He should come straight to the point and say what he wants by bringing three or four points to their attention.

#### **(5) Interesting, jovial and humorous**

A speaker wins or loses the battle in the first two or three minutes. If the speaker has impressed the audience with his opening remarks, he is well on your way to winning a space in their heart. And that is the target. It has to be a heart to heart dialogue. Lace it with short humorous anecdotes – laughter lubricates learning!

Anecdotes should be short, appropriate and in good taste. Quotations, proverbs and idioms should be like arrows piercing directly in to the heart of the audience. Experienced speakers learn to master the art of reciting these statements, giving a long pause after it has been stated to let it sink in with the audience.

#### **(6) Listener-oriented**

Audience is your customer. It is your business to know their needs and wants, their desires and their expectations. Speaker has to be very sensitive to the body language of their audience and modify the speech to fine tune with them. If the message has to gel well with the audience, speakers' antenna should pick up the cues from the body language of the listeners.

### **4.4 TRAITS OF A GOOD SPEAKER**

Speakers have also to learn and acquire skills in speaking. These skills can vary widely from being effective in conversation among a few colleagues, a medium sized group or a large audience verging upon a public speech. A few salient traits of a good speaker are:

#### **(1) Be earnest**

An earnest person speaks not to show off nor talks about irrelevant topics. He remains conscious of the purpose of his speech.

#### **(2) Have a sense of responsibility towards audience**

He is conscious that time is precious and tries to make the best use of the time he gets with his audience.

#### **(3) Has a sense of commitment to his subject / duty**

He thinks and plans ahead what he has to say and does not take on more than what can be accomplished.

#### **(4) Has a sense of responsibility towards other speakers**

He does not try to monopolize the occasion and restricts to the time allotted to him.

#### **(5) Keeps his cool**

He is not carried away by excitement and enthusiasm. Over-confidence is as bad as under-confidence.

**(6) Has a good sense of leadership**

He speaks with eye contacts with the audience in full measure; talks with confidence, authority, and responsibility.

**(7) Is balanced in approach**

The speaker should remain balanced in spite of provocation if any and exhibit sanity to the audience.

**(8) Has a sense of humour**

An anecdote that is humorous is welcome as it adds a flavour to the message being delivered.

**(9) Is focused and interested**

The speaker must convey that he is very interested in the subject as it is interesting and will be of interest to his audience too. His focus on the subject should become evident by the time he finishes speaking.

**(10) Is enthusiastic and spirited**

The speaker must be full of spirits and assume lively audience who need to be enthused about the benefits of the message that he has the privilege of knowing and delivering.

**4.5 ADVANTAGES OF ORAL COMMUNICATION**

Important merits are:

- 1 It has proximity with the audience
- 2 It helps immediate interchange of the opinions
- 3 It provides instant feedback
- 4 It involves participation of all present

**ACTIVITY**

It is said that orators have mastery on their speech. They are very good in moulding opinions of their audience and veering them around to the desired viewpoint. In elections to state assemblies and Lok Sabha, actors and other celebrities are in great demand to address the election rallies for two reasons – firstly, they are able to attract more people to the public meetings and secondly, they are able to master the long parts of their speech quickly and deliver it in their own familiar style that appeals to the listeners.

.....  
Think of a good speaker you have listened to and write down all the aspects of speech that appealed to you.  
.....

Go back to the relevant sections above and identify what aspects you have overlooked.

## **4.6 STYLES OF ORAL COMMUNICATION**

In order to understand the meaning and importance of oral communication, we must know the three styles of oral communication:

- Non-assertive (Submissive) communication style
- Aggressive communication style
- Assertive communication style

These are described below:

### **(1) Non-assertive (Submissive) communication style**

This style or behaviour happens when persons:

- Fail to stand up for their rights
- Do things in a manner that others can easily disregard
- Express opinions, feelings etc in apologetic and cautious manner
- Fail to express own opinions, feelings etc altogether

A person becomes submissive when he sees that his own needs and wants are less important than others. The person tends to justify or explain while accommodating others' viewpoint.

In the event of a conflict, a person with submissive communication style can easily defuse the situation by avoiding taking a strong stand. It helps people to escape anxiety or confrontation. He avoids feeling guilty about letting someone down etc. Usually work suffers because aggressive viewpoint, not necessarily the best option, prevails.

### **(2) Aggressive communication style**

This style or behaviour happens when persons:

- Stand up for their rights in a way that violates the right of others to have their say
- Express own thoughts, feelings etc in inappropriate way even when they believe that their views are incorrect

Aggressive style of communication enhances speakers at the cost of others. It puts the other person down and is based on the opinion that their opinions are more important than others. It is characterized by:

- Blaming others or factors external and outside own control
- Showing contempt for others

- Being hostile to others
- Attacking others orally
- Patronizing others

Aggressive behaviour usually succeeds in getting what he wants; it also conveys a sense of power over others. It helps the communicator to release his steam and provides an outlet for his anger and bad feelings.

### (3) Assertive communication style

There is a third style of communication – assertive communication. It is neither submissive nor aggressive – it is emphatic behaviour while communicating with others. It happens when persons:

- Stand up for their rights in a way that does not violate others’ rights
- Express own point of view honestly, openly and directly while conveying that they understand the others’ position

## 4.7 COMMUNICATION GRID

Which style of communication one adopts in a given situation is largely influenced by person’s evaluation of self-esteem. Self-esteem is the assessment we have of ourselves. It is the judgement about own worth as a person and reflects ones’ life position in terms of ones’ belief in own competence and success.

These styles can be illustrated with the help of the following communication grid:

	<b>I am OK</b>	<b>I am not OK</b>
<b>You are OK</b>	<b>Assertive Style</b>	<b>Submissive (Non-assertive) Style</b>
<b>You are not OK</b>	<b>Aggressive Style</b>	<b>Manipulative Style</b>

All four options have a direct influence on individual’s thinking and impact on his oral communication.

### (1) Assertive style

It is the best and most positive stance of behaviour. It is a positive code of conduct when one hears other participants' point of view while expressing one's own. The person is open to ideas and willing to accept a change in the stand if the need arise. At the least, the two viewpoints are synthesized and a third viewpoint emerges which is based on combining the better features of the suggestions available.

When individuals communicating are in assertive frame of communication, both are listening to each other, Since two heads working together are better than one, invariably a fourth solution that was thought of by neither of the parties, emerges. This fourth solution has often been found to be the most rewarding.

## **(2) Other styles**

In a simple formulation, the different styles are adopted in a problematic situation. In general, responses can be:

- Facilitating (assertive)
- Surrendering (submissive)
- Argumentative (Aggressive)
- Undermining (Manipulative)

In nutshell, it is agreed that the assertive style of communication is the most desirable as it takes a good, positive view of not only self but also of other participants in the interaction.

## **4.8 ELEMENTS OF STYLES OF COMMUNICATION BEHAVIOUR**

A sensitive observer should be able to spot the communication style of individuals' from the verbal cues or signals exhibited:

### **(1) Non-assertive (submissive) communication style**

The verbal cues and clues are:

- (1) Use of apologetic words
- (2) Devaluation of self
- (3) Failure to say what one means really
- (4) Use of phrases implying diffidence
- (5) Beating about the bush - hedging
- (6) Loss of words
- (7) Self-defeating
- (8) Shifting responsibility to others
- (9) Rambling and disjointed expressions
- (10) Veiled meanings

### **(2) Aggressive communication style**

The verbal symbols are:



- (1) Accusations of others
- (2) Behaving like a dictator
- (3) Use of very subjective descriptions
- (4) Not recognizing roles of others
- (5) Use of loaded words
- (6) Putting others down
- (7) Frequent use of 'you' messages blaming or labeling others
- (8) Use of superior wordings in expressions

**(3) Assertive communication style**

The verbal signs and signals are:

- (1) Accept responsibility
- (2) Make direct statements that say what they mean
- (3) Express own feelings honestly
- (4) Negotiate on the basis of win-win situation for both parties
- (5) Use 'I' messages frequently
- (6) Use object sentences
- (7) Recognize others' contribution
- (8) State their 'wants' clearly

**ACTIVITY**

You are attending a meeting that has about 10 to 12 members who get together regularly to discuss topics of interest. It could be a safety meeting or works committee meeting. Using the above cues, identify their dominant style of communication and classify them in to the above three types.

.....  
 Visualize that there is a contentious point being discussed where a person with aggressive style of communication is pitted against a person with non-assertive style of communication and guess the winner.

.....  
 Now reverse the roles of the two speakers representing the two viewpoints and guess the winner.

.....  
 Finally, visualize the same contentious issue being discussed between two speakers having assertive styles of oral communication. What would be the outcome?

**4.9 ONE IS AS GOOD AS ONE THINKS**

Shakespeare had said, 'Nothing is good or bad; only thinking makes it so'. Ones' thoughts mould ones' personality. In general, two types of thought processes are:

**(1) Positive thought**

These are:

- Positive self-recognition
- Identifying relationships with self and others
- Self-confidence

**(2) Negative thoughts**

These include:

- Negative self-recognition
- Crisis of relationship with self and others
- Non-assertive (submissive or aggressive) behaviour

Communication skills when measured along the dimension of negative thought, can become non-assertive in nature. Negative behaviours lead to low morale and lower inputs of employees on the one hand and low work output and low efficiency on the other.

It is thus of critical value to budding managers / leaders to ascertain their style of communication behaviour and to adapt more positive style.

#### **4.10 ASSERTIVE RIGHTS OF INDIVIDUALES**

Every citizen of the world has two types of rights:

**(1) Fundamental rights**

These are guaranteed by the constitutions of the respective countries. They have the legal back up of the country to which the persons belong.

**(2) Assertive rights**

These are not guaranteed by legal framework but in the emerging world, these are being recognized as 'Everyone's Bill of Rights'. These rights stand for freedom from bondage and represent the spirit of individuals as they wish to be treated by society. These are:

**(i) Right of self respect and respect for others**

It signifies confidence in self's abilities and also respecting others as a reciprocal behaviour.

**(ii) Right to have and express own feelings and opinions**

It represents the innate desire in each one of us for being recognized as a useful member of the society.

**(iii) Right to be listened to and taken seriously**

It implies the innate urge to have self-esteem as it promotes positive attitude.

**(iv) Right to set own priorities**

It represents individualistic approach and highlights the freedom to change own ideas and opinions without having to explain to anyone.

**(v) Right to say 'no' without feeling guilty**

It means unwillingness to accept ideas of others if they do not match with own understanding or perception.

**(vi) Right to ask for what one wants**

It again talks of the individualistic needs, wants and desires.

**(vii) Right to get what one pays for**

It upholds the right of consumers that has now become well-established norm in society.

**(viii) Right to ask for information from professionals**

With the right to information from Government and other agencies becoming a law in India, this right to be informed by professionals is not far away.

**(ix) Right to make mistakes**

It stands for accepting responsibility for errors and omissions by individuals. It reinforces the age-old concept that 'To err is human'. At the same time, it implies that making mistakes is an essential part of learning and growing.

**(x) Right to choose not to assert oneself**

It recognizes individuals' need to renounce, resign and abdicate.

#### **4.11 STRATEGIES FOR ASSERTIVE STYLE OF COMMUNICATION**

Various tried out approaches are:

**(1) Creating the right first impression**

A speaker is judged in the first two or three minutes. It is, therefore, imperative for the speaker to have a very well rehearsed opening of the presentation. If the good impression already exists, no major effort may be necessary. However, it is not desirable to take things for granted; good speakers have a good collection of opening statements in their repertory.

**(2) Clarifying and building image of the goal**

Always start with end in view. You cannot go wrong if, from the beginning, speaker shares with the receivers the goal or the purpose or the ultimate finishing point. It helps developing a rapport with the listeners. A quick indication of the road map en route may further invoke interest and make it easier for the audience to understand the message. Some deviations are always possible and sometimes, are even welcome!

### **(3) Making purposive statements**

The goal should serve as a flag under which the participants can rally when the things are not smooth. It helps the speaker to bring discussions back on track and in reckoning; it is always welcomed by the audience. They link well with the ultimate destination and prevent derailing of your line of thought.

### **(4) Using clear and lucid Language**

An assertive speaker is direct and straight. He has the capability to hold the listeners spell-bound or in a trance willing to do his bidding. Use of clear, lucid and winning words that are couched in phrases the listeners are familiar is very rewarding.

### **(5) Speaking with empathy**

Experience confirms that ‘how’ of the message is more important than ‘what’ of the message. The body language is critical – good posture, eye contact and good voice modulation adds confidence and truthfulness to the speakers’ statements. The level of confidence that the speaker exhibits is very infectious.

### **(6) Paraphrasing**

From time to time, the speaker should repeat the important part of the message as it keeps the attention of listener focused on the point. It avoids any of the listeners losing track of the subject. Simultaneously, speaker should ask questions to ensure audience participation.

### **(7) Maintaining listeners’ interest**

The speaker applauds good answers from the audience and makes positive gestures when listeners have grasped the idea or concept. He keeps them involved about the next step on the road map to the finish and readies them for receiving the message by telling listeners about its importance.

### **(8) Collecting feedback**

‘Feedback is the breakfast of the champions’. If you want to be a champion speaker then, it is absolutely essential to be sensitive to the feedback from the audience. Active participation by the receivers is very desirable. Ideally, the feedback is more than the body language that they show – they way they move forward or backward on their seats, the way they yawn and they way they twitter their fingers are cues and clues that will never tell lies but if these are supplemented by comments / suggestions in line with the issues being discussed, it is a feedback that should not be ignored.

#### **4.12 TRAITS OF ASSERTIVE STYLE OF COMMUNICATION**

In order to acquire a high level of assertive behaviour, the individuals have to imbibe certain traits as below:

**(1) High level of listening skills**

The human mind has one limitation – it can do one thing at a time. However, it can change to another idea or thought in a flash and sometimes, persons think that they can do many things at the same time. When one is speaking, one cannot be listening. A good listening requires the ability to remain silent for long periods. Besides when two persons are interacting, silence is very awkward. If one person remains silent for reasonable length of time, the other person will fill the vacuum with his voice; he is able to listen to the other person completely.

**(2) Initiative to make new contacts**

This increases persons' area of influence as he is able to listen and get opinions of wider range of people who can share their experience or viewpoint.

**(3) Quick to respond**

This is the ability to respond to a large number of contacts in short time. It directly measures ones' reaction time. 'Response is everyone's response-ability'. Some persons are, by nature, more sensitive to others needs and wants while others take time to respond. By speeding up own responses, persons can speed ahead of their competitors.

**(4) Perseverance with issues**

It is the ability of an individual to keep going back to the same persons and raising issues that have been rejected or where there has been little enthusiasm. The approach is that if one feels strongly about issues that have not invoked the right response, it is time to re-examine critically about the way it was packaged and parceled last time and make necessary changes to make it more exciting and interesting on the one hand and to compromise, persuade and bring out newer possibilities on the other.

**(5) Maintaining flexibility**

Rigid stand leads to resistance. It is always better to remain flexible and open as that helps one discover patterns that other finds easy to understand. It also encourages them to talk freely and openly. This openness in dialogues invariably leads to solutions that are more rewarding and fetching.

#### **4.13 DETERMINING / CHANGING STYLE OF COMMUNICATION**

It has, thus, become an issue of critical value for all budding managers and leaders to identify their style of communication and take conscious steps to change it to the assertive style of communication.

It is a journey starting with change in the mindset of the individual – changing it from negative thinking to a positive one. It signifies changing from ‘I should’ to ‘I want to’ and finally to ‘I will’. The subtle differences in these stages of transition are:

**(1) ‘I should’**

Such statements demonstrate powerlessness that places the ability to act quite outside the control of the speaker. These are passive statements and rarely, result in getting people to act.

**(2) ‘I want to’**

These statements include expression of the intent to a desired level in a speaker. The listener taking action, as a result, is likely.

**(3) ‘I will’**

Such statements are assertive as they claim ownership of the idea and present the concept to the listener in the present tense of ‘here and now’. The speaker takes control of the idea and listeners’ acting on it becomes imminent.

This is illustrated below:

An individual can make a transition to second stage and then to the third stage. Some individuals can transform themselves directly to stage three as the triangle shows.

#### **4.14 SUMMARY**

Oral communication stands for words uttered through the mouth and excludes nasal resonance. It encompasses both speaking and listening. Spoken words are powerful weapons for influencing others to accomplish objectives. Powerful speakers can inspire or dispirit, build or relax tensions, incite quarrels or make friends, turn hostile group in to a supportive one and vice versa, stir people to revolt or become docile, persuade people to take long march or stay at home etc.

A good speech should have clarity, be informal, personal and conversational. It should be concrete, vivid, brief, interesting, jovial and humorous. A good speaker is honest, committed to his subject, has sense of responsibility to audience and commitment to fellow speakers. He is balanced, keeps his cool and has a sense of humour and leadership. He is focused, intense, enthusiastic and spirited.

Oral communications result in immediate interchange of opinions, instant feedback and participation by all present. Of the three basic styles of oral communications – submissive, aggressive and assertive, assertive style is considered to be the best as it is the most positive. Such persons are open to new ideas and willing to accept changes if needed.

It is said that one is as good as his thought – positive thoughts bring in positive self-recognition and self-confidence and negative thoughts result in negative self-confidence, submissive or aggressive behaviour. Everyone must learn to determine his style of communication and make all out efforts to change over to assertive style of communication.

A few time-tested strategies for assertive style of communication are making first good impression, clarifying / building image of the goal, making purposive statements and using language that is straight, direct from heart to heart. Other tried strategies are speaking with empathy, paraphrasing from time to time, collecting feedback while speaking and sustaining listeners' interest.

Individuals with assertive style of communication have high level of listening skills, are good at making new contacts, are quick in their responses and are persistent with issues while remaining flexible all the time.

#### 4.15 KEYWORDS

- (1) **Oral** – These are words uttered at and near the mouth using mouth resonance.
- (2) **Characteristics** – These are the distinguishing traits, features and peculiarities of anything.
- (3) **Traits** – These are the distinguishing qualities or characteristics especially of personality.
- (4) **Style** – The manner or mode of expression in a language or the way of putting thoughts in words in oral communication.
- (5) **Submissive** – It is the tendency to yield without resistance.
- (6) **Aggressive** – It is the bold and energetic pursuit of one's ends with a ruthless desire to dominate.
- (7) **Assertive** – It is the self-confident and persistent determination to express oneself, opinion or claim.
- (8) **Transition** – It is the passing from one condition, form, stage, activity or place to another.
- (9) **Feedback** - It is returning a part of the output of a process back in to the input side so as to regenerate it.
- (10) **Grid** – It is a framework of parallel bars, gratings etc similar to lead plates in a storage battery. In management, it is used for organizing material, data etc in set of rows and columns to enhance understanding.

#### **4.16 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS**

- 1 Describe the critical role of oral communication in business. Highlight its advantages.
- 2 Describe the types of oral communications.
- 3 Highlight the power of a speech.
- 4 Describe the characteristics of a good speech.
- 5 What are the personal traits that a good speaker should endeavour to acquire?
- 6 Describe the different styles of oral communications. Which one would you recommend to a manager / leader and why?
- 7 With the help of communication grid, explain that the assertive style of oral communication is most rewarding.
- 8 What is the impact of a positive attitude on speech?
- 9 Knowing one's style of oral communication is crucial to being able to change to assertive communication style. What are the guidelines to identify individuals' style of oral communication?
- 10 What are the fundamental rights of individuals and how do they differ from the assertive rights of individuals?
- 11 Discuss assertive style of oral communication and recommend the steps for changing over to assertive style of oral communication.
- 12 What strategies would you recommend for becoming a successful assertive speaker?
- 13 Highlight the personal traits that one should acquire to become good assertive communicator.

#### **4.17 SUGGESTED FURTHER READINGS**

- 1 Bovee, Courtland L., Thill, John V. (1992). Business Communication Today. New York, NY, USA: McGraw Hill Inc.
- 2 Pal, Rajendra, Karlahalli, JS (1997). Essentials of Business Communication. New Delhi (India): Sultan Chand & Sons.
- 3 Giblin, Les (2006). How to Have Confidence & Power in Dealing with People. New Jersey, USA: Prentice Hall International.



## **UNIT 5      DELIVERING PERSUASIVE SPEECH**

### **STRUCTURE**

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Strategies for Persuasive Speeches
- 5.3 Involvement for Effective Persuasive Speeches
- 5.4 Guidelines for Power-point Presentation
- 5.5 Creating Power-point Presentation
- 5.6 Interacting Skills with Audience
- 5.7 Summary
- 5.8 Keywords
- 5.9 Self Assessment Questions
- 5.10 Suggested Further Readings

### **5.0 OBJECTIVES**

After learning this unit, students should be able to:

- Absorb various aspects of delivering persuasive speeches
- Understand and adopt strategies for persuasive speeches
- Appreciate the role of personal involvement in delivering persuasive speeches
- Acquire skills required for preparing Power-point presentations
- Deploy skills in creating Power-point presentations
- Imbibe skills of interacting with the audience

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

Besides flow of information, speaking involves persuading others to a common goal as that is the 'core purpose' of communication. Sales persons persuade potential buyers to partake their products and services. Potential employees try to sell their skill sets and competence to future employers. Managers and leaders motivate their employees to reorient their mindsets leading to change in their attitude to the work and to the firm, resulting in higher performance and rewards.

When speakers try to persuade, motivate and guide listeners to a goal, the speeches are persuasive. All speakers must learn the importance of:

- How they physically present themselves?
- How they say things?
- What things they say?

Since managers / leaders have to be good speakers, it will be very beneficial to them if they learn and master the following important elements for becoming effective, persuasive speakers:

- (1) Demonstrated skills in public speaking and attentive listening and ability to articulate and use body language to the best effect
- (2) Understanding of elements of persuasion
- (3) Identification of elements of personal credibility
- (4) Ability to analyze other speakers' speeches
- (5) Confidence to outline the main ideas and thoughts on a subject
- (6) Creating and crafting persuasive speeches

## **5.2 STRATEGIES FOR PERSAUSIVE SPEECHES**

Everyone seems to be talking to every other person. It is human nature to be communicating, negotiating and marketing all the time with the aim of persuading others to own point of view. The sole purpose is to change the mind or way of thinking about a topic. Budding managers / leaders must become aware of the role of different elements that go to make a person an effective, persuasive speaker:

### **(1) Articulation**

Everyone should have a basic appreciation how the speech mechanism works in humans. He should be able to adjust the faculty of speech to suit the occasion.

### **(2) Pronunciation**

The speaker should be able to pronounce each word clearly and avoid slang to make a point. He should not slur the words and avoid speaking filler phrases like 'I think' or 'you know' etc.

### **(3) Tone**

One should avoid speaking in one tone, without varying it, as it will make the speech very monotonous and dull. One should modulate one's voice to make it sound interesting.

### **(4) Pitch**

One should vary the wavelength and frequency of the voice. A good speaker keeps the listeners on their toes by continually changing tone and pitch of voice. This precludes speeches becoming boring.

### **(5) Speed of delivery**

An effective speaker has a control on his pace of delivery. A speed of 150 to 200 words per minute is normal. A faster delivery may appear insincere and a lower pace may sound like 'lecturing'!

It is possible to count words spoken per minute by tape-recording the speech. A human brain can easily hear up to 400 words per minute. If speaker is slow, listeners' mind may wander away.

## **(6) Pauses**

Pause in speech is a critical tool. When speakers want to highlight any word, a pause just before that word would ensure that. If they want to emphasize the importance of a word, a pause just before and after the word would do it effectively.

## **(7) Body language**

The powerful language of gestures, sounds and expressions never tells a lie and does not mislead those who have a deep knowledge of it. A proper posture is very important – saggy shoulders and cross-legged sitting postures will not appear to be honest.

## **(8) Volume**

If one is screaming throughout one's speech, it may sound jarring and monotonous. On the other hand, a few well-meaning shouts so as to throw your voice to the last row, may energize a speech and electrify the situation. It can be an effective tool for persuasion but should be used very carefully.

## **(9) Quality of voice**

Quality of voice can be measured by the impact it has on the audience. Every one must try to keep the vocal quality high because it is what distinguishes one speaker from another!

## **(10) Variety in speaking**

A seasoned speaker keeps varying the voice of delivery – tone, pitch, speed and volume, to make it sound interesting. Change should be brought in every 30 seconds or after every paragraph!

Variety in speech delivery keeps the listeners locked in to it as it sounds interesting. The speaker should let the words speak for themselves as listeners reflect on them through his voice.

## **5.3 INVOLVEMENT FOR EFFECTIVE PERSUASIVE SPEECH**

The main purpose of speech is to influence the behaviour of listeners to a common aim. A few important strategies are:

### **(1) Be the change you want to see in others**

A person must sell himself before he can sell his message. If audience feels that the speaker is not reasonable, there is a remote chance of his being able to convince them. The speaker must be committed to the goals of the speech himself. Avoid use of words like 'may be' or 'might'. Replace them by using positive and action words like 'will' and 'must'.

Speaker is usually the ‘power figure’ in a speech – he should have enough material to support his claims. Audience can usually spot the pretender or the person who is faking or winging the speech. He should be honest and truthful. He should be able to show emotions that add to the credibility of the speech. His words must match with his gestures, sounds, expressions and postures because body language does not lie.

**(2) Speaker must exercise self-control**

One cannot let the words gush out of one’s mouth to deliver the message. One has to use one’s total self and reveal one’s personality to deliver the message. Once the speaker shows a bit of his personality to the group, it becomes very supportive of the message!

**(3) Reaction of the audience as a group**

In order to measure the effectiveness of a persuasive speech, speakers must collect the reaction of the listeners as a group. It has two aspects:

**(i) Delivery of speech**

Listeners often pose a question to themselves – whether there was a gap between what is said and the body language or were they in agreement with each other?

**(ii) Listeners find if speaker is faking**

To avoid being assessed negatively, speakers, instead, find out what changes can be brought about in the speech to make it more convincing and persuasive.

**ACTIVITY**

Students must stop to ponder over the merits of a good persuasive speech. They should be formed in to teams of no more that 2 or 3 members who should be asked to prepare a speech that should last for at least five minutes on some of the compelling topics from India’s socio-economic problems. A few suggestions for topics to be assigned to team members are:

Critical importance of women education in India  
India is not an underdeveloped country; it is an under-managed country.  
Importance of cleanliness and hygiene in everyday life  
etc etc

**5.4 POWERPOINT PRESENTATION SKILLS**

‘Power-point’ software, created by Microsoft, is a very useful tool and is being used extensively as an essential aid to oral presentation. ‘Power-point’ can be used in

conjunction with Over Head Projector (OHP) or Liquid Crystal Display (LCD) or as a vehicle for multi-media presentation.

Multi-media presentation is becoming popular very fast. It uses a compact disc that contains the entire subject in suitably prepared MS 'Power-point' slides.

A few important guiding principles are:

**(1) Know the subject material**

Speakers must have authentic material on the subject of their presentation. Ideally, it should be audience-tested and modified taking in to account the feedback. To the audience, they are the experts.

**(2) Know the audience**

To customize the presentation for the audience, speakers must know them and their learning objectives. Speakers need to check out if the material available is adequate for meeting the learning objectives.

**(3) Understand time constraints of presentation**

Presentations are made in the limited time frame available. The challenge before the speakers is to complete the presentation within the time slot available and still make it very effective.

**(4) Keep presentation simple**

Three important rules are:

- Use as few words as possible
- Assume your audience can read
- Don't let words run-off the page

Many a times, speakers read all the words and lines in the presentation – it is almost 'insulting' to the audience! This can be achieved better when speakers use 'speaker notes' and audience does not have to go through the entire matter on the screen.

**(5) Use speaker notes**

For each power-point slide, speakers must create own dialogue. It is a detailed script of what they are going to say when the slide is projected on the screen. The entire presentation is prepared and printed before making the presentation. Once it is ready, it becomes easier for the speakers as they can make the presentation by working from the speaker notes.

## **5.5 SKILLS FOR CREATING THE POWER-POINT PRESENTATION**

The objective of creating power-point presentation is to ensure and achieve a uniform standard of presentation. The look of the slides should also be consistent and of uniform standard. It involves the followings:

**(1) Using slide master**

The users should be familiar with the facility of ‘Slide Master’ in the Power-point software. It is much like the sliding scales used on a drawing board as it helps to get X-coordinates and Y-coordinates correctly. Besides, it can draw many types and sizes of boxes for writing in properly aligned and sized matter.

**(2) Editing master title and style**

Before preparing slides, they must choose the title and the text styles. These can be defined for various levels as a number of levels, as below, are available:

First level	<b>BIG</b>
Second level	<b>NOT SO BIG</b>
Third Level	<b>SMALL</b>
Fourth level	<b>SMALLER</b>
Fifth level	<b>SMALLEST</b>

Usually three or four levels are adequate for a speaker.

Once the size and style of ‘font’ is chosen, speakers should stick to it for all the slides on a subject matter.

Font size and style are very important for preparing good slides in this software.

**(3) Using graphics, tables and charts**

Graphics, table and charts are relatively new facilities but are being used increasingly in power-point presentation. These can enhance the quality of presentation if following ‘Dos’ and ‘Don’ts’ are observed:

**(i) Do’s**

- Ensure that graphics etc relate to the topic
- Make graphics etc secondary to the material
- Place graphics etc properly in the text

**(ii) Don’ts**

- Don't use animations
- No background 'colours' or 'fills' should be used
- Don't let graphics etc overwhelm the presentation

#### **(4) Watching grammar and punctuations**

The software has many features that help to achieve good quality slides:

- Use online dictionary
- Use software for 'spell check' with some reservations as most software check for American spellings whereas we, in India, follow British spellings.
- Use writing style guide or sentence construction software – it is a good help.
- Use thesaurus for selecting the correct synonyms
- Use the power of punctuations to embellish your language

#### **(5) Using guides and rulers**

These two facilities in Power-point software need to be learnt and used properly.

##### **(i) Guides**

- Setting up guides is easy – they help in aligning text and graphics
- Guides make presentation seamless

##### **(ii) Rulers**

Rulers allow accurate measurement of spaces, boxes etc

### **ACTIVITY**

The persuasive speech as prepared above by different teams should be converted by each one of them in to a 'Power-point Presentation' for the class, using the guidelines suggested in the above paragraphs.

## **5.6 SKILLS FOR INTERACTING WITH AUDIENCE**

Speakers should not only use slides prudently by pointing out the salient aspects of topic under discussion but also interact with the audience and maintain a reasonable eye contact with the listeners. It ensures that audience interest is kept at a higher level.

To enhance the effectiveness of the Power-point presentation, speakers must:

- Get comfortable with the subject
- Run through the slides at a reasonable pace
- Read 'speaker notes' while rehearsing
- Learn to 'time' the presentation especially the impact points.

If the above guidelines are followed, there is no doubt that, with practice, speakers gain confidence, poise and power. Acquiring the skills to influence others to work to own point of view or to achieve the common goals of the team, department or the firm, can be very fascinating and satisfying.

Thus, Power-point software is a powerful tool in the hands of modern, global managers and leaders.

## **5.7 SUMMARY**

Speeches not only facilitate the flow of information but also persuade audience and veer them around to common purposes. To become effective, persuasive speaker, attention must be paid to learn how to make physical presentation, how to say things and what to say.

Since managers / leaders are communicating, negotiating and marketing all the time, they must acquire the traits of articulation, pronunciation, use of the right tone, pitch and speed of delivery. They should be able to make good use of pauses, volume, quality of voice, variety in speech and make effective use of signs, signals, gestures, expressions and sounds of the body language.

Persuasive speeches require speakers' personal involvement and they should embody the change they want to see in others, must exercise a lot of self-control and should ensure good response and reaction from the audience for their delivery and sincerity.

Microsoft's Power-point software is an extremely useful tool that supports presentation by overhead projectors, liquid crystal displays and multimedia. With the use of Power-point software, speakers can become more effective and persuasive if they know their subject, have good perception of their audience, understand time constraints involved in presentation, keep them simple and supplement them with 'speaker notes'.



For using Power-point software, speakers have to become comfortable with the subject, run through the presentation at a reasonable pace, use speaker notes properly and learn to time the impact points of their presentation well.

## 5.8 KEYWORDS

- (1) **Persuasive** – It is the power to induce someone by reasoning, urging, prevailing or convincing.
- (2) **Presentation** – It is the act of introducing others to topics, displays and exhibits and prompting them to understand before acceptance. Usually it is a presentation on a stage.
- (3) **Interaction** – It is the process of acting on each other with reciprocal effect.
- (4) **Involvement** – It is enwrapping, enfolding and enveloping someone by occupying his attention, interest and energy.

## 5.9 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- 1 Describe the role and relevance of a persuasive speech highlighting its salient features.
- 2 A new recruit in a sales department has to be guided in to becoming a persuasive speaker. What strategies would you recommend to him for regularly delivering effective persuasive speeches to his clients and customers?
- 3 A person can be good at persuasive speeches only when he can transfer the feelings in his heart to the listeners. What kind of personal traits would you recommend to a speaker to acquire?
- 4 What are the guiding principles for preparing a computer-aided oral presentation with the help of ‘Power-point’ software?
- 5 Describe the method for creating an effective ‘power-point’ presentation supported by visual aids as appropriate.

## 5.10 SUGGESTED FURTHER READINGS

- 1 Bovee, Courtland L., Thill, John V. (1992). Business Communication Today. New York, NY: McGraw Hill Inc.
- 2 Herta A Murphy, Herbert W Hilderbrandt (1991). Effective Business Communications. New York, NY: McGraw Hill Inc.
- 3 French, Astrid (2005). Interpersonal Skills: Developing Successful Communication. New Delhi: Sterling Publishing Co.

## **UNIT 6      SUCCESSFUL MEETING SKILLS**

### **STRUCTURE**

- 6.0    Objectives
- 6.1    Introduction
- 6.2    Understanding Group Dynamics of Meetings
- 6.3    Role Display in Meetings
- 6.4    Group Norms of Behaviour
- 6.5    Group Decision Making
- 6.6    Arranging Meetings
- 6.7    Contributing to Productive Meetings
- 6.8    Seven Deadly Blunders of Meetings
- 6.9    Checklist for Organizing Successful Meetings
- 6.10   Guidelines for Mastering International Meetings
- 6.11   Summary
- 6.12   Keywords
- 6.13   Self Assessment Questions
- 6.14   Suggested Further Readings

### **6.0    OBJECTIVES**

After perusing this unit, students shall be able to:

- Learn of the advantages and disadvantages of meetings
- Understand the group dynamics that accompany the conduct of meetings
- Comprehend the complex process when participants play different roles
- Distinguish the norms of behaviour of group attending the meeting

- Understand the intimate relationship between stages of ‘forming’, ‘storming’, ‘norming’ and ‘performing’ while decisions are taken in groups
- Appreciate the benefits of organizing meetings meticulously
- Become aware of roles of individuals in contributing to productive meetings
- Acquire guidelines for attending international meetings
- Identify blunders of meetings that must be avoided
- Draw up a checklist for organizing successful business meetings

## **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

With the increasing trend towards participative management, importance of teamwork and group decisions is going up. More teamwork means more meetings. Future managers / leaders should acquire the skills involved in attending and speaking purposefully and persuasively. It is estimated that already managers are spending 25 to 30 % of their time in meetings and the trend is increasing. Senior executives spend even more time in meetings.

### **(1) Advantages of meetings**

Several merits are:

- (i) Meetings are extremely useful for coordinating activities of people and departments and taking decisions in consultation with persons involved.
- (ii) Fact-to-face interaction among participants at a meeting leads to better decisions as they are based on the combined intelligence of the team.
- (iii) Whether meetings are for solving problems or just sharing information, participants feel a sense of recognition, importance and involvement.
- (iv) Because participants take joint decisions, they accept them more willingly and become involved and committed for execution.

### **(2) Disadvantages of meetings**

A few deficiencies of meetings are:

- (i) If unproductive, meetings can be very frustrating.
- (ii) They are expensive – if ten persons are attending, ten staff hours are spent every hour of the meeting held.
- (iii) Poorly organized meetings can be counter-productive as they may lead to taking bad decisions.
- (iv) If participating members are pressurized to conform, they abandon their personal responsibility in such decisions.

## **6.2 UNDERSTANDING GROUP DYNAMICS OF MEETINGS**

A meeting is always called for a purpose that gives form to it. The interactions and processes that take place in meetings are called the group dynamics that determine the outcome. Although people assemble to achieve work- related tasks, there is always a

personal agenda involving private motives that also affect group interaction. These motives may be:

- 'A' wants to prove that he is more powerful than 'B'
- 'C' may be trying to share the risk of decision making with others
- 'D' may be seeking approval of his peers etc

Such hidden agendas may either contribute or detract the group from its ability to perform. Thus success of meetings not only depends upon the goals but also on the groups' approach to the task(s).

### 6.3 ROLE DISPLAY IN MEETINGS

Individuals have many parts of their personality; sometimes they are carefree and fun loving and at other times they are serious and hardworking. Individuals assume different roles to suit the situation and the context. Although these roles are consistent with ones' self-respect, they vary their image from time to time to suit demands of situation and cues received from others. Role-playing in meetings can be classified as under:

#### (1) Self-seeking roles

These take the form of:

- (i) **Controlling** – Trying to dominate over others by exhibiting superiority or authority – aggressive behaviour
- (ii) **Withdrawing** – Retiring from the group by remaining silent or refusing to deal with a particular issue – submissive behaviour
- (iii) **Attention-seeking** – Calling attention to oneself and demanding recognition from the group – manipulative behaviour
- (iv) **Diverting** – Discussing individuals rather than the task-related issues

#### (2) Group-maintenance roles

These are:

- (i) **Encouraging** – Drawing out members by verbal and non-verbal support, praise etc
- (ii) **Harmonizing** – Resolving differences or conflicts, using humour to diffuse tension etc
- (iii) **Compromising** – Yielding to a point in the interest of reaching a mutually acceptable decision

#### (3) Task-facilitating roles

These may take the form of:

- (i) **Initiating** – Getting work started

- (ii) **Information giving / seeking** – Offering / seeking relevant information on the issue under discussion
- (iii) **Coordinating** – Highlighting relationships among ideas, classifying issues and summarizing discussions of the group
- (iv) **Procedure setting** – Suggesting comprehensive procedures that can move group towards the goal

In most groups a certain amount of power politics occurs as each person tries to establish his relative status. These power struggles come in the way of real work.

#### **6.4 GROUP NORMS OF BEHAVIOURS**

A group that meets regularly develops its own unwritten rules of behaviour and participants are expected to follow them. Some groups are more cohesive. When groups have their own identity, members observe the norms more religiously. There is greater pressure to conform and deviations are frowned upon. Such group loyalty can have both positive and negative implications:

##### **(1) Positive aspects**

- Members have strong commitment to one another
- Members are highly motivated for the group to succeed

##### **(2) Negative aspects**

Members become susceptible to the deficiency of groupthink as belonging to a group becomes important. Individuals set aside personal opinions and go along with others even when they are wrong.

#### **6.5 GROUP DECISION MAKING**

Group decision-making passes through the following four stages:

- Orientation phase (Forming)
- Conflict phase (Storming)
- Emergence phase (Norming)
- Reinforcement phase (Performing)

These are detailed below:

##### **(1) Orientation phase (Forming)**

Group members socialize with other members, establish their roles and agree on the reasons / justifications for the meeting.

##### **(2) Conflict phase (Storming)**

Members begin to discuss the problems and issues involved. If groups are chosen carefully to represent different interests, expertise and viewpoints, disagreements are natural and healthy. At the end of this phase, considerable agreement is reached regarding the possible solution.

**(3) Emergence phase (Performing)**

Members who advocated different solutions put aside their objections either because they are convinced of the majority solution or because they recognize that arguing would be futile.

**(4) Reinforcement phase (Performing)**

Consensus among members emerges and solutions are agreed. Individual members are given specific assignment for carrying out decisions and arrangements are made for following up on these assignments.

The above four phases almost always occur. If leader emerges or is appointed early, his background work may help reach the final stage a little faster.

## **6.6 ARRANGING THE MEETING**

By developing a good understanding of the entire process, effective leaders can ensure that their meetings are productive. They need to plan the following steps carefully:

- Determining the purpose
- Selecting the participants
- Setting the agenda
- Preparing the location

These are described below:

**(1) Determining the purpose**

Meetings are expensive. Before convening a meeting, we must ask about the purpose and what is the best way to achieve it. Generally, purposes can be:

- Information sharing
- Decision-making
- Combination of information sharing and decision making

**(i) Informational meetings**

Usually an informational meeting is for sharing information among participants. Every participant gives a brief speech and it is followed by question-answer session.

**(ii) Decision-making**

Meetings are intended to develop a course of action. It entails analysis of issues involved, persuasion, brain storming session etc. It is useful if members are aware of the nature of problem and criteria for solution before attending the meeting.

**(iii) Combination of information sharing and decision-making**

This is most common and hence circulation of agenda prior to the meeting is a good practice.

**(2) Selecting participants**

It should include key persons and still limit the number of participants. Despite the pressure to include several persons, only those persons whose presence is essential should be invited. Number of participants reflects the purpose of the meeting – it is said that if you want to kill an issue, appoint a large committee!

- In informational meetings, since one person does most of the talking, we can have a large group.
- In decision-making and problem-solving meetings, participants should be limited to seven or below.

Ensure to include those persons who can contribute and who can take decisions.

**(3) Setting the agenda**

Nature of meeting decides the agenda – some of them are not amenable to fixed agenda and others should adopt a flexible approach to adding to the agenda. Agenda should be distributed several days ahead of the meeting. This ensures that the participants are better prepared.

Some are of the opinion that important issues be scheduled first; others favour a few minutes of warm up before taking up serious agenda. However, starting and ending meetings on time sends a signal of good organization and facilitates members to meet other commitments.

**(4) Preparing the location**

Location of meeting should be decided early and advance reservation should be made. Organizers must think through:

- Seating arrangements
- Room temperature
- Lighting
- Ventilation
- Acoustics
- Refreshments
- Microphones, projection and other technology aids to be used

These may sound trivial but they can make or mar a meeting.

## **6.7 CONTRIBUTING TO PRODUCTIVE MEETINGS**

Leaders have a major role in ensuring that meetings remain productive and successful. They are responsible for:

- (1) Keeping the ball rolling
- (2) Not domineering so as to close all discussions
- (3) Not being passive as to lose control
- (4) Inviting persons whose opinions can contribute
- (5) Drawing out shy participants
- (6) Steering the pace of discussions to complete the agenda on time
- (7) Asking someone to record the proceedings
- (8) Not being rigid on the agenda and cutting out meaningful discussions
- (9) Summarizing at the end of each point of agenda, giving major viewpoints
- (10) Concluding the meeting with a wrap up of the major feelings of the group
- (11) Sending a copy of the minutes of the meeting (MOM) to all concerned clearly marking the actions, names of persons responsible and the date of completion.

Members are also responsible for making useful contributing not only to the subject or issues under discussions but also the general interaction among the participants. Members should have good listening skills and powers of observation to understand the group dynamics at work and adjust their own behaviour to help meetings achieve the objectives.

## **6.8 SEVEN DEADLY BLUNDERS OF MEETINGS**

Meetings should be success experiences for all involved. Leaders should encourage people to participate and feel that their participation has made all the difference!

However meetings have a bad reputation – they never seem to end. One person had suggested that meetings should be short and the only sure way to make them happen is ask each participant to stand on one leg for the duration of the meeting!

Virginia Johnson, a consultant on communication with 3M of USA suggests that, 'Tell people what time the meeting will end as well as when it will start'. According to her, people should avoid the following blunders:

### **(1) Monopolizing**

Leaders' role is to manage the participation by others and not deliver a monologue.

### **(2) Clowning**

Allow humour but not clowning because if there are comical characters, meeting will have trouble dealing with serious issues.

### **(3) Losing control**



Leader should not let participants take the meeting away by going off at tangents. Always use agenda to control events.

**(4) Scolding**

If leader embarrasses a participant, all others will fear being put in the same position and will become defensive.

**(5) Allowing interruptions**

Do not allow outside interruptions. Alert your staff to prevent telephone messages and other interruptions.

**(6) Resenting questions**

Leaders must acknowledge all questions and if they do not know the answer to a question, assure the person that someone will get it for him. Avoid answering a question with just a 'yes' or 'no'. These kinds of answers can be very deflating.

**(7) Coming unprepared**

This is the deadliest and most common blunder. If leader is not prepared, meeting will probably prolong. It will not have a logical flow and will waste participants' time.

## **6.9 CHECKLIST FOR ORGANIZING SUCCESSFUL MEETINGS**

There are three stages for organizing successful meetings – preparing, organizing and following up implementation. Quick checklists for the three stages are:

**(1) Preparing for the meeting**

- (i) Determine meetings' objective
- (ii) Work out agenda that will achieve the objective
- (iii) Select participants
- (iv) Determine location and reserve the room
- (v) Arrange for light refreshments, if appropriate
- (vi) Check lighting, ventilation, temperature and acoustics of the room
- (vii) Determine seating needs – chairs, tables etc and seating arrangements

**(2) Conducting the meeting**

- (i) Begin and end the meeting on time
- (ii) Control the meeting by following the announced agenda
- (iii) Encourage full participation
- (iv) Sum up discussions, actions and recommendations while moving through the agenda. Restate the main points at the end.

**(3) Following up implementation**

- (i) Distribute notes or minutes of the meeting on time
- (ii) Take follow up actions agreed upon.

**ACTIVITY**

Students of management institutes should be encouraged to form themselves in to multifarious activities at the campus – sports club, social club, cultural club and separate clubs for marketing, finance, human resources, information technology etc. Usually shy students are left out of these activities. The concerned faculty in charge of the club should make it a point to draw out these reclusive students to bring out the brighter side of these individuals.....It is said that every human being is like a feldspar – a kind of mineral stone that shines from at least one angle. The challenge before the managers is to reorient their approach towards individual persons so as to see them from the angle that helps them shine!

**6.10 GUIDELINS FOR MASTERING INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS**

International meetings that bring together persons with diverse cultural backgrounds, have many special problems:

**(1) Organizers and participants doing homework**

Organizers should learn every important aspect of participants’ homeland – history, geography, people and its politics to find out what subjects are welcome and what should be avoided. If organizers give the impression that they tried to learn about participants’ country, it would be very meaningful to them.

**(2) Arranging business meetings in foreign countries**

If coming from another country, visitors must find out about the rudimentary rules of holding business meetings in that country. In China, teams of people will be brought in to hear the presentation. In Saudi Arabia, much of the time, one may be talking to one person only with frequent interruptions, telephone calls etc

**(3) Knowing rank and status of the participants**

In many countries, rank and status of the participants is important. You have to know it before even starting the meeting. In China, it may not be obvious as the leader comes in as one of the participants!

**(4) Using correct form of address**

Everybody likes to be addressed by the correct name. Visitors must make efforts to learn the style of the country they are visiting. In China, surname is first. It is usually a one-syllable word like ‘Wang’; consequently, address him as ‘Mr Wang’. In Latin America, names may be a little longer – Jorge Rojas Neto; it may be appropriate to address him as ‘Mr Jorge’ or ‘Mr Rojas’

**(5) Dressing properly**

Dress codes vary from one culture to another. People must learn it for own comfort and confidence. Also, participants should make the first right impression.

**(6) Acquiring basic knowledge about body language**

Body language can be baffling in many countries. Some basic knowledge can take us far. In Japan, nodding head up and down is not saying 'yes'; in fact he is saying 'no'. If not familiar with local customs, avoid physical contact.

**(7) Familiarizing with local bargaining / compromising style**

In some cultures, bargaining is a must because it is customary and necessary to win some concessions. This must be taken in to account while quoting the price!

**(8) Learning role of dinners and entertainment in business**

Business lunches and dinners are playing important role in doing business. It is a normal way of doing business in Europe and USA. In Japan and Mexico, no serious business discussions proceed without several rounds of lunches and dinners!

**(9) Aligning pace of communication with local customs**

It varies with the culture. Americans like to get in to business straightaway. In Saudi Arabia, pressures of time for concluding business do not go well.

## **6.11 SUMMARY**

With increasing trend towards participative management, team working and group decisions are becoming more popular. Ability to participate, speak and conduct business meetings successfully have become skills of strategic importance. Meetings enable participation, face-to-face interactions and taking decisions with persons and groups involved; participants gain a sense of recognition, importance, involvement and commitment. Disadvantages of meetings are that they are expensive and if participants are pressurized to perform, they may abandon responsibility in such decisions. If not conducted effectively, meetings can be frustrating and counter-productive.

All meetings are characterized by group dynamics as, besides discussing work-related tasks, participants have hidden agenda – they tend to play roles of self-seeking, group-maintenance and task-facilitating. Also norms of behaviour in business meetings may be positive with strong commitment to one another and strong motivation for the group to succeed or they may be negative when they become susceptible to 'groupthink' and individuals, setting aside personal opinions, go along the group even when it is wrong. All groups go through orientation phase of forming, conflict phase of

storming, emergence phase of norming and reinforcement phase of performing.

Organizing successful business meetings should be planned properly by determining the purpose, selecting the participants, setting the agenda and preparing the venue carefully. Leaders and participants have the responsibility to make useful contribution to the successful outcomes, A few common blunders to be avoided are – monopolizing, clowning, losing control, scolding, allowing interruptions, resenting questions and coming unprepared for the meeting. Successful organizers draw up check lists for preparing, conducting and following up the outcomes of the business meetings.

In the global world, managers and leaders should learn to organize international business meetings, seminars and conferences by doing proper homework, learning elementary rules of holding meetings in foreign countries, knowing rank and status of participants, using correct form of addressing, dressing for the occasion, acceptable style of bargaining, role of business lunches, dinners and entertainment and still keeping the pace of communication in line with the local customs.

## 6.12 KEYWORDS

- (1) **Meeting** – It is an assembly or gathering of people to discuss and decide on matters of interest.
- (2) **Group dynamics** – It is the action of forces, physical and emotional, on individuals when they assemble, interact and work together.
- (3) **Role playing** – It is a part or character actors play in a performance. It is the roles played by participants in meetings besides work related tasks.
- (4) **Norm** – It is a standard, model or pattern of achievement represented by the average (median) of a large group.
- (5) **Groupthink** – It is the phenomenon that happens when individuals, setting aside personal opinions, go along with the group even when they are wrong.
- (6) **Forming** – It is the process of putting together something that outlines its pattern, formation and organization.
- (7) **Storming** – It is a strong disturbance, upheaval of a political or social nature. It is a tumultuous attempt to capture the group.
- (8) **Norming** – It is the process of fixing norms or standards for achievement.
- (9) **Performing** – It is the process of acting to accomplish, complete and execute tasks according to requirements.
- (10) **Blunder** – It is to work blindly, clumsily, carelessly and flounder, fumble and make foolish mistakes.
- (11) **Culture** - It is the refinement of thoughts, emotions, manners, taste etc relating to concepts, habits, skills, arts, instruments and institutions of people in different time periods.

## 6.13 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- 1 Do a critical appraisal of the role and importance of ‘meetings’ in business environments, giving their advantages and disadvantages.

- 2 What is the relevance of group dynamics in business meetings and highlight how participants seem to do the role playing rather than participating in the business meetings.
- 3 What are group norms and their importance in a business meeting?
- 4 There is a trend towards taking business decisions by the concerned group of functionaries. Highlight the importance of 'group decision making' in modern large business corporations.
- 5 Draw up the steps involved in organizing a business meeting.
- 6 How leaders contribute to conducting effective business meetings?
- 7 Recommend the guiding rules for organizing international business meetings.
- 8 Describe the common pitfalls in organizing business meetings.
- 9 Develop a checklist for organizing business meetings successfully.

#### **6.14 SUGGESTED FURTHER READINGS**

- 1 Bovee, Courtland L., Thill, John V. (1992). Business Communication Today. New York, NY, USA: McGraw Hill Inc.
- 2 Pal, Rajendra, Karlahalli, JS (!997). Essentials of Business Communication. New Delhi (India): Sultan Chand & Sons.
- 3 French, Astrid (1997). Interpersonal Skills: Developing Successful Communication. New Delhi: Sterling Publishing Co.

### **UNIT 7 LISTENING SKILLS**

#### **STRUCTURE**

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Listening Skills
- 7.2 Need for Improving Listening Skills
- 7.3 Hearing, Listening and Understanding
- 7.4 Process of Listening
- 7.5 Types of Listening
- 7.6 Importance of Active Listening
- 7.7 Barriers to Good Listening
- 7.8 Improving Listening Skills
- 7.9 Listening Habits of Managers and Leaders
- 7.10 Taking Notes while Listening
- 7.12 Ten Commandments of Good Listening
- 7.13 Summary
- 7.14 Keywords
- 7.15 Self Assessment Questions
- 7.16 Suggested Further Readings

#### **7.0 OBJECTIVES**

After studying this unit, students should be able to:

- Comprehend the importance of acquiring good listening skills

- Distinguish between hearing, listening and understanding
- Understand the process of listening
- Identify types of listening
- Grasp the importance of active listening
- Identify blocks to good listening
- Describe barriers to good listening
- Acquire ways and means of enhancing listening skills
- Appreciate the role of taking notes while listening
- State the ten commandments of good listening

## **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

Ability to listen is the most critical skill required in managers and leaders. It provides them with all the information they need. Art of listening is the leaders' cutting edge. If individuals establish reputation among subordinates and peers that they are good listeners and they welcome comments and suggestions, much useful information will gravitate towards you. It is said that, 'If you listen to people well, they will tell you things that you have not ever thought of yourself!'

More people are pleased when they are listened to rather than being talked to. Although both talking and listening form the grist of the oral communication, one cannot listen if he is talking and if he is not listening, he is not learning either.

Smart people speak from experience; smarter people, from experience, do not speak. One cannot be listening with his mouth open. And the less people talk, the more others like to listen to them.

## **7.2 NEED FOR IMPROVING LISTENING SKILLS**

Followings would highlight the importance of good listening:

### **(1) Poor listeners**

Most of us think that we are good listeners – research has confirmed the opposite! Managers spend 45 % of their time listening (they spend 30 % of their time talking).

### **(2) Listening more**

There is now a consensus among specialists that individuals should listen more, especially those going up the ladder of hierarchy. When they listen more, they learn more and when they learn more, they are able to provide better leadership.

### **(3) Poor retention and memory**

Experience confirms that people are not only poor listeners but also poor in retaining and remembering. People can recollect only 50 % of what they hear and half of that also, they forget within 48 hours of hearing. When people were queried two days after

they heard a speech, they tended to mix up subject matter and 30 % of the time replied incorrectly.

#### **(4) Listening is not taught**

As a part of growing and development through learning and education, children are taught reading, writing and even speaking. They are rarely taught how to listen, now considered to be the most essential skill for managers and leaders. It is ignored in high schools and even in business schools where full credit subject of business communication skills is taught.

Now many companies are training their managers and leaders in the art of listening to help them incorporate listening as an important skill in their personality – it is a lot of hard work. Speaking (and teaching) is not as difficult as listening (and learning).

### **7.3 HEARING, LISTENING AND UNDERSTANDING**

Hearing is becoming aware of sounds especially through stimulation of auditory nerves in the ear by the sound waves. It is a sense by which sounds are perceived.

Listening is much more – it is making conscious efforts to hear the speaker. It is matching of the mental faculties of the sender and the receiver. It is the understanding of the intent of total message as sent by the sender. When the speaker asks if the audience understood the message, listeners' nod is for the complete message including unspoken words, gestures and expressions of the speaker. Listening is an accurate perception of all that is being presented. Listening is a vital part of the entire process of communication. The effectiveness of communication is, in fact, determined by the extent to which listening and understanding takes place after an interaction. It consists of two stages:

- Encoding and transmission of the message by the sender
- Decoding and providing the required feedback by the receiver

Listening is said to have taken place if there is satisfactory execution of both the stages. If the message has been understood in exactly the same way as was intended by the sender, it can be said that listening has taken place accurately. However, if there are discrepancies between the intent of message sent and the way it has been perceived, listening is deficient and the communication has not been effective.

### **7.4 PROCESS OF LISTENING**

It entails following five steps:

#### **(1) Sensing**

It is physical hearing and assimilating through all the five senses – hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting and touching. It should also include taking down notes. However, reception of message can get blocked because of:

- Interfering noises and distractions
- Inattention by audience
- Impaired hearing etc

Listeners have to work hard to avoid distraction and focus on the message.

## **(2) Interpreting**

It is decoding in our mind and absorbing the message being delivered. As people listen, they assign meanings to words through their own mental filters comprising of their:

- Beliefs
- Assumptions
- Values
- Ideas
- Expectations
- Roles
- Needs
- Personal history

Thus role of the persons listening to a speech is very vital. They should pay attention to non-verbal cues because body language of gestures, sounds, postures and expressions do not tell lies. If they have learnt the art and science of understanding speeches well, it increases accuracy of their listening.

## **(3) Evaluating**

It is forming opinion about the message heard. If the subject matter is complex or it is a topic that has emotional overtones, effort is required to:

- Sort out the remarks made by the speaker
- Separate facts from opinions
- Evaluate quality of evidence

As a rule, listeners dismiss ideas from an unattractive and abrasive speaker. Also, they easily embrace ideas of ‘charismatic’ speakers.

## **(4) Remembering**

It is storing message after receiving in the memory for future use. Good speakers facilitate storage by doing the followings:

- Comparing the message with the previous similar messages
- Highlighting the components of transition in the new message



- Summarizing and paraphrasing the message

### **(5) Responding**

It is reacting to the content of the message in some fashion. When audience is large, it may take the form of:

- Silence
- Applause
- Laughter etc

## **7.5 TYPES OF LISTENING**

Listening can be varied depending upon:

- Purpose
- Interaction
- Feedback

It can be classified in to the following three distinct types:

### **(1) Content listening**

The purpose of content listening is to retain the information for future use or for further transmission rather faithfully. Here, we try to identify the key points and concentrate on the structure of the message. Receivers take a preview – an overall view of the entire message. It is not important whether they agree or not with the contents. They try to assimilate the contents of the message as received. For example, a department of the government giving the details of the procedure would expect the public to follow in dealing with them!

### **(2) Critical listening**

The message received undergoes evaluation at several levels to understand:

- Logic of argument
- Strength of evidence
- Validity of conclusions
- Implications of message for individuals
- Implications of message for the organization
- Speakers' intention and motive
- Omission of any relevant point etc

Evaluating and absorbing information simultaneously is rather difficult. Listeners' should reserve their judgement right up to the end. Effort should be made to uncover speakers' viewpoint.

### **(3) Active / empathetic listening**

The purpose here is to understand the speakers' feelings, needs and wants. Listeners have to understand speakers' viewpoint irrespective of whether they share those perceptions or not. By listening actively, receivers' let speakers vent their emotions. Listeners should resist the temptation of advising them and they should let the persons do the talking with cues and clues of encouragement. Typical features of active and empathetic listening are:

- Make eye contact
- Exhibit affirmative head nods and appropriate facial expressions
- Avoid distracting actions and gestures
- Ask questions
- Paraphrasing what is said
- Avoid interrupting the speaker
- Do not over-talk
- Make smooth transition from the role of a speaker to that of a listener

All the three types of listening have practical use in the life of managers and leaders. They must learn how to apply these methods in different situations.

## **7.6 IMPORTANCE OF ACTIVE LISTENING**

Managers and leaders have to be good in active listening.

### **ACTIVITY**

Find time to go and observe political leaders attending public meetings as invitees or chief guests etc. It can be easily observed that they listen to various speeches that precede them very actively and attentively.....

They are very good in remembering names of speakers and the main points of their speeches. When their turn to speak comes, usually as the end of the function, they make a very impressive speech.

All future managers and leaders should resolve to become good listeners. They must exhibit the determination and remain unwavering in becoming good listeners. They should work hard to imbibe the following 'seven traits' of good listeners:

- 1 'I' want to help
- 2 'I' will not judge
- 3 'I' am willing to be quiet and listen
- 4 'I' will be responsive
- 5 'I' will paraphrase the issue under study
- 6 'I' will probe without accusing and for better clarity
- 7 'I' will validate rather than deny the reality

## 7.7 BARRIERS TO GOOD LISTENING

Listening is rather very difficult. It is taken for granted by parents, schools, colleges and management institutes. Although the receivers are personally present throughout, most of them are poor listeners. What are the inherent problems in the process of listening and how to overcome these barriers? A few common barriers have been listed below:

### (1) Environmental barriers

These are:

#### (i) Physical distractions

Environmental disturbances come in the way:

- Noisy surroundings
- Loud music
- Noise of machines, office equipment etc
- Noise of road traffic including horns of vehicles

#### (ii) Loud talking

In some cultures people talk rather loudly. Talking loudly by persons nearby can distract a person from hearing others.

#### (iii) Visual distractions

A hoarding or poster on the wall may distract attention and may come in the way of catching an important point of the conversation. Similarly, speakers' clothes, accessories, make-up like eye shadows etc may distract listeners' attention.

### (2) Physiological distractions

These may be:

- (i) **Hearing impairment** – It is the case with many old persons
- (ii) **Hunger** – It may make one inattentive
- (iii) **Tiredness / exhaustion from overwork** – It may come in the way of listening
- (iv) **Pain or injury** – It may divert ones' attention

### (3) Psychological barriers

These are:

#### (i) Beliefs

Audiences' strong views on religion, politics, business area or even sex may come in the way of their paying attention to the speaker. Individuals' views impact on their attitude and behaviour.

**(ii) Fear**

If the subject being talked about is sensitive in nature as it pertains to audiences' fears, they may cut it off from their hearing.

**(iii) Anger**

If a remark by the speaker has made audience angry and upset, it will reduce their ability to absorb the message or they may miss it altogether.

**(iv) Anxiety**

State of health of a near or dear one may make one anxious about it while at work and the person may miss some parts of the conversation.

**(v) Sad memories**

While listening to a speech, if someone refers to an incident that has a lot of memories treasured by listeners, it may send them in to a reflective mood and they may miss some parts of conversation.

**(4) Linguistic barriers**

Also called semantic barriers, these can block ones' ability to listen. These are:

**(i) Use of difficult words and jargons**

Some speakers have an affected style of talking – they use difficult words and slang to impress rather than convey the message. Speakers must gift parcel their speech to the level of understanding of the listeners.

**(ii) Speakers' manners and style**

Much of the time, speakers' manners, appearance and body language are important. Politicians can, sometimes, stoop low and talk narrow, petty issues for winning local sympathy and perhaps votes but a rational listener may block his speech as hallow and worthless. He may block the message completely.

**(iii) Use of words with double meaning and mispronounced words**

Some speakers have a poor way of pronouncing with heavy bias of the regional spoken language. This may come in the way of catching the words and phrases correctly.

**(iv) Lag time in speech**

Some speakers speak very slowly. They take so much time to complete a sentence that listeners find it very difficult to slow down their thought process. They get too much of spare time when their mind flies away to other issues. Keeping focus is a lot more difficult in such cases.

**(v) Different frame of mind**

If speaker's background and area of specialization is widely different, it may come in the way of understanding the terms and phrases used in the speech. The same words may have different meaning in listeners' framework; consequently, there may be a gap in the understanding the message received.

**(5) Socio-cultural barriers**

A few important ones are:

**(i) Cultural background is different**

Different cultural background leading to different pronunciations and accents for speaking the same words can spoil the delivery of a message. In the recent cricket match series in Australia between the host country and Indian team, there was a piquant situation because 'bastard' is an accepted form of communication in Australia and 'monkey' is an accepted admonition in any heated personal discussion in India.

**(ii) Personal space and public space**

Some cultures permit greater personal space than others. If the same is not available even in a not-so-formal interaction, it may upset some. Even the way of addressing in different regions of the same country can create misunderstanding. (For details refer to 18.6 of Unit 18)

**(iii) Sense of time**

Experience confirms that a western visitor from USA or Europe would like to get straight in to business without significant preliminaries beyond wishing one another and getting introduced. However, a typical Asian may start with preliminaries as a warm up and may even prefer to have a cup of tea before coming to the formal part of the agenda. It is said that Japanese like to have a game of golf before sitting for any serious meeting! (For details refer to 18.5 (2) (vi) of Unit 18)

## **7.8 IMPROVING LISTENING SKILLS**

Human ears are, in the modern world, continually bombarded with sounds. People hear these sounds but do not listen to all of them. They should be thankful to God that they cannot because if they do, they shall go mad! As a self-defence mechanism, listeners block off many sounds from their consciousness by tuning them out.

Blocking off sounds is a good device as it helps in concentrating on what people want to hear. Unfortunately, they also run the risk of blocking off what they should be listening. They develop such habits so that many a times, they block off even when they are in the company of their best friends.

Fortunately such habits can be unlearned and replaced with good listening habits. Being aware of this deficiency is giving the process of unlearning a good start! Following steps are suggested:

### **(1) Preparing for listening**

This involves the followings:

#### **(i) Determining your purpose**

Listening is three types – content listening, critical listening and active / empathetic listening. Listening to a lecture in a classroom is content listening; listening to a political debate on TV is critical listening and listening to a speaker in office or small groups, is active / empathetic listening.

Each one of these requires different skills and degree of attentiveness as good listeners. At any rate, in order to become good listeners, individuals must understand why they are listening!

#### **(ii) Getting ready to listen**

Good listening implies a readiness to listen. Individuals have to prepare themselves for listening physically, mentally and emotionally. It means shutting out all distracting sounds and signals, trying to sit nearest to the speaker so that speaker can be seen and heard clearly. Mental preparations give a purpose to listening, leading to emotional involvement in listening.

#### **(iii) Accepting your share of responsibility**

Listeners should share with the speaker the responsibility of communicating rather than behave as if they are daring him to make audience take interest in the subject. In fact, quality of listening improves the quality of speakers' delivery! Everyone has an innate desire to be listened to. Quality of listening by the audience influences not only the quality of delivery but also the length of speech.

### **(2) Adopting basic rules for good listening**

These are:

#### **(i) Listening with understanding**

Receivers have to listen to the speaker completely and carefully to grasp the ideas. If necessary, they should ask questions for clarifications. They should be sure they understand the message fully.

**(ii) Listening with an open mind**

Mind is like an umbrella – it works only when it is open. Listeners have to forget their biases and prejudices and grasp new ideas even though they may conflict with theirs. The new ideas may change us a bit. Accept the change for it may be for the better.

**(iii) Listening with attention**

Listening means a lot of hard work by them because it implies three things:

**(a) Concentrating**

It means focus should be on what speaker says by cutting out noises and distraction from other sources. It takes both will power and energy.

**(b) Relating with what is already known**

By relating what people listen to with what they already know, they lay the foundation for bringing in the change. Until people learn, they do not change.

**(c) Reading between the lines**

Good listening means reading between the lines i.e., sensing the implications of the message. Good listeners analyze speakers' choice of words and phrases, observe their postures, facial expressions, tone and pitch of voice, manners, general appearances etc

**(iv) Listening with empathy**

Good listeners put themselves in speakers' place. It is making extra effort to understand speakers' viewpoint. It calls for imagination. Good listeners have to be attentive which is flattering to the speakers. It helps to draw out speakers from their shyness, hostility or suspicion they might have about the audience.

**(v) Listening intently**

Listening intently is a part of good listening. While listening, audience evaluates not only what the speaker says but also how he says it. They listen to the main idea and all the supporting details. They review all the points made and anticipate what speaker is going to say next! They analyze the evidence and finally accept or reject speakers' conclusions.

Good listeners are able not only to listen intently but also reflect on words said in the spare time available (people listen 2 to 3 times faster than the rate at which they speak). Half-hearted listeners or disinterested listeners use the spare time to daydream or turn their attention elsewhere.

Good listeners use their spare time to thought processes that are closely related to what the speaker is saying. Such listening results in increased understanding and longer remembering of the message being received.

A few tips for using the spare time wisely are:

**(a) Taking notes**

Usually speakers share notes that contain the major points of their speech. Good listeners grasp those main points and write them down.

**(b) Rephrasing and reviewing the message**

Good listeners try to retain the message by rephrasing mentally and silently. It is like taking mental notes. By repeated practice of rephrasing, individuals can become better listeners. Similarly, listeners review the main points of the speaker. By using both the methods viz., rephrasing and reviewing, they reinforce their understanding of the subject and remember the main points of the message.

**(c) Detecting bias and determining motives**

A biased and prejudiced view is a partial viewpoint. In a firm, sales persons are usually determined to sell and secure the maximum share of the market. This can bring in bias among them. Good listeners should detect this bias and recognize the motive behind it. A good principle for the buyers is to be aware of such trappings in the speakers' messages.

**(3) Practising regularly**

The above rules should be practised regularly so that they become an integral part of ones' style. Practice alone makes persons perfect.

**7.9 LISTENING HABITS OF MANAGERS AND LEADERS**

There is a distinctive pattern exhibited by different types of listeners. Students must be familiar with these patterns or habits so that they can determine where they belong and determine scope for improvement. They should accomplish the same by setting self-improvement targets. A few major ones have been tabulated below:

<b>Poor Listeners</b>	<b>Listening by Managers</b>	<b>Listening by Leaders</b>
(1) Tune off dry subjects	Explore area of interest	Look for opportunity
(2) Shut out poor delivery	Judge contents and not delivery of speech	Judge contents and skip delivery of speech
(3) Tendency to enter in to arguments	Hold his cool	Do not judge until last & interrupt only to clarify



(4) Listen to facts	Listen to ideas	Listen to central theme
(5) Take extensive notes	Flexible about taking notes	Take fewer notes; make 'mental' notes
(6) Pretend to be attentive	Work at listening	Work hard at listening
(7) Are distracted easily	Resist distraction	Fight distraction, tolerate bad speech and know how to concentrate
(8) Resist difficult subjects & seek light material	Exercise mind	Exercise mind with heavy material
(9) React to emotional words	Keep mind open	Interpret emotional words & refuse to get stuck with them
(10) Prone to day-dreaming with slow speakers	Capitalize the spare time because of difference in speeds of delivery and thinking	Challenge, anticipate, summarize, weigh, listen between lines and other clues

The above clearly establishes that individuals' style of listening has a powerful influence on their personal traits, personality and advancement in career.

### 7.10 TAKING NOTES WHILE LISTENING

Good listeners take down notes. However, this note taking should not be done at the cost of listening. If too much of time is spent taking down notes, listeners may miss the heart of the message! A few good tips for taking down notes are:

- 1 Have adequate paper, a good pen and a pencil or two
- 2 Use uncluttered backup for support while you take down notes
- 3 Label your notes for easy identification later
- 4 Listen to list of cues such as 'first', 'second' and 'finally' or 'in summary' so as to catch these details and take down notes accordingly.
- 5 Flag / mark important parts of notes by using brackets, underscore, arrows etc
- 6 Listen for special instructions
- 7 After the speech, go over notes promptly to fix major points more firmly in mind.

#### ACTIVITY

In a classroom, if notes taken by students while hearing a lecture are analyzed and compared, it may be interesting to find the linkage between quality of note-taking and their performance in the examination.....

The writer's experience is that good performers reproduce the words, phrases and sentences used by teachers in the class that are uniquely those of the concerned teacher!

## **7.11 TEN COMMANDMENTS OF GOOD LISTENING**

Someone has listed the following ten commandments of good listening:

- 1 Stop talking
- 2 Put the talker at ease
- 3 Show willingness to listen
- 4 Remove distractions
- 5 Empathize with speaker
- 6 Be patient
- 7 Hold own temper
- 8 Go easy on arguments and criticism
- 9 Ask questions
- 10 Stop talking, once again

## **7.12 SUMMARY**

Ability to listen effectively has emerged as the most strategic skill for managers and leaders. Most people are pleased when they are listened to rather than when they are talked to. Also the less a person talks, the more others like to listen to him.

Most of us are poor listeners as listening skills are not taught in high schools or even management institutes. Everyone should listen more, have better retention and memory. Hearing perceives only the sounds and not their meaning whereas listening leads to better understanding. The process of listening entails sensing, interpreting, evaluating, remembering and responding. Based on purpose, interaction and feedback, listening is classified in to content listening, critical listening and active / empathetic listening. Of these the most critical is active / empathetic listening as it requires greater self-control and discipline.

Barriers to good listening can originate from environmental, physiological, psychological, linguistic and socio-cultural factors. Nevertheless, listening skills can be improved by preparing for listening, following basic rules for good listening and practicing regularly.

Students should become familiar with the typical patterns of poor listeners so that they can make conscious efforts to assimilate leader-like traits. Taking down notes while listening and imbibing the commandment for good listening will guide the budding managers and leaders in becoming good listeners.

### 7.13 KEYWORDS

- (1) **Hearing** – It is the process of becoming aware of the sound waves especially through the stimulation of auditory nerves of the ears.
- (2) **Listening** – It is the conscious effort to hear closely, giving heed and taking advice.
- (3) **Understanding** – It is the process of getting or perceiving the meaning, implication and inference. It implies comprehending the nature, character and feelings.
- (4) **Sensing** – It is the ability of five human senses and the brain to receive and react to stimuli. It is feeling, impression, perception and recognition of things or happenings.
- (5) **Responding** – It is the process of acting in return for answering, replying and reacting.
- (6) **Empathy** – It is the projection of own personality in to the personality of others. It is an intellectual identification with another person to understand his emotions and responses.

### 7.14 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- 1 What is the role and importance of developing good listening skills in enhancing ones' career missions?
- 2 Draw up the compelling reasons for acquiring very high levels of skills in listening.
- 3 Describe the complete process of listening.
- 4 Describe different types of listening and how they differ from one another.
- 5 Describe the personal traits one should acquire to become a good active listener.
- 6 Highlight the possible impediments to good listening.
- 7 Draw up the list of steps one should take in developing good listening skills.
- 8 Explain the importance of taking down notes while listening to any speaker.
- 9 List down the ten commandments of good listening.
- 10 Highlight the personal traits managers and leaders must possess to acquire effective listening skills.
- 11 Describe the barriers to good listening.

### 7.15 SUGGESTED FURTHER READINGS

- 1 Bovee, Courtland L., Thill, John V. (1992). Business Communication Today. New York, NY: McGraw Hill Inc.
- 2 Herta A Murphy, Herbert W Hilderbrandt (1991).Effective Business Communications. New York, NY: McGraw Hill Inc.
- 3 Alessandra, Tony, Hunsaker, Phil (1994). Communicating At Work. Singapore, A Fireside Book.

## **PART III**

### **BODY LANGUAGE - NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION**

Non-verbal communication comprises of all forms of communications other than the verbal one. Although world has become more aware of it in the last 50 years, its role and relevance is increasing at a higher rate than the requisite knowledge about it. Human body movements, postures, gestures including appearances etc are guided by

inner thoughts, emotions and feelings. Just as any language uses a set of symbols to represent letters and words to convey the meanings, body language, mostly unconsciously, carries messages, attitudes, status, mood etc of the person. Although dress, accessories, perfumes and cosmetics are used to convey own feelings consciously but most persons doing so are unaware of their importance in interpersonal communications.

Body language has emerged as the richest language known and researches are adding more and newer dimensions to the concept and scope of non-verbal language. A few salient aspects of the non-verbal communication are included in the following Units:

Unit 8	Understanding Body Language
Unit 9	Paralinguistic or Paralanguage

## **UNIT 8 UNDERSTANDING BODY LANGUAGE**

### **STRUCTURE**

- 8.0 Objectives
- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Body language through Ages
- 8.3 Importance of Body Language
- 8.4 Different Non-verbal Stimuli
- 8.5 Objectives of Body Language
- 8.6 Some Facts about Body Language
- 8.7 Making Effective Use of Body Language
- 8.8 Advantages and Limitations of Body Language
- 8.9 Role of Appearances in Body Language
- 8.10 Components of Body Language
- 8.11 Kinesics or Body Movements
- 8.12 Summary
- 8.13 Keywords
- 8.14 Self Assessment Questions
- 8.15 Suggested Further Readings

## 8.0 OBJECTIVES

After perusing this unit, students shall be able to:

- Comprehend the vast scope and importance of body language in conveying messages especially in face-to-face / oral communication
- Understand use of body language in the evolution of human civilization
- Grasp the strategic role of body language in managing people, the core activity of a business enterprise
- Identify different types of non-verbal stimuli that sensitized managers / leaders should be able to perceive and distinguish
- Learn the strategic relevance of mastering skills in the use and interpretation of body language
- Absorb some well researched data about body language in management
- Understand ways to make effective use of body language, identify advantages and limitations
- Distinguish and discern the role of appearances especially clothing, hairstyle, accessories, perfumes, cosmetics, pair of spectacles in communication
- Acquire knowledge about different components of body language like kinesics, paralanguage etc and their role in communication
- Acquire deeper understanding of facial expressions, eyes, hands and arms, thumbs and fingers, feet and legs, walking styles etc

## 8.1 INTRODUCTION

Human beings are also known as ‘homo communicus’ because they communicate with other members of the species. Before spoken languages were developed, they communicated with other members by using various parts of our body – face, eyes, limbs, body and sounds to convey their feelings, emotions, ideas etc. However, interest in the subject started only after Charles Darwin wrote his book titled ‘Expressions of Emotions in Men and Animals’ in 1872 and has increased after Julius Fast wrote his book titled, ‘Body Language’ in 1970. Also called non-verbal communication, it is a complex process involving people and the gestures, expressions and sounds they make to communicate with others. Over time it is encompassing the related fields of ergonomics, neuro linguistic programming (NLP) related to impact of five basic senses and brain on human perception.

Charlie Chaplin and other famous actors of silent movies may be considered to be pioneers in non-verbal communication skills as they conveyed meaning of their acting without uttering any dialogue. Non-verbal communication specialists enjoy watching cues and clues about the attitude and responses of other people by simply watching them in social functions, formal gatherings and in television shows. It is like ‘birdwatchers’ studying birds in order to understand their movements. Much the same way, young people develop the hobby of ‘girl-watching’ or ‘boy-watching’ in order to understand the meanings of their body movements.

By studying the actions of fellow human beings, one can ultimately learn more about self. Words and movements of body parts occur together with such predictability that,

according to Prof Birdwhistle, a trained person is able to tell what movement a person is making by listening to his voice only; conversely, he is able to tell the words and phrases he is speaking by watching his gestures and expressions only. For example, a mother can easily make out from the sound of her infant child as to whether it has wetted the bed or is hungry or is just missing her.

## **8.2 BODY LANGUAGE THROUGH AGES**

Humans have been using body language to convey our thoughts since ancient times and have been aware of it as is evident from the following ancient sayings:

- Actions speak louder than words
- Watch out for the man whose stomach does not move when he laughs
- The eyes of men converse as much as their tongues, with the advantage that the ocular dialect needs no dictionary but is understood the world over
- Learning is acquired by reading books but the much more necessary learning, the knowledge of the world, is only to be acquired by reading men and studying various editions of them
- Communication is like a dance, with every one engaged in the intricate and shared movements across many subtle dimensions, yet all strangely oblivious that they are doing so
- Mortals can keep no secrets. If their lips are silent, they gossip through their fingertips. Betrayal forces its way through every pose.

At any given moment, the brain assumes a certain attitude which gets communicated to people around through various parts of the body that respond instinctively with specific actions, gestures, expressions, sounds, movements, dress, perfume etc

## **8.3 IMPORTANCE OF BODY LANGUAGE**

Researches have confirmed that verbal communication, both oral and written, primarily helps in conveying information and non-verbal communication assists in negotiating inter-personal attitudes and behaviour. In some cases, non-verbal communication even substitutes oral communication - a woman can give a man a 'look to kill' without speaking a word.

In respect of body language and the rules it follows, human beings are at the same stage of development as other animals and are governed by the biological rules that control their actions in the form of gestures, expressions and sounds. It is rather interesting to know that human beings are rarely aware of their postures, expressions and sounds that accompany their oral messaging.

Persons trained well in body language can reap the following benefits:

### **(1) Securing reliable feedback**

Body does not lie although human beings can easily be swayed in to telling things that are not true. A perceptive and trained speaker can easily find out if he is speaking

above, below or in line with the level of understanding of the audience and change / modify the message and his style to suit.

## **(2) Distinguishing truth from lie**

Sensitive observers of body language can capture cues from non-verbal communication and compare it with the verbal communication and if they do not match, they get the uncanny feeling that the speaker is not telling the truth. There is a famous maxim, 'Words may lie but the body seldom does'. Body language has been described as the language all speak but very few understand it.

## **(3) Women are more perceptive than men**

Also called 'women intuition', they have an innate ability to pick up and decipher non-verbal signs and signals and have an eye for details. No wonder, few husbands can lie successfully to their wives. Conversely, most women can pull a fast one on their men without their realizing it. Female intuition is very high among women who have grown up children. Mothers solely rely on non-verbal communication to interact with the child for the first one year or so.

## **8.4 DIFFERENT NON-VERBAL STIMULI**

Students, managers and leaders should become aware of a very large number of stimuli that come under the umbrella of body language. Following list is illustrative only:

Smiling	Hair style	Yawn	Scream
Frowning	Skin colour	Snore	Laughter
Glances	Perfume used	Sigh	Whistle
Posture	Dress	Moan	
Walking style	Physical features	Voice quality	
Spatial distance		Accent	
		Tone	

Researchers in the West have already identified about 1,000,000 gestures, expressions and sounds that can provide valuable clues to managers and leaders while communicating and negotiating with others. Much of this research has been done without any major inputs from ancient civilizations like India which has very rich tradition of dancing, singing and performing. Indian dances have rich repertory of eye contacts, facial expressions and use of limbs for conveying simple as well as subtle emotions. In India live arts have been always woven around stories. (Much of the culture in India has also been passed down generation through these live art forms).

## **8.5 OBJECTIVES OF STUDYING BODY LANGUAGE**

Through the clever use of different parts of their body people are able to telegraph their private thoughts and emotions through their gestures, expressions and sounds.



Learning to interpret other peoples' body language can help conclude if the person was lying, bored, impatient, sympathetic, defensive or whether he was open, nervous, suspicious, angry, worried or insecure. This information can be of critical importance to every one who meets customers, colleagues, suppliers and those working in the enlarging sector of services industry where customers are invariably present. Learning body language can help managers and leaders in following ways:

- (1) To gain knowledge of various non-verbal cues and clues, signs, symbols and signals so that they can modify their behaviour pattern for better, positive impact.
- (2) To grasp and understand others' body language quickly and match with their oral communication and then respond quickly, appropriately and adequately.
- (3) To enhance ones' total communication capability as people tend to emphasize the verbal part and ignore the non-verbal part. Knowledge of body language helps them to respond at both verbal and non-verbal level for total impact on the audience.
- (4) To monitor and enhance own non-verbal behaviour in interactions with other people.
- (5) To establish rapport with others by perceiving their body language and to know what pleases and offends them.
- (6) To bring out to conscious level own subconscious motivations and understand them completely.

## 8.6 IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT BODY LANGUAGE

As stated above, already about one million different gestures, expressions and sounds have been identified. It would not be out of place to mention that English is the most widely understood language in the world and consequently most developed. It has about 750,000 words although the exact number keeps fluctuating as words are added and go out of use almost simultaneously.

According to Albert Mehrabian, the average proportions of different types of communications are:

Words (verbal communication)	=	07 %
Tone, pitch of the sound (Vocal communication)	=	38 %
Non-verbal communication (body language)	=	55 %
		-----
Total	=	100 %

According to Prof Birdwhistle, it is estimated that the proportion between verbal (face to face) and non-verbal communication is:

Verbal (face to face) communication	=	35 %
Non-verbal communication (Body Language)	=	65 %
		-----
Total	=	100 %

In recent years body language has been the focus of many studies - a study has arrived at the relative proportion of the use of different parts of the body:

<b>Part of body</b>	<b>Proportion as a percent</b>	
Head	08	
Eyes	16	
Ears	03	
Nose	03	
Mouth	06	
Lips	06	
Face	16	
Heart	10	68
Neck	06	
Throat	06	12
Fingers	08	
Feet	06	
Belly	06	20
	----	-----
	100	100

The upper parts of the body contribute 80 % of the total communication.

## **8.7 MAKING EFFECTIVE USE OF BODY LANGUAGE**

Managers and leaders have to learn how to make effective use of the body language of gestures, expressions, sounds etc. A few useful tips are;

1. Remember that the body talks and communicates a great deal provided one is quick to catch the cues and clues.
  1. Be careful with the handshake – it tells a lot.
  2. Maintain a very good eye contact – it plays a major role in forming an impression.
  3. Communicate with the person at his level by judging and adjusting to his style.
  4. Be sincere and genuine. Never fake it; it can be easily detected.
  5. Always use graceful movements, gestures and expressions as they supplement the verbal communication.

## **8.8 ADVANTAGES AND LIMITATIONS OF BODY LANGUAGE**

### **(1) Advantages of Body Language**

Resourceful managers make effective use of the power of the body language. They are able to take several advantages by taking note of the signs and signals of body language:

- 1 It is a visual form of communication and is readily visible to the receivers of the message and facilitates decoding the message more accurately.
- 2 Body language happens simultaneous to oral communication and supplements it, especially in face-to-face communications.
- 3 Since body talks subconsciously, it adds intensity to the message. Without these gestures, expressions and postures, the communication may be bland.
- 4 People are generally mindful of the body language. Its proper use can enhance the environment for business negotiations.
- 5 It is a very good tool in face-to-face communication among small groups.

## **(2) Limitations of Body Language**

Some notable limitations of body language are:

1. Since it is a non-verbal communication, it is not relied upon completely and is used as a supportive add-on. Written or oral communications are taken more seriously.
2. Body language is heavily influenced by the culture of the country or the region; hence one has to be very careful in their use and understanding.
3. Listener has to be extra careful to make note of the gestures, expressions and postures to draw meanings out of them and if he is not attentive, he can go wrong.
4. Body language is not effective in large gatherings. It is a very good tool in face-to-face communication among small groups.

## **8.9 ROLE OF APPEARANCES IN BODY LANGUAGE**

In the context of non-verbal communication, appearances should include:

1. Clothing
  - Hairdressing and style
  - Jewellery and other accessories like watch, belt, shoes etc
  - Cosmetics including choice of perfume
  - Pair of spectacles

Initial thought may verge on the feeling that the above are quite unrelated to body language including movements, gestures, postures etc. However, a little deeper thought should convince that they are related to body language and can have serious influence on gestures, expressions and movements and change their meanings significantly.

It is said that a person is known by his dress and address. It emphasizes not only the kind of dress he wears but also the way he addresses his listeners. Perhaps it has some link with his postal address indicating his social status if he is residing in the upper class locality.

## **8.10 COMPONENTS OF BODY LANGUAGE**

Non-verbal communication has emerged as area of major interest to budding managers / leaders because they can exploit the knowledge successfully during negotiations and other major human interactions. Based on the developments in the broad field of body language, subject can be grouped in to the followings;

**(1) Kinesics**

Kinesics is the study of movements of different parts of the body

**(2) Paralinguistics**

Also called Para Language - it concerns with study of the role of the vocal aspects viz., volume, speed, modulation, clarity etc while speaking.

**(3) Proxemics**

It relates to the role and importance of personal or spatial distance when people interact socially.

**(4) Chronemics**

It relates to concept of time and its impact on humans in communication.

**(5) Neuro Linguistic Programming**

Effective communication is the perception of ‘what has been received’ rather than ‘what has been delivered’ and in this five human senses have significant role and influence. Neuro Linguistic Programming studies this aspect of human interaction.

In this Unit, major aspects of Kinesics or movement of different parts of body have been described.

## **8.11 KINESICS OR BODY MOVEMENTS**

Kinesics literally means ‘body movements’ and has emerged as the most important area of non-verbal communication. Kinesics stands for the way the body communicates without words but with the use of movements of the body.

It must be understood that the body movements are the reflections of ones’ feelings, emotions, thoughts and position in a given situation. By nodding their head or by shrugging their shoulders or by blinking their eyes, people are able to send messages that are often stronger than the spoken words. They are able to convey a large array of emotions, feelings and thoughts that need to be inferred from the signs and signals involving body movement.

Although the list of different parts of the body is large, following aspects will be discussed in some details:

- Facial expressions including smiling

- Eye contact, gazing, glancing and eye blocking
- Hands, palms, handshakes, double handshakes, arms, hands and fingers together
- Thumbs and fingers
- Legs and feet postures
- Walking styles

These are detailed below:

### **(1) Facial expressions including smiling**

Face is the index of heart. It is the most expressive part of the body and is also the one that is observed most by the audience. Persons' feelings and emotions get immediately transferred in to some form of expressions on the face. Facial expressions include the parts played by head, heart, eyes, nose, mouth and lips. Everyone, almost intuitively, recognizes the facial expressions associated with:

- Happiness
- Fear
- Surprise
- Anger
- Sadness
- Astonishment
- Bewilderment
- Contentment etc

Similarly, observers can easily detect smile, frown etc. In conjunction with nose and nostrils, ears, mouth, lips etc they are able to decipher many other expressions and movements very quickly. These thoughts, feelings and emotions may be either positive or negative – being able to read them from the facial and related expressions, managers and leaders are able to use the knowledge to their advantage. It is said that 'every face tells a story' and managers and leaders must learn the kinesics to grasp that story quickly and react accordingly.

The muscles of the face have a nerve center in the stem of the human brain and it contains 7,000 to 10,000 nerve cells that are spread out in different parts of the face. The facial muscles that control a smile are similar to the muscles that control posture, voice tone and pitch, movements and expressions that are triggered by emotions from emotions of the heart (right side of the brain) or thoughts (from the left side of the brain).

Very often, facial expressions involve more than one part of the face. For example, an extremely aggressive person will have his lips closed tightly, eyes wide open, eyes and eyebrows turned down, teeth clenched and he will speak with his lips barely moving! Similarly, a defiant person will have his head and chin thrust forward, lips tensed up and pushed forward so that any person can see that he is in angry mood.

#### **(i) Smiling face**

Smile is a specific feature of facial expression. It is the most universal sign, common among all cultures. It has following characteristics:

- Ordinarily, smile is related to happiness of a person
- Smile is also used when we recognize a person or accept the presence of another person
- A smiling face often appears to be friendly and cooperative
- Oblong smile happens when lips are drawn fully back from the upper and lower teeth. It expresses politeness. It also conveys respect to the teacher or the boss
- A simple smile also shows love, interest or attention to a person or an object
- If used properly, a smile can make a tense situation friendly and relaxed

Smiling plays a very crucial role in human interactions:

- 1 Smile creates a lasting first impression. A smile says, 'I like you. I am glad to see you'.
- 2 Smile is a messenger of your goodwill; it brightens the lives of all who see it. For those who often see people frown, scowl or turn their faces away, smile is like a sun breaking through the clouds.
- 3 It costs nothing but creates much – it enriches those who receive without impoverishing those who give.
- 4 It happens in a flash but the memory of it sometimes lasts forever!
- 5 One is not dressed for the day if he has not worn his smile. Nobody needs a smile so much as those who have nothing to give.
- 6 Smile creates happiness at homes, fosters goodwill in business and is the countersign of friendship.

According to an old Chinese proverb, 'A man without a smiling face must not open a shop'.

## **(ii) Laughter**

It is another allied expression where face plays a very dominant role. Laughter has been classified in to different types:

- Humorous laughter
- Social laughter
- Ignorance laughter
- Evasion laughter
- Embarrassment laughter
- Apologetic laughter
- Anxiety laughter
- Derisive laughter
- Joyous laughter

<b>ACTIVITY</b>
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Smiling and laughing are facial expressions that is easiest to detect and easier to watch. One way to do it is seeing some comedy serials on Television by putting them on mute making sound inaudible .....

A close watch on the judges and audience on the stage would reveal some interesting facts about 'smiling' and 'laughing'. Write down the various types of smiles and laughter observed and then compare with the contents of the paragraphs above.

## **(2) Eye contacts including gazing, glancing and eye blocking**

Although eyes are a part of the face and can be read along with many other facial expressions, they have a crucial role in body language and hence, merit special treatment. Owing to the critical importance of eye movements and their impact on facial expressions, this area has developed in to a science called 'oculesics' – study of eye language and its grammar. Following features of the oculesics highlight their role:

- Eyes have been referred to as 'the mirror of the soul'. They express innermost thoughts of a person. Knowing them by looking at the eyes can be a very rewarding skill and ability.
- Eyes react instantaneously to any external stimuli. They react faster than other parts of the body, Actions and contents of speech can be 'faked' quickly but it is very difficult to 'fake' the expression of eyes.
- Eyes also play a significant role in execution, action taking and collecting feedback. Eyes provide feedback that is instantaneous. (76 % of the sensory feedback happens through seeing)
- Eyeballs produce a great emotional impact from the way they affect the area of the face around the eyes.
- Eye contact is also important in oral presentations – confidence of the presenter is judged from his eyes; eye contact with the audience is also required for keeping their interest alive during presentation. Collective eye contact is also critical to the successful running of meetings, seminars etc.
- Eyes of a painting give an accurate picture of what it communicates – sadness, happiness, hunger, desire, anxiety or contentment.
- Various dance forms especially Indian dances emphasize eye movements a great deal to express the theme and the mood of the dance.

### **(i) Reading eyes**

Eyes form the focal point of the face and body movements. Proper reading of the eyes can reveal the following states of mind:

#### **(a) Positive feedback**

If the eye contact gives a positive feedback to the speaker, it boosts his confidence and imparts a new zeal to the presentation.

#### **(b) Negative feedback**

If the feedback through the eye contacts is negative, it leads to demoralizing of the speaker, resulting in his faltering and fumbling.

**(c) Positive eye contact**

A positive eye contact especially during gatherings like seminars, meetings etc, makes them interesting and lively.

**(d) Blank looks**

A person with a blank look, when eyes do not blink, appears to be bored. It means he is not listening.

**(e) Avoiding glances**

Generally people do not exchange glances with the strangers to avoid opening of any conversation or contact with them.

**(f) Avoiding eye contact**

A person avoiding eye contact may not be feeling comfortable or he may be attempting to deceive or hide something. He may have guilty conscience.

**(g) Indifference**

Eyes can easily give the idea whether the person is showing indifference to the topic being discussed or happenings in the vicinity.

**(h) Index of state of mind**

Eyes can effectively reveal anger, authority, fear, disgust, timidity, confidence, love, intimacy etc

**(i) Index of emotional state**

Eyes can also convey the emotional states of happiness, sadness, surprise, fear, disgust or pain.

**(j) Staring eyes**

Although people do not like staring, a person in love stares often.

**(k) Sidelong glances**

A person engaged in sidelong glances may be suspicious, doubtful or distrusting of what is happening around.

**(l) Concentrated eyes**



A person with concentrated eyes, accompanied by lowering of eyelids, is not concealing the eyes; instead, he is focusing on some interesting object as is often used by artists and lovers.

**(m) Wearing glasses on eyes**

It does not come in the way of reading the eyes. On the contrary, it may yield additional information to the watcher. A person removing glasses and then wearing it again quickly wants quick decisions.

**(n) Eyes lighting up**

Eyes light up when one is happy or excited about something or when he wants to share someone's happiness.

**(o) Eyes welling up**

When a person empathizes with another individual, eyes well up.

**(p) Dilation and contraction of pupils of the eyes**

If a person is very excited, the pupil can dilate up to four times its normal size. Contracted eyes make them look beady or like snake eyes that shows anger. Babies and small children use dilation of pupils to gain attention. Dilation of pupil by kids makes them appear more desirable.

**(q) Expression of anger and hostility through eyes**

The expression of anger and hostility through other parts of the body is largely controllable but it is very difficult to control the anger and hostility through the eyes. It invariably leads to serious conflicts.

Almost every adult must have experienced:

- 'A look that would kill'
- 'A come-hither look'
- 'I am available look'
- 'A fist eye'

As a rule, successful managers develop a good understanding with their subordinates through eye contact. It leads to better rapport between the manager and his subordinates. This kind of relationship with subordinates enhances human potential, their output and productivity.

Eye movements form the lifeblood of Indian classical dances – they use a permutation and combination of eyebrows, eyelids, eyelashes and pupil and make eyes the potent instrument for suggestions and other emotional feelings.

In most situations of business interest, managers should look in to the eyes when they are talking to someone. It is interesting to note that the late A Onassis, a

Greek shipping magnate who often emerged as a successful negotiator of deals, wore dark glasses while negotiating!

**(ii) Gaze behaviour**

Real process of communication gets established when people make eye to eye with other individuals. This is known as gaze behaviour and its important features are:

- (a) Some people can make you feel comfortable when you are conversing with them by their gaze behaviour.
- (b) Some people can make you feel ill at ease with their gaze behaviour when conversing with you.
- (c) When a person is not maintaining eye contact and the duration of eye contact is less than one-third of the time, they arouse a feeling of untrustworthiness in them as they seem to be holding back information and are not honest or forthright.
- (d) When the gaze continues for more than two-third of the time, it can imply one of the followings:
  - If the gaze leads to dilated eye pupils, it means the other person finds you interesting
  - If the gaze leads to contracted eye pupils, it means the other person is hostile to you.
- (e) Gazing helps to build rapport with colleagues, subordinates and bosses. If gazing continues for more than two-third of the total time, it leads to positive results. If a person continues gazing for over two-third of the time with the boss, he can win his confidence.
- (f) A nervous person who holds the gaze for less than one-third of the time cannot be trusted.
- (g) Some gazing is culture-centric. South Europeans gaze longer that may be offensive in some cultures. Japanese gaze at the neck rather than at the face!
- (h) The geographical area on which the gaze is focused has profound meaning especially during negotiations:
  - If directed at the other person's forehead, it creates serious atmosphere and the other person can sense you mean business. If the manager wants to reprimand his subordinate, gaze will focus on the forehead.
  - If gaze does not drop below the eye level, person is able to maintain control over the interactions.
  - When gaze falls below the eye levels, it leads to creation of social atmosphere.
  - If the area of focus is across the eyes and below the chin of the other person, it is an intimate gaze.
- (i) If salespersons can find out what is on customers' mind, it is valuable to them:
  - If prospects' eyes are downcast and face is turned away, he is shutting you away.
  - If prospects' eyes engage yours for several seconds at a time, he is weighing your proposal.

- If prospects' head is shifted to the same level as yours, the sale is virtually made.

**(j) Gaze plays a big role in courtship:**

- Signals are exchanged when they meet each other's gaze
- Girls use makeup to emphasize their eye display
- If a girl likes the boy, her eye pupils dilate and get properly decoded
- With partially drooped eyes, girl will hold boy's gaze just long enough for him to notice and then quickly turn her gaze away
- A girl can convey coy looks by blinking quickly 2 to 3 times in a short span of time
- If a girl's gaze is accompanied by dilation of pupils, it shows she is interested

**(iii) Glance behaviour**

Glances are part and parcel of everyday communication. They are also used in dancing and other live arts. They are the dramatic versions of the glances of everyday life:

- Sideway glances combined with a smile communicate interest and is frequently a signal of courtship
- Sideway glance combined with slightly raised eyebrows convey hostility
- Sideway glances combined with down-turned eyebrows and furrowed signal suspicion and critical attitude
- Sideway glance combined with corners of the mouth turned down also signal suspicion and critical attitude.

**(iv) Eye blocking**

It is very irritating to deal with people who use eye-blocking gesture as they speak:

- When a person attempts to block other person from sight, he is eye-blocking because either he is bored or feels superior.
- An average person blinks 6 to 8 times in a minute. If the person is closing his eyes longer, he is momentarily trying to wipe you off his mind.
- The ultimate eye blocking occurs when the other person keeps his eyes closed.
- If one experiences eye blocking from his boss, it is a danger signal – it should immediately tell him that the approach he is following is causing negative reaction. He must switch to another approach or tactics if the communication has to proceed in an effective manner!

**ACTIVITY**

Another rewarding activity is watching eye contacts and related eye movements and expressions. It is interesting to watch an infant less than one year in age who cannot speak. It conveys a lot of emotions through its eyes.....

Another good way is watching a young girl dressed up well for the evening and walking around in the market in the company of another girl .....

By closely watching their eye movements, write down what is observed under two separate headings of (1) Infant watching (2) Girl watching and compare with what is written above.

**(3) Hands, palms, handshakes, double handshake, arms, hands & arms together**

Hands, palms etc form visible parts of the upper half of the body. They are used more frequently than the other parts and are detailed below:

**(i) Hands**

A few common movements are:

**(a) Clenched hands in a sitting position**

It normally signifies determination. However, in interviews, it is a sign of nervousness.

**(b) Hands inter-locked at crotch level**

Such a posture is meant for statues; it should not be used at all.

**(c) Slashing / jabbing the air and then pointing forefinger to someone**

It is a strong warning or making an accusation on someone.

**(d) Hugging of the self**

When some one is hugging self with arms and hands, it conveys uncertainty and lack of confidence

**(e) Arms folded in front of the chest with thumb pointing upwards**

The individual has closed personality and closed mind. He suffers from a superiority complex.

**(f) Holding hands in front of the abdomen**

It has two interpretations depending upon the position of hands:

- If the left hand cups the right hand, the individual is of artistic bend of mind – related to the right side of the brain.
- If the right hand cups the left hand, the individual is of logical mind – related to the left side of the brain.

**(g) Clasping of the hands behind the back**

It implies that the individual is very confident of himself. He is not used to taking orders and is in the habit of issuing directions.

**(h) Either hand behind the neck**

The individual is trying to analyze the problem and evaluating the proceedings of the interaction. The other person should be careful in interactions as the issues are being evaluated.

**(i) Both hands clasping behind the neck**

It is a danger signal because it means as if the spine or backbone is being straightened before the final plunge!

**(j) Both hands behind the head**

Positioning of both hands behind the head is a gesture of superiority, confidence and possible arrogance. This gesture if combined with the expression on the face and eyes can be interpreted as under:

- If the individual maintains eye contact, he feels superior and is confident.
- If the individual turns his head away but continues to position his hands behind the head, he is dismissing your position without much ado. It is pointless to continue further interaction with the person.

**(k) Scratching the head**

As is the proverb, individual is confused and would like to sort things out as they are causing a lot of discomfort.

**(l) Stroking the chin**

It implies that the ideas brought up in the discussions are being pruned and being given due consideration. Issues will be taken to their logical conclusions.

**(m) Scratching or lightly rubbing one side of the neck**

Rubbing one side of the neck may involve one or two fingers only. It means the individual is insecure and is looking for some kind of assurance that he would get from stroking the self or being in close proximity of his own self.

**(n) Clenching of hands**

It conveys different meanings if the person is speaking and listening:

- If speaking, it implies frustration about the issue and also uncertainty about how long the interaction would continue

- If listening, it means that he is responding rather negatively to whatever is being said.

**(o) Thumbs hidden inside the fists**

This gesture implies that the person is not able to resolve the issue or reach an amicable solution. Additionally, if the thumbs are well covered, it means the person is depicting his inability to face the situation or come up with a satisfactory solution.

**(p) One or both the hands on the hip**

If a person is standing erect with one or both the hands on the hip, it denotes two things – either it is a habitual gesture or one that implies authority or royalty and the person is a monarch of all he surveys!

**(q) Hands down and fists clenched**

It means that the person is getting ready for a quarrel and is ready for the final outburst. The other person can give him a break before he lets off his steam because, otherwise, he is likely to be very aggressive and hostile.

**(r) Rubbing hands**

There are several interpretations:

- If the rubbing of hands is quick, it implies that the person is excited about something that is satisfying too.
- Slower the rubbing of hands, more dangerous is the implication. It indicates that some kind of deception is going to take place. It also implies that something is going on in the mind of the person that needs close watching.
- Still slower rubbing of the hands similar to when they are cleaned or washed, indicates that the individual is deciding to steer clear of the situation.

**(s) Pressing the hands in front of the body like Indian namaskar**

The gesture indicates that the individual should be given a chance to present and defend his case. In such gestures of persuasion, there is an element of request that implies that he is in desperate need of having his case heard.

**(t) Stapling of the fingers and thumbs together**

This gesture signifies that the person is of a very confident nature and is certain of the opinions he wants to put across in the interaction. Being a person of extreme strength and convictions, little can shake his confidence in whatever he wishes to convey.

**(u) Leaning forward with head supported by one or both the hands**

This has two variants:

- If accompanied with enthusiastic looks in the eyes, it shows interest in the listener
- If it is coupled with bored look on the face, it implies the listener is bored or tired of the interaction.

**(v) Person holding his ears with both hands**

Although not very common, it implies that the person is sorry and apologetic for what he has done.

**(ii) Palms**

Human palms are used to give one of the most powerful signals given by human palms. Some of these are:

**(a) Open palm gesture while talking or speaking**

This stands for openness and frankness. It is very valuable when you are making an oral presentation. It shows a positive personality.

**(b) An open palm pointing upwards**

It indicates submissiveness, as if asking for alms.

**(c) An open palm but pointing downwards**

It reflects authority. The person is in command. If request is given to subordinate, it is acceptable. However, if request is given to a colleague with open palm pointing downwards, he may feel annoyed.

**(d) Palm closed in to a fist but forefinger pointing**

By this gesture, the speaker is beating his listener in to submission. It is one of the most irritating gestures a speaker can use. If you are a habitual finger pointing type, try palm up or palm down positions. These lead to more relaxed attitude that has a more positive effect on others.

**(iii) Handshakes**

Shaking hands is a relic from the old caveman age. Whenever they came out of their cave and saw others, they shook their hands to let the other persons know that they are not carrying arms. Over time, this got modified in to a handshake that involves interlocking and shaking of palms. Internationally, this has become a popular way of greeting on meeting and once again, when departing excepting some older civilizations as in India where 'namaskar' is still popular.

There are several types of handshakes:

**(a) Normal (Equal) handshake with thumbs pointing sideways**

It indicates good grip with a good degree of professionalism in approach. It reflects equality in attitude and in behaviour. All managers and leaders must learn how to do handshake professionally.

**(b) Handshake with your thumb on top of the other person's hand**

It suggests you are in control of the situation

**(c) Handshake with other person's thumb on top of your hand**

It means that the other person is in control

**(d) Handshake with person offering hand with open palm pointing downwards**

It suggests that the person is presenting a dominant handshake. To counter it, the other party should catch the hand from the top and shake it. With this, the other party becomes the dominant partner!

**(e) If offered a dominant handshake, step forward with left foot**

When the second party steps forward on the left foot, it allows him to strengthen the handshake position. The second party can even turn other person's hand in to submissive position.

**(f) Handshake with right foot forward**

Most persons are right footed and they move forward to the right to shake hands. It enables the person to step into the other person's intimate zone and brings the handshake to a vertical position for equal exchange

**(g) Knuckle grinding (tight) handshake**

It is a tight handshake and indicates rough and tough guy. It should be avoided in social interactions.

**(h) Dead-fish handshake**

It is an uninviting handshake – the hands are cold, sweating and lifeless. Such persons are weak and socially not groomed. It gives one the feeling of dampness and being uncomfortable. Many persons using this handshake are not aware of it. They should ask their friends before deciding which one to adopt as a habit.

**(i) Fingertip-grab (limp) handshake**



The other person mistakenly grabs the tips of the fingers. It indicates diffident person, not groomed socially. If intentional, person has a weak personality and wants to keep the other person at arm's length.

**(j) Informal handshakes**

This happens among friends. A preliminary to this handshake is the banging of hands midair before doing an informal handshake.

Another version of it is that the handshake begins with the index fingers, moves on to the little fingers and then to the thumbs, before interlocking in to a warm handshake.

**(iv) Double handshakes**

These are also happening with a great deal of regularity. A few of the gestures fall under the intimate level of relationship and may not be useful in business and formal arena. A few well know ones are:

**(a) Glove (politician) handshake**

The gesture means that the receiver of handshake holds your hand with both the hands. The person is trying to give the impression that he is sincere and trustworthy. However, if this is done with someone who is not known, the person should become cautious and suspicious.

**(b) Left hand on the wrist while shaking with the right hand**

Left hand is used to show sincerity, trust and depth of feelings.

**(c) Left hand on the forearm near the elbow while shaking with right hand**

Higher the level of point at which the left hand is while shaking with right hand, more intimate and intense are the feelings being conveyed.

**(d) Left hand on the upper arm while shaking with the right hand**

This takes the handshake in to the area of personal / intimate zone. It may not be used in business and other similar interactions.

**(e) Left hand on the shoulder while shaking with the right hand**

This takes the person in to more personal and intimate zone.

**(v) Arms**

Arms are often used as barriers to defend ones' position or to hide self. A few common gestures involving arms are as below:

**(a) Standard arm-cross gesture**

When both hands are folded across the chest, attempt is to hide from unfavourable situations. It is a universal gesture signifying negative or defensive attitude. When a person is among strangers in a public meetings, queues, cafeterias, lifts etc, people feel uncertain and insecure.

A simple but effective method to avoid this is to hand the person a pen, a book or something that forces him to open his arms. Another method is to reach him and ask if he wanted to ask a question. Successful salespersons do not proceed with the presentation about their product until they have uncovered the reasons for customer folding his arms.

**(b) Reinforced arm-cross gesture**

If in addition to the above he has clenched his fists with a red face, a verbal or physical attack is imminent. A submissive palm open up approach is required to discover the reason if it is not known already.

**(c) Arms folded and gripping the upper arms**

Often the arms are gripped so tight that fingers and knuckles turn white because the blood circulation is cut off. This gesture is common among people waiting in doctors' / dentists' clinics. A first time traveller prior to plane taking off also exhibits this gesture as it shows negative restrained attitude.

**(d) Arms folded in front and thumbs pointing vertically upwards**

When a young executive among unfamiliar people does a handshake with the top boss and then stands aside with arms folded with thumbs pointing vertically upwards, it represents a defensive gesture but with a cool approach. It reflects self confidence with folded arms giving a sense of protection

**(e) Arms folded partially in front with one hand in the other**

This is a partial arm-cross barrier and often seen in meetings among strangers. It is a common gesture used by people who stand before a crowd to receive an award or give a speech. This gesture reminds people of their childhood days when parents held his hand under fearful circumstances!

**(f) One arm swings across the body to hold or touch the other arm in normal position**

This is also a partial arm-cross gesture as described in (e) above.

**(vi) Hands and arms together**

Hands clenched together indicate a position of frustration like a sales person having lost a deal. Various gestures that are common are:

**(a) Sitting with hands clenched in front of the face**

If the hands are held high, it is more difficult to handle him.

**(b) Sitting on the desk with hands clenched but resting on the table**

It is also a sign of frustration but perhaps to a less degree

**(c) Hands clenched in the lap while sitting or hands clenched in front of crotch while standing**

It is also a sign of frustration but to a still lower degree.

**(d) Sitting with elbows resting on the table but hands going up in a steeple**

This posture is common among speakers who talk while sitting. The person is giving his ideas, opinions and views. If given at the end of a long session with a salesperson, it signals closing of the deal. When this position is taken with head tilted back, it indicates that the talker is assuming an air of smugness or arrogance.

**(e) Sitting in a lounge chair but hands going down in a steeple**

This gesture is common among those who are listening to someone. Women take this position more than men.

**(f) Arms at the back with one hand gripping the other hand**

This is common gesture among the royalties across the nations, policemen on beat, principals on their round of the school etc. This is a gesture of superiority or confidence. It lets people expose their stomach, heart and neck areas as acts of fearlessness unconsciously.

**(g) Arms at the back with one hand gripping the other forearm just above the wrist**

It shows that the person is angry about something and he is gripping the wrist to restrain himself.

**(h) Arms at the back with one hand gripping the other upper arm**

It shows that the person is very angry and is trying to exercise a greater degree of control by gripping the upper arm. It might happen when some one is made to wait very long after the appointed time. Perhaps that is the origin of the idiom, 'Get a good grip on your-self'.

**(4) Thumb and fingers**

Thumbs and finger have also important roles in non-verbal communication. These shall be discussed separately although briefly.

**(i) Thumbs display**

Thumbs display strength of character and ego of a person. Thumbs displays are positive signals. ‘Cool’ managers, courting men in the company of their female partners and persons wearing rather attractive, fashionable clothes use these postures often. A few popular postures are:

**(a) Hands in the pocket of waistcoat or cardigan with thumbs outside**

Thumb displays indicate a sense of superiority. They are positive signals and if used intentionally, can give incorrect signals.

**(b) Person holding robe / jacket in one hand & thumb pointing upwards**

A person like an advocate addressing a jury may use very apologetic and humble form of address but if he is holding his robe or jacket with one hand with its thumb pointing upwards, it conveys a contrary message of speaking from authority and vanity. If he wanted to match his words, he should have taken one foot forward, with his jacket open and open palm pointing upwards and stooping forward a bit.

**(c) Both hands in trousers’ pocket (back / front) & thumbs protruding out**

This gesture is common among both men and women and people use it to hide their domineering attitude. Women have adopted this male gesture over time.

**(d) Arms folded in front with hands under armpit & thumbs pointing upwards**

This is double signal – it is defensive or negative approach owing to folded hands but thumbs pointing upwards indicate a superior attitude.

**(e) Thumb pointing to another person**

This is a symbol of disrespect or ridicule. People use it for persons they do not like.

**(ii) Finger movements**

These can also be observed fairly quickly and are useful cues of body movements:

**(a) Index finger pointing**

Several interpretations are:

- If index finger is pointed to someone, it is considered an accusation and should be avoided.
- If it is accompanied by heated arguments, it is a negative signal.

- A simple finger pointing is usually associated with authority, parents and preachers.

**(b) Steeple-like fingers**

Several meanings are:

- Fingers not pointing to anyone in particular convey confidence, egotistic, pontifical or a proud gesture. Such persons are very sure and have a sense of superiority.
- A raised steeple pointing upwards implies that he is giving his opinion while speaking.
- A lowered steeple means he is listening.

**(c) The ‘O’ gesture**

When tips of the index finger and thumb are brought together to form ‘O’, it has several meanings as under:

- In English speaking countries including India - OK or perfect.
- In Japan - Money
- In France - Zero
- In Brazil - Insult

**(d) The ‘V’ sign**

Popularized by Winston Churchill during the Second World War, it is a sign of victory in all English speaking nations of the world including India.

**(e) Scratching neck with one or two fingers**

It signifies doubt or uncertainty.

**(5) Legs, and Feet Postures**

Like arms and hands, legs and feet also play significant roles. A few important and common postures are:

**(i) Leg Postures**

**(a) Standard leg-cross posture**

In this posture, one leg neatly crosses over the other leg – usually right leg over the left for men and left leg over the right for women. This posture indicates nervous, reserved and defensive attitude. This is a supportive gesture and occurs with other postures and should not be interpreted in isolation. It is common among the audience listening to a lecture. It also happens during cold weather. If it happens with arms folded in front of the chest, it will be foolish to expect any positive outcome from the interaction.

**(b) Leg lock position with a figure of 4 (American)**

If the legs are not slightly across but make a full cross over resembling a figure of 4, it indicates an argumentative or competitive position. For instance, in a sales conference, when an argumentative sales person while addressing the gathering, was criticizing management working, managers were sitting leg-cross, with arms folded in very defensive position. However, when the speaker started giving suggestions for improving the working, almost like an orchestra, the managers shifted the posture to the argumentative and combative type!

**(c) Leg locked like figure of 4 and clamped**

A person who has had a hard and tough argument and debate will clamp his position with one or two hands. This is a signal of being tough-minded, stubborn person and would need a special approach to break through the barrier.

**(d) Standing leg cross posture**

When attending a meeting or a function, one finds a number of persons standing with cross legs and folded arms in front. They also stand at a distance from one another indicating they are strangers to one another. This group would remain well buttoned up. You will also notice another group who are standing with arms unfolded, coats unbuttoned and more relaxed than the previous group. They know one another well, moving in and out of each others' intimate distance frequently.

**(e) Cold or defensive posture**

Many persons claim that they cross legs and arms because they feel cold. This is often a cover-up because there is a difference between the two. When a person feels cold, he puts his arms under the armpit and not under the elbows. When one feels cold, a person folds his arms in the form of a body hug and legs are crossed but straight, stiff and pressed hard against each other.

**(f) Ankle-lock posture**

Ankle lock is also a negative gesture similar to cross leg and cross arm posture. In male version, ankle lock is combined with clenched fists on the knees or with hands tightly gripping the arms of the chair and feet are together near the ankle. In the female version, knees are held together and legs crossing below the knees. Hands are either on the thighs next to each other or one above the other. This kind of posture is common among candidates for interviews. They try to hold back negative thoughts, emotions and nervousness. Litigants sit with ankle lock in the court. Girls in miniskirts sit in that position and observers are likely to misinterpret!

**(ii) Feet postures**

**(a) Foot-lock posture**

This posture is almost exclusive to women – toes of one foot lock around the other leg. It is a defensive position. In this posture, women become a mental recluse, retreating like a tortoise in to the shell.

**(b) Standing erect with evenly distributed weight on both legs**

Person is confident

**(c) Standing with tilted body weight**

It is a clumsy and casual posture

**(d) Standing with drooping shoulders and sagging body**

It is a timid and weak personality.

**(e) Standing with arms held loosely by the side of the body**

Person is open and friendly.

Postures represent ones' personality. Observers are able to recognize persons from a long distance because of the familiarity with their standing postures even before they are able to see them clearly.

**(6) Walking styles**

Style of walking can help detect the type of personality traits of individuals. However, walking style alone should not be used as the determining factor. This has to be taken together with other postures, gestures etc. Some of the common styles of walking are:

**(i) Walking with hands in pocket**

This is a portrayal of a macho image. He may be shy, withdrawn and critical of happenings around.

**(ii) Walking with hands in pocket, disorganized walk with head bent**

The person may be depressed.

**(ii) Walking with hands in pocket, disorganized walk and kicking an imaginary object**

The person might be upset and angry.

**(iv) While walking, his eyes are focused on the ground**

The person is lost in his thoughts.

**(v) While walking, his eyes are focusing in the air**

He is pre-occupied and is looking for solution to problems.

**(vi) Strutting style of walking**

He is a person of extreme certainty of opinion and very confident of himself.

## **8.12 SUMMARY**

Human beings have always communicated with other members of the species. Before spoken languages were developed, they used different parts of the body to convey their emotions, feelings and ideas. People have been aware of using parts of the body to convey their thoughts since times immemorial. Whenever brain assumes certain attitude, it gets communicated to people around through body parts as they respond intuitively with specific actions, gestures and expressions. Persons trained in body language can secure reliable feedback from their audience and distinguish when the speaker is telling a truth or lie. Women have eyes for details and are more receptive than men in picking up these cues and clues.

Objective of learning body language is to gain knowledge and modify own behaviour, change oral communication in line with the feedback and respond quickly for better total impact on the audience. Monitoring non-verbal cues enables people to improve interaction, establish rapport by learning what pleases / offends and bring about a subconscious motivation to conscious level for complete understanding with others.

Communication is 7 % verbal, 38 % vocal and 55 % non-verbal – nearly 80 % coming from the upper part of the body. Advantages to managers are that body language is visual, happens simultaneous to oral communication, makes message more intense, enhance environment for interaction / negotiation and is very effective in small gatherings. Limitations are that, being non-verbal, it is not taken as seriously as oral / written communications, gets influenced by local culture / customs, listeners / observers have to be very careful and attentive to notice and infer and is not very effective in large gatherings.

It is now recognized that besides body parts, clothing, hair styles, jewellery, accessories, cosmetics / perfumes and even pair of spectacles / sunglasses play significant role in body language. A person is also known by his dress and address.

Five major areas of study of body language are kinesics (movements of body parts), paralinguistic (voice power), proxemics (concept of personal spaces), chronemics (impact of time and timing) and neuro linguistic programming (role and influence of human senses and mind).

Kinesics is the most important part of non-verbal communication and covers facial expressions including smiling, eye contacts and related gazing, glancing and eye blocking, hands, palms, handshakes, double handshakes, arms etc, thumbs / fingers and legs, body postures, standing / walking styles etc.



### 8.13 KEYWORDS

- (1) **Vocal communication** – It is uttered, produced and performed by voice, spoken and sung, that makes oral sound.
- (2) **Visual communication** – It is connected with and used in seeing, making mental pictures, through insight or intuition.
- (3) **Cue** – A signal in dialogue (usually a musical note) in a stage performance reflecting the frame of mind, mood and temperament.
- (4) **Clue** – It is something that leads one out of a maze, perplexity and help solve a problem.
- (5) **Perceptive** – It is the ability to become aware of the objects, data etc in the surroundings readily.
- (6) **Rapport** – It is a close relationship based on agreement and harmony.
- (7) **Stimuli** – It is a number of stings, pangs and torments that arouse or incite to action or increased action. Starting as nerve impulses, they activate connected muscles.
- (8) **Culture** – It is the concepts, habits, skills, arts, instruments, institutions etc of a given people in a given period of civilization.
- (9) **Kinesics** - It is the study of the ways in which body communicates without words but with the use of different parts of the body.

### 8.14 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- 1 Describe the role body language must have played during the evolutionary stages of human civilization.
- 2 Explain the critical role of body language in oral face-to-face communications.
- 3 List the various non-verbal stimuli you have experienced and describe any five of them in details.
- 4 What benefits managers and leaders can derive from developing a deep understanding of the body language?
- 5 Describe the major components of body language and their relative importance.
- 6 Explain how we can make effective use of body language during negotiations and other human interactions.
- 7 Highlight the advantages and disadvantages of learning body language.
- 8 Justify the importance of Kinesics as a critical set of knowledge that is of crucial value in managers and leaders.
- 9 Draw up the main groupings of body movements and describe briefly their relative importance.
- 10 Describe the various movements of the eyes including gazing, glancing and eye blocking for enhancing oral communications.
- 11 Describe some major movements involving hands, palms and arms.
- 12 Describe major movements involving facial expressions.
- 13 Highlight some of the popular movements involving fingers.
- 14 Describe a few movements with feet and legs that have a direct influence on interpersonal communications.

## **8.15 SUGGESTED FURTHER READINGS**

- 1 Bovee, Courtlaand L., Thill, John V. (1992). Business Communication Today. New York, NY, USA: McGraw Hill Inc.
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- 3 Pease, Allan (1995). Body Language. New Delhi: Sudha Publications Ltd.
- 4 Lewis, Hedwig (2000).Body language: A Guide for Professionals. New Delhi, Response Book.

## **UNIT 9 PARALINGUISTICS OR PARA LANGUAGE**

### **STRUCTURE**

- 9.0 Objectives
- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Voice Power
- 9.3 Importance of Voice
- 9.4 Types of Voices
- 9.5 Quality of Voice
- 9.6 Understanding Speech Mechanism
- 9.7 Skills for Enhancing Voice Power
- 9.8 Correcting one's Voice
- 9.9 Advantages and Limitations of Paralanguage
- 9.10 Summary
- 9.11 Keywords
- 9.12 Self Assessment Questions
- 9.13 Suggested Further Readings

### **9.0 OBJECTIVES**

After learning this unit, students shall be able to:

- Grasp the relevance of paralanguage in delivering oral messages
- Distinguish different types of voices
- Become a good judge of ones' voice

- Learn the physiological aspects of speech mechanism and functions performed by respiratory, phonatory and articulatory systems
- Acquire the self improvement skills for enhancing voice power
- Correct ones' voice for improvements
- Understand the advantages and limitations of paralanguage
- Train ones' voice to become strong and commanding, soft and pleasing, caring and caressing to suit the situation.

## **9.1 INTRODUCTION**

The literal meaning of 'para-' is 'like'; the subject relates to a field that is 'like language'. It is not a language because it does not involve any words. However, no words can be spoken or sung without the sound that accompanies it. It is a non-verbal communication, known as 'vocal communication'. Without it, words do not convey the intended meaning. Thus the entire subject of communication has three distinct components:

- Verbal is what of the message i.e., words
- Vocal is how of the message i.e., voice of the speaker
- Visual is the supportive body movements without which a face-to-face message is incomplete.

## **9.2 VOICE POWER**

Human voice has been hailed as the 'organ of the soul'. Human beings are very fortunate to have been blessed with the ability to produce, modulate and throw the voice in the way they desire to influence the audience. With devotion and practice, they can reproduce the voices of different animals, birds etc. They are also able to replicate the sounds of different musical instruments.

Voice is an important part of ones' personality. A talented manager could not progress much in his career because he had a squeaky voice. Another erudite person wanted to become a trainer but because his voice crackled often, it failed to make the right impression on his wards. There are also instances when a hoarse or husky voice was thought to be very seductive and women with husky voice could easily command attention in party circuits.

## **9.3 IMPORTANCE OF VOICE**

The critical role of voice in oral communication cannot be over-emphasized. Following findings of a study are both interesting and revealing:

What you say	- 07 % (mostly hearing)
How you say	- 38 % (hearing and seeing)
Body language	- 55 % (seeing)

From the above it is evident that ‘what is said’ is not as important as ‘how it is said’. And ‘how’ is greatly influenced by the reproduction of sound waves, their transmission and reception by the listeners.

The quality, tone and texture of your voice and the manner and speed of its delivery have a major role in influencing the audience. Combined with other etiquettes / mannerism, ‘how it is said’ is over five times more effective than ‘what is said’.

## **9.4 TYPES OF VOICES**

Several notable types of voices are:

- Baby voices
- Pleasing voices
- Firm voices
- Unattractive voice

### **(1) Baby voices**

The moment a baby is borne, it starts communicating. A newly born baby expresses itself through ‘gurgling sounds’. Mothers can make it out soon. Experienced mothers can guess very accurately from the sounds a baby makes, whether it is hungry or has wetted the bed or is just missing the presence of someone.

Equally, even babies, at very early stage, are able to distinguish between tones of its parents - whether it is endearing, playful or unpleasant.

Pet dogs respond to the tones of their masters very faithfully – they go by the way some thing is said rather than understand the verbal command. It is surprising how accurate they are in their interpretation of their masters’ commands. For example:

- Pet animals obey promptly the ‘stern voice’ of their masters
- Pet dogs start wagging their tails to a ‘loving voice’
- Pet dogs can start jumping to a playful tone of their masters’ voice

At other times, they start licking the master.

### **(2) Pleasing voice**

A pleasing voice is the first requirement of a ‘charming speech’. The future managers and leaders must cultivate it assiduously.

#### **A CASE EXAMPLE**

A well-established person in the field of organizing successful international conferences wanted to diversify in to management development programmes. He went in to a strategic alliance with another senior person who had a big name in the field of organizing management development programmes. Being a junior partner in

the alliance, management development specialist used to go out of the way to encourage participation of the senior partner. Unfortunately, his voice crackled quite a bit. Appearing for the same audience with his junior partner led to poor feedback about the senior partner. Obviously, the partnership did not last long and was terminated on the most flimsy grounds!

It is said that the voice of a perfect lady ‘ravishes all senses’. She can wield a great deal of influence on her listeners!

### **(3) Firm voice**

A firm but quiet voice is an asset to a speaker. Cultivating a firm but quiet voice is an art. You have to practise hard to achieve a certain level of expertise. It pays rich dividends to the possessor of such a voice. It makes ones’ utterances very persuasive. Speakers with this voice quality command greater attention as people like listening to them.

### **(4) Unattractive voice**

Unattractive voice can drive people away from them. Shrill voice gets on people’s nerves. Swan is beautiful to look at and has a graceful body but it possesses a shrill voice. A loud woman sounds very derogatory – audience would not like her speech either. The unattractive voice can be further classified as below:

#### **(i) Harsh voice**

It may arise from the tension in the throat muscles. Practise deep breathing and other exercises to relax throat muscles. Try and practise speaking at a low pitch. Speakers should open mouth just enough for throwing the voice to the audience.

#### **(ii) Shrill voice**

If the voice is shrill, it is difficult to overcome the deficiency without the help of a speech therapist.

#### **(iii) Nasal voice**

A nasal twang can spoil ones’ voice and make it unpleasant to listen to. The persons with nasal voice should pay attention to improve quality of their voice. In no case should one become self-conscious. Please remember that a natural flow and smoothness of words is the best.

## **9.5 QUALITY OF VOICE**

Everyone should be an honest judge of his voice. Listen to own recorded voice on an audio-cassette. The voice can be corrected by practicing – reading aloud from books, magazines and newspapers. Reciting poems loudly also helps.

Correcting ones' voice and regular practice in speaking helps and is very rewarding.

Quality of voice can be judged from the following three aspects:

1. Tone
  - Pitch
  - Texture

These are described below:

### **(1) Tone of speech**

'Tones of human voice are mightier than the strings of brass in moving the soul'. We also know that army commanders' tone can catapult soldiers in to action at the quick. Tones of voice convey a vast range of emotions – from anger to happiness, from sorrow to command etc.

A mother's tone soothes her baby. Film stars are trained to modulate the tone of their voice to suit the demands of the scene they are enacting. They spend many long hours in the dubbing studios to record the correct 'tone' of their voice.

In speech, it is the vocal sound and covers the choice of words, phrases etc. It stands for intonation of their voice that expresses a particular meaning or feeling of the speaker / writer. It represents a certain attitude on the part of the speaker / writer.

Tone stands for elegance – a distinctive style. It is the rising, falling and other inflections by words that are otherwise pronounced in the same manner that differentiate a speaker. It is that sound which is distinct and identifiable even when it is in harmonic relations with other sounds. It means the sound produced by the vibrations of the vocal cords that has a syllabic stress imparts the desired tone that tunes in with the listeners.

### **(2) Pitch of the speech**

It is the process of setting up or erecting, throwing, casting, flinging or hurting forward the voice. It is intended to fix a particular point, level or degree of speech delivery. It is the quality of sound that is determined by the frequency of vibrations of the sound waves reaching the listeners' ears. As a rule, greater the frequency of vibrations, higher is the pitch of speech.

### **(3) Texture of the speech**

Derived from the weaving of the fabrics, it connotes the composition and the structure of the speech. It should be woven like artists do. Speakers or writers are like artists who have at their disposal a set of speech organs and they should weave the magic of their offerings in a systematic and logical manner so that it shows their class.

## ACTIVITY

Every one is familiar with a number of popular ad-movies that are beaming on television screens in India. Like the popular movies, they are shot and dubbed separately.....

If one is a regular watcher of these ad-movies, he can easily understand that in most of these ad-movies, barring those involving celebrities, dubbing is done by different persons because the objective is to ensure marketing communication is put through in the most telling fashion in the limited time available. Observers should note especially the timing of placing the 'punch line' of the message in order to appreciate the role and importance of the sound that accompanies the scene.

## 9.6 UNDERSTANDING SPEECH MECHANISM

In view of the critical importance of voice in speech delivery, it is useful to have a good idea of the physiological aspects of speech. It has also been given a great deal of importance in the study of almost all human languages.

### (1) Phonetics

It is a branch of language that deals with the study of speech, sound, their reproduction and combination. It deals with how production, transmission and reception of sounds in a particular human language take place. A spoken language consists of a succession of varying sounds for which several parts of body are used.

Spoken medium is also known as 'aural communication. (Written communication is also known as visual communication). Learning a human language involves the process of learning the reproduction of sounds and patterns used by other human beings as each language has its own system. Usually there is a relationship between the sounds and letters representing these sounds. Unfortunately, in English language this relationship is not as consistent as it is in most Indian languages.

### (2) Process of speech

A speech entails a number of steps as below:

- A concept formulated in the brain of the speaker
- Nerves from brain transfer 'linguistic codification' to speech organs
- Speech organs are set in motion that produces disturbances in the air
- Listeners receive these sound waves
- Listeners' nervous system carries message to the brain
- Brain interprets in linguistic terms all that flows as information from the speaker to the listener

### (3) Physiology of speech

Speech comes from a special mechanism that has following three parts:

**(i) Energiser**

It is the exhaled breath of the speaker

**(ii) Vibrator**

It is the vocal cord of the speaker

**(iii) Resonator**

It is the passages represented by the throat, mouth and / or nose.

The exhaled air stream when it passes through the windpipe to the mouth or nose produces the sound:

- When it passes through the mouth or the oral passage, oral sounds are produced
- When it passes through the nose or the nasal passage, nasal sounds are produced

**(4) Organs of speech**

These can be divided in to three groups as below:

**(i) Respiratory system**

It comprises of:

- Lungs
- Muscles of the chest
- Wind pipe

Since people are well aware of these parts, no further details are necessary.

**ii) Phonatory system**

It comprises of:

**(a) Larynx**

These are two vocal cords that look like a pair of lips placed horizontally from front to back. It is located on top of the windpipe through which the air stream comes out after it is released by the lungs. They are joined in the front but separated at the back and the opening between the two cords is called '**glottis**'.

The vocal cords are held loosely together. When air comes from the lungs, it is under pressure that vibrates the cords producing the sound. The frequency of the vibration is directly related to the number of times these cords open and close. Frequency of vibrations determines the pitch of the voice.



## **(b) Pharynx**

It is a tube that begins just above the larynx. At the top, it is divided in to two parts, one part being the back of the mouth and the other being the beginning of the way to nasal cavity.

## **(iii) Articulatory system**

It comprises of the nose, the mouth including the teeth, the tongue, the soft palate and the lips. The roles of the palate, the tongue and the lips are described below:

### **(a) The palate**

The roof of the mouth can be divided in to three parts:

**Teeth ridge or the alveolar ridge** – It is the part just behind the teeth. It is the hard convex surface behind the upper front teeth.

**The hard palate** – It is the hard concave surface the follows the teeth ridge

**The soft palate or the vellum** – The back part of the roof is called the soft palate

The soft palate can be lowered to close the nasal passage.

When nasal passage is closed, sounds are produced with the escape of air stream through the oral passage. These sounds are called oral sounds. Excepting sounds for ‘m’, ‘n’ and ‘r’, all other sounds are **‘oral sounds’**.

When the nasal passage is opened and simultaneously, oral passage is closed by closing the lips or part of the tongue making a firm contact with some part of the roof of the mouth, the air stream coming from lungs passes through the nasal passage and makes **‘nasal sounds’**.

When both oral and nasal passages are open for the air stream from lungs to escape, the sounds thus produced are called **‘nasalized sounds’**.

### **(b) The tongue**

Surface of the tongue is divided in to four parts:

- The tip or the extreme end of the tongue
- The blade or the part that lies opposite the teeth ridge
- The front or the part that lies opposite to the hard palate
- The back or the part that lies opposite the soft palate

The tongue can take different positions to articulate different vowels and consonantal sounds.

## **Vowel sounds**

There are 20 vowel sounds recorded. In the articulation of vowel sounds any part of the tongue can be raised towards the roof of the mouth. The tongue can be raised to different degrees for the articulation of different vowel sounds:

- Vowels for which front of the tongue is raised, are called '**front vowels**'
- Vowels for which central part of the tongue is raised, are called '**central vowels**'
- Vowels for which back part of the tongue is raised, are called '**back vowels**'

In the production of vowel sounds, air stream comes out from the lungs continuously through the mouth and vocal cords vibrate. There is no closure of the passage nor there is narrowing of the passage.

## **Consonantal sounds**

Consonantal sounds are produced because of the audible friction arising from the narrowing of passages for the exhaled air stream. Consonantal sounds are modified by the different positions of soft palate, tongue, lips etc. These sounds can be both:

- Voiceless
- Voiced

Whether it is voiceless or voiced depends upon the position of the vocal cords. When they are drawn close together, they vibrate and it is voiced. If they are drawn wide apart, they do not vibrate even when the air stream passes through them aggressively. Consequently they are voiceless.

## **Articulation of consonantal sounds**

Three factors play important roles in the articulation of consonantal sounds:

- Place of articulation
- Manner of articulation
- Strictures

With these three variable factors, everyone can create very large array of ways of articulating words, phrases and sentences that would directly pierce through the heart of listeners.

### **(c) The lips**

The lips play an important role in the articulation of some of the consonantal sounds. The lips can be:

- Tightly shut

- Brought together loosely
- 1. Drawn apart
- 2. Brought near to each other with a narrow gap in between

The lips also assume following positions for articulating vowel sounds:

- Spread
- Open
- Rounded
- Neutral

## **9.7 SKILLS FOR ENHANCING VOICE POWER**

Every budding manager / leader should want to improve his ability to enhance his voice power. These days business schools are organizing stage shows, dramas etc so that student managers can hone their skills in throwing their voice to their best advantage when they face the listeners.

For stage actors, this skill is extremely valuable for their professional advancement. In modern production methodologies for movies, ‘acting’ part is separated from the ‘dubbing’ part and actors either learn formally or through repeated experience how to modulate their voice, increase or decrease the pitch, tone and speed of delivery to make the maximum impact on the scene that is being dubbed.

Successful orators spend hours in practicing their speeches. They pre-decide the points of importance and how to modulate the voice so that they can impact the understanding of the listeners most. Every significant stop or pause is well thought of. The positioning of anecdotes, humorous or otherwise, is thought out before hand and executed with finesse.

National and international leaders get their speeches written by reputed persons who know their style of delivery. Even so, these speeches are pre-tested with a select audience of critics, political and other thinkers who listen to the draft speech carefully, give their valuable suggestions on content and delivery and even suggest changing and chopping of critical sentences etc.

Whatever be the level of the speaker, in addition to the suggestions as above, they should also indicate corrections to the draft speech. These usually relate to:

- Pronunciation
- Enunciation
- Speed of delivery
- Pitch of the voice
- Pauses

These are detailed as under:

### **(1) Pronunciation**

Pronunciation imparts life to the words. Leaders who are international travellers, global trainers etc have to spend time learning the way the pronunciation changes among communities and countries. These also change in different parts of the same country as is common in India. If speakers can learn and quickly adapt to the local lingua, the impact of their message goes a long way.

## **(2) Enunciation**

Enunciation and tone of the voice go together. Some sentences, anecdotes play central role in conveying the message and need to be enunciated properly and correctly by varying the tone of the voice to suit the story in the message. Suggestions to improve their rendering in a speech are fetching and speakers should learn to modify the speech from possible listeners' point of view.

## **(3) Speed of delivery**

Some speakers deliver their speeches very fast while others are very slow and boring. The correct speed is between 150 to 200 words. Anything above 200 words per minute is fast. The only exception to this rule is the need to enunciate the message. If faster delivery for a few sentences is required to make the right impact, it should be so incorporated in the speech.

## **(4) Pitch of the voice**

Husky voice may be an asset for an actress. Most speakers have to use the mike to deliver the speech. For such persons, ensuring use of the right pitch of the voice is important. That would also be comfortable for the audience who are the customers as the message is intended for them.

## **(5) Pauses**

Pauses are like punctuations in a written message. They should be observed at the right places. It makes the speech more effective. Effective speakers pause just before making an important point and sometimes, even after making an important point to ensure that it has been well received. Absence of pauses distracts listeners.

A few deep breaths at the beginning of a formal speech and correct breathing throughout the delivery embellish a speech.

## **9.8 CORRECTING ONES' VOICE**

Communication skills are the most important personal soft skills that need to be acquired early to give a good start to ones' life. An ideal conversation is an exchange of thoughts among persons participating. It is not an exercise in wit or oratory. As a rule, it is always better to think about the way of saying rather than pre-occupy mind with the subject alone when the speech is being delivered. It is always better to be enigmatic and un-predictable rather than be a non-stop talker. Voice reveals ones'

personality – an aggressive and dictatorial person usually has a loud voice and a commanding tone while a meek, peace loving person has a soft and gentle voice.

Voice is not only the index of mind but also an index of the character of the speaker. Voice is said to be the ‘sweetest harmony’. Voice of the loved ones is like ‘honey to ones’ ears’.

Telephone operators are trained to speak in a warm, well-modulated tone. If a telephone operator is smiling while talking, callers can feel it in her tone of speech. Telephone operators are rehearsed to use plenty of ‘pleases’ and ‘thank you’. Every one has to cultivate a habit of talking in to telephones. Speaking clearly without swallowing words is a must for a good telephone personality.

A flat, cold voice leaves a lot to be desired. Everyone can improve the quality of his voice by:

- Exercising the throat muscles
- Improving breathing while talking
- Practising deep breathing regularly

#### **(1) Exercising throat muscles**

Some people talk very loudly and may develop it in to a habit. Loud speaking taxes one’s throat muscles as vocal chords are overworked because of the pressure exerted on them. Persons can suffer from permanent hoarse throat.

A regular exercise of the throat muscles to relax them is absolutely essential. As a long-term measure, the speakers must learn to speak without over-straining the throat muscles. Voice is God’s gift to human beings; it is a possession they must value and treasure. For example, a doctor’s voice should soothe the patients and a teacher’s voice should capture the attention of the students.

#### **(2) Improving breathing while speaking**

Some persons have difficulties in breathing while speaking because they may have developed a wrong habit of breathing through the mouth. This needs to be corrected with a lot of practice. Just as a good singer cannot afford to mix up normal breathing while singing, this correction can be achieved by conscious efforts over time.

**(3) Practising deep breathing regularly**

Deep breathing has a major role in ones’ life. It is far more useful to a speaker or a person whose profession involves a lot of speaking. A few deep breaths before going on to the stage can help one overcome nervousness and tension. Some speakers speak rather fast for which ability to take longer breath is an advantage. Indistinct voice can result from weak movement of the tongue. Proper posture is also important for clear and soft voice. Experts advise speaking from the bottom of lungs. If people practice yoga exercises of deep breathing regularly, they may reap the benefits of a fascinating and melodious voice.

**ACTIVITY**

In mainstream movies produced across the world, the role and importance of background music is considered to be very crucial as the vocal support enhances the verbal and visual experience. ....

In addition, special effects by introducing sounds that support the actions in the scene are also incorporated in these movies to further enhance the verbal and visual impact of the scene(s).

**9.9 ADVANTAGES AND LIMITATIONS OF PARALANGUAGE**

**(1) Advantages of Paralanguage**

Several advantages are:

1. Closely allied to language, no oral message can be complete without it
2. Paralanguage is a good indicator of speakers’ status in the organizational hierarchy
3. Paralanguage tells clearly about speakers’ educational background
4. Paralanguage speaks volume of speakers’ national, regional background and this is very useful in dealing with them
5. Paralanguage gives clues about speakers’ state of mind and can help receivers decide how to deal with them
6. Since people belong to different continents, countries and communities, it is difficult to achieve uniformity in how the message should be conveyed

**(2) Limitations of Paralanguage**

Paralanguage has also a few limitations:

1. Paralanguage is non-verbal. It is like language but it is not the language. Hence it cannot be entirely relied upon.
2. Often ‘what is said’ does not blend with ‘how it is said’. It requires extra care from listeners to get the exact meanings of the message.

3. When voice quality and pitch of the speaker is not up to the mark, listeners have to remain open minded and patient to get the message correctly
4. Paralanguage may sometime misguide or mislead listeners
5. Since people belong to different countries, continents and communities, it is difficult to achieve uniformity in how the message should be conveyed.

Students should not underestimate the power of their voice. Voice is the most effective weapon in the armoury of managers / leaders. It can carry them a long way in their ambitions to become successful speakers and effective communicators.

Human voice can be trained to become strong and commanding, soft and soothing, caring and caressing to suit the individual situation. Voice has been rightly described as a **‘celestial melody’**

## **9.10 SUMMARY**

Paralanguage is like a language where no words are spoken or sung – it is the sound that accompanies the words. It is a part of the non-verbal communication as, without the accompanying sound, words do not convey their intended meanings. Human voice is described as the organ of the soul and since it supports 38 % of the oral communication, it means that ‘how to say’ is more important than ‘what to say’.

Human beings may have baby voice, pleasing voice, firm voice or unattractive voice such as harsh, shrill and nasal voices. Quality of voice can be determined by its tone, pitch and texture. Tone of a voice can have profound impact on listeners – army commanders’ tone can catapult soldiers to immediate action and mothers’ tone can soothe the babies. Pitch is the manner of throwing or hurling forward ones’ voice and impacts on the speed of delivery. Texture is the composition and structure of the speech and speakers / writers must weave their offerings like artists that show their class.

Communicators must become familiar with the phonetics (study of sounds, their combination and reproduction), process and physiology of speech. Speech mechanism of human beings consists of three parts – energizers, vibrators and resonators. Speech entails use of organs of respiratory, phonatory and articulatory systems and the process of articulation involves the palate, tongue and lips. Individuals can enhance their voice power by learning and practicing pronunciation, enunciation, speed of delivery, pitch of voice and use of pauses.

Voice is not only the index of mind but also the index of ones’ character. Experienced telephone operators have well modulated voice. Individuals can improve their voice quality by exercising the throat muscles, improving breathing while talking and practicing deep breathing regularly. Ability to use paralanguage effectively reflects persons’ status, educational background, national / regional roots and clues about their state of mind. Some times, paralanguage can also misguide.

## **9.11 KEYWORDS**

- (1) **Organ** – In animals and plants, it is a part composed of several tissues and adapted to the performance of a function or functions.
- (2) **Ravishing** – It is something that causes a great joy or delight and is charming and enchanting.
- (3) **Physiology** – It is a branch of biology dealing with the functions and vital processes of living organisms or their parts and organs.
- (4) **Mechanism** – It is the working arrangement of parts of a machine.
- (5) **Energizer** – It is the part played by the exhaled breath of the speaker in the mechanism for speech.
- (6) **Vibrator** – Vocal cords of humans act as vibrators in the speech mechanism.
- (7) **Resonator** – It is a device in the speech mechanism that produces resonance or increases sound of resonance.
- (8) **Respiratory system** – It is the set of glands and organs that are connected with breathing air in and out – inhaling and exhaling of air.
- (9) **Phonatory system** – It is the set of organs connected with uttering voiced words or vocalizing.
- (10) **Articulatory system** – These are organs in the mouth and throat which, when moved, give or help to give speech sound with their characteristic acoustics properties.
- (11) **Larynx** – It is the structure and cartilages at the end of human trachea containing the vocal cords and serving as the organ of sound.
- (12) **Pharynx** – It is the throat muscles and membranous cavity of the alimentary canal leading from the mouth and nasal passages to the food pipe.
- (13) **Strictures** – These represent the different ways in which the passage of air is restricted in speech mechanism.
- (14) **Pronunciation** – It is the manner of pronouncing words with reference to the production of sound, placing of stress, intonation etc.
- (15) **Enunciation** – It is to announce words clearly, distinctly and definitely.

## 9.12 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- 1 Justify that the voice is the organ of the soul. Highlight its importance in oral communications.
- 2 One comes across a wide range of voices. How do you classify them?
- 3 Highlight the critical role of quality of voice. Distinguish between various types of voice qualities.
- 4 Explain the speech mechanism of human beings and how different component parts influence the modulation of one's voice.
- 5 What are strictures in speech mechanism and their role in modulating human voice?
- 6 What kind of skills you would recommend to a person wanting to improve the quality of his voice?
- 7 What are the different methods available for correcting one's voice?
- 8 What are the importance aspects of quality of human voice?
- 9 Highlight the advantages and limitations of paralanguage.

## 9.13 SUGGESTED FURTHER READINGS



- 1 Bovee, Courtland L., Thill, John V. (1992). Business Communication Today. New York, NY: McGraw Hill Inc.
- 2 Herta A Murphy, Herbert W Hilderbrandt (1991). Effective Business Communications. New York, NY: McGraw Hill Inc.
- 3 Cooper, Dr Morton (1999). Change Your Voice: Change Your Life. New York, NY: Barnes & Noble
- 4 Lewis, Hedwig (2000). Body language: A Guide for Professionals. New Delhi, Response Book.

## **PART IV**

### **WRITTEN COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

Writing makes a person perfect. It is an important part of communication skills in the hands of budding managers and leaders. Since writing is a deliberate and intended expression of one's thoughts and feelings, its quality is usually better than oral communication which can be immediate, quick response and faster than written communication. Although an ancient wisdom suggests that one should think before speaking, the quality of choice of words, phrases and sentences is not as good as it is in written communication.

Following units cover the different aspects of written communication:

Unit 10	Writing Skills
Unit 11	Writing Style
Unit 12	Writing Business Letters
Unit 13	Electronics Communication

## **UNIT 10 WRITING SKILLS**

### **STRUCTURE**

- 10.0 Objectives
- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 Distinguishing Features of Written Communication
- 10.3 Basic Principles of Written Communication
- 10.4 Three Levels of Learning Writing Skills
- 10.5 Importance of Language / Grammar in Communication
- 10.6 Words as Building Blocks of Language
- 10.7 Power of Punctuation
- 10.8 Summary
- 10.9 Keywords
- 10.10 Self Assessment Questions
- 10.11 Suggested Further Readings

### **10.0 OBJECTIVES**

After learning this unit, students shall be able to:

1. Understand the unique features of written communication
2. Acquire the governing rules of adaptation in written communication
  - Choose the right words
  - Construct the appropriate sentences
  - Design paragraphs of the right size
  - Understand the importance of language / grammar in communication
  - Identify the building blocks of communication
  - Embellish the composition by using the power of punctuation

### **10.1 INTRODUCTION**

Writing is a skill that can be acquired. Perfecting the art of writing, however, requires a lot of hard work. It is a skill that can distinguish a person from the group. A successful executive, while sharing the reasons for his quick promotions in the first five years' of his career admitted that it was largely because he could write better than others. The verbal edge is the winning edge - a competitive edge over rivals.

There is a famous saying, “reading makes a full man, conference a ready man and writing an exact man”. It must be understood that whatever is written or said is the real self of the persons doing so. A good writer feels from the heart and then writes.

## **10.2 DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF WRITTEN COMMUNICATION**

Written communication is a very critical recipe for success of managers and leaders. Following famous statement also underpins the importance of writing skills:

“Beneath the rule of men entirely great,  
The pen is mightier than the sword!”

Written communication has the following unique features:

### **(1) Creativity**

Written communication is the product of a well thought out process: It is not a spontaneous response as is the case with oral communication. Message written in the form of letters (and even emails) are deliberate and creative.

### **(2) Delayed response**

Since crafting a written communication takes some time, the response to the sender is not as prompt as it is for the oral communication.

### **(3) Limited cycles of exchange**

In oral communication whether face-to-face or otherwise, in a short span of time, it can complete several cycles of communication and all doubts get cleared quickly. In written communication, ideally responses should be complete and clear in the first instance but in case, some clarification is needed, one has to make do with one or two cycles of communication only.

### **(4) Feedback from the receiver**

There may be considerable time lag in receiving the response from the receiver. A fax message (telex of old days), may be answered quickly, possibly within a few hours. If it is a letter, receiver may take a day before it is read and responded, if at all. Similarly, a written report (including soft copy sent on line) may be read in a few days. Thus time lag is longer. In many cases, it may not happen at all. Lack of feedback / response can arise from lack of concern, forgetfulness or even contempt!

## **10.3 BASIC PRINCIPLES OF WRITTEN COMMUNICATION**

The core principle of any communication is that of ‘adaptation’. The sender must use words, phrases, signs and signals that the receiver is familiar with. Sender must be very sensitive and good at visualizing the level of audience. If it is not done, he may

be talking Greek to some one – it is like using a foreign language quite unknown to the receiver. Following two aspects must be borne in mind:

- Process of adaptation
- Governing rule of adaptation

### **(1) Process of adaptation**

One has to work hard to be able to express one's thoughts accurately. It is so difficult that most people seem to be happy in using the first word that flashes in their mind. The process should begin with visualizing the receivers – what they know, feel or think. It often means communicating with readers (who are customers) at levels lower than yours.

Adaptation is easier if one is communicating to a single person or a homogenous group. If addressing a mixed or diverse group, one has to adapt at the lowest level.

### **(2) Governing rule of adaptation**

An overriding rule that should govern the adaptation process is that of simplicity. Choice of simple words and phrases, woven in to simple sentences and use of simple rules of grammar can propel a person forward and fast in his learning curve for developing effective writing skills. The 'KISS' principle is easy to learn and remember; it is a reminder to 'keep it simple and short'.

## **10.4 THREE LEVELS OF LEARNING WRITING SKILLS**

Learning how to write effective communication, can be described at three levels:

- Choosing the right words
- Constructing sentences
- Designing paragraphs

### **(1) Choosing the right words**

A skilled writer should choose words such that the receiver gets the meaning in a precise manner, without different interpretations. Following guidelines are useful:

#### **(i) Searching words that the receiver understands**

Adaptation is a process of simplifying; it is not as easy as it sounds because:

- Many individuals write at a more difficult level
- Writers know the subject better than the receiver

Extensive experience supports simplification.

#### **(ii) Using familiar words**

Familiar words enhance communication because they are easy to understand and absorb. Human memory favours familiar words as it speeds up filing and storage! For example, use:

- ‘Show’ in place of ‘demonstrate’
- ‘Use’ instead of ‘utilise’
- ‘Try’ for ‘endeavour’

**(iii) Choosing short words**

Short words communicate better; use:

- ‘Quit’ in place of ‘terminate’
- ‘Agreed’ in lieu of ‘accorded’
- ‘Last year’ instead of ‘previous year’

**(iv) Using technical words with caution**

Every field of specialization has words that have specific meaning in that field and should be used when communicating with persons from the same area of specialization. They do not communicate well with others and hence should be used with caution, if at all.

**(v) Adding vigour to words**

Our senses and mind do not respond equally to all words – words with vitality attract better attention. Thus one must add zing to one’s writings by using strong words. As a rule, a word is strongest when used as a verb, followed by when it is used as a noun. Adjectives and adverbs are comparatively weak and should be used sparingly. A few useful tips are:

**(a) Selecting strong and vigorous words**

The main purpose of any writing is to attract the attention and time of the reader. We know that strong and vigorous words attract attention from senses and mind. Use:

- ‘Tycoon’ in place of ‘eminently successful businessman’
- ‘Boom’ instead of ‘period of business prosperity’

**(b) Using concrete words**

Using concrete words makes writing more interesting instead of abstract words. Use of specific words adds exactness in ones’ expressions.

**(c) Preferring active to passive verbs**

Active form of expression is better than the passive form - it is stronger and shorter. Passive form has a place only when ‘doer’ is not important.

**(d) Avoiding camouflaged verbs**

Do not camouflage verbs in to nouns; they dilute expressions. For example, use:

- Cancel and not cancellation
- Acquire and not acquisition

**(vi) Selecting words for precise communication**

One should have good command over the vocabulary. It helps in searching for the correct words and phrases that convey precise meanings in a given situation. Writer must try to have a very good collection of idioms, maxims and proverbs. They are very powerful in conveying ones' thoughts in a precise manner.

**(vii) Avoiding sexist words**

These are words that show male dominance e.g., manly figure or manly habits.

**(viii) Avoiding pronouns indicating sex**

Do not use pronouns like he, she, him or her. This can be done by:

- Making them plural
- Rewording the sentence
- Going in for neutral expression like one, someone etc

**(ix) Avoiding words derived from masculine words**

Do not use words like manpower, chairman, postman, watchman etc

**(x) Avoiding words that are demeaning to women**

Words like womanizing, prostituting etc should be left out of writing as they offend some readers.

**(2) Constructing sentences**

Length of the sentence is the most important feature of constructing sentences. In general, sentences should be adapted to readers. Long sentences are hard to read and harder to absorb. Short sentences enhance readability. A sentence should have 16 to 18 words, on the average. Sometimes longer or shorter sentences may be justified. A few good suggestions are:

**(i) Limiting content of a sentence**

Limiting content of a sentence would reduce its length. However, it should not be overdone. Too many short sentences make the reading choppy!

**(ii) Economizing on words**

Always look for shorter ways of saying things. A few suggestions are:

**(a) Avoiding cluttering phrases**

Go in for shorter expressions like:

- ‘If’ for ‘In the event that’
- ‘Like’ for ‘Along the lines of’
- ‘To’ for ‘With a view to’

**(b) Eliminating superfluous words**

Some words do not add any meaning and a quick scrutiny can go a long way.

**(c) Avoiding round about ways of saying things**

Round about ways of saying add words and verbosity to the sentences. Being direct makes it simple, short and impressive.

**(d) Avoiding repetition of words and phrases**

Repeating words and phrases is very boring and should be excluded from ones’ writing. Only exception is when the writers want to emphasize something.

**(iii) Determining emphasis in the construction of sentence**

Short sentences emphasize content and long sentences dilute it although determining emphasis in a sentence is largely a matter of judgement.

**(iv) Imparting unity to a sentence**

All parts of a sentence should relate to one ‘single thought’. This unity is often violated in the following three ways:

**(a) Including unrelated thoughts**

Unrelated thoughts vitiate unity of a sentence and can be taken care of by:

- Using separate sentences for unrelated thought
- Making one thought subordinate to the other
- Adding words to show that the thoughts are related

**(b) Giving excessive details**

Giving too many details dilutes the unity of a sentence. Avoid details or put them in a separate sentence within parenthesis.

**(c) Constructing illogical sentences**

Constructing illogical sentences can spoil the unity of a sentence. It results from:

- Mixing active and passive forms of expressions
- Going in for mixed construction of sentences.

**(v) Using correct rules of grammar for sentence clarity**

Rules of grammar have emerged as a result of some customs but mostly because they help write logically and clearly. Students must know these rules of grammar to acquire effective writing skills.

**(vi) Learning power of punctuation**

This is a group of distinctive signs that are used in writing and every writer must learn them properly. Some of the uses change like fashion over time and writers must remain updated on them. They add power to ones' expressions.

**(3) Designing paragraphs**

Paragraphs form the third link that is critical to acquiring effective writing skills. Besides words and sentences, they play a major role. Paragraph designing requires a clear thinking and a systematic mind. Design of paragraphs has a direct impact on the layout and presentation of the writing and contributes significantly in attracting and retaining readers' attention. A few guidelines are:

**(i) Paragraphs should exhibit unity of idea or topic**

Contents of a paragraph should relate to one idea (group of thoughts) or topic. However, unity can vary and so can the size of a paragraph. Ideally, a good test for a paragraph is that it should be possible to reduce the contents of a paragraph to one sentence or one statement. If it is not possible, unity of the paragraph is likely to suffer.

**(ii) Paragraphs should be kept short**

A paragraph should consist of 8 to 9 lines only. Paragraphs larger than 10 lines should be critically examined and 'fat' cut off

- Large paragraphs are heavy and make reading dull and difficult
- Short paragraphs appear well-organized and invite readers to read on with attention

Paragraph positioning enhances layout design. Suitable system of headings and subheadings can further improve the attractiveness of the prose. These days printers use colour schemes for titles etc to give 'come hither' look to the readers.



**(iii) Positioning topic sentence to advantage**

Writers must become aware of the importance of positioning topic sentence in the design of a paragraph. It can help in designing good paragraphs. However, where it should be placed in a paragraph depends upon the writers' plan:

**(a) Placing topic sentence first**

It is the best option and many firms have adopted it as a policy guideline.

**(b) Placing topic sentence last**

Here the beginning sentence in the paragraph serves as an introduction. The paragraph ends with the topic statement that is the real content.

**(c) Placing topic sentence in the middle**

If topic sentence is placed in the middle of a paragraph, it dilutes the content. It is rarely used but, in specific situations, it can impart the requisite impact.

**(iv) Leaving unnecessary details out of the paragraph**

This requires good visualization of the receiver. One can make the paragraph smarter by omitting extraneous details. Much depends upon the writers' judgement.

**(v) Paragraphs should move the text forward**

Each new paragraph is the next additional step in moving towards the goal of the message. If each paragraph represents the orderly development of the ideas, it facilitates move forward. Smoothness in writing style and good proficiency in choice of words and sentences can move the idea forward through each paragraph. Once a while, short paragraph is incorporated to organize the transition from previous paragraph to the next.

**ACTIVITY**

The students should, at this stage, undertake exercise in sharpening their writing skills. They should study any book on general management topics available in most libraries and roadside bookstalls and make a long summary in own handwriting (similar to long reviews of books that appear in some of the business magazines available in the market). They should not resort to word processing as it leads to plagiarism. Textbooks should be avoided.....

The length of summary should not exceed ten A-4 size pages and should follow the pattern of giving numbers as followed in this book with suitable headings for the sections, paragraphs and subparagraphs. Students should not follow the chapter-wise approach and can skip topics that do not add much to the overall theme of the book.

## 10.5 ROLE OF LANGUAGE / GRAMMAR IN COMMUNICATION

Communicators must understand the role and importance of language and use of proper grammar in enhancing their written communication skills:

### (1) Importance of language

A Chinese sage of distant past was once asked by his disciples what he would do first if he was given the power to set right the affairs of the country. He answered, “I would certainly see that the language is used correctly”. “Surely”, said the disciples, “This is a trivial matter. Why should you deem it so important?” The Master replied, “If language is not used correctly, then what is said is not what is meant, then what ought to be done remains undone. If this remains undone, morals and art will be corrupted, justice will go astray. If justice goes astray, the people would stand about in helpless confusion”.

Lee Iacocca, the famous former CEO of Chrysler, USA emphasized it further, “You can have brilliant ideas but if you can’t get them across, your ideas won’t go anywhere”. It must be remembered that knowledge is nothing but messaging of information and communication; it is the only factor of production that is not subject to the law of diminishing returns.

### (2) Importance of grammar in a language

Grammar is a branch of linguistics dealing with the form and structure of words (Morphology) and their interaction in a sentence (Syntax). The study of grammar reveals how the language works. By mastering the rules of grammar, one can become a better ‘**wordsmith**’ – an essential ingredient for becoming a good communicator.

## 10.6 WORDS AS BUILDING BLOCKS OF LANGUAGE

Word is a fundamental building block of any language. These are used in different parts of a sentence. Word’s part in a sentence or speech is not inherent in the word itself – it comes from the way the word is used in the sentence. It is thus an important part of the skill set of the communicators.

Words can be placed in any part of the sentence or speech. It is decided by the way it is going to be used i.e., whether as a noun, a verb, an adjective etc. Important types of words have been detailed in the following paragraphs:

### (1) Nouns

Noun is a Latin word and its literal meaning is ‘name’ – it is the naming ability of words. We need to name:

- A person
- A place
- A thing

- An idea

Types of nouns are:

**(i) Proper nouns**

These are names of specific persons, place or entity. First alphabet of these nouns is always in capital e.g., Anil, Agra etc

**(ii) Common nouns**

These are names of generic category like ‘boy’, ‘boss’, ‘brother’ etc. Here first alphabet is not a capital. A quick test is that if noun can be modified quickly by adding an adjective, it must be a common noun! For example, a good boy, a nice boss, the older brother etc

**(2) Verbs**

Verb is a word used to express action or to describe a state of being. Verbs are of two types:

**(i) Action verbs**

They express action e.g.,

- Sheena smiled
- 1. Ruchi replied etc

**(ii) Linking verbs**

They describe the subject e.g.,

- Food was tasty
- Book became the best seller
- Movie got a very good response

**Tenses of verbs**

All verbs have tenses. Two importance aspects of tense are:

**(i) All verbs have three tense forms:**

- Present e.g., ‘is’
- Past e.g., ‘was’
- Future e.g., ‘will / shall’

**(ii) All verbs have four conjugation forms:**

<b>Present</b>	<b>Past</b>	<b>Participle</b>	<b>Continuous</b>
Write	Wrote	Written	Writing
Speak	Spoke	Spoken	Speaking

### (3) **Adjectives**

Adjectives play three roles as below:

#### (i) **Noun modifiers**

As noun modifiers, they always precede the nouns they modify e.g.

- Loud explosion
- Beautiful girl
- Sick old man
- Golden voice etc

#### (ii) **Predicate adjectives**

The predicate adjectives follow the linking or descriptive verbs and describe the subject e.g.

- The play was terrific
- The crust turned brown
- Please keep quiet

#### (iii) **Determiners / Modifiers**

The adjectives can also be determiners or modifiers. These are diverse group of words that precede descriptive adjectives and can be grouped in to following subclasses:

##### (a) **Articles**

In all there are three articles (the, a, an) in the English language and can be categorized as:

- Definite article – ‘the’ is the only article in this category
- Indefinite articles – ‘a’ and ‘an’ are the only two articles in this category

Their applications are discussed as follows:

##### **Definite article – the use of ‘the’:**

- To define, particularize or single out a noun e.g., I have read ‘the’ book.
- To make obvious of what we mean e.g., ‘The’ movie ran for three hours.
- To single out the superlative form of noun e.g., ‘The’ best employee of ‘the’ firm.

- To highlight title of the dignitary e.g., ‘The’ Chief Justice
- To single out things that are one of its kind e.g., ‘the’ sky, ‘the’ sun, ‘the’ moon etc
- To common noun that represents a class e.g., ‘The’ staff should be part of management.
- To adjectives that indicate a class of persons e.g., ‘The’ rich should help ‘the’ poor.
- To a distributive measure e.g., Milk is sold by ‘the’ litre or by ‘the’ kilogram.
- To abstract nouns when particularized e.g., ‘The’ honesty of taxi driver was applauded.
- To the names of rivers, mountains, seas, scriptures, newspapers etc e.g., The Ganga, The Himalayas, The Arabian Sea, The Geeta, The Hindustan Times etc

### **Indefinite article – use of ‘a’ and ‘an’**

#### **Article ‘a’ is used:**

- In singular nouns e.g., a meeting, a message, a class etc
- With words starting with a consonant e.g., a man, a situation, a behaviour etc
- With words beginning with sound of ‘y’ or with ‘o’ as in one e.g., a young-man, a one-rupee coin

#### **Article ‘an’ is used:**

- In singular nouns starting with a vowel e.g., an engineer, an officer etc
- With words where first alphabet is not sounded e.g., an honourable person etc

#### **(iv) Demonstratives**

These are – ‘this’, ‘that’, ‘these’ and ‘those’. Everyone must learn to use them properly in oral and written communication.

#### **(v) Number words**

These have two subgroups:

- Cardinal numbers like one, two, three etc
- Ordinal numbers like the order in which things occur - first, second, third etc

#### **(vi) Possessives**

- These are words that are used as adjectives e.g., Rita’s friend, Anita’s puppy
- We also have possessive pronouns like me, your, his, her, its, our, their etc

**(vi) Quantifiers**

These are – ‘some’, ‘many’, ‘several’ etc

**(4) Adverbs**

These are words that modify verbs, adjectives and even other adverbs. Two types are:

**(i) Those that modify verbs e.g.,**

- Ruchi drives the car ‘carefully’.
- Rohil parked the car ‘there’.
- Anjana parked the car ‘yesterday’.

**(ii) Those that modify adjectives**

These are – ‘very’, ‘much’, ‘too’, ‘enough’ etc

**(5) Pronouns**

A conventional definition of pronoun is that it is a word used in place of one or more nouns. It replaces or represents a noun or nouns. For example,

‘Pankaj wondered where Rumi was’ can be rewritten as ‘he wondered where she was’.

Pronouns have four subclasses:

- Personal nouns
- Reflexive nouns
- Indefinite pronouns
- Demonstrative nouns

These are explained in the following paragraphs:

**(i) Personal pronouns**

These have three further categories – Subject, Object and Possessive and each category has three forms – First person, Second person and Third person and each of them can be either singular or plural as shown below:

	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>
<b>First Person</b>		
Subject	I	We
Object	Me	Us
Possessive	Mine	Ours

## Second Person

Subject	You	You
Object	You	You
Possessive	Yours	Yours

## Third Person

Subject	He, She, It	They
Object	Him, Her, It	Them
Possessive	His, Hers, Its	Theirs

### (ii) Reflexive Pronouns

These are unique and easily recognizable group of pronouns that end in ‘-self’ in singular form or ‘-selves’ in plural form as explained below:

Person	Singular	Plural
First Person	Myself	Ourselves
Second Person	Yourself	Yourselves
Third Person	Himself	Themselves

### (iii) Indefinite pronouns

These pronouns use the same words as are used in adjectives and can, therefore, be confusing. However, we must remember that the indefinite pronouns stand alone by themselves whereas adjectives always modify nouns. For example,

- Sanjay would like some. Here ‘some’ is indefinite pronoun.
- Sanjay would like some spinach. Here some is used as ‘adjective’ as it precedes and modifies a noun.

### (iv) Demonstrative pronouns

These are a group of four pronouns – ‘This’, ‘That’, ‘These’ and ‘Those’. Similar to indefinite pronouns, the same words are also used as adjectives. However, as explained above, pronouns always stand alone - demonstrative pronouns are no exception.

## (6) Prepositions

These are little words – ‘By’, ‘To’, ‘With’, ‘About’, ‘Over’ etc and are used to make prepositional phrases which consist of a preposition plus its object that can be either a noun with or without adjective or a pronoun. For example,

- ‘In’ the morning
- ‘Under’ the bridge
- ‘By’ Shakespeare

- ‘To’ them

Prepositions come as a part of a package. They are bound by their objects to form prepositional phrases. These cannot be looked at in isolation!

## **(7) Conjunctions**

These are words used to join or conjoin words or group of words. Conjunctions have two subclasses:

### **(i) Coordinating conjunctions**

These can be easily remembered by adopting an acronym of ‘FANBOYS’.

F	-	For
A	-	And
N	-	Nor
B	-	But
O	-	Or
Y	-	Yet
S	-	So

A few illustrations are:

- Amit loves coconut ‘and’ bananas.
- Sanjay is poor ‘but’ honest.
- Ruchi wanted biscuit ‘or’ chocolate

### **(ii) Subordinating conjunctions**

They join or conjoin groups of words of unequal status and are not much in use.

## **10.7 POWER OF PUNCTUATIONS**

Punctuations are a set of conventions that make it easier to read any language. In the English language the various rules are no more than conventions. Conventions are agreed ways of separating a text so that the readers’ eyes and brain can assimilate easily. These conventions are like table manners that change over time. These are like fashions with which most writers try to experiment and innovate. However, some rules are clear and remain unaffected and have been explained for each of the punctuation mark in the following paragraphs:

### **(1) Full stop (.)**

It is the longest pause that a reader should observe while reading a text. Full stop is used:

- At the end of a sentence except in interrogative and exclamatory sentences.



- After the initials or abbreviations e.g.

P. Dhingra for Pankaj Dhingra  
Esq. for Esquire

These days full stop is omitted from well-known abbreviations like UNESCO, WHO, WTO, BHEL etc

## (2) Comma (,)

It is the shortest pause and is used extensively. It is a troublesome punctuation and a few tips are:

- Put comma where one would pause while reading a sentence aloud
- To set off a noun of address e.g., ‘Mr. Verma, please get this bill settled’
- To indicate omission of a word e.g., ‘Quality is excellent; the appearance, attractive; the price, low’.
- To separate direct speech from the rest of the sentence e.g., ‘Mr. Seth, you have been very careless in your work’.

Commas are useful in separating one part of a sentence from another. They also have a role in speaking; they may not suggest a pause long enough to be noticed but if observed properly, these can enhance your skills in delivering a speech.

## (3) Semicolons (;)

If two sentences are closely related in meaning and it is not desirable to separate them by a full stop, semicolon is used. For example,

‘You type the letter; I shall type the bill’.

## (4) Colons (:)

Colon is used to:

- Introduce a list e.g., ‘Please arrange these items: a personal computer with printer, a pad, a pack of envelopes, gum stick, paper pins and paper clips’.
- Introduce an explanation e.g., ‘The problem is this: we cannot get trained hands at such a short notice’.
- Separate two contrasts e.g., ‘Managers make plans: insincere workers sabotage them’.

## (5) The question marks (?)

It is used after a direct question e.g., ‘Can I help you?’

It should never be used after an indirect question. Grammatically, an indirect question is not a question at all e.g., ‘The Accounts Manager asked Mr Malhotra why he did not put the amount in fixed deposit’.

## **(6) The exclamation marks (!)**

It is used at the end of a sentence that expresses a strong feeling e.g., ‘Congratulations to all the winners!’

## **(7) Quotation marks or inverted commas (“ ”)**

These are also used in the text. A few tips are:

- (i) The direct words of a speaker (the words that one actually hears) are enclosed in inverted commas. Since these are also used to enclose quotation ascribed to an eminent person, these inverted commas are also known as quotation marks.
- (ii) An interrupted speech is also put within inverted commas e.g., “I would rather starve,” he said, “than accept such a job”.
- (iii) Titles of books, magazines, newspapers, essays, poems etc are also enclosed in inverted commas e.g., “City of Sorrow” has raised a lot of interest.

## **(8) The apostrophe (’)**

Ever since there is an emphasis on conversational English to be adopted as the preferred style of writing, this has become very popular. A few tips are:

- (i) It is used in place of an omitted letter in a contraction e.g., ‘doesn’t for does not’.
- (ii) All possessive nouns contain an apostrophe e.g., A week’s wages, Customers’ views etc
- (iii) Apostrophe is also used to form plurals of alphabets and figures:
  - Dot your i’s and cross your t’s.
  - Let us take up the issue with a few of the MP’s.
  - His phone number is all 2’s.

## **(9) Hyphens (-)**

A few rules are:

- (i) It is used to join parts of a compound word e.g., maid-servant etc
- (ii) It is used to combine a word with its prefix e.g., Post-dated etc

## **(10) The dash (-)**

A few useful rules are:

- (i) It is used to show a sudden change of thought e.g., ‘The substance of the story is us – but do you have the time to listen to me’.
- (ii) It is also used for explanation e.g., ‘In this term, there are three core subjects – Strategic Management, Project Management and Quality Management.

### (11) Parentheses ( )

They serve the purpose of double dashes. They separate from the main sentence, a phrase or a clause that does not belong to it e.g., ‘The scheme (see the enclosed brochure) is designed to give you the maximum return on your money’.

### (12) Capital letters

It is not a part of punctuations but it is useful to understand where in a text, capital letters are used:

- First alphabet of a sentence
- First alphabet of a quotation
- All proper nouns
- Names of religious sects, political parties
- All nouns and pronouns referring to God
- Pronoun ‘I’
- Interjection ‘O’
- All words in a heading excepting the articles, prepositions and conjunctions
- Abbreviations of degrees, titles etc
- Forms of address e.g., Dear Sir / Madam etc

#### ACTIVITY

Every student should repeat the exercise of ‘preparing summary of at least one more popular book on any topic of management but of general interest. Textbooks should be avoided.

.....  
If it is being administered to a group of students at one site, teacher must ensure that no two persons do the long summary of the same book.

### 10.8 SUMMARY

Writing skills can be cultivated and acquired although they entail a lot of hard work.

Effective writing skills can impart individuals a competitive edge over rivals because pen is mightier than the sword. Written communication is a delayed response and hence more creative. Compared with oral communication, it permits limited cycle to respond and lag time for feedback takes longer and in some cases, it may not happen at all.

Adaptation is the basic principle as writers have to work hard to express their thoughts accurately. They must visualize what receivers know, feel or think and then select the right words and phrases. It is easier communicating with single person or homogenous groups rather than mixed and diverse groups. However, governing rule is to keep it simple and short (KISS).

Written communications involve learning at three levels – choosing the right word, constructing good sentences and designing appropriate paragraphs. Effective writers must understand the importance of language and use of correct grammar. Since words form the building blocks of effective communication, the way words are used constitute crucial part of writing skill. There are seven ways words are used - as nouns, verbs including tenses, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, prepositions and conjunction.

Proper use of punctuation signs embellishes the style of communicators who also tend to experiment and innovate with them as their usage changes over time. Writers should be well versed in the use of the twelve punctuation signs – full stop, comma, semicolon, colon, question mark, exclamation mark, quotation marks, apostrophes, hyphens, dashes, parentheses and capital letters.

## 10.9 KEYWORDS

- (1) **Creative** – It is something original crafted by imagination and invention.
- (2) **Delayed** – It is the interference of something that causes a detainment or postponement causing putting off to a future time.
- (3) **Cycle** – It is a period of time within which a round of regularly recurring events or phenomena is completed.
- (4) **Feedback** – It is responding by returning a part of the message back to the sender.
- (5) **Adaptation** – It is making something more suitable by changing its structure, function or form that produce a better adjustment to its environment.
- (6) **Wordsmith** – It is using words in a text innovatively to give different meaning, form or substance to the sentence and hence the message (just like goldsmiths, silversmiths or ironsmiths who impart by hammering out different, lovely shapes to the base metal)

## 10.10 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- 1 What is written communication and describe its distinguishing features?
- 2 Justify with suitable explanations, the basic principles of written communication.
- 3 What are the advantages of written communications?
- 4 Describe the stepwise procedure of learning writing skills.
- 5 Describe the guidelines for choosing the right words in written communication.
- 6 Explain how one can improve skills in constructing sentences in written communications.
- 7 What is the importance of designing the proper paragraphs in written communication?
- 8 Highlight the importance and relevance of language and its grammar in acquiring effective communication skills.
- 9 What is the role of choice of words in a language?
- 10 Describe the different types of words used in English language.

- 11 Distinguish between proper nouns and common nouns.
- 12 Describe different types of verbs. What are tenses and the conjugation forms of a verb?
- 13 Verbs signify action. Justify that action words are the most important ones in a message.
- 14 What are the different roles played by adjectives?
- 15 What are the different types of adverbs and where are they used?
- 16 What are the different types of pronouns and where are they used?
- 17 Describe preposition and conjunction in English grammar.
- 18 Where are full stops and commas used? Distinguish between their roles and uses.
- 19 Explain the uses of semicolons and colons in English grammar.
- 20 Describe the uses of question marks and exclamation marks in English language.
- 21 Highlight the role of apostrophes and quotation marks in modern English grammar.
- 22 Explain the uses of hyphen, dash and parentheses in English language.
- 23 What is the importance of capital letters in English language?

#### **10.11 SUGGESTED FURTHER READINGS**

- 1 Bovee, Courtlaand L., Thill, John V. (1992). *Business Communication Today*. New York, NY, USA: McGraw Hill Inc.
- 2 Pal, Rajendra, Karlahalli, JS (!997). *Essentials of Business Communication*. New Delhi (India): Sultan Chand & Sons.
- 3 French, Astrid. *Interpersonal Skills: Developing Successful Communication*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishing Co.
- 4 Kreps, Gary L (1996). *Organizational Communication: Theory & Practice*. London, Longman.

## **UNIT 11 WRITING STYLE**

### **STRUCTURE**

- 11.0 Objectives
- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 Axioms about Writing Style
- 11.3 Writing Sentences with Style
- 11.4 Role of Idioms, Maxims and Proverbs
- 11.5 Importance of Idioms, Maxims and Proverbs
- 11.6 Meanings of Idioms, Maxims and Proverbs
- 11.7 Pickle Effect of Idioms, Maxims and Proverbs
- 11.8 Wide Choice of Idioms, Maxims and Proverbs
- 11.9 Evolution of Idioms, Maxims and Proverbs
- 11.10 Summary
- 11.11 Keywords
- 11.12 Self Assessment Questions
- 11.13 Suggested Further Readings

### **11.0 OBJECTIVES**

After learning this unit, students will be able to:

- Comprehend the crucial role of writing style in communication
- Appreciate the universal truths about skills in writing style
- Understand the importance of acquiring skills in writing sentences with style
- Identify the role, importance of idioms, maxims and proverbs in writing styles
- Accomplish the pickle effect of idioms, maxims and proverbs in sentences
- Acquire a repository of idioms, maxims and proverbs and use them appropriately
- Learn the evolution of some idioms, maxims and proverbs

### **11.1 INTRODUCTION**

Many good ideas are lost because they are expressed in dull, wordy and involved way. No two people write exactly alike. Even writing about the same thing such as writing an essay in a school classroom, two persons will invariably say it differently.

“To write well is at once to think well, to feel rightly and to render properly. It is to have, at the same time, mind, soul and taste”.

There is seldom only one best way of writing – there are usually several equally good ways of writing.

## **11.2 AXIOMS ABOUT WRITING STYLE**

Ben Johnson has said, “For a man to write well, there are required three necessities: to read the best authors, observe the best speakers and much exercise to your own style”.

However, everyone must remember following four axiomatic truths about writing style:

- (1) Style cannot be taught
- (2) Each person’s style is his / her own personality
- (3) Style is unique to him / her
- (4) Each one of us can improve our style

## **11.3 WRITING SENTENCES WITH STYLE**

Writing good sentences is the key to improving one’s style of writing. It requires concentration, patience and a lot of practice. It is much more than stringing words together as they tumble out of writers’ mind! Everyone can learn to write better sentences and improve sentences already written if writers observe the following five rules meticulously:

- Creating interest
- Making meaning clear
- Keeping sentences brief
- Making every word count
- Varying sentence pattern

These rules have been described further:

### **(1) Creating interest**

If one goes by the formal, academic styles that are commonplace in most writings, there is a strong tendency to ‘impress’ rather to ‘express’. Writings can be made more interesting by writing in an informal, conversational style. Since this style is used in everyday life, readers can understand easily. One must always remember that readers are customers and they should become receptive to writers’ thoughts and ideas.

After all, the core purpose of the process of communication including written one, is to influence them to achieve some common objectives!

## **(2) Making meaning clear**

Knowledge and application of various rules of grammar help us to focus the readers on the meanings we wish to convey. Once writers have clarity about an issue, grammar would take care of the conveyance of correct meanings. This involves the followings:

### **(i) Emphasizing the main idea**

This can be ensured by:

- (a) Using devices like capital letters, italics or blocking in word processing and printing. Using headings, inverted commas and other punctuations is also helpful.
- (b) Placing the idea effectively in a sentence. The most emphatic place is in the beginning of a sentence; next best is placing it at the end and the least important place is putting it anywhere in the middle of a sentence.

### **(ii) Avoiding wandering sentences**

All parts of a sentence should contribute to one clear idea or impression. Long, winding and straggling sentences usually contain hodge-podge of unrelated ideas. Such long sentences should be broken up in to smaller ones or at the least, should move subordinate ideas in a subordinate form.

### **(iii) Avoiding ambiguity**

Always remember that if a sentence can be misunderstood, it will be.

### **(iv) Making sure your modifiers say what you mean**

Every modification to a sentence should improve the conveyance of clearer thought or idea.

## **(3) Keeping sentences brief**

One can achieve brevity by dividing complex sentences in to small, bite-size ones. Writers must avoid unnecessary words and phrases. Needless repetition and elaborations must be deleted. A few suggestions are:

### **(i) Using strong verbs**

Words are strongest in the verb form. Strong verbs liven up and electrify the sentence. The strong verbs add action to thoughts.

### **(ii) Using active forms**

Active form is always preferable to a passive form of a sentence. It gives ones' writing a sense of energy, vitality and motion. In passive form, actor in the



sentence is not allowed to act and the verbs are made weak and feeble. Before using a passive form, make sure that there is a strong justification for it.

**(iii) Changing long modifiers to shorter ones**

It enhances readability and comprehension of the thought process.

**(4) Making every word count**

Writers must always be sincere to their readers. One should never cheat them. When readers read the message, they are really looking for ideas, thoughts and meanings. A few tips are:

**(i) Making each word advance your thoughts**

Following example is illustrative:

**Wordy / Verbose**

‘The following statistical data would serve to give a good idea of the cost of production’

**Concise (Improved)**

‘Statistics show the cost of production’

Look for every superfluous word and eliminate it. It will save customers’ effort.

**(ii) Consolidating thoughts**

Writers can do several things to pack a sentence by combining, summarizing and consolidating thoughts succinctly.

**(5) Varying sentence patterns**

Varying sentence patterns imparts variety and makes the sentence reading interesting and invites attention of the readers. A few rules worthy of emulation are:

**(i) Varying length of sentences**

Readability experts are of the opinion that length of a sentence should not exceed 20 words (average being 16 to 18 words) for the most effective communication. It is a good rule of thumb. Experienced communicators suggest that length of sentence should vary. An occasional long sentence is acceptable if it is followed by a shorter one.

**(ii) Varying construction of sentences**

There are four types of sentences:

- Simple
- Compound
- Complex

- Compound-complex

Following tips are useful:

- If two or more sentences have the same idea, combine them in to one simple sentence with compound verb.
- If two thoughts are of equal or parallel weight, write them as two clauses in a compound sentence.
- If one thought is more important than the other, put it in the main clause of a complex sentence.

#### **ACTIVITY**

Students would do well to cultivate the habit of reading newspapers, magazines and books on general management and make collection of ‘inspiring ideas, superb speeches and excellent executions’ either date-wise or subject-wise. His collections would also reflect his style or his preferred way of expressing himself that has to be unique and distinct.....

It is said that ‘read to lead’ implying if one reads more, he learns more and when he learns more, he acquires the leader-like traits and is already on way to become a leader!

### **11.4 ROLE OF IDIOMS, MAXIMS AND PROVERBS**

Use of idioms, maxims and proverbs helps in embellishing style of communication. However, we have to learn to use them judiciously and with deep understanding;

#### **(1) Idiom**

It is an accepted phrase, construction or expression in a language. However, it may be contrary to the usual pattern of a language and has meanings that are different from the literal ones. It can often be a peculiar phraseology, a dialect or a language.

#### **(2) Maxim**

It is a concisely expressed principle or rule of conduct and is a statement of general truth or precept.

#### **(3) Proverb**

It is a short saying in common use that strikingly expresses a maxim. It is an enigmatical saying in which a profound truth is cloaked or hidden.

For details, refer to various examples given in the following paragraphs.

## **11.5 IMPORTANCE OF IDIOMS, MAXIMS AND PROVERBS**

Idioms, maxims and proverbs are specimens of language in its crystalline form. These are often compared to the glittering diamonds in a gold necklace.

These are used to express feelings, thoughts and ideas in a succinct, effective and attractive way. Normally a matter that requires several sentences or a whole paragraph may be expressed in 2 or 3 words. The combination of these words has meanings that are far removed from its literal meanings. For example, when it is said, 'In a nutshell', it means saying in a few words. When someone feels that the Government machinery moves at 'a snail's pace', he means that there are usual bureaucratic delays that send people 'from pillar to post'. One can 'cut the long story short' and simply say 'red tape'.

If a person can build up a good repertory of idioms, maxims, proverbs and quotations and then recollect them to suit the occasion, he is already well on his way to becoming a good writer and / or a good speaker.

## **11.6 MEANINGS OF IDIOMS, MAXIMS AND PROVERBS**

Words contained in these idioms etc may not convey any sense by themselves but, with reference to the context, they lend themselves much meanings and thoughts. These also add a touch of beauty and style to ones' communication.

For instance, consider the words, 'eating one's own words'. On the face of it, these words sound absurd for how can one eat one's words. Using these words suitably as an idiom in a sentence, it can be said that the new manager was 'talking tall', threatening to pull up the employees who have failed to turn up for a cultural event on a holiday. However, when union leaders accosted him, he had 'to eat his own words'.

## **11.7 PICKLE EFFECT OF IDOMS, MAXIMS AND PROVERBS**

Drawing a parallel from the world of food, it can be said that idioms, maxim and proverbs are like a pickle which is rarely eaten by itself. But when used judiciously with the meals, it adds aroma, flavour and taste to the food.

- (1) Idiomatic expressions, maxims and proverbs are not bound by the usual rules of grammar. For example, it may be recalled that, 'Many a ship have floundered on these strong seas'.
- (2) When people are hungry and famished, they can just boil some rice and gulp it down. It may kill their hunger but this is not what they usually do. They cook different types of food, add spices / flavourings and then eat them with relish. They not only fill their stomach but also do it royally.

In the same way, while writing or speaking, people do not merely use some words that somehow carry meanings across to readers; they try their best to add beauty and

style to the diction to make it attractive so that it has the requisite impact. For example, consider a friend who is always vague in his expressions, rambling and dilly-dallying – he is never able ‘to come to the point’. His manner of speaking can be expressed effectively in a few words that he is fond of ‘beating about the bush’.

Another colleague is always clear, specific and to the point – ‘no hemming and hawing’, no faltering and ‘no beating about the bush’. The same could be stated more powerfully that he always ‘hits the nail on the head’.

## **11.8 WIDE CHOICE OF IDOMS, MAXIMS AND PROVERBS**

Writers can pick up idioms, maxims and proverbs from a large number available in all languages. They enhance style of writing and are attractive to the receivers of message. There are many such expressions that are vying with one another and wanting, willing and asking to be picked up by the communicators. Thus if senders of message have a better command over the language and vocabulary, they would be more proficient in selecting the right ones. A few examples are:

- (1) The colleague who always speaks to the point can also be described as a person who never ‘minces his words’ or he is ‘cut and dry’.
- (2) Raju, a villager, was always getting drunk and falling in the gutter. He would beat his wife ‘black and blue’, snatching her money and ‘blowing it up on drinks’. His family was fed up with him. He did not have any friends ‘worth the name’. When Raju’s life came to an end, his family ‘breathed a sigh of relief’. One fine morning, he was found dead in a gutter. Someone said that Raju ‘breathed his last’ but one could also say that he ‘kicked the bucket’.

## **11.9 EVOLUTION OF IDIOMS, MAXIMS AND PROVERBS**

Following examples are illustrative:

### **(1) Story of kicking the bucket**

One view is the bucket in the story does not refer to a bucket as such but to a wooden frame used in the olden days to hang freshly killed pigs.

Another theory is that the idiom was coined by looking at the way people took their own lives. Such persons kept the bucket upside down to stand on, put the noose hanging from the ceiling around their neck and then kicked the bucket from underneath.

### **(2) Story of sour grapes**

Leila was ‘head over heel’ in love with Rahul but he ‘spurned her overtures’ and married Pooja. Leila was very much upset but went about pretending that she ‘knew in her heart of hearts’ that Rahul was not the sticking type. Someone said it is a clear case of ‘sour grapes’ as mentioned in Aesop’s fable, ‘The Fox and the Sour Grapes’.

## ACTIVITY

Students must cultivate habit of reading especially the newspapers, magazines etc relating to business, economy and management. By choosing the profession of management, they have committed themselves a life-long learning. Much of the learning comes from reading the latest literature, listening to interviews of business leaders and reading books on general management from authors of repute.....

It is suggested that they develop the habit of collecting inspiring ideas (thoughts), superb speeches and excellent executions and build a good stock of these collections either date-wise or subject-wise. Searching out for idioms, maxims and proverbs on the Internet, when required, is not the best way of imbibing and incorporating their use in ones' writing / speaking style. Instead, it is suggested the collection of 'inspiring ideas, superb speeches and excellent executions' has to be done almost on day to day, as a routine rather than as a special one-time exercise!

## 11.10 SUMMARY

There is seldom one best way of writing – invariably there are several equally good styles of writing. Writing style reflects the personality of writers and constitutes their body, soul and taste. Style cannot be taught; it is unique to a person. However, everyone can improve his writing style.

The core of writing style is writing sentences that create interest, make meanings clear, keeping them short, making every word count and by varying sentence pattern. Use of most suitable idioms, maxims and proverbs can embellish ones' writing style as these are the crystalline form of a language and glitter in a sentence like diamonds in a necklace.

A very large variety of idioms, maxims and proverbs is available and students would do well to build up own repertory of these. They act like a pickle in an Indian food – pickle is rarely eaten by itself but when used judiciously with meals, it adds aroma, flavour and taste. They should focus on the evolution of these idioms, maxims and proverbs and become adept at using them skillfully.

## 11.11 KEYWORDS

- (1) **Style** - It is the manner and mode of putting thoughts in to words and represents distinction, excellence, originality and character in literary expressions.
- (2) **Ambiguity** – It is the expression with more than one possible meanings.
- (3) **Verbose** – It is an expression using or containing too many words and becoming long-winded or wordy.
- (4) **Concise** – It is stating of much in a few words by removing all superfluous elaborations and being brief and to the point.

- (5) **Pattern** – It is something that represents a class or type giving arrangement of form, disposition of parts, design and decoration.
- (6) **Crystalline** – It is consisting or made of crystals – clean and transparent.
- (7) **Pickle** - It is any brine, vinegar, oily or spicy solution used as a supplement food. If taken in small quantity, it imparts aroma, flavour and taste to food.
- (8) **Axiom** – It is a statement that is universally accepted as true. It needs no proof as the truth is evident. It may be an established principle or law of science.

### 11.12 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- 1 Describe the importance of writing style in a language. What are the universal truths about writing styles?
- 2 Writing correct sentences forms the central core of a good writing style. Describe the steps involved in acquiring a good writing style
- 3 How do you distinguish among idiom, maxim and proverbs. Give examples.
- 4 Describe the role and importance of idioms, maxims and proverbs in written and oral communications.
- 5 How do the meanings of an idiom, maxim or proverb vary over time?
- 6 Highlight the role and importance of idioms, maxims and proverbs in a language.
- 7 How do we build up vocabulary of idioms, maxims and proverbs?

### 11.13 SUGGESTED FURTHER READINGS

- 1 Bovee, Courtland L., Thill, John V. (1992). Business Communication Today. New York, NY: McGraw Hill Inc.
- 2 Herta A Murphy, Herbert W Hilderbrandt (1991). Effective Business Communications. New York, NY: McGraw Hill Inc.
- 3 Cooper, Dr Morton (1999). Change Your Voice: Change Your Life. New York, NY: Barnes & Noble.

## **UNIT 12 WRITING BUSINESS LETTERS**

### **STRUCTURE**

- 12.0 Objectives
- 12.1 Types of Written Communication
- 12.2 Importance of Business Letters
- 12.3 Functions and Objectives of Letter Messaging
- 12.4 Traditional Classification of Letters
- 12.5 Modern Classification of Business Letters
- 12.6 Styles in Writing Business Letters
- 12.7 Components of a Business Letter
- 12.8 Checklist for Effective Business Letters
- 12.9 Stationery for Business Letters
- 12.10 Appearance of Business Letters
- 12.11 Steps in Planning Business Letters
- 12.12 Summary
- 12.13 Keywords
- 12.14 Self Assessment Questions
- 12.15 Suggested Further Readings

### **12.0 OBJECTIVES**

After perusing this unit, students should be able to:

- Make a list of the different types of written communications used in business
- Learn the role and need of business letters
- Identify the functions and objectives of letter messaging
- State the traditional and modern classifications of business letters
- Acquire the appropriate style of writing business letters
- Imbibe the skills in writing different components of business letters
- Recount checklist for effective letter messaging
- Become conscious of the importance of stationery used for business letters
- Acquire skills in enhancing the appearance and presentation of business letters
- Remember steps in planning effective business letters

### **12.1 TYPES OF WRITTEN COMMUNICATION**

Written communication has a very large variety:

- 1 Letters

- 2 Memos
- 3 Telegrams
- 4 Tele-printer messages
- 5 Short reports (Informal)
- 6 Long reports (Formal)
- 7 Proposals
- 8 Company profiles
- 9 Product profiles
- 10 Applicant profiles or resume/ writing
- 11 Abstracts or Summary writing
- 12 Reviews and Comments
- 13 Minutes of meetings etc
- 14 Research papers

Two popular forms – letters and memos are detailed below:

### **(1) Letters**

A letter is a written or printed personal or business message that is usually sent by a mail in an envelope. Many types of letters are in use:

- Personal and non-personal letters
- Direct, indirect and persuasive letters
- Official, demi-official (DO), formal and internal (memo) letters
- Subject letters like enquiries, orders, credit information, collection of debts, complaints, sales promotions, sales circulars, appointment of agencies etc
- Functional letters of correspondence emanate from functional departments like personnel, sales & accounting, purchasing etc

### **(2) Memos**

Memos are intra-organization correspondence written among different departments in the same location or in different locations, factories and offices. Before word processing and other forms of electronic communication became popular, memos carried bulk of the load of written communication within a firm. One of the popular formats was that the initiator of the memo prepared it, with the help of carbon papers, in a set of three copies. The third copy was kept as a record and the set of two copies – first and second, were sent to the person to whom the message was targeted. Only the left half of the memo was written in by the sender. The receiver used the same set of papers and wrote the responses on the right half and sent it back to the initiator.

Essentially both business letters and memos serve the same purpose excepting that memos, being internal communications, were shorn of formal addressing style of business letters that are normally addressed to external customers, prospects, government and other statutory authorities,

## **12.2 IMPORTANCE OF BUSINESS LETTERS**

### **(1) Role of Written Business Letters**



Letter messaging is a significant form of business communication. It also constitutes the major component of written communication and forms the backbone of a successful enterprise. A good letter message:

- Can pacify an angry customer (and a bad letter can annoy a customer)
- May sell a new product (or spoil the sale of an established product)
- May collect debt without hurting customers' feelings (or lose both money and customer)
- May refuse a request yet win respect
- May grant a request yet incur ill will

## **(2) Need for Written Business Letters**

- (i) Every business has to maintain contacts with suppliers, customers / prospects, government agencies, employees, bankers, investors etc. Most often these happen through business letter.
- (ii) Companies have to correspond with other enterprises for varied reasons:
  - Placing orders for goods & services required from other firms
  - Acknowledging and executing orders for other firms
  - Granting credits to other parties
  - Negotiating credits from other parties
  - Securing credit facilities etc from banks
  - Sending statement of accounts for debtors
  - Receiving statement of accounts from suppliers etc
- (iii) Letter messaging may be of less importance for small businesses but it is not dispensable. In fact, a certain amount of letter writing is essential for day to day living in the modern knowledge society.

## **12.3 FUNCTIONS AND OBJECTIVES OF LETTER MESSAGING**

### **(1) Functions of Letter Messaging**

According to a reputed expert, L Gartside, followings are the primary and secondary functions of letter writing:

#### **(i) Primary functions**

- Providing a convenient and inexpensive means of communications without personal contact
- Seeking or giving information
- Furnishing evidence of transaction entered in to
- Providing a record for future reference

**(ii) Secondary functions**

- Creating goodwill for the company
- Making an impression as an efficient and reliable firm

**(2) Objectives of Letter Messaging**

More important ones are:

- Serves as a record for future use – copies can be sent to functionaries in different locations for future reference
- Leaves a more durable impression on the receiver than an oral message
- Can reach any where in the firms' hierarchy and even levels that are difficult to access normally
- Can be sent to different regions, countries and continents where oral or personal contacts are difficult, thus widening firms' reach and access
- Forms authoritative, legal document for contracts and collaborations in business
- Is used for building goodwill, image and reputation.

**12.4 TRADITIONAL CLASSIFICATIONS OF LETTERS**

Letter messages have evolved over a long time. A traditional way of classifying these letters in five different ways is as below:

**(1) Classifying on the basis of nature of contact**

**(i) Personal letters**

These are written to friends and relatives and follow informal and friendly style. They help:

- Exchange information
- Seek information
- Seek help, guidance or advice etc

**(ii) Impersonal letters**

These are usually business letters written in formal style. They are intended to exchange communication among individual functionaries, firms and institutions.

**(2) Classifying on the basis of approach**

Three categories are:

**(i) Direct letters**

In these letters, one comes direct to the point without any introductory remarks. Such letters are useful for:

- Enquiries
- Quotations
- Orders
- Good news messages
- Offers of appointment
- Promotions
- Instructions for job

**(ii) Indirect letters**

Theme of such letters is not pleasant as they concern bad news like:

- Not being able to sanction the loan
- Cannot concede the claim preferred
- Not being able to accept the terms asked for

In such letters, there is always an introductory sentence that is intended to put the receiver in a good frame of mind.

**(iii) Persuasive letters**

These are mainly sales letters where one has to think of an opening that catches readers' attention immediately and prompts him to read on. The message is aimed at persuading readers to buy the product or acquire / experience the service offered.

**(3) Classifying on the basis of types of communication**

Four types are:

**(i) Official letters**

These are letters written to Government, semi-government and other statutory authorities and are addressed formally.

**(ii) Demi-official (DO) letters**

These are also official letters but are addressed to a person by name. DO letters are written if matter:

- Requires personal attention of the addressee
- Is of confidential nature
- Is urgent requiring immediate disposal / response

**(iii) Form letters**

These are letters that are used for correspondence on routine and recurring issues. These are usually preprinted as forms with suitable blanks and hence the name. These are used for:

- Acknowledgement
- Reminders
- Interviews
- Notices
- Appointments etc

Sometimes, various possible alternative responses are preprinted and the applicable paragraph(s) are ticked. They lack personal touch but save effort and time.

**(iv) Internal letters**

These take the form of memos written among different functions and departments within an organization. They are eminently suitable for internal communication.

**(4) Classifying on the basis of subject of the letters**

These may be one of the several types as below:

- Enquiries
- Orders
- Credit information
- Collection of debts and dues
- Complaints
- Sales promotion
- Sales circulars
- Appointment of agencies etc

**(5) Classifying on the basis of functions / departments of the firm**

A few major functional heads are:

**(i) Personnel letters**

These are letters emanating from personnel / human resource department:

- Inviting applications for notified vacancies
- Calling for preliminary interviews
- Calling for written tests
- Calling for recruitment interviews
- Sending offers of appointment
- Issuing circulars for training and development
- Issuing promotion, increment or bonus letters
- Issuing warning letters etc

**(ii) Purchasing letters**

These letters cover the correspondence for purchasing and other allied functions in materials management, supply chain functions etc:

- Inviting tenders or quotations
- Placing orders for supplies and contracts for services & materials
- Sending reminders
- Sending complaint letters etc

**(iii) Sales letters**

These are letters pertaining to the marketing and sales activities of the firm:

- Advertising, publicity and marketing communication
- Marketing research and surveys of customers and competitors
- Sales circulars
- Giving and soliciting specific sales information etc

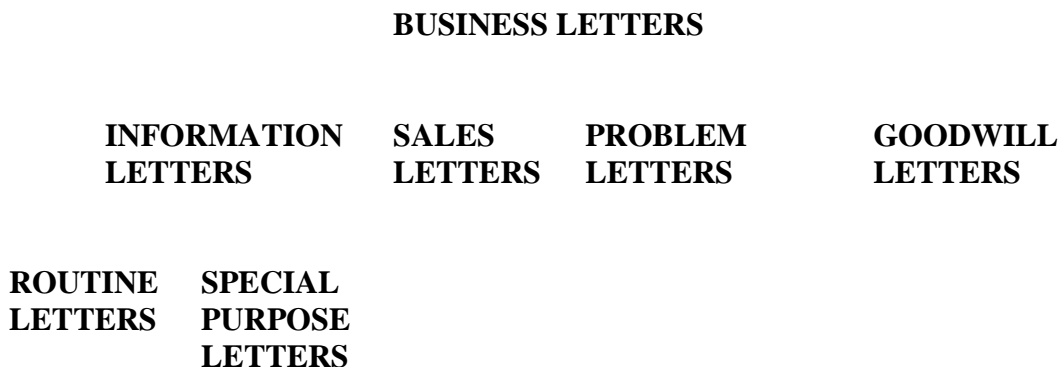
**(iv) Accounting and finance letters**

These letters may relate to:

- Account payable
- Account receivable
- Banking
- Investments etc

**12.5 MODERN CLASSIFICATION OF BUSINESS LETTERS**

This classification, ascribed to L Gartside, focuses on business letters. It is a comprehensive and widely accepted classification as it covers all types of business letters used in the modern enterprises. This is illustrated below:



<b>Enquiries</b>	<b>Circulars</b>	<b>Voluntary offers</b>	<b>Complaints</b>	<b>Greetings</b>
<b>Quotations</b>	<b>Personnel</b>	<b>Tours</b>	<b>Concessions</b>	<b>Thanks</b>
<b>Orders</b>	<b>Agencies</b>	<b>Employment</b>	<b>Overdue a/c</b>	<b>Congrats.</b>
<b>Payments</b>	<b>Travels</b>	<b>Reminders</b>	<b>Sympathy</b>	<b>Condolences</b>

The above classification of letters is not exhaustive; some letters may not fall neatly in to any category.

## **12.6 STYLE IN WRITING BUSINESS LETTERS**

There is nothing like the commercial style of English language. Commercial correspondence differs from ordinary correspondence in the nature of content and construction and not in style.

A suitable style reflecting the personality of the writer is always more wholesome and refreshing. It makes a good impression on the customers.

It is not difficult to acquire skills in writing effective business letters provided one has:

- Good knowledge of the language
- Constant habit of reading
- Persistence with writing letters

A business letter is much like a conversation – it is a piece of conversation in writing and delivered by post. Alexander Pope emphasized the point:

‘True ease in writing comes from art, not chance,  
As those move easiest who have learn’d to dance.’

Business letters differ from personal letters in the sense that the goal or purpose is paramount. A few useful tips to serve as a checklist are:

- Will it irritate or annoy?
- Is it a kind of letter everyone would like to receive?
- Will it persuade one to do what is asked?

### **ACTIVITY**

Business letters form the grist of much of the writing work managers / leaders have to do as a routine. Students should be given extensive training in writing business and related letters. A popular exercise used by the author is about writing letter to the editor (LTTE), loosely christened as ‘LTTE Exercise’ . . . . .

Students form teams of two or three members and are encouraged to write letters to various newspapers, magazines etc on topics of grave concern to the society – social, economic and issues related to everyday life. The ultimate criterion is to get it published and then submit it for the ongoing evaluation in the class.

## **12.7 COMPONENTS OF A BUSINESS LETTER**

A letter should be a sum of the following parts that make it an effective form of communication:

- Letterhead
- Reference number
- Date
- Special markings
- Inside address
- Attention line
- Salutation
- Subject heading
- Main body
- Complementary close
- Signatory of letter
- Enclosures
- Copies circulated
- Initials markings for identification
- Postscript

These have been described in some details:

### **(1) Letter head**

Since it is the first contact with the recipient, letterhead should make a favourable impression. It is done on printed stationery, usually on a bond paper that has a fine texture. It should not smudge and should withstand piercing and punching for filing work. Modern letter heads occupy about 2” of the top of the page with following information neatly printed / embossed:

- Full name of the firm
- Postal address
- Pin code
- Telephone no(s)
- Fax no(s)
- Email ID etc

In the modern age of Internet, website details are also given. It must contain the registered address of the firm which is often written at the bottom of the first page.

### **(2) Reference Number of the letter**

A reference number is essential for large firms as it facilitates connecting up the next correspondence. Usually, offices have a comprehensive system of filing and associated file nos. The last numerals are unique serial numbers given centrally by the department or even dispatch office. In such cases, it is useful to have a master file containing all the letters issued by a firm or department serially. It can also be organized on a computerized system.

### **(3) Date of letter**

Every letter must have a date of issue that is written in two ways:

- Dd/mm/yyyy or 27 January 2010
- Mm/dd/yyyy or January 27, 2010

The practice followed in the country should be adopted – no other form of writing the date should be used viz., 27<sup>th</sup> January 2008 or January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2008. First form of writing date is becoming popular universally.

### **(4) Special markings**

Many letters need to be given special markings:

- Confidential
- Airmail
- Registered post
- Speed post
- Courier etc

These markings carry special meaning and are also put on the envelope.

### **(5) Inside address**

Next, complete name and address of the recipient is written. This should be the same as required to be written on the envelope. These days, comma is not put at the end of each line nor a full stop at the end of the complete address. However, pin code must be written properly and prominently to help postal persons en route.

### **(6) Attention line**

Different types of letters follow different ways:

Official letter : Attention line is formal; usually, designation of the person is used.

DO letter : Mr Pankaj Dhingra

Form letter : Designation is followed by name in parentheses  
e.g., Vice President (Mr Pankaj Dhingra)

Internal letter : Memos use a direct approach viz.

To

From

### **(7) Salutation**



It is a formal greeting to the recipient of the letter message. Its choice is directly dependent upon the extent of formality one wishes to observe:

- Official letters : Dear Sir / Madam
- DO Letters : Dear Mr Dhingra / Ms Gautam

Here recipients are not addressed by their first name. Please remember, 'Respected Sir' is wrong English!

**(8) Subject heading**

Appropriate heading denoting the subject of the letter being written is usually given e.g., Application for loan, Bill No ----- for ----- dated -----

**(9) Main body**

Main body comprises of three parts:

**(i) First part**

It is devoted to a brief introduction and stating the purpose of the letter.

**(ii) Second part**

It is longer and presents the relevant facts in a logical sequence. It may be extend over several paragraphs. Each paragraph should deal with a separate point and written as clearly as possible.

**(iii) Third part**

It is related to 'conclusion' that sums up and rounds up the letter politely, usually soliciting a reply. A few standard forms of concluding phrases are:

- Thanking you
- We thank you in anticipation
- Looking forward to a positive response
- We would be glad to furnish any further information

**(10) Complimentary close**

It is an important part of the letter and should match the form of salutation used in the beginning of the letter. The usually pairing is as under:

	<b>Salutation</b>	<b>Complimentary close</b>
(i)	Sir	Yours truly
(ii)	Dear Sir / Madam	Yours faithfully
(iii)	Dear Mr / Ms	Yours sincerely

Please note that memos, being internal communication, have neither the salutation nor the complimentary close.

### **(11) Signatory of letter**

A letter without signatures and signatory is not well received. A recent trend is that computer generated correspondence is being sent without signatures. In coming years when every mail will be sent electronically, it is understandable. However, in these letters, the name and official designation of the sender should be clearly stated. (A number of offices especially from government and public sector undertakings do not seem to follow this practice religiously).

### **(12) Enclosures**

These must be stated clearly after the signature of the sender. Any document sent must be stated clearly for future reference.

### **(13) Copies distributed**

Usually, copies of the letter are sent to persons for the following reasons:

- For information only
- For complementary action(s) as appropriate

Also copies of letters may either contain the enclosures or may be sent without the enclosures. The fact should be clearly stated against each copy distributed.

### **(14) Markings of initials for quick reference**

It is a good practice to put the initials of person who has dictated / directed the letter to be sent under his signature. Also, the initials of the person who has transcribed / word-processed is stated. This is done just below the typed name of the signatory. This can be done in the following ways:

- JNK: ar
- JNK: AR
- JNK/AR
- JNK-AR

Of the above alternatives, first one is preferred.

### **(15) Post script**

People write postscript as a last minute addition to what has been said in the letter. Such additions must be avoided in commercial correspondence. There is no place for such after-thoughts in the electronic age of word-processing.

## **12.8 CHECKLIST FOR EFFECTIVE LETTER MESSAGING**

Principles of good communication are equally applicable to written communication and to writing skills for letter messaging. However, a good checklist for business letter writing is as below:

- Promptness
- Subject knowledge
- Appropriateness
- Accuracy, completeness and clarity
- Courtesy
- Tact
- Persuasion
- Conciseness
- Salesmanship
- The 'you attitude'
- Positive and pleasant approach

These are described below:

**(1) Promptness**

Letters should be replied the same day. Should one need time to reply, it is better to acknowledge the letter and politely indicate to the sender how soon the reply will be sent.

**(2) Subject knowledge**

Ability to reply a business letter has three pre-requisites:

- Knowledge of previous correspondence
- Understanding of the requirements of the sender
- Knowledge of the firm's policies applicable

**(3) Appropriateness**

To acquire a good reputation of choosing words and phrases that are appropriate, we need to vary the tone and tune of the language used in letter messaging. These often change according to the:

- Need of the occasion
- Psychology of the readers

**(4) Accuracy, completeness and clarity**

All facts, figures and statements must be stated accurately and should be verified before using in the letter. If dealing with a business enquiry, one must ensure that the information covers all the points for completeness. If it is a persuasive message, it must be clear and unambiguous so that it accomplishes the purpose it is intended for. Ambiguity can arise from:

- Omission of a word
- Faulty punctuation
- Faulty construction of sentence, mixing arrangement of words

Effective letter writers should avoid these pitfalls.

#### **(5) Courtesy**

Writers must seek favours politely and express their gratitude for favours received already.

#### **(6) Tact**

This quality goes hand in hand with courtesy. It is very important for letters:

- Dealing with complaints
- Seeking credits from banks, suppliers etc

The essence of tactfulness lies in retaining the goodwill in spite of turning down the request.

#### **(7) Persuasion**

It means winning over people to own point of view without coercing them. They should genuinely feel that what they are doing is to their own advantage. Therefore, hypocrisy and pretensions have no place in these interactions.

#### **(8) Conciseness**

The writer should ensure against loading it with irrelevant and unnecessary 'ifs' and 'buts' – more concise the message, more effective it will be. Also, there is no justification of using telegraphic language and construction of sentences that hampers understanding. Two golden rules are:

- No letter is long enough if clarity has to be achieved
- A short letter is not good enough if the message is not clear.

#### **(9) Salesmanship**

Every letter that goes out of the company should be treated as its ambassador. It must carry and convey the message precisely and enhance the reputation of the firm.

#### **(10) The 'you attitude'**

The letter message should always take in to account the readers' point of view – he is the customer! Use of 'I' and 'we' should be avoided; instead writers should use 'you' in the text as often as possible.

#### **(11) Positive and pleasant approach**

Avoid using ‘no’ and ‘sorry’ – they are unwelcome words. The writers must always emphasize pleasant and positive things. For example:

- ‘No’ can be easily rewritten as ‘another time’.
- ‘Sorry’ can be replaced by ‘I will try’.

## **12.9 STATIONERY OF BUSINESS LETTERS**

### **(1) Letterhead**

Various aspects of interest are:

#### **(i) Quality of paper**

It should be good quality bond paper.

#### **(ii) Size of letterhead**

These days standard A-4 size paper is preferred – bigger sizes are awkward to handle and file; small size, look cheap!

#### **(iii) Colour of paper**

Most letters in the world are written on white paper with black print. Black print on white paper emits glare. As a result, there is a growing tendency for using coloured papers. Using coloured paper has two distinct advantages:

- Colour coding is possible and can become a useful symbol for the firm
- If colour of the paper corresponds with the colour of firm’s logo and / or trademark, it can help project a good image of the company.

Colours have a strong association with moods and attitudes of the people as summarized below:

**Blue** : Sincerity and harmony  
**Brown**: Strength, practicality and usefulness  
**Gray** : Confidence and wisdom  
**Green** : Life, coolness and freshness  
**Pink** : Femininity, grace and health  
**Purple**: Tradition and high rank  
**Red** : Excitement and danger  
**Yellow**: Cheerfulness and vigour

Following two points should be borne in mind while selecting the colour:

- Light colours are easy on the eyes; deep colours should be avoided
- Colours selected should be those that reproduce as clearly as white on photocopying

### **(2) Envelope**

We must remember that the envelope is seen even before the receivers read the letter. Usually, it is the appearance of the envelope that determines its fate. It should be:

- Impressive to look at
- Of matching colour

## **12.10 APPEARANCE OF BUSINESS LETTERS**

A letter is seen even before it is read. The first impression that it makes on readers' mind has a vital influence on formulating an opinion on the message contained in the letter. What a good approach is to personal salesmanship, a good appearance is to written salesmanship. Following aspects impact on the appearance of a letter:

### **(1) Word processing of letters**

Computers have changed the way the communication and documentation relating to it are handled these days. Because of flexibility, speed and ability to correct, transpose and make other changes, word processing is impacting on the appearance of letters in a big way:

- The text can be changed, chopped and edited repeatedly until writer is fully satisfied
- Visuals like tables, charts and graphs can be easily included
- Typing errors can be completely eliminated
- Spelling can be checked with software to ensure better accuracy
- Construction of sentences can be checked with software and corrected
- Managers can word process own letters, leaving supporting staff for other chores
- Choice of size of alphabets and font can be changed at will
- Important words can be made bold to make them more prominent
- Copies can be made as if they are the original ones

Circular letters can be done quickly and made to appear as personal communication.

### **(2) Layout design of letters**

There are two types:

#### **(i) Blocked layouts (American)**

In this, each paragraph or line starts from the extreme left position. Letters end also on the left side. These are very popular in private sector and commercial establishments in India.

#### **(ii) Semi-blocked layouts (British)**

In these letters, paragraphs start from a little to the right of extreme left position – this shift is by one space. The letters end on the right side extreme.

Whichever format one follows, it should be done all the way. Never mix the two types of layouts. Blocked layout is more efficient from the viewpoint of stroke on the keyboard. Somehow, Government offices in India are still using the semi-blocked layout design.

### **(3) Margin and blank spaces of letters**

There are no rigid rules for margins and blank spaces at the top and bottom of the letters. In word processing, commands are available for starting and ending each line at the same point; consequently, space between the words becomes flexible and floating. Two useful tips are:

- For short letters, double spacing looks more pleasing
- For paragraphs, double spacing looks good

At any rate, computers enable a pre-view of the page(s) before taking prints.

### **(4) Use of continuation sheet**

Majority of letters are one page communication. Where necessary, pre-printed continuation sheets, as per the following sample, should be used:

ICI India Limited

Continuation sheet

These continuation sheets should have the same quality and colour of paper as the letter head.

### **(5) Folding of typed letters**

Folding causes creases, much like in a suiting. Creases can play havoc to the appearance of letters. Creases at the wrong places may spoil the appearance of an otherwise beautiful layout of the letter. Before folding, followings need to be considered:

- Size of the envelope
- Size of the paper
- No of enclosures etc

Since window envelopes have become popular, letters need to be folded in such a way that the inside address falls just in line with the window of the envelope. It saves the effort on typing the address again on the envelope. However, folding of letter should be such that the entire address is visible completely and clearly.

## **12.11 STEPS IN PLANNING BUSINESS LETTTERS**

Bulk of business is carried through exchange of letters as they constitute the most extensive medium of communication. They must be planned meticulously so that they achieve the purpose for which they are written. Following six steps will help acquire enviable skills in letter writing:

- Defining the main objective of letter messaging
- Identifying the subsidiary aim
- Collecting all the relevant data
- Knowing the person to whom the letter is addressed
- Determining the tone of the letter
- Deciding the approach to be followed

These are detailed below:

**(1) Defining the main objective of the letter messaging**

Among the possible objectives are:

- Quoting a price
- Complaining about defective goods
- Collecting money against outstanding bills
- Getting status report about order placed on supplier(s)
- Obtaining information about a prospect
- Pacifying an angry customer etc

Whatever may be the main objective, it must be written clearly before drafting a business letter.

**(2) Identifying the subsidiary aim**

If main objective of writing a letter is to submit a quotation, then the subsidiary aim would be to secure the order. Similarly, if the main objective is to register a grievance, the subsidiary aim is to get it resolved. Once again, writer must be clear about the subsidiary aim.

A proper understanding of the main and subsidiary aims helps in writing more effective business letters.

**(3) Collecting all the relevant data**

As stated earlier, writer must have:

- Knowledge of the previous correspondence on the subject
- Good knowledge of the person receiving the letter
- Knowledge of the relevant policies of the firm

If any information is not available, the same must be collected to facilitate letter writing.

**(4) Knowing the person to whom letter is addressed**



Letters do not deal with a subject or situation; they deal with people, first and foremost. A letter to a reasonable and balanced person is bound to be different qualitatively from the one people write to a short-tempered and arrogant individual.

**(5) Determining the tone of the letter**

Knowing the business situation and the person being written to, will decide the tone of the letter that may be:

- Apologetic
- Conciliatory
- Friendly
- Persuasive
- Sympathetic

Besides, it should be:

- Firm
- Polite

The writer has to decide the most suitable mix in a given business transaction.

**(6) Deciding the approach to be followed**

This is also one of the basic decisions to be made before writing a letter. It may be:

- Direct
- Indirect

If one follows a few basic principles stated above and jots down on a piece of paper the main points in the proper sequence, to be included in the letter, writers' ability to dictate or word process the letter faster is substantially enhanced and quality of the message improves manifold. A task well begun is half done. Constant practice by writers enables them to embed these principles in to their style. If the message carries conviction of the writer in a firm but fair tone, good results are bound to ensue.

**ACTIVITY**

Teams of 2 to 3 students should be asked to draft a letter complaining to the Customer Care Manager of the manufacturing firm about the poor quality of the household appliance bought by the family giving details of problems being faced with the dealer and his efforts to repair it.....

The objective would be to elicit immediate response and secure proper technical resolution of the problem or replacement as the buy is still within the warranty period.

**12.12 SUMMARY**

Business letters and memos are the most popular forms of written communications. Business letters are written or printed and are usually sent by mail in envelopes. Since letter messaging forms a significant part of business communication, it is the backbone of all successful enterprises. Letters are written to maintain contacts with suppliers, customers, government agencies, banks, investors and employees and cover a wide array of information exchanges regarding inquiries, purchase orders, invoices, acknowledging and executing orders, granting and negotiating credits with parties, sending / receiving of accounts etc. Letter messaging is indispensable even for small firms.

Based on objectives and functions discharged, letters may be classified as: personal or impersonal; direct, indirect or persuasive; official, demi-official, form or internal. Letters are also categorized on the basis of subject dealt with or the department of origin.

Ability to write business letters skillfully gives a competitive advantage over fellow employees. Always remember to check if the letter will irritate or annoy, will customer love to receive it and will he do what is asked. Effective writers of business letters must watch the 15 aspects of letter messages: letterhead, reference numbering, date, special marking and inside address; attention line, salutation, subject heading, main body and complimentary close; signature, enclosures, copies distributed, initial markings and post script if any.

Business letters should be marked by promptness, subject knowledge, appropriateness, accuracy / clarity, courtesy and tact. They should be persuasive, concise, focus on customer and salesmanship with positive and pleasant approach.

Creating and crafting business letters should be meticulously planned by defining main objective, identifying subsidiary aim, collecting all relevant data, knowing the customer and deciding the approach to be followed even before starting.

### 12.13 KEYWORDS

- (1) **Letter** – It is a written or printed message usually sent by mail in an envelope.
- (2) **Personal Letter** – It is a written or printed message that has a lot to do with character, personality, intimate affairs and conduct of a certain person.
- (3) **Impersonal Letter** – It is a written or printed message without any connection or reference to any particular person.
- (4) **Direct Letter** – It is a written or printed message that is straightforward and not vague.
- (5) **Indirect Letter** – It is a written or printed message that is not direct, not straight and a roundabout way of sending communication.
- (6) **Persuasive Letter** – It is a written or printed message that has the power to induce, convince and cajole.
- (7) **Official Letter** – It is a formal message in written or printed form, from a person in a position of authority.
- (8) **Demi-official Letter** – It is a half-official, semi-formal or semi-informal message in written or printed form.

- (9) **Form Letter** – It is a printed document with blank spaces to be filled in by the sender.
- (10) **Internal Letter** – It is a written or printed message that is of and for use within an enterprise.

#### **12.14 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS**

- 1 Describe the role of letter messaging in business.
- 2 Explain briefly the objectives and functions of writing business letters.
- 3 What are the traditional methods of classifying letters and how do they differ from the modern way of classifying letters?
- 4 Describe the most appropriate style of writing business letters.
- 5 What are the components of a business letter?
- 6 Describe the different components of a business letter, giving your recommendations for effective letter messaging.
- 7 What are the guiding rules to be followed for effective business letters?
- 8 Highlight the importance of stationery and envelope in business correspondence.
- 9 Letters are ambassadors of the firm. Suggest how their design, layout etc can be improved to enhance the image of the company.
- 10 What steps would you suggest in planning writing of effective business letters?

#### **12.15 SUGGESTED FURTHER READINGS**

- 1 Bovee, Courtlaand L., Thill, John V. (1992). *Business Communication Today*. New York, NY, USA: McGraw Hill Inc.
- 2 Pal, Rajendra, Karlahalli, JS (1997). *Essentials of Business Communication*. New Delhi (India): Sultan Chand & Sons.
- 3 French, Astrid (1997). *Interpersonal Skills: Developing Successful Communication*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishing Co.
- 4 Lesikar, Pettit & Flatley (2006). *Basic Business Communication*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill International Edition.

## **UNIT 13 ELECTRONICS COMMUNICATION**

### **STRUCTURE**

- 13.0 Objectives
- 13.1 Introduction
- 13.2 Word Processing and Short Messaging Service from Mobile Phones
- 13.3 Electronic Mail
- 13.4 Electronic Meeting System (EMS)
- 13.5 Fascimile Transmission or Fax Machine
- 13.6 Teletext and Videotext
- 13.7 Imaging
- 13.8 Optical Scanning
- 13.9 Desktop Publishing (DTP)
- 13.10 Electronic Data Interchange (EDI)
- 13.11 Blogs
- 13.12 Summary
- 13.13 Keywords
- 13.14 Self Assessment Questions
- 13.15 Suggested Further Readings

### **13.0 OBJECTIVES**

After studying this unit, students shall be able to:

- Utilize the power and flexibility of word processing for enhancing presentation of written communication
- Make emailing as a habit for free flow of written information across global distances and different time zones instantaneously
- Use audio, video and computer electronic meeting system for clinching group decisions among different locations without traveling and being in face-to-face communication
- Transmit technical, engineering and legal documents instantaneously for seeking agreements, approvals and gaining time in execution
- Grasp the role of technologies of teletext and videotext in electronic commerce, gaming, entertainment world etc
- Use the power of digital imaging for storing, retrieving and projecting technical, engineering and legal documents across global sites for reaching agreements on trade, legal and political issues

- Exploit the full potential of optical scanning to speed up transactions electronically across a large array of businesses and industries
- Incorporate desktop publishing among large corporations, universities and research institutes
- Install EDI telecommunication facilities for immediate exchange of written documents and data across dissimilar computer hardware and software systems
- Use blogs to share opinions, viewpoints and expertise in writing among community members brought together electronically for diverse social, religious, political and a host of other themes

### **13.1 INTRODUCTION**

As a rule, factories process materials, offices process words and data are processed in both factories and offices. When IBM introduced its first electronic typewriter – ‘Selectric’, in 1964, little did they realize that it would become the precursor of revolutionary changes in communication capability of the organizations, groups and individuals. Personal Computers (PCs) were introduced in 1970s and were initially thought to be good toys that companies were giving away to managers to play around but, with the advent of technology of building networks of PCs and integrating them with communication technology around mid-1980s, it is changing the way of doing business in the twenty-first century. The vast strides in business electronics has had a profound impact on the way people communicate and send / receive information across companies, countries and continents.

The advancement in computer-centric technologies has made communication travel faster, safer and almost free from distortions during transmission. Possibilities of misrepresentation are negligible although there are still some unresolved issues of security, hacking etc. Electronic communication has brought in revolutionary changes in written communication. More important tools and techniques of electronic communication that have impacted on written communication, described in this Unit, are:

1. Word Processing
2. Electronic Mail and SMS from Mobile Phones
3. Electronic Meeting System (EMS)
4. Fascimile Transmission or Fax Machines
5. Teletext and Videotext
6. Imaging
7. Optical Scanning
8. Desktop Publishing (DTP)
9. Electronic Data Interchange (EDI)
10. Blogs

### **13.2 WORD PROCESSING**

It is using computers to automate transformation of ideas into a readable form of communication. It involves manipulation of text data viz., characters, words, sentences and paragraphs to produce information (useful data) into documents like:

- Letters
- Memos
- Forms
- Reports

It is the oldest application. Operators use keyboards of a PC or a terminal to type matter that is displayed on the screen. With appropriate command, words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs can be added, deleted and moved around. Format and font of the documents can be adjusted and a variety of other manipulations can be carried out. The output can be stored in the hard disk memory or in secondary storage and printed whenever required.

Most software packages of word processing have:

- Spelling check
- Check of grammar or construction of a sentence
- Thesaurus check
- Style check

The final document can be previewed to check layout and presentation before printing. As a result of these facilities in the software packages, it is now dramatically easier to:

- Create and print documents of various designs, sizes and shapes
- Edit, correct and revise documents

It also has software to assist in letter writing as it stores some paragraphs or sentences that are useful viz.

Opening sentences like;

- ‘Thank you for your letter concerning employment with our company’
- ‘Thank you for sending us a resume of your past business experience’

Closing sentences like:

- Again, thank you for your interest in our company
- We look forward to hearing from you soon
- Yours truly
- Yours faithfully
- Yours sincerely etc

Word processing facilitates:

- Preparation of more effective written communication

- Quicker to and fro communication
- Migration of receivers of word-processed messages to word processing
- Better and quicker decision making

### 13.3 ELECTRONIC MAIL AND SMS FROM MOBILE PHONES

#### (1) Electronic Mail

It is a one-way communication. Even so it has been able to solve issues that plagued telephone calls. A research by AT & T has confirmed that in 80 % of the cases, callers did not get the full information sought before calling off. Besides, the caller got in to the game known as ‘telephone tag’ – one party leaves the message to call back and when the second party called, first party was not present. The game went on for several rounds!

Despite the fact that Email is a one-way flow of information, it has become more popular in business. The process is quite simple. The user types the message and places it in the receivers’ electronic mail box. The receiver, at his convenience, opens the mailbox using his own PC / Laptop or terminal and own password and responds. Thus oral conversation on the telephone is replaced with two separate sets of one-way flows of information. Email software controls the entire process.

The software has following additional features:

- (i) **Electronic bulletin board** - It is like a notice board for every one to read the message
- (ii) **Registered mail** – In these cases, sender receives a confirmation that the message has been delivered
- (iii) **Private mail** – This ensures that the message is not routed to others in the network
- (iv) **Mail distribution** – It ensures that the same message is delivered to other addresses in the network

Internet access, available for a fee, comes with this facility and one can send / receive email messages almost anywhere in the globe instantaneously.

#### (2) SMS From Mobile Phones

Another innovation in electronic technology that is making waves during the last 15 years, is the rapidly growing use of mobile telephony. According to the latest statistics, already there are about 670 millions mobile phones in India. They are increasingly incorporating a number of features in mobile phones that were earlier available only in personal computers and laptops. Short Messaging Service (SMS) is one powerful tool that is akin to Email and is making waves. Already, SMS is playing increasing role in business. Banking, Financial institutions and other industries are integrating it with their routine customer contacts.

The experts are of the opinion that laptops and mobile phones are moving in congruence. According to a publication by Microsoft, laptops and PCs of yesteryears

will become more like wallets. With additional features being built in to mobile phones, they are becoming a wee bit bigger. From the current trends, it appears their congruence is not far away.

### **13.4 ELECTRONIC MEETING SYSTEMS (EMS)**

Attending meetings away from the office entails a lot of time and expense in traveling, staying in hotels etc. These expenses can be considerably reduced by modern electronic meeting systems. They are becoming popular as viable options and broadly cover the following four options:

- Audio conferencing
- Computer conferencing
- Video-audio conferencing
- Use of web cameras

These are described below:

#### **(1) Audio Conferencing**

It uses voice equipment viz., telephone network that establishes audio links with persons who are either in the same building or geographically dispersed locations or a mix of both.

It has been in use by Indian Railways and Indian defence services for a long time as they have had their own private telephone networks. This type of conference does not require computers as such although these days the entire telephone system uses computer backup any way.

Audio conferencing has advantages as under:

- Equipment not costly and is within easy reach of the firms
- People feel at ease when talking on telephone
- Meetings can be arranged at short notice

It is well suited for offices located wide apart or even within a building. However, communications for problem solving among persons located in the same premises is faster through face-to-face interaction.

In order to make such meetings more effective, following rules are suggested:

1. Organizer or senior person should moderate the discussions
2. No of participants to be kept less than 6
3. Copy of the agenda to be faxed before hand
4. Participants to identify themselves before speaking
5. Proceedings of the conference should be tape-recorded
6. Copies of the decisions should be circulated to all participants; this can be done through email to all concerned instantaneously.



## **(2) Computer Conferencing**

It is getting persons from different locations and disciplines together on computers that are networked to exchange information on a common problem for decision-making and work out a solution. There is a fine line between email and computer conferencing. In computer conferencing, usually a large number of persons can be brought together to interact on issues requiring their suggestions.

A very well known example is that of IBM organized one of the largest computer conference before they finalized the specifications and features of a standard Personal Computer (PC). It is on record that some 40,000 persons participated in it and about 4,000 topics were discussed, recording the participants considered opinions about various features and facilities to be incorporated in a PC.

Obviously, when the IBM PC was launched in 1983, it set up a whole new standard in product design in the industry. It had many pioneering feature and facilities that were not available before in any of the PCs in the market.

Computer conference can be set up with persons who might be sitting in the next cabin as well as with those across the globe.

## **(3) Video-Audio Conferencing**

Here television equipment is used to link participants in locations that are geographically dispersed. It has three basic configurations:

- One-way video and one-way audio
- One-way video and two-way audio
- Two-way video and two-way audio

This facility is used to get together managers from different locations and involve them in to almost face-to-face communication for taking group decisions. It enhances the ownership, authorship and involvement of all persons who take decisions jointly. Thus this technology facilitates personal involvement in problem solving and decision-making. In most large organizations, there a separate room specifically created for organizing these conferences.

Electronic Meeting Systems are seeing rapid growth as it promotes quickest communication for group decision support systems. Because of their increasing popularity for effective communication, many hotels and telecommunication carriers are offering these facilities for:

- Launching new products in large markets like USA, EU, India etc
- Organizing sales meetings of the large sales force
- Education and training of employees of large corporations

## **(4) Use of Web Camera**

In recent years, Internet Telephony has made rapid strides and reputed firms like Skype and Yahoo are offering facilities of use of web cameras (Webcams) for verbal communications as well as chatting through written messaging instantaneously.

Use of webcams is becoming a powerful tool for one-to-one communication that is almost face to face. Before long many useful business applications will be available that would enable group interaction and decision-making across regions, countries and continents. Already webcams are fitted in most of the laptops in the market.

However, for complex problems, there is no substitute to face-to-face meetings.

### **13.5 FASCIMILE TRANSMISSION OR FAX MACHINES**

Fax machine can read a document image at one end of the communication channel, using an ordinary land line of a voice telephone system and making a copy at the other end instantaneously. Alternatively, a fax board can be fitted on the PC and then, it can perform the functions of a fax machine.

The messages can be keyed, stored, displayed and transmitted at will either immediately or at a time set by the sender. Previously, when telephone tariffs were high, messages were transmitted at night to take advantage of lower tariffs.

This has emerged as a powerful means of communication particularly in the technical and legal areas. Drawings can be faxed to another location at construction sites or consultants offices and discussed jointly to speed up decision-making. Similarly, legal documents in draft or final forms can be transmitted across to include suggestions of the concerned persons to finalize the contracts quickly.

Fax machines are also used to exchange documents between countries to conclude agreement among nations on political, economic, trade or other sensitive issues where wordings and what appears in fine prints is of great importance.

It is also a very important mode of communication in exports and international trade. Parties send enquires on fax, receive the answer by fax. Sometimes, the same message is sent back with quick hand written notes and the other party replies. If acceptable, the same fax message is sent back and becomes the agreement.

The small gadget called Fax machine has speeded the pace of communications for clinching many large contract in quick time.

### **13.6 TELETEX AND VIDEOTEX**

This is an automatic system of retrieval wherein a firm can receive requests for information and the same can be provided 24 x 7 round the clock without anyone touching the computer keyboard!

Any organization can create a variety of information documents with suitable code numbers. On furnishing the code number of the document of interest, a customer can

access the same. If the customer is satisfied with the product details available and the price, he can place order for the product on line in the order format provided. If the customer gives his credit card details, firm can receive the payment also automatically. However, this requires a great deal of sophistication and high degree of ethics in business.

Information products of various kinds have attracted a lot of interest for gathering information leading to quick e-commerce transactions on the one hand and facilitating information from other external sources that can serve as a vital input for long-term strategic decisions.

Because of these powerful advances in communication technology, a new breed of businessmen have come up and are known as 'infopreneures' who are in the business of processing data in to convenient documents that are of value to customers who can download or collect by paying the right price for it.

The technology is called the Teletex or Videotex and the corresponding products are known as teletext or videotext. These are one-way, repetitive broadcasting of pages of tables, text and graphics that can be displayed on individuals' television screen. Broadly, these documents may be classified in to three categories:

- Teletext
- Hypertext
- Videotext

These services can be provided through:

- Cable system
- Telephone lines
- Standard television transmission

All three of them can be available as interactive information service provided by the firm and are described below:

### **(1) Teletext**

The information software provides for ways to access different sections of the information on the press of the command. For example, by a simple click of the mouse, we can access:

- Electronic yellow page
- Personal bank accounts
- Air booking both domestic and international
- 'Demat' accounts with various depository partners for stocks etc

Major government departments, agencies and corporations have developed large text bases containing documents of all kinds for use by the public. There is a whole group of 'Text Database Management System' software available and these can be used to

create, store, search, retrieve, modify and assemble various types of information products.

Teletex system will also be used extensively for doing daily shopping. Customers can connect with the grocery stores and all the items available and the prices ruling on the day will be available on display. They can order requirements of items and seek door delivery. The customer can also do comparison buying by ringing up other stores and finding their prices. They can even divide order among two or more stores.

## **(2) Hypertext**

At higher levels of management, strategic decision-making is better if external, notably environmental data is used. Such data, known as Hypertext, are available from professional information providers who offer these services for a price usually against an annual membership fee or on piece-meal basis.

Such data form an integral input for Executive Information System (EIS) for decisions at the executive (senior management) level. These text and data are retrieved from commercial databases for a fee and from public databases, free.

Hypertext are available not only in an interactive mode but also with facilities like pop-up displays which are brought on to the screen for a short time and then one can revert back to what was at hand.

These are several software of Hypertext available as they are delivering value to the users.

## **(3) Videotext**

This type of database is also available in interactive mode and uses a combination of technologies. These applications are developed as Digital Video Interactive (DVI) applications and require significant processing power and memory, hard disk and optical disk storage besides audio, video and text technologies.

Here also three options are available:

- Create own videotext files
- Access videotext files of other companies
- Subscribe to videotext service bureau

These modes of communication, although in the initial stages in 1980s, did not arouse enough attention; they have become popular for E-commerce as they bring the exchange of information among the stores and buyers to a meaningful conclusion. It is expected to become very popular with retailers and grocery stores.

They will play a bigger role in the transmission of newspapers, journals etc on-line to enable readers all over the world to remain in touch with news in the format they are familiar with!

## 13.7 IMAGING

Image processing is growing rapidly as it enables end users to electronically capture, store, process and retrieve images of documents and drawings that cover:

- Numeric data
- Text
- Handwritten material
- Graphics
- Photographs
- Drawings
- Sensitive legal documents etc

Besides, imaging faculty has helped upgrade the Electronic Document Management (EDM). Besides, digitized voice note can be attached with the text improving the comprehension of documents that may otherwise appear prosaic. EDM can easily interface with other electronic methodologies like:

- Word processing
- Desktop publishing
- Email
- Voice mail

This further enhances the communication process between two or more parties for speeding up decision-making.

## 13.8 OPTICAL SCANNING

Scanners employ photo-electronic devices to scan the characters being read. The reflected light patterns of the data are converted in to electronic impulses that are, in turn, accepted as inputs to the computer system. It can convert a paper document directly in to input.

Following three types of scanners are common:

### (1) Optical character recognition (OCR) equipment

It can read alphabetic, numeric and other special characters that are printed, typed or hand-written on ordinary paper. The most popular one is the scanner for score sheets of objective types of tests with multiple choices. These are used for compiling the entire examination results on computers. These are used extensively on:

- Credit card billing operations
- Processing of utility bills
- Accounting of insurance premiums
- Processing of airline tickets
- Accounting of cash register entries

- Sorting of mail automatically
- Computing test scores automatically
- Processing of a variety of forms in Government and business

**(2) Graphic scanners**

These scanners can read graphics, text etc and are popular in Desktop publishing’

**(3) Hand-held optical scanners**

These are used to read data on merchandise tags and other articles. They can scan a lot of data printed in bar codes and have revolutionized store receipt and issue operations, billing at check-out counters in malls etc. Once bar coding becomes compulsory in India, these are going to become very commonplace devices in most retail stores.

However, readers must learn to distinguish scanners from magnetic ink character readers (MICR) used extensively in banks for reading cheques and deposit slips.

**13.9 DESKTOP PUBLISHING (DTP)**

Large corporations are using DTP systems to create their own printed materials. The printed material of the corporation can have several types of:

- Character styles and sizes
- Graphics
- Colours in different pages
- Layouts that are impressive

All that the firm needs are:

- Personal computer
- Laser printer that is capable of quality printing
- Software for word processing, graphics and page make-up

The firm has to invest in high quality printing and install a more powerful computer with advanced graphic capabilities.

Recent advances in software have made the job of printing complex reports involving illustrations, graphics etc much easier than before. These outputs presented to your customers and stakeholders make an impressive presentation that enhances firms’ image and reputation. These make the communication more effective and speed up decision making in own favour. If in-house facility of DTP is used, it can help improve the layout of written presentation that can incorporate suitable visual aids to make the matter easy on the eye, easier to read and easiest to comprehend.

**13.10 ELECTRONIC DATA INTERCHANGE (EDI)**

It involves electronic transmission of business transactions over telecommunication network between trading partners, covering the firm and its suppliers, customers etc. A large variety of business transactions of firms are transmitted electronically using standard message format of the firm. The technology is called 'packet switching' viz., data is transmitted in a sort of envelope without any changes made to it.

Transmission of documents can be between:

- Computer of one firm to the computer of another company
- Through a third party value-added service provider

The bulk of the documents that are sent through EDI by packet switching are:

- Purchase orders
- Invoices
- Requests for quotations
- Quotations
- Shipping notices etc

Use of EDI has expanded very fast as it ensures following benefits:

1. Reduction in paperwork
2. Reduction in expenses in postage expenses
3. Reduction in labour costs
4. Faster flow of communication on transactions
5. Reduction in inventory levels
6. Better customer service

EDI is ringing in a new revolution in the way the business is done. The talk that is a buzz in the marketplace is, 'Link up or lose out'.

It is already being said the, 'Doing business without EDI will soon be like trying to do business without a telephone'. EDI, because of its capability to exchange information and speed up flow of communication in a multi-lateral direction, is promoting strategic business partnerships among partners. The way we are moving, it will soon be, 'No EDI, No Business'.

### **13.11 BLOGS**

Blog is a powerful web-related innovation developed by Google in 1999. Its use is developing and growing very rapidly. Already there are millions of blogs available in more than forty languages of the world. In simple parlance, a blog is a website where one can write ones' thoughts on ongoing basis. New writings show at the top so that visitors can read new additions straightaway.

By creating a blog on the Internet, using the toolbar called 'Blogger' invented by Google, followings advantages accrue:

- 1 Share ones' thoughts with friends and world at large
- 2 Post photos, videos etc as required on the blog
- 3 Make it a personal diary where one can write daily or more / less often
- 4 Create a collaborative space for interfacing with readers across the world
- 5 Establish a community of friends, relations etc
- 6 Set up theme blogs where any one interested can share / comment on views
- 7 Develop a soap box for political views on contemporary issues
- 8 Create an outlet for breaking news
- 9 Send memos to the community and world
- 10 Establish repository of ones' private thoughts

A blog is whatever the user wants it to be. It can be a collection of links. They come in all shapes and sizes. One can post to it from the Internet or from **mobile phones**. It has unlimited flexibility and it is free.

One can create own blog. Since its creation in 1999, it has:

1. Refreshed the web
  - Impacted the politics
  - Shaken up journalism
  - Stirred up social causes
  - Provided millions with an outlet for their thoughts, opinions and views

According to Google, the revolutionary wave of 'blogging' has just begun. More interesting things would happen in the future.

### (1) **Routine features**

These are:

#### (i) **Publishing ones' voice**

It takes a few steps; one can start in minutes by registering and using the toolbar known as 'Blogger'. One can start by posting text, photos and videos.

#### (ii) **Simple-to-use interface**

The user friendly interface permits one to change font, making part of the text in bold or italics, adjust colour, alignment and positioning in the format.

#### (iii) **Saves automatically**

The tool enables one to save as the text is getting composed without interrupting typing. It has spell check feature and a simple feature to add labels to the write ups.

#### (iv) **Has editing facility**



With the help of HTML Edit, one can customize the look and feel of the text as required.

**(v) Hosting on the website is free**

One can host it on the available space provided by Google. If user wants to change the location, it is easy to do so. Customer-driven domain options are also available. It is possible to assign own name having all the normal features.

**(vi) Users can customize the templates**

Users have the option of choosing any of the available templates or they can customize the design of blog by using standard 'drag-and-drop' interface.

**(vii) Can add photos to blog**

By clicking the image icon, users can add photos to blog by using post editor tool. In the 'Web Album Account', one can order prints and organize photos in albums.

**(viii) Can add videos to blog**

Similar to above, by clicking on film strip icon, videos can be posted in the blog. Videos uploaded through the toolbar 'Blogger' are hosted on Google Video.

**(2) Special Features**

**(i) Develop own community**

By adding 'Follower Gadget' to the blog layout, readers can click 'Follow the Blog' link to add the blog to their Blogger Dashboard and Google Reader Account. This would permit them to add their image and profile to the blogs of well-known people to convey to the world that they are fans of the celebrity.

**(iii) Obtaining feedback from readers**

Readers can easily leave their comments / suggestions on the blog, giving useful, timely feedback. These comments can be inserted just below the post or in a pop-up window or on a separate page. One can also use the 'Reaction' facility when reader can just provide the feedback quickly with just one click.

**(iii) Readers can subscribe to blog feed**

If required, readers can subscribe to the feed from the blog. They can also be notified whenever a new blog is published.

**(iv) Can customize what one wants to share**

By incorporating this feature, the new posts in the blog can be emailed automatically to specified addresses or mailing list like newspapers etc.

**(v) One common identity**

When blogging is done from Google Account, it gives user access to Gmail, iGoogle, Orkut etc; it means users have one less user name, password to remember. The blogging address can be used with one OpenID which would give one single identity across the web. Consequently readers with OpenID and registered Blogger members will be able to access the blog and provide feedback and participate in conversations.

**(vi) Access in large number of languages**

Blogging can be done in more than 40 languages of the world. Transliterations in five Indian languages are already available.

**(vii) Posting from other modes**

The Blogger toolbar allows one to post blogs from:

1. Mobile phones

  - Secret 'Mail-to-Blogger email address'
  - Blogger Post gadget
  - iGoogle home page

These facilities enable a person to post and publish whatever he wants, from wherever he wants and at any time he wants.

**(viii) Group Blogging**

With toolbar Blogger, it is possible to create a team or group blog allowing many individuals to contribute to a single blog. However, one has to name a member who has the administrative authority; others will be just authors.

**(ix) Make blog private or restricted**

One can also choose to make the blog private or make it available to restricted numbers of viewers, enabling one to have full control of his blog.

**(x) Third party applications**

Blogger toolbar offers many third party applications. If one is a developer, he can check out 'code.blogger.com' so that he can create own great applications.

## **13.12 SUMMARY**

Advancing frontiers of knowledge in electronics, computers, information technology and integrated networking with telecommunication technology has had a profound impact on written communication. Several new methodologies that support written communication directly have become commonplace.

Word processing has automated the transformation of ideas into a readable form where text in words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs are manipulated, formats and fonts can be changed and text / data can be deleted, added, moved around to enhance presentation of written / printed letters, circulars and memos.

Electronic mail, although one way flow of information, has speeded up communication to the remotest corner of the globe instantaneously. Features like electronic bulletin boards, registered mail, private mail and mail distribution has enhanced access of individuals, groups and organizations through the Internet by paying a small fee. With mobile telephony becoming popular, Short Messaging Service (SMS) is becoming popular for many business transactions notably in banking, financial institutions and other industries.

Electronic meeting systems covering audio conferencing, computer conferencing and video-audio conferencing ably supported by email, teletext etc have reduced time and money spent in travelling, hotel and other expenses enabling business executives to become more efficient and effective. Use of web cameras and instant chatting facilities are making one-to-one communication across regions, countries and continents almost face to face.

Fax machine has been described as a small wonder machine or even a card attached to computer that can transmit technical, engineering and legal documents instantly and has been credited with speeding up project work in several locations, negotiations in business and international diplomacy.

Teletext and videotext methodologies are spearheading growth of both business-to-business and business-to-customer electronic commerce. Hypertext has facilitated the inflow of external and competition information from government agencies and merchant 'infopreneurs' that enable putting together online Executive-Information-System (EIS) for speeding up strategic decision-making and action-taking processes.

Imaging technology has revolutionized the way massive volumes of technical, legal and diplomatic text / data are stored in digital form that can be transmitted rapidly across countries and continents although their lack of admissibility in courts and judiciary requires more advancements to open the floodgates for their wider use.

Optical scanners collect data from product tags, cheques and other documents and transfer them to computers networks for inventory, sales and accounting applications.

Availability of cheap desktop publishing facilities in large companies has enhanced presentation of written documents like bids, purchase orders, delivery advices and transport documents and making first dazzling impression about the firm.

Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) has overcome barriers to transmission of text / data among dissimilar hardware and software systems and is becoming a necessary facility much like a telephone and soon business shall reach the stage of 'No EDI, No Business'.

Since their origin in 1999, blogs have caught the imagination of a very number of senders of written communications. Blogs have grown in variety from individual blogs to theme blogs to communities of blogs to meet the needs of individuals, groups and enterprises.

### 13.13 KEYWORDS

- (1) **Manipulation** – It is skilful handling, artful management and control by shrewd use of resources available.
- (2) **Word Processing** – It is subjecting words, text and data to special treatment through a number of manipulations to finalize written and printed documents.
- (3) **Telephone Tagging** – It is a term coined by A T & T of USA to describe a game that starts between the caller and called party with landline telephone connections – when the first party called, second party was not available and left a message to be called back and when second party called back, first party was not available. The game continued for further two or three rounds before the parties could speak to each other.
- (4) **Conference** – It is conversing and consulting in a formal gathering on issues of serious importance.
- (5) **Scanners** – These are electronic devices that use a beam of light to traverse the written or printed document for transmitting and reproducing text and data to a computer which is a part of larger network.
- (6) **Packet switching** – It is a technology used by EDI for transmitting text / data across dissimilar computer hardware and software systems. The approach is similar to putting the text / data in to envelop, putting the destination address and then sending by mail so that it reaches the destination safely and securely.
- (7) **Blogs** – A blog is a website where one can write ones' thought on an ongoing basis. New writings show at the top to enable visitors to read new additions straightaway.

### 13.14 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- 1 Describe the impact of electronic on mode of writing, sending and receiving response to written communications and highlight how it has increased the efficiency in offices.
- 2 Describe the salient features of word processing and how has it significantly improved the efficiency and effectiveness of a business organization.
- 3 Evaluate the impact of email communication on modern global businesses.
- 4 Describe how fax communication has drastically speeded up project, legal and diplomatic work globally.
- 5 Describe electronic meeting system and its classifications, highlighting advantages and disadvantages of each type of EMS.

- 6 Teletext and videotext are becoming very popular. Describe the technologies behind them and evaluate their usefulness in e-commerce.
- 7 Describe the methodology of imaging and the role it can play in revolutionizing research and technology work, technical design and legal documentation.
- 8 Justify why large business corporations, universities and other institutions are opting for in house Desktop publishing.
- 9 Describe the methodology of Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) and evaluate its impact on the way business would be done in future. Assess the future of EDI.
- 10 Describe the role and importance of blogs in modern world.

### **13.15 SUGGESTED FURTHER READINGS**

- 1 Bovee, Courtland L., Thill, John V. (1992). Business Communication Today. New York, NY: McGraw Hill Inc.
- 2 Herta A Murphy, Herbert W Hilderbrandt (1991). Effective Business Communications. New York, NY: McGraw Hill Inc.



## **BLOCK V**

### **BUSINESS APPLICATIONS**

Business communication is the kernel of every human activity and endeavour. Its importance must go home to every budding manager and leader. It is a personal trait and must be acquired in all sincerity so as to lay a sound foundation for building the future of every individual, every family and every organization.

A few typical applications of business communication skills have been detailed in the following Units:

Unit 14	Writing Business Reports
Unit 15	Writing Applicants' Profile or Resume
Unit 16	Interview Skills
Unit 17	Negotiation Skills
Unit 18	Cross Cultural Communication Skills

### **UNIT 14 WRITING BUSINESS REPORTS**

#### **STRUCTURE**

- 14.0 Objectives
- 14.1 Introduction
- 14.2 Importance of Business Reports
- 14.3 Classification of Business Reports
- 14.4 Characteristics of Good Business Reports
- 14.5 Advantages of Written Reports

- 14.6 Limitations of Written Reports
- 14.7 Preparing Written Reports
- 14.8 Preferred Format for Written Reports
- 14.9 Summary
- 14.10 Keywords
- 14.11 Self Assessment Questions
- 14.12 Suggested Further Readings

## **14.0 OBJECTIVES**

After studying this unit, students shall be able to:

- Grasp the role and importance of written reports in business
- Classify business reports in several ways
- Understand characteristics of good business reports
- Appreciate the advantages and limitations of written reports
- Become proficient in preparing written reports
- Learn the preferred format for good written reports

## **14.1 INTRODUCTION**

A report is a method of giving information about something seen or investigated. It is a formal presentation and is written complete with conclusions reached and recommendations made. It provides background material and relevant information in decision-making and action-taking.

It is rightly said that reports carry information from those who have it to those who need it. They reflect flow of information and have become integral part of modern information management for decision-making.

## **14.2 IMPORTANCE OF BUSINESS REPORTS**

Reports have become, over time, basic management tools for decision-making. These are extremely important for firms that have grown in size. All the facts and figures cannot be masterminded by one individual like a proprietor / entrepreneur does in a small enterprise.

For larger firms, reports are indispensable. They have emerged as a very good way of ensuring participative management for better decision-making and carrying the business forward faster on the path of growth and expansion.

## **14.3 CLASSIFICATION OF REPORTS**

Reports can be classified in several ways as under:

- (1) **Classifying on the basis of form of communication**



- Oral reports
- Written reports

**(2) Classifying on the basis of legality**

- Informal (short) reports
- Formal (long) reports

Formal reports can be further subdivided:

- Statutory reports
- Non-statutory reports

**(3) Classifying on the basis of frequency of issue**

- Periodic reports (also called Routine reports)
- Special reports

**(4) Classifying on the basis of functions**

- Informative reports
- Interpretive reports (also called Analytical or Investigative reports)

**(5) Classifying on the basis of nature of subject**

- Problem determining reports
- Fact-finding reports
- Performance reports
- Technical reports

**(6) Classifying on the basis of number of persons entrusted to draft reports**

- Reports by individuals
- Reports by team
- Reports by committee or sub-committee

## **14.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD BUSINESS REPORT**

Following features stand out:

**(1) Accuracy of facts**

Since reports are used for decision-making, inaccurate and unverified facts can lead to disastrous results. It is said, ‘What is worse than no information is wrong information’.

**(2) Brevity**

Difficult to define, it is also not possible to state it as a rule to be followed for writing reports. Good reports are brief but brevity should not be achieved at the cost of clarity nor should it be at the expense of completeness. Thus the reports should include everything that is relevant yet be brief!

### **(3) Clarity**

Clarity comes from orderly, systematic and clear thinking. Reports should be skillfully divided in to short paragraphs, giving headings and inserting signposts to attract attention and securing sustained interest of the readers who are indeed customers.

### **(4) Free from grammatical errors**

Good reports are a good piece of composition presented attractively and free of any grammatical error. If choice of words is faulty, construction of sentences is confusing and design of paragraphs is dull, reports would find few readers. If reports require too much of sorting out of data and sifting out the meanings before taking decisions, it would always leave a lurking doubt in the decision makers' mind. And if decisions do not reflect the conviction of management, they are unlikely to be implemented properly.

### **(5) Objectivity of recommendations**

Recommendations should be objective and impartial. These must be based on logical conclusions of the investigation, analysis and findings. Self-interest of the individuals should not creep in directly or indirectly.

### **(6) Unity and Cohesion**

If the writers are clear about the main purpose of the report, it gives unity and cohesion to the report

### **(7) Precision**

Reports avoid extraneous issues and are precise and incisive. Precision adds value to the report.

### **(8) Reader-orientation**

Reader orientation is customer orientation. Writers must always keep the person(s) going to read the report in mind. Contents of reports to laypersons will be different from the reports prepared and submitted to experts and specialists.

### **(9) Relevance**

The facts and data should have a direct bearing on the main purpose of the message intended. Nothing relevant should be skipped nor any irrelevant data be added to

make the report confusing. Exclusion of facts may make the report incomplete and is likely to mislead.

#### **(10) Simple language**

Reports using simple, familiar words and direct construction of sentences call for a greater understanding of the subject. Only a deep knowledge enables persons to throw up and use simple words and phrases for expressions. Reports should be free of trite expressions, clichés and figures of speech.

### **14.5 ADVANTAGES OF WRITTEN REPORTS**

Among other merits, following could be enumerated:

1. Provide record for both the parties – sender and receiver
2. Provide a reference that can be distributed to all concerned
3. Writers have time to think and ponder before writing
4. Writers can change and chop the text several times before its submission
5. Receivers can go over the reports several times
6. Receivers can construct better response as they too have time to think and ponder

### **14.6 LIMITATIONS OF WRITTEN REPORTS**

A few major ones are:

1. No immediate feedback is available.
2. Lack of personal contact with the readers
3. Readers cannot ask questions by way of clarification
4. Text of the reports is not adjustable as is possible with oral reports

### **14.7 PREPARING A WRITTEN REPORT**

Written reports have emerged as very useful tools in decision-making in large organizations. Usually some vital decisions are taken and if companies have to survive and grow in competitive environments, quality and reliability of decisions must be world class. This requires great care while preparing the written reports. Six important steps are:

- Knowing the purpose of the report
- Visualizing the reader(s)
- Choosing the ideas
- Collecting all facts and data backing the ideas
- Organizing ideas in the most effective manner
- Writing, rewriting and rewriting

These are explained below:

### **(1) Knowing the purpose of the report**

Reports are generally investigative in nature. The senior management while appointing the task force or team to look in to the issue(s) must indicate the purpose. Sometimes, the purpose is vague in the beginning and after some initial exploration, the real purpose becomes clearer.

However, in all events, readers, even before they begin to go through the reports, should know the purpose of the writer. It is always difficult to grasp the ideas if the purpose of the report is not clear.

This highlights the importance of crafting a good title for the report. The wordings of the title of the report should cover the purpose in a precise, concise and specific manner.

### **(2) Visualizing the reader(s)**

Reports should adapt to the mental frame of the readers. Since business reports have limited circulation, it is easier to visualize the possible readers and identify their business and professional background:

- Bosses, peers or subordinates
- Gender – man or woman
- Age – young, middle-aged or old
- Length of service with the firm – new or old associate

If report is meant for a larger group, the typical characteristics of the receivers must be visualized and borne in mind while writing the report. In short, writers must have a healthy love and respect for their readers – report has to attract and sustain their attention!

### **(3) Choosing the ideas**

After knowing the purpose, the various ideas that come to mind must be written succinctly. Here effort should be made to jot down all the possible key words of the ideas that flash in the mind of the writer. After writing down the ideas, next step is to sequence them in some logical and systematic way for making it easier for the readers to understand and grasp the ideas.

### **(4) Collecting all facts and data backing the ideas**

The writers must remember that the written report has to be a very compelling document supporting the ideas you want to sell to your superiors, peers and subordinates. Here writers should make a list of the ideas in the left half of the paper and then on the corresponding right half, write the data / facts that must be collected in support of those ideas. This draft action plan would save time and effort of the team who would collect the relevant data required for the subject.

Having collected all the relevant data, writers must edit in terms of the most suitable sequencing of the ideas for influencing the receivers. For ease of readability, all the data may not have to be put in the main body of the report – detailed tables, charts etc may be put in the appendices at the end of the report. Only the summary of the data may be put in the main body to ensure the write up moves forward with every paragraph.

**(5) Organizing ideas in the most effective manner**

The order in which the ideas will be presented is as important as the ideas themselves. The discipline of translating your thoughts in to appropriate words and organizing these thoughts and words logically has no equal in the intellectual training. This process of ‘wordsmithy’ is very invigorating and satisfying to the writers of any communication, especially the business reports.

**(6) Writing, rewriting and rewriting .....**

It is well known secret of the industry that good authors, journalists and correspondents write, rewrite and rewrite..... To be able to do it, contents have to be rewritten repeatedly with a view to improving them; it also requires an innate respect and love for the readers.

To revise any draft effectively, it should be read objectively and with a fresh mind from the viewpoint of the readers. Writers must read paragraph by paragraph and check the continuity of the ideas. Every word, figure and image must be checked thoroughly.

Wherever possible, consider suggestions from knowledgeable colleagues and subordinates.

**14.8 SUGGESTED FORMAT FOR WRITTEN REPORTS**

The reports that are most popular in business are the stand-alone type and are prepared by individuals or teams and circulated to the concerned persons under cover of a letter. Although format of reports is influenced by the topic under study, a generalized format covers the followings:

1	Title page
2	Acknowledgement
3	Executive summary
4	Table of contents
5	Main body of the report
5.1	Introduction / Background
5.2	Defining the problem
5.3	Analysis of data, facts and supporting evidence
5.4	Conclusions
5.5	Recommendations
5.6	Implications for other functions in the organization
5.7	Appendices

All reports may not contain the topics suggested under the heading of ‘Main body of the report’. Each of these items has been explained as follows:

**(1) Title page**

Every enterprise, organization and institution should standardize a format for use by all report writers. Among the many variations of the title page in use, following design is recommended for adoption:

<b>INFORMATION SYSTEM FOR OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT</b>	
Submitted by	
Name	Function
Date	
XYZ Limited, New Delhi 11019	

**(2) Acknowledgement**

In the compilation, analyses of data, facts etc for the preparation of the report, the individuals or the team might have requested and received valuable help and suggestions. It is a good practice to thank the persons individually or collectively for the help extended by them for the completion of the report.

The acknowledgement should normally cover not more than half-full A-4 size word processed page and should be signed by all the persons who have authored the report.

**(3) Executive summary**

The term ‘executive’ has been derived from its usage in USA where ‘executive’ are members of the top rung of the organization covering Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Chief Operating Officer (COO), Chief Finance Officer (CFO), Chief Information Officer (CIO) etc. This is an extremely important page and must be written in very compelling language covering the main recommendations. Executives read this page

first and if there are some useful recommendations, they go to the paragraph on detailed recommendations in the ‘main body’ of the report. Since it is in writers’ interest to not only attract the attention of senior executives but also induce them to read the entire report from first page to last, critical role of this section called ‘executive summary’ cannot be over-emphasized.

**(4) Table of contents**

This is a must because most business reports run in to several pages. This page reveals the overall design of the report and guides the readers to the page number of any topics that they like to peruse. The format is the same as written above but reproduced for clarity:

<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>		
Serial	Topics	Page No
1	Acknowledgement	
2	Executive summary	
3	Table of contents	
4	Main body	
	4.1 Introduction / background	
	4.2 Defining the problem	
	4.3 Data, facts and supporting evidence	
	4.4 Conclusions	
	4.5 Recommendations	
	4.6 Implications	
	4.7 Appendices	
5	Bibliography and webliography	

**(5) Introduction / Background**

This section highlights the possible reasons for initiating this study / investigation. It should focus on how broken the existing process or situation is and its implications in terms of costs incurred by the company. Japanese always highlight the losses incurred by the firm in continuing with the existing system, procedure or practice. This approach builds / attracts supporters for the change(s) the report is going to propose.

**(6) Defining the problem**

After setting up the background in the introductory paragraph, writers must proceed to define the problem formally. A good definition of the problem would invariably incorporate the main purpose of the study. It would also indicate the direction of possible solution(s).

**(7) Facts, Data and supporting evidence**

Definition of problem also paves the way for compiling, examining and analyzing of the relevant data. This part may have to be spread over several headings that need to be sequenced properly in a logical manner.

Care must be taken not to clutter the body of the report with too much of data tabulation if conclusions are based on the overall summary of the data. In such cases, detailed tabulation should be shifted to appendices and only summary reported in the text. This enhances readability of the report and what is easy to read or see, is easier to comprehend. Process of mental assimilation is associated with a lot of abstraction and simplification.

## **(8) Conclusions**

Having described all the relevant facts in the above paragraphs, it is now time to integrate the different parts of the investigation and come to a few clear conclusions. The intention of following this sequence is to convince the readers in a very logical manner about the soundness of approach and consequently the integrity of the conclusions arrived at. Also, it sets the stage for formulating the recommendations of the study.

## **(9) Recommendations**

We have now readied the readers to focus on the recommendations. These must be drawn in the order of their importance to the company. This order may not follow the sequence of study. Since writers have to develop the Unique Selling Proposition (USP) in selling their suggestions for acceptance, sequence of presentation of recommendations can be quite different from the sequence followed in the findings.

## **(10) Implications**

In most companies, decisions are taken by a group of managers. Many a good suggestions flounder because someone raises a question about its implications for other wings of the organization. To forestall such eventualities, it is always better to highlight implications, if any for other departments and functions.

In this paragraph itself, suggestions that can be replicated in other parts of the enterprise with considerable gains, should be highlighted. It must be remembered that these form the additional merits of recommendations that must be added to enhance the salability of recommendations.

## **(11) Appendices**

In many detailed and technical investigations, a lot of tables, charts and graphs can be pushed back in to appendices. It serves two purposes:

- It improves readability of the report
- It adds to the credibility of the findings if supporting data is also furnished.

## **(12) Bibliography and webliography**



Writers tend to minimize the role of providing the necessary references in the bibliography. It gives a very favourable impression of the team and highlights the efforts put in by them for the in-depth study carried out. In the contemporary world, searching the web for seeking the latest development on any subject has become very popular especially with management students. The specific web sites consulted should get proper mention in the bibliography. However, in no case, search engines should be mentioned as references as they are mere tools to get to a particular site, similar to going to library before one can consult a book!

## **14.9 SUMMARY**

Business reports carry information from those who have it, to them who need it and have emerged as integral part of modern management tools for decision-making and action-taking in large corporations. They contribute significantly to better decision-making and carrying business forward on the path of growth and expansion.

Reports may be oral or written, informal or formal, statutory and non-statutory, routine or special, informative or interpretive, problem-solving or fact-finding, performance or technical and may be prepared by individuals, teams or committees.

Business reports should aim for accuracy of facts, brevity and clarity; they should be free of grammatical mistakes and have objectivity in recommendations. They should have unity, cohesion, precision, reader-orientation, relevance and be couched in simple language.

Written business reports provide record for senders, receivers and other users; they are thought out well before they are written and submitted. Receivers can go through them several times and construct better response(s). Limitations of written business reports are that there is no immediate feedback to senders, no personal contact with readers who are not able to ask questions for clarifications and once submitted, their contents cannot be adjusted.

For preparing better business reports, writers must know the purpose, visualize the readers, choose ideas, collect facts to back them, organize ideas in the most effective sequence and finally writing, rewriting and rewriting ..... to improve their readability and salability.

Organizations should standardize the formats of their business reports incorporating the title page, acknowledgement, executive summary, table of contents with page numbers in the beginning and appendices, bibliography at the end of the reports. The format of the main body of the business reports may be varied to suit the type of the report and other specific needs of business.

## **14.10 KEYWORDS**

- (1) **Information Management** – It is telling and being told of the news, data, facts, intelligence, learning acquired in any manner to facilitate good decision-making in any activity or enterprise.
- (2) **Participative Management** – It is to take part or have share and involvement with others in an activity or enterprise.
- (3) **Objectivity** – It is collecting material that is real, actual, factual, fair and impartial and is free of bias, prejudice.
- (4) **Purpose** – It is aim, ambition, wish, desire, intention, motive, rationale, will, resolve, hope, aspiration, drive, resolution and single-minded determination.
- (5) **Visualizing** – It is imaging, picturing, conceiving, dreaming, conjuring, envisaging, inventing, and seeing with mind's eyes.

#### **14.11 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS**

- 1 Bring out the role and importance of business reports in large business corporations.
- 2 Describe different ways of classifying business reports.
- 3 What are the common features of a good business report?
- 4 Describe the advantages and limitations of a business report.
- 5 What is the format you would recommend for business reports in a large organization?
- 6 What practical steps you would recommend for preparing a good business report?

#### **14.12 SUGGESTED FURTHER READINGS**

- 1 Bovee, Courtlaand L., Thill, John V. (1992). Business Communication Today. New York, NY, USA: McGraw Hill Inc.
- 2 Pal, Rajendra, Karlahalli, JS (1997). Essentials of Business Communication. New Delhi (India): Sultan Chand & Sons.
- 3 Kreps, Gary L (1996). Organizational Communication: Theory & Practice. London: Longman.
- 4 Lesikar, Pettit & Flatley (2006). Basic Business Communication. New York, NY: McGraw Hill International Edition.

### **UNIT 15 WRITING APPLICANT PROFILE OR RESUME**

#### **STRUCTURE**

- 15.0 Objectives
- 15.1 Introduction
- 15.2 Types of Format for Job Applications
- 15.3 Categories of Job Applications
- 15.4 Job Application as Business Letter

- 15.5 Bio-data, Resume and Curriculum Vitae
- 15.6 Features of Good Resume
- 15.7 Types of Resume
- 15.8 Writing the Resume
- 15.9 Writing Covering Letter
- 15.10 Practical Hints for Writing Resume Letters
- 15.11 Summary
- 15.12 Keywords
- 15.13 Self Assessment Questions
- 15.14 Suggested Further Readings

## **15.0 OBJECTIVES**

After learning this unit, students shall be able to:

- Understand different categories of job applications and their overall formats
- Grasp that job application is also a business letter
- Absorb the essence of resume, bio-data or curriculum vitae
- Appreciate the features of good resume
- Learn various types of resume
- Master skills in writing resume
- Understand importance of covering letter for job applications
- Acquire practical hints for writing resume letters

## **15.1 INTRODUCTION**

Human resources constitute a renewable form of energy. When employees reach the age of superannuation or are disabled or call it a day for other reasons, they seek and secure retirement and are replaced by younger persons who enter / have entered the work force.

Even in the normal course of career progression, people change jobs from one firm to another. Job seekers, as a rule, write application letters to employers or recruitment agencies or placement consultants whenever they are contemplating a change in their job.

## **15.2 TYPES OF FORMATS FOR JOB APPLICATIONS**

These are broadly classified in to two types:

- (1) An application that also includes the resume or bio-data of the candidate. This type of job applications are used by persons who are seeking employment at the lowest entry level as unskilled employees, peons, janitors etc. Such candidates do not have a great deal to tell about their educational qualifications, work experience or other details.
- (2) Second type of job applications are in two parts – the personal details, bio-data, resume or curriculum vitae is given in a separate set of sheets and a

covering letter that is addressed to the appropriate person in the employing organization. This format is extremely popular among persons with college education, specialists and professionals with experience etc.

In this Unit the focus would be on the second type of job applicants and their profiles for securing gainful job placement commensurate with their accomplishments.

### **15.3 CATEGORY OF JOB APPLICATIONS**

These are also of two categories:

- Solicited applications
- Unsolicited applications

In both cases, the job applications shall follow the two-part format i.e., resume will be a separate set and it will be sent to employing organization under a covering letter.

### **15.4 JOB APPLICATION AS A BUSINESS LETTER**

Since the job application is sent in the form of a business letter, writers should be clear about the type of business letter it is so that the contents are written accordingly. Application letters are an interesting mix of two types of business letters:

- **Personal letter** – It is a letter written in a very personal way
- **Sales letter** – Its purpose is to sell the writer as a person and what skill sets he can offer

Accordingly, rules applicable to both types of business letters must be observed. Usually, it is more difficult to say something laudatory about oneself than about the products or services one has to sell as a part of normal duties.

### **15.5 BIODATA, RESUME AND CURRICULUM VITAE**

There are three terms used and described as under:

#### **(1) Bio-data**

Bio-data is a paragraph summary of who a person is and can be written for any purpose whatsoever.

#### **(2) Resume**

Resume is a statement containing specific information relating to education, training and experience. It is usually a single page and is used for applying for job.

#### **(3) Curriculum Vitae**

Curriculum Vitae is like a resume but it may be much longer spreading in to 3 to 4 pages.

The above definitions bring out the subtle differences among the various terms used. However, in India they are being used almost interchangeably. In this Unit, the term resume has been used.

The word resume has two popular connotations:

(i) **Resume as a noun**

It is even pronounced differently. It stands for a detailed bio-data, personal record sheet or curriculum vitae.

(ii) **Resume as a verb**

It means restart. Job hunting or job change should be thought of as a process of giving a restart to ones' life and working career. The concerned person must remember that the resume is not about his past job. It is about writing all about self so that he can give a fresh start to his working life. It must talk about the person and his accomplishments as would fit the requirements of job he is applying. It should highlight his personality and focus on how well he was equipped to perform the future job.

Resume is the most important document a person creates for himself. It should be available with him all the time. It must be revised and updated from time to time – perhaps once in six months in the prime years of his working life. It is everybody's duty to plan his career in such a way that he can add something more exciting and more topical to his resume in line with the contemporary needs of business and industry.

When resumes are mailed unsolicited to possible employers, these are also scanned quickly by the persons concerned – they skim through the resume in 1 – 2 minutes. It means that resume should be as brief as possible so that it can attract the attention of the quick readers. One of the most difficult tasks is to secure an appointment for an interview - that is the first and very important step in getting recruited. Good resumes pave the way for the interview.

Someone has compared resume with a bouquet of flowers. Every blossom should be chosen with a lot of care and every flower should be set in a way that adds to the beauty of the bouquet.

Thus learning to write resume is a very skillful job. Each job one applies for may require fine-tuning of the resume to suit. Experience has proved that although considerable effort is required for turning out a brief but attractive resume, it is very rewarding to individuals. It can propel applicants on faster trajectory of career progression.

## 15.6 FEATURES OF A GOOD RESUME

It is an acronym that follows the spelling of 'resume'.

- **Result-centric** document containing relevant and critical information to prove that the applicant has suitable credentials for the job
- **Enlightening** tool to readers that portrays the essence of the applicant – who, what, when, where, why and how (5W's and IH) of the individual.
- **Shares** information about the person and simultaneously, selling his value and worth to the recruiting firm
- **Uniqueness** of ones' personality, the inimitable 'you' captured in print
- **Meaningful** marketing tool available to secure a call for interview
- **Evoke** a positive response from prospective employer

## 15.7 TYPES OF RESUME

There are broadly three types of resume:

- Functional resume
- Chronological resume
- Combination resume

These have been described as below:

### (1) Functional resume

Focus of a functional resume is on work experience and highlights skills that have been acquired through education and experience. It draws attention of the reader to skill sets that are specific to the requirements of the new job.

### (2) Chronological resume

A chronological resume enumerates working experience in the reverse order starting with the most recent job first and then going backwards to the previous job(s). This approach builds credibility with the reader through work experience and highlights the growth of the applicant over time. The reader can then easily judge the suitability of the candidate for the new job.

This format is popular in USA and is picking up in India too.

### (3) Combination resume

As the name implies, it balances the above two approaches and adopts the middle path. Here, the functional list of skills is stated first in a forward manner followed by chronological listing of work experience with different employers in the reverse order.

In India, much of the time, combination resume has become more popular.

## 15.8 WRITING THE RESUME

It has many components as below:

1. Name
2. Address
3. Phone No and Mobile Phone No
4. Email ID
5. Date of birth
6. Life mission or objective
7. Educational qualifications
8. Work experience
9. Sports, social and cultural activities
10. Hobbies and interests
11. Special accomplishments
12. Languages known
13. References

These have been described as under:

### (1) Name

Correct name as written in educational certificates must be mentioned. Avoid giving nicknames.

### (2) Address

Give complete address for correspondence because that is the most important one if employers wish to contact the applicant. At this stage, give permanent address only if required.

### (3) Telephone No and / or Mobile Phone No

Decide which phone number to give to enable them to contact. In recent days young candidates prefer giving their Mobile Phone No. - it saves time and avoids leaving message to call back.

### (4) Email Identity

Because of the increasing use of Internet for communication, it is desirable to furnish Email ID. It should be given only if computer access and use is available.

### (5) Date of birth

This is given as the minimum personal data to provide a quick check on applicants' age.

The above five components are typed centrally on an A-4 size paper. It would be a good idea to give a space before entering birth details.

**(6) Life mission or objectives**

This should be a short but attractive statement about the applicants' purpose in life. It should be well crafted as it shows the real 'you' to the readers. It is something that should be unique and something that he craves and for which he will leave no stone unturned to accomplish – his calling in this life!

**(7) Educational qualifications**

It is normally written in a tabular form. The design of columns in the table can be varied to suit individual needs. However, usually it is written in forward chronological order, starting with the first board examination after Class X. If meritorious student, the same can be highlighted in the 'remarks' column at the end.

Some people tend to overdo this part also in reverse chronological order. A straight-forward approach is better.

**(8) Work experience**

This should be written in reverse chronological order to provide the current status and accomplishments quickly. There are an equal number of candidates who write this section also in the forward chronological order. This part can also be tabulated and the design of columns can be changed to suit individual requirements. The nature of duties and responsibilities must remain in focus. Designation, name of the company, location and tenure should be mentioned clearly.

**(9) Sports, social and cultural activities**

Each of these – sports, social or cultural activities if applicable should be written separately in the forward chronological order. Post of captain of the team, house captain, editor of school / college magazine, debate / drama participation etc should be mentioned properly. Any other post of eminence occupied must be stated.

**(10) Hobbies and interests**

Every one has some special, out-of-the-ordinary interests like music, singing, gardening, social service, participating in quizzes, general knowledge tests etc. These must be mentioned. If one is fond of Hindi or Hollywood movies, cartoons, comics etc, these should find proper mention.

**(11) Special accomplishments**

In addition to the above, there may be some very special events that have happened in ones' life. If, because of parents' posting abroad, person has studied in school in a foreign country, it should get a mention in the resume. If the person has been lucky enough to go with the family abroad for a vacation as a kid or as a grown up person, it should also be stated. Winning a prize for community work, painting competition or competition of flower arrangements etc, should be highlighted too.



## **(12) Languages known**

In India we are fortunate to learn many languages. Some of these languages, we can speak, read and write, others we can read and write and still others we can read only. This capability must find a mention in your resume.

## **(13) References**

In the growing competition, recruiters want to be sure that they are inviting a good person to join the organization. They want to speak or write to and obtain reports about the candidate from prominent persons who have known the candidate. While there are no hard and fast rules on this, usually two referees' names, address and telephone and email ID should be included. For young persons, the two preferred references are: a teacher under whom he has studied and the boss in a firm he has worked and who is personally well known. Candidates should not give their names as referees until they have taken permission of concerned persons.

At any rate, it is a good habit to cultivate rapport with seniors who can act as mentors both inside and outside the organization they are working for.

### **ACTIVITY**

As an integral part of the learning of communication skills, every student should be asked to draw up a detailed resume that would be used for vacation placement interviews towards the close of their first year and for final job placement at the end of final year. ....

Each resume must be critically reviewed by the experienced members of faculty and / or staff of Placement Group attached to the institute. Students must be asked to update their resumes on an ongoing basis and they should carry 1 – 2 copies of it with them as a routine.

## **15.9 WRITING COVERING LETTER OF JOB APPLICATIONS**

Resumes of qualified professionals are done in two parts. The resumes are prepared in separate set of A-4 size paper and are always sent under covering letters.

A covering letter is also very important as it precedes the resume. It should tell the employer the exact purpose of the resume and the benefits that potential recruiter can enjoy. The covering letter goes hand in hand with the resume – it permits the applicant to show his communication skills and other exciting aspects of his personality. The covering letter should inspire confidence in the mind of the recruiter so as to call the applicant for an interview. It should propel him to read the resume and send an appointment for interview.

Various aspects of writing letters have been discussed in an earlier Unit. However, following points should be borne in mind:

### **(1) Subject heading**

This must be clearly mentioned and blocked to make it look prominent. This is important as the readers can link with the post the person is applying for.

## **(2) Main body**

The guidelines for three paragraphs are:

### **(i) Opening paragraph**

Much like a sales letter, the opening paragraph must attract the attention of the reader and impel him to read on. Since it is not like selling a product, be brief, direct and make a statement to connect with employers' needs. A few examples of a good opening paragraph are:

1. With reference to your advertisement in The Times of India dated 29 January 2010, I wish to apply for the post of .....
2. Referring to your advertisement in the Times of India dated 29 January 2010, I wish to apply for the post of .....
3. In response to your advertisement in the Times of India dated 29 January 2010, I wish to apply for the post of .....
4. Your advertisement in the Times of India dated 29 January 2010 for the position of .....suits my qualification and experience.
5. I request your favourable consideration for my qualifications and experience for the post of ..... which your firm advertised in the Times of India dated 29 January 2010.
6. With my qualifications and experience of ...years in ICI India Limited, I consider myself eminently suitable for the post of ...advertised in the Times of India dated 29 January 2010.

If it is unsolicited application, opening paragraph may be as under:

1. Having come to understand from a reliable source that you are actively looking for a suitable candidate for the post of .... with your firm, I offer my candidature because of my qualifications and .... years' experience as detailed in the enclosed resume.
2. A consultant friend of mine has asked to send my application for the post of .... with your firm because of my qualifications and ...years' experience. The detailed resume is enclosed for your kind perusal.

### **(ii) Middle paragraph**

This may add one or two sentences that highlight applicants' exceptional achievements so as to convince the reader further about his suitability for the post.

### **(iii) Concluding paragraph**

Concluding paragraph should urge the receiver of the letter to do the act of calling the applicant for an interview. In this paragraph, many applicants trip

up because they try to invoke sympathy and plead for the opportunity. No firm hires employees as act of charity. Employer would call candidates for an interview only when they are convinced about their suitability for the post. A few examples of good concluding paragraphs are:

1. Hoping to hear from you soon, with best regards,
2. Looking forward to an opportunity to meet you in a personal interview, with kind regards,
3. May I look forward to an interview with you at your convenience?
4. Hoping that my qualifications and experience will merit your consideration and looking forward,
5. May I have the opportunity to meet you in person to substantiate my resume credentials and give further clarifications as required?
6. Hoping that my resume would meet your requirement, I look forward to a personal interview for which you can reach me on my Mobile Phone No .....

### **(3) Complimentary close**

The most commonly used complimentary close is 'yours faithfully'. Avoid using hackneyed closings like 'Your most obedient servant' or 'I beg to remain, your most obedient servant' etc.

## **15.10 PRACTICAL HINTS FOR WRITING RESUME LETTERS**

Securing a suitable job is not easy – one has to cross many hurdles. Writing an attractive resume with a covering letter is not only the first such obstacle but also the most important one. Acquiring skills in writing a powerful and persuasive resume letter is an art that one can perfect by regular practice. A few of the 'Dos' and 'Don'ts' are:

### **Do's for effective resumes**

1. Use white or off-white paper
2. Use standard size paper – A 4 is a universally accepted standard
3. Use laser or other high quality printer
4. Print one side of the paper only
5. Stick to the font size from 10 to 14
6. Stick to one typeface throughout the resume and covering letter
7. Stick to past tense even for current job responsibilities
8. Your technical strength should stand out vividly at the beginning of resume
9. Sentences to use action verbs – deeds speak louder than words
10. Be brief and precise – readers spend less than one minute on reading it
11. Don't sell yourself short – both over- and under-estimations are bad
12. Resume should appeal the potential recruiter
13. Restrict it to one page - maximum of two pages if unavoidable
14. Resume should be completely free of spelling and grammatical errors
15. Proofread several times to eliminate errors
16. Send your resume in a large envelope

17. Ensure your resume is sent to the right person

### **Don'ts for effective resumes**

1. Avoid decorative typeface
2. Avoid colourful pages
3. Avoid excessive italics, blocking and underlining
4. Avoid graphics, pictures etc
5. Avoid light and dark printing
6. Avoid too much personal information – marital status, health etc

A quality resume can make a huge difference. Employers are always looking for right persons for the job and would not like to compromise on the caliber of the person for recruitment. Writing effective resume has become a specialized service. In India, service organizations are offering these services along with word processing, printing and other facilities.

It has also emerged as a very important document in European Union (EU). EU has standardized a model for writing curriculum vitae (CVs) that has been approved by the European Parliament in 2004. It is called the 'Europass' and is intended to ease migration of skilled persons among member nations.

### **15.11 SUMMARY**

Human resource is a renewable form of energy. When employee retire or call it a day for whatever reasons, they are replaced by younger persons who enter / have entered workforce. Working persons have to write application letters and resumes for employers, recruitment and placement agencies. Two types of job applications are in use. A letter that also contains the resume is used by candidates for entry at lower levels like unskilled workers, peons etc. Persons with college, professional qualifications and experience write job applications in two parts – a set that details the resume and a covering letter that is addressed to the appropriate authority. Job applications, both solicited and unsolicited, are business letters that combine the features of a personal and sales letter.

Resume is a creative document that has been compared to a bouquet of flowers where every blossom is chosen carefully and every flower adds to its beauty. Although considerable time and effort are required for turning out a brief but attractive resume, the exercise is rewarding and fetching to individuals. Good resumes are result-centric, enlightening and sharing information about the applicant that enhances his value and worth to potential employers. Resume captures uniqueness of applicants' personality and becomes a useful tool for securing a call for interview. It should be so drafted as to evoke positive response from potential employers.

Resumes can be written in style that is functional, chronological or combination of the two. Name, address, phone number, email ID and date of birth are typed in the top middle of an A4 sized paper. Life mission / objectives, educational qualifications, sports, social and cultural activities, hobbies, interests and special accomplishments may be stated in the forward chronological manner. Work experience may be

tabulated in reverse chronological manner. Languages known and references should also find a proper mention.

Covering letter should also be written skillfully as it precedes the resume. It should have the subject heading and the main body should have three paragraphs – the opening, the middle and concluding paragraph. Finally, it should have a complimentary close. All job applicants whether students, managers and leaders should be conversant with do's and don'ts of good resume writing.

## 15.12 KEYWORDS

- (1) **Bio-data** - Bio-data is a paragraph summary of who a person is and can be written for any purpose whatsoever.
- (2) **Resume** - Resume is a statement containing specific information relating to education, training and experience. It is usually a single page and is used for applying for job.
- (3) **Curriculum Vitae** - Curriculum Vitae is like a resume but it may be much longer spreading in to 3 to 4 pages.
- (4) **Career Progression** – It is a march / advancement in profession, pursuit, occupation, vocation, job or work.
- (5) **Solicited applicants** – It is asking for, seeking earnestly, pleading, begging, entreating, tempting and enticing potential candidates for jobs.
- (6) **Skim through** – It is looking at hastily, flipping or glancing through without reading word for word and making rapid examination.
- (7) **Functional resume** – It is the bio-data of applicants that highlights their occupation and employment details.
- (8) **Chronological resume** – It is the bio-data of applicants that gives accurate details of the events in the life of applicants, arranging them in the sequence of their occurrence date-wise.
- (9) **Life's mission** – It is the special task and purpose for which a person is destined and is his aim, goal, vocation and calling.
- (10) **References** – These are the prominent individuals who know the applicant personally and professionally and can provide testimonials, attestation, affirmation, certification and communicate good words about them.
- (11) **Caliber** – It is the quality, merit, ability, capability, talent, stature and capacity of persons.
- (12) **Euro-pass** – It is the standardized format for writing resumes by residents of member countries of the enlarging European Union to facilitate their movement for jobs and placement.

## 15.13 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- 1 Describe the needs, types of applications and the formats that are common while preparing resume or applicants' profile for seeking a job.
- 2 What are the features that should be incorporated in a good applicant profile?
- 3 Describe different types of resume or curriculum vitae.
- 4 Explain the role and importance of covering letter in securing a letter for interview for a job.

- 5 Describe do's and don'ts of writing good job resume.

#### **15.14 SUGGESTED FURTHER READINGS**

- 1 Bovee, Courtland L., Thill, John V. (1992). Business Communication Today. New York, NY: McGraw Hill Inc.
- 2 Herta A Murphy, Herbert W Hilderbrandt (1991). Effective Business Communications. New York, NY: McGraw Hill Inc.
- 3 Kreps, Gary L (1996). Organizational Communication: Theory & Practice. London: Longman.
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## **UNIT 16 INTERVIEWING SKILLS**

### **STRUCTURE**

- 16.0 Objectives
- 16.1 Introduction
- 16.2 Objectives of Interviews
- 16.3 Skills involved in Interviews
- 16.4 Interviewer Skills

- 16.5 Interviewee Skills
- 16.6 Summary
- 16.7 Keywords
- 16.8 Self Assessment Questions
- 16.9 Suggested Further Readings

## **16.0 OBJECTIVES**

After studying this unit, students shall be able to:

- Understand different types of interviews in modern living and working
- Grasp the objectives of interviews
- Acquire skills in interviewing candidates for recruitment and placement
- Absorb skills in doing well in job interviews

## **16.1 INRODUCTION**

It takes two to tango. Interviews entail two parties. There are many types of interviews:

- Selection and placement interviews
- Vocational guidance interview
- Counseling interview
- Survey interviews
- Group interviews
- Diagnostic interviews

In this Unit, focus will be on selection and placement interviews although other types of interviews are also becoming popular in business and industry.

## **16.2 OBJECTIVES OF INTERVIEWS**

Interview is not the only source of information available to companies. They have other sources at their disposal viz.

- Intelligence tests
- Aptitudes tests
- Physical examination
- Credit investigation
- Grades scored in board / university examinations
- Transcript or other written or practical tests
- References

However, it is the interviews that enable companies to collect much useful data. Selection and placement interviews are organized for the following objectives:

1. Matching the candidate with the job and selecting the most suitable one
2. Giving essential facts about the job, nature of work, duty hours, location etc
3. Creating mutual understanding and a sense of confidence among selected candidates
4. Promoting goodwill among candidates about the firm

### **16.3 SKILLS INVOLVED IN INTERVIEWS**

Interviews involve two separate skill sets:

- Interviewer skills
- Interviewee skills

Both play important role in the life of an individual who is career oriented and have been discussed separately.

### **16.4 INTERVIEWER SKILLS**

#### **(1) Role, responsibilities and qualifications for interviewers**

The person assigned by the company to interview the candidates for selection and recruitment, should have the following traits:

- (i) Good knowledge of the job for which recruitment is being done. Ideally, a copy of a detailed 'Job Analysis' should be available indicating the followings:
  - Duties and responsibilities
  - Qualifications and training required
  - Work experience
  - Technical requirements
  - Working conditions
  - Acquired knowledge and skill
  - Mental and soft skill requirements
- (ii) Be objective in approach and not swayed by pity, compassion or biases
- (iii) Is warm by nature and quick in winning the confidence of candidates
- (iv) Is good listener and keen observer of candidates' body language
- (v) Have the experience of interviewing for selection and placement
- (vi) Have the maturity and poise to impress candidates with his sincerity
- (vii) Have good interaction with persons of the age group being interviewed

#### **(2) Conduct during the interview**

Remember that interviewers are dealing with persons who are under emotional strain and would be very vigilant. While there is a need to maintain a control on the interview, ideally the interview should be like an unstructured conversation where candidates are made to do most of the talking. Interviewers should notice the gaps and



omissions in candidates' responses and then ask appropriate questions. Interviewers should watch applicants' reaction, comments and body language.

A few important tips are:

- (i) Make candidates comfortable so that they talk freely
- (ii) Let the applicants do most of the talking
- (iii) Use brief interludes like, 'Tell us more', 'what happened then' etc
- (iv) Pay attention to candidates by supportive gestures, expressions and postures
- (v) Use silence or long (but not lengthy) pauses as tools to check out if candidates want to share more information. (Nature abhors silence during conversation)
- (vi) Respect the feelings of candidates even when they are wrong
- (vii) Accept what candidates say without frown, surprise and disapproval
- (viii) Avoid impulsive or abrupt change in the topic
- (ix) Never argue with candidates
- (x) Be informal – if it is one-to-one session, interviewer can sit on the same side of a desk or on a sofa
- (xi) Do not pretend; be yourselves throughout the interaction
- (xii) Try understanding candidates with empathetic approach

### **(3) Preparing for interviewing**

Preparing for an interview is as important as preparing a speech or writing some thing or for listening to a lecture / discussion on an important topic.

- (i) Decide the areas to focus in the interview
- (ii) Think about how candidates can demonstrate their skills and qualities
- (iii) Ask about their experience – what have they done?
- (iv) Ask about their interest and hobbies – what they like to do?
- (v) Ask about their life goals – what they feel strongly about?
- (vi) Ask about their career plans – Where do they see themselves in 5 years?
- (vii) Ask about salary expectations – What are the expectations now and in 5 years?

Interviewer should be able to obtain as much information about candidates as possible.

### **(4) Conducting the interview**

Some aspects need to be planned ahead; these are:

#### **(i) Deciding place of interview**

- Room should be quiet, free from interruptions, telephone calls etc
- Should have adequate and proper waiting room with sofas etc
- Facilities for writing – table, chairs, pen etc to fill a form or write something

- Entry and exit of candidates be planned with care – avoid congregating at a place

**(ii) Warming up period**

- Give firm handshake, warm smile and speak in a friendly tone
- Begin with small talk like any problem in getting to office, weather etc
- Develop rapport by being friendly and sincere

**(iii) Eliciting information for evaluation**

Eliciting information from candidates is the heart of the interview and should cover the content and range of questions planned. A good structure for this is following the chronological approach. A few frequently asked questions are:

- Tell us about yourself
- Tell us about your family background
- How do you spend your spare time?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- Why do you want to leave your present job?
- Why do you want to join this organization?
- Why did you choose the field you are in?
- What subjects did you like during school or college?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 / 7 years?
- What are your salary expectations? etc

**(iv) Taking notes during interview**

Interviewers may want to write down something for reference. It should be done so that candidates become aware of it. However, do not take notes when he is giving unfavourable information and do not allow it to come in the way of making eye contact with them.

**(v) Telling about your company**

Interviewers have to earmark some time for telling the candidates about employing company – nature of job, location, duty hours etc. Candidates have to be given salary details, allowances and perquisites including fringe benefits etc as applicable.

Do not forget to ask the person if he wants any information – their questions should be entertained and answered politely, accurately and sincerely.

**(vi) Parting**

Parting is as important as welcoming. Interviewer should thank candidates for coming to the interview. He should also tell them when they would be advised of the outcome of the interview.

## **(5) Evaluation for selection**

Securing all the information about the candidate is a lot of hard work. One must remember that there are many other sources other than the interview that requiring accessing and tapping.

### **(i) Cues from the interview**

Interviewers have to be keen observers and sharp listeners so that they do not miss out on any important cues and clues as below:

<b>Sl</b>	<b>Positive cues</b>	<b>Negative cues</b>
1	Arrives early	Arrives late
2	Alert, responsive	Inattentive, slow and dull
3	Relaxed	Tense
4	Smiles	Frowns
5	Clear voice	Mumbles, unclear voice
6	Sticks to the point	Changes subject often
7	Relevant responses	Ir-relevant responses
8	Well organized presentation	Disorganized presentation
9	Spontaneous replies	Long pauses before replying
10	Speaking well of others	Critical of others
11	Appropriate use of humour	Makes fun of others
12	Incisive, precise	Wordy; gives too many details

### **(ii) Criteria for selection**

The criteria can vary from one firm to another but the followings represent a good range:

- Appearance and poise
- Communication skills
- Self-confidence
- Intelligence
- Integrity
- Inter-personal relations
- Experience
- Maturity
- Sense of responsibility
- Leadership potential

Their relative weights need to be agreed among interviewers before the evaluation is carried out. A number of firms give equal weights to all the factors selected but this is debatable. Similarly, the scale to be used for rating should also be decided although it is not so critical. Scale of 1 to 10 is the most popular for rating and then multiplying with the relative weights, will yield the overall score.

## **(6) Five types of interviewers**

There are five types of interviewers:

### **(i) Sympathetic interviewers**

They prefer to spend time with civilized and cooperative candidates and show interest in candidates’:

- Ambitions
- Career goals
- Private interests
- Emotional problems

They establish friendly atmosphere and they remain in self-control.

### **(ii) Bully interviewers**

They usually cross-examine the candidate and are usually anxious to discover their weaknesses. Their manners are provoking and they leave the candidate more stressed. The interviewees must remain calm and answer even provocative questions pleasantly.

### **(iii) Psycho interviewers**

They try to analyze the candidate in different situations on psychological grounds. They are rather confusing for the candidate for there is no clear right or wrong answer.

### **(iv) Techno interviewers**

They are bursting with technical knowledge and are out to establish their superiority. If the candidate fails, which is most likely, they will willingly furnish the correct answers too. Such persons are usually young and can easily fall in the trap of flattery. Their immaturity is easily influenced by sympathy and praise.

### **(v) Professional interviewers**

They are seasoned interviewers. They have often juicy set of questions which they rapid fire to probe skill and personality of the candidates. Candidates have to be active and alert with these interviewers. These persons are always on the look out for:

1. Contradictions in candidates’ statements
2. Signs of laziness and lack of motivation
- Signs of arrogance
1. Tendency to criticize others
- Tendency of irresponsibility, insubordination etc

## **16.5 INTERVIEWEE SKILLS**

Writing effective resume for applying for the job is the first and critical step for securing a call for the interview and this has been detailed in the previous Unit. However, once the applicant knows that he has to face a personal interview for selection and placement in a new organization, he has to do the followings:

### **(1) Knowing about the future employer**

Candidates have to collect all the relevant information about the prospective employer and his organization viz.

- Name address, region or branch office where the job is
- Public, private, government or non-government, profit or non-profit social service firm
- Main area of business, brand names etc
- Status of business – profit or loss making, expanding or contracting, future plans etc
- Background history of the firm since it was formed
- Ownership and management pattern
- Firm's stated philosophy, if any

### **(2) Preparing for the interview**

If candidates have to realize their goal of securing offer of a job, it is a project and they have to work hard to accomplish it:

#### **(i) Knowing yourself**

Candidates should take good, critical look at own resume and understand own strengths and weaknesses. They have to try to cover their weaknesses without being overtly visible and highlight their strengths without being too obvious about it. They have to learn to bring interviewers' attention to aspects they want to impress.

#### **(ii) Knowing your resume**

Candidates should remember and be able to recall every detail mentioned in the resume. They should always take a few extra copies of the resume with them even if they have already sent them earlier. Also, take original copies of all certificates and testimonials in case they want to check or scrutinize.

#### **(iii) Knowing job profile being interviewed for**

If candidates know the job they are being interviewed for, they should prepare the case for being suitable for it. However, if being interviewed for a general, non-advertised position, they have to be well prepared to marshal all facts in support of their claim. If interviewee is a deserving candidate, he has to show it!

**(iv) Knowing the venue of the interview, date and time**

Candidates must know the exact place of interview, date and time to decide mode of transport, starting time etc to the venue before hand. They should arrive early and in good time. No amount of excuses for being late cut any impression with the new company.

**(v) Knowing the basic salary ranges applicable**

Preliminary interview sessions are not for discussing or negotiating salary. However, knowing salary ranges applicable especially if being interviewed by government / public sector undertakings, is very useful. Final interview is the most appropriate time for negotiating salary etc. Avoid digging a fixed position on salary but an emphatic communication is appropriate.

**(vi) Knowing appearance and first impression count**

Candidates must be aware of everything about themselves – their appearance, dress, shoes, colour choice while dressing, jewellery, grooming etc, speak volume about them. Whenever in doubt, it is better to be a little conservative in approach.

**(vii) Knowing body language rarely lies and speaks loudly**

Candidates should have a good idea about their body language – gestures, sounds, expressions etc and these should be supportive of what they are saying. Any gap between the verbal communication and the non-verbal cues detected by experienced interviewer can be lethal.

**(viii) Knowing oral communication reflects ones' personality**

Candidates should neither be aggressive nor submissive in their expressions; assertive style of communication is most rewarding. The tone, pitch and speed of delivery are critical components of ones' attitude and response.

**(ix) Knowing answers to frequently asked questions in the interview**

Analysis of interviews conducted by many firms has revealed a set of frequently asked questions (FAQs). Candidates should prepare to answer those questions in a way that help them project a favourable image about themselves.

**(x) Rehearsing for interviews leads to positive results**

Facilities should be created for carrying out rehearsal with friend, brother, sister or parents. Even video pictures can be taken and played back for self-improvement. Placement officers attached to management institutes can be asked to prepare candidates for mock interviews. Co-mentoring teams can be created in colleges to help students learn from one another.

### **(3) Interview process**

Every candidate should be familiar with the possible formats used by different companies for evaluation through the process of interview. In general, it comprises of some or all of the followings:

- (i) Written test like intelligence test, aptitude test, language test, logical skill test, mathematical skills test, technical knowledge test etc
- (ii) Self introduction - extempore
- (iii) Talk on any one of the three topics for 3 to 4 minutes
- (iv) Group or leaderless discussions
- (v) Interaction with the panel members over lunch
- (vi) Personal / individual interviews

The writer when being interviewed for a job with a multinational firm in 1960s had to undergo a full day interview by a panel of interviewers comprising of all the six components. The personal interview was after lunch and after completing the interview, the candidates exited through a separate gate and did not have any opportunity of mixing with other candidates

Later selected candidates are called separately for a medical test.

### **(4) Reasons why persons are not hired**

Candidate should be aware of the way interview evaluations for selection and placement are moving in the market place. Placement Centre of Northwestern University, USA conducted an extensive survey on the reasons for management students not getting hired and came to the following conclusions that are listed in the descending order:

- 1 Poor personal appearance
- 2 Over-aggressiveness
- 3 Inability to express clearly
- 4 Lack of interest and enthusiasm
- 5 Lack of career planning - no purpose and no goal
- 6 Nervous – lack of confidence and poise
- 7 Over-emphasis on money
- 8 Unwillingness to start at the bottom
- 9 Make excuses
- 10 Lack of tact and courtesy
- 11 Immaturity
- 12 Condemning past employers
- 13 No genuine interest in company or job
- 14 Not looking the interviewer in the eye
- 15 Sloppy application form
- 16 Little sense of humour
- 17 Arriving late at the interview
- 18 Failing to express appreciation of interviewers' time
- 19 Failing to ask questions about company and the job

20 Vague responses to questions

### **(5) Ten frequently asked questions**

It is rather difficult to predict how interviewers in a firm conduct interviews, experience across the board suggests the followings are the most popular questions:

- 1 What exactly you want from the job?
- 2 Why did you leave your last job?
- 3 Why are you switching careers?
- 4 Where do you want to be in five years' from now?
- 5 What is your greatest accomplishment?
- 6 What are your strengths?
- 7 What are your weaknesses?
- 8 What about a time you failed?
- 9 Will you get along with your potential boss?
- 10 Are you likely to marry soon? How old are your children?

Every candidate should be ready and should have rehearsed the replies to these questions. If asked, they should be able to make very good impression.

### **(6) Positive behaviours during interview**

The desirable behaviours during interview are:

- 1 Show interest, enthusiasm and agility
- 2 Be sincere and honest
- 3 Listen actively and attentively
- 4 Keep your answers brief and to the point
- 5 Show interest in the company recruiting
- 6 Show ability to analyze issues systematically and comment on pros and cons

### **(7) Negative behaviours during interview**

Following negative behaviours should be avoided during interviews:

- 1 Do not be discourteous.
- 2 Do not use jargons or slang words in your communication
- 3 Avoid aggressive / submissive behaviours; be assertive instead.
- 4 Do not make cynical statements
- 5 Omit criticisms of people or companies you have worked for

The list can be very long but the idea is to make the candidates aware that certain behaviours need to be avoided if they are sincere in securing the job they are being interviewed for!

### **(8) Five types of candidates**

A study has identified following five types of candidates:



**(i) Shy candidates**

Shyness among candidates can arise from:

- Unknown situations
- Lack of confidence
- Puzzling questions
- Inherent

A candidate from village appearing for an interview in a five-star hotel may be shy. If a difficult question has been posed, candidate may become shy in answering as he is not sure of the correct answer. Some candidates are shy to start with but as the interview proceeds, they overcome their shyness.

**(ii) Talkative candidates**

When someone talks too much, usually he has very little to say. More talking may lead candidates to trouble rather getting them out of it - listeners get bored.

**(iii) Nervous candidates**

A bit of nervousness is common among the candidates but excess of it is undesirable. Sometimes, interviewers also tend to unnerve candidates. Nervousness can be detected by:

- Failure to make eye contact
- Lack of smile
- Sitting on the edge of a chair
- Sweating
- Talking too fast
- Failing to listen to the question

**(iv) Cunning candidates**

Some candidates furnish wrong information or suppress facts about themselves. These may relate to:

- Qualifications
- Salary levels
- Hiding criminal convictions
- Hiding forced resignations

They avoid questions about their weaknesses.

**(v) Centipede candidates**

These candidates move slowly in several directions and readily agree with the interviewers. When cornered, they change direction quickly. They apply

wherever they can and attend interviews without any preparation and without any homework on their career goals.

**ACTIVITY**

The faculty should, in consultation with the Placement Group, organize ‘mock interviews’ within the institute premises to rehearse and prepare students for facing real life interviews.....

For conducting such interviews, each one of student should submit his resume before hand to enable interviewers to pose the appropriate questions etc. If possible, invite an outsider to become a member of the interviewing panel as that would impart the required level of formality in the exercise.

**16.6 SUMMARY**

Interviews involve two parties – the interviewer and the interviewee. Of the several types of interviews, selection and placement interviews are most common place. In these interviews, candidates are matched with job requirements and then select them. It involves giving them details of nature of work, duty hours, location etc, creating mutual understanding / confidence and promoting firms’ goodwill among the candidates.

Different skills are required by interviewers and interviewees. However, interviewees benefit a great deal if they are aware of the mindsets of the interviewers.

Interviewers need to prepare for the interaction by acquiring good knowledge of the job requirements – duties, responsibilities, qualifications, training, work experience, technical requirements, acquired knowledge / skills, working conditions etc. They should be mature, objective and good listeners. They should have experience of conducting placement / selection interviews, poise, sincerity, sound judgement and ability to conduct good interactions with persons of target age group.

During the interviews, they should make the candidates comfortable, let them do most of the talking, pay attention to their body language and remain silent so that candidates speak more. They should respect interviewees' feeling even when they are wrong, avoid impulsive change of topic of discussion, not argue with candidates, be informal and empathetic. They should give all the required details about the company before candidates' departing and should always end with formal thanks.

Interviewers must evaluate the candidates to format agreed among the members of the interviewing panel and selection criteria should include appearance, poise, communication skills, self confidence, integrity, inter-personal skills besides experience, maturity, sense of responsibility and leadership potential. Based on traits exhibited by interviewees, they can be classified as sympathetic, bully, psycho, techno or professional.

On the other hand, interviewees should, besides knowing details of future employer, prepare for the interview by knowing own strengths / weaknesses, being thorough with own resume, details of job profile for which he is being interviewed, knowing venue, date and time of interview, salary ranges applicable etc. Candidates should also be aware of own appearance, first impression, true nature of body language, and importance of oral communication skills. They should also be ready with answers to frequently asked questions. Interviewees should also be familiar with the process of interview including the steps involved and be aware of the reasons why people fail to get hired.

They should adopt positive behaviour during interviews and curb negative attitude. In general, there are five types of candidate – shy, talkative, nervous, cunning and centipede. Every candidate should become aware of own type and work hard to overcome those deficiencies.

#### **16.6.1.1.1 KEYWORDS**

- (1) **Selection** – It is the process of discrimination, determination or nomination of winners among several options available.
- (2) **Placement** – It is positioning, installing and seating of selected candidates in to the organizations.
- (3) **Job description** – It is writing down giving full details of the job in words that make a picture and highlights the kind, variety of the requirements of the job.
- (4) **Job analysis** – It is an incisive break up of a job description in to its parts and components that highlight its physical / mental needs, acquired knowledge, skill, education and experience, working condition / environment as objectively as possible.

- (5) **Hobbies** – These are those activities that persons love to do in their spare time and are their favourite pastime, avocation or sideline.
- (6) **Contradiction** – It is the denial, disagreement, rebuttal, countering of a thing or position.
- (7) **Jargon** – It is the dialect that is outlandish, somewhat derogatory and use of slang.
- (8) **Cynical** – It is being skeptical, pessimistic, sarcastic and scornful.
- (9) **Rehearsing** – It is practicing, running / going through over and over again, training by repeating / drilling, perfecting and polishing some thing.
- (10) **Arrogance** – It is being haughty, proud, conceited, snobbish, assuming and overbearing.

## 16.8 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- 1 What are the different types of interviews and their objectives?
- 2 What are the salient features of skills required by an interviewer?
- 3 What are the different types of interviews? Which type is most popular and why?
- 4 Describe the salient features of skills required of an interviewee?
- 5 What are the steps you would suggest to a candidate who is going to appear for an interview?
- 6 Recommend the rules to be followed by a candidate for conducting himself well during an interview.
- 7 Describe various types of interviewees for a job.

## 16.9 SUGGESTED FURTHER READINGS

- 1 Bovee, Courtland L., Thill, John V. (1992). Business Communication Today. New York, NY, USA: McGraw Hill Inc.
- 2 Pal, Rajendra, Karlahalli, JS (1997). Essentials of Business Communication. New Delhi (India): Sultan Chand & Sons.
- 3 Keswani, H R (2000). Tough Interviews. New Delhi: Masters Academy.
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## **UNIT 17    NEGOTIATION SKILLS**

### **STRUCTURE**

- 17.0 Objectives
- 17.1 Introduction
- 17.2 Criteria for Successful Negotiations
- 17.3 Behaviour Patterns of Skilled Negotiators
- 17.4 Planning for Negotiations
- 17.5 Process of Negotiations
- 17.6 Negotiation Styles
- 17.7 Negotiating Power
- 17.8 Negotiations and Bargaining
- 17.9 Summary
- 17.10 Keywords
- 17.11 Self Assessment Questions
- 17.12 Suggested Further Readings

### **17.0    OBJECTIVES**

•  
After perusing this unit, students shall be able to:

- Acquire negotiation skills for buying, selling, bargaining etc
- Understand the attributes of successful negotiators
- Learn and absorb the behaviour patterns of skilled negotiators
- Prepare for the negotiations through better planning and strategy
- Develop a deep understanding of the process of negotiations
- Identify own style of negotiations and effect improvements where needed
- Identify the sources of negotiating power
- Comprehend the intimate relationship between negotiations and bargaining

### **17.1    INTRODUCTION**

Negotiation may be defined as a process of conferring, discussing or bargaining among two or more parties with different needs and wants to reach an agreement in business or diplomacy. It is intended to settle and conclude a deal that enables people to succeed, surmount difficulties and accomplishing objectives.

Negotiations have become important and integral part of any business / diplomacy. It is the core process for selling any product, service or an idea; it is the heart of clinching orders for purchasing and procurement work and it is resorted to by management team to either jointly solve disputes, disagreements or to bargain new wage and salary structure with the representative union.

Although conducting negotiations among business partners is fairly regular, always remember the famous advice of John F Kennedy, the late President of USA:

‘Do not ever fear to negotiate but never negotiate out of fear’.

## **17.2 CRITERIA OF A SUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATOR**

There has been a considerable debate and discussions on the traits of successful negotiators. Research on the subject has evolved broad consensus on the following criteria for determining skilled negotiators:

### **(1) Rated as effective by the parties.**

This precondition for identifying candidates for further study enables to prevent picking a person from a single frame of mind.

### **(2) Have a track record of significant success**

The central criterion for choosing effective negotiators is their track record over time to ensure an element of consistency so as to avoid any conclusions based on short term studies where agreements might have been secured through tricks or deception.

### **(3) Have a low incidence of implementation failures**

The purpose of negotiations is not only to reach agreements but also to make them work during implementation. Track record of successful implementation is a pre-requisite for identifying skilled negotiators.

## **17.3 BEHAVIOUR PATTERNS OF SKILLED NEGOTIATORS**

Skilled negotiators have markedly different pattern of behaviour than the average negotiators. Based on a research carried out on face-to-face negotiations, it has been found that following behaviours were used by skilled negotiators more frequently:

### **(1) Behaviours that are avoided**

These are:

#### **(i) Using irritators**

Negotiators tend to use certain words / phrases that do not add any value to the process of persuasion that moves parties closer to agreement. For instance,

- Using the prefix of 'generous offer' to own proposal
- Using 'fair' or 'reasonable' for own offers

Although it is rather difficult to avoid saying favourable things about ourselves, these should be treated as 'irritators' as they tend to offend the other party. Skilled negotiators use these irritators about 2 times per hour compared to 11 times by average negotiators in the face-to-face negotiations.

## **(ii) Making counter proposals**

During negotiations, it happens frequently that the moment one party puts forward a proposal the other party follows it up immediately with a counter proposal. Skilled negotiators make such counter proposals less often – only about 2 times against 3 times per session made by average negotiators. Disadvantage of making counter proposals are:

- Introducing new and additional options leads to complicating and clouding the clarity of negotiations
- Giving counter proposals when the other party is pre-occupied with own proposal, are not received well
- The other party usually perceives counter proposals as a way of blocking or conveying their disagreement

## **(iii) Avoiding 'Defend / Attack Spiral'**

Negotiations often happen for resolving conflicts. When negotiators use emotional or value-loaded behaviour to attack the other party or to defend own proposal, the process goes in to a spiral and the line between defend / attack blurs. One party may perceive it as a legitimate defence while the other may deem it as an unwarranted attack. Skilled negotiators use it about 2 times per hour against the average negotiators' 6 times in face-to-face negotiations.

## **(iv) Avoiding dilution of argument**

Laypersons seem to think that more reasons or justifications offered to support an issue, better are the chances of their acceptance by the other party. In reality, opposite is true because more arguments lead to more dilution because the opposite party would use the weakest justification to hit back. Thus the weakest argument dilutes the stronger ones and becomes the common denominator of the process in hand. Skilled negotiators use them less often.

## **(2) Behaviours that are used frequently**

These are:

### **(i) Giving advance indication of behaviour supporting agreement**

Skilled negotiators tend to label their behaviour before setting it out especially if there is no disagreement involved whereas average negotiators tend to be abrupt. For example, prefacing a question by saying, 'Can I ask a question .....'. Labelling behaviour beforehand has some advantages:

- It draws the attention of listeners to the issue stated and would lead to a response from the other party.
- It slows down the negotiations as parties take time to gather their thoughts from the previous statements made before they can respond.
- It adds a certain formality which keeps the negotiations at rational level.
- It reduces ambiguity and leads to clearer communications

**(ii) Giving reasons before indicating disagreement**

There is a marked difference between skilled negotiators and average negotiators when it comes to expressing disagreement:

An average negotiator would say that 'I disagree with that because .....' whereas a skilled negotiator is more likely to begin with the reasons and explanations before making the statement of disagreement. This is illustrated below:

**Average Negotiators**

Statement of Disagreement followed by Reasons and Explanations

**Skilled Negotiators**

Reasons and Explanations before Statement of Disagreement

**(iii) Testing understanding and summarizing**

Testing understanding is a behaviour used by negotiators to check and establish whether the previous statement has been understood by the other party. Summarizing is making a compact statement of points discussed previously. Both the behaviours are useful as they sort out misunderstanding and reduce misconceptions. Skilled negotiators tend to use them twice as more frequently than average negotiators because of the following reasons:

- Concern for clarity and prevention of misunderstanding
- A measure of reflection of the other party's response
- A concern for stick-ability and implement-ability of agreement

**(iv) Seeking more information**

Skilled negotiators seek more information than the average negotiators. Their justifications are:

- Need to obtain necessary information to use it for bargaining



- Using the strategy of asking questions as they:
  1. Give control over discussions
  2. Are more acceptable alternatives to disagreements
  3. Keep the other party active, leaving little time to think
  4. Give time to negotiators to collect own thoughts

**(v) Sharing feelings**

Skilled negotiators tend to play their cards very close to their chest and are often able to keep their feelings to themselves. It is almost impossible to measure these feelings in any research. However, an indirect indicator is available as they tend to give ‘internal information’ more often than the average negotiators. Giving internal information amounts to sharing with others as to what is transpiring in their mind. Such revelations may or may not be genuine. Giving internal information has also been used instead of disagreeing behaviour.

Psychologists are of the opinion that expressing feelings helps build trust.

## **17.4 PLANNING FOR NEGOTIATIONS**

Although skilled negotiators use certain behaviours and avoid other behaviours, planning for negotiations is the foundation for being successful in negotiations – those who fail to plan, plan to fail. Experience has confirmed the following salient aspects of planning for effective and successful negotiations:

**(1) Time spent in planning for negotiations**

No significant difference was found between the total time spent in planning by the skilled and average negotiators. It is not the amount of time spent in planning but the quality time spent that determines the success of negotiations.

**(2) Exploration of range of options in negotiations**

Skilled negotiators tend to explore the whole range of options covering not only issues introduced by them but also those that might be introduced by the other party. They tend to explore about twice more number of the options than an average negotiator and consequently, prepare better for securing a win-win situation for both the parties.

**(3) Focusing on common ground**

Although both groups of negotiators concentrate on possible areas of conflict, skilled negotiators spend three times more time on possible areas of common ground than the average negotiators. Pull type of behaviour in persuasion is a better strategy and paying more attention to areas of common ground is more rewarding.

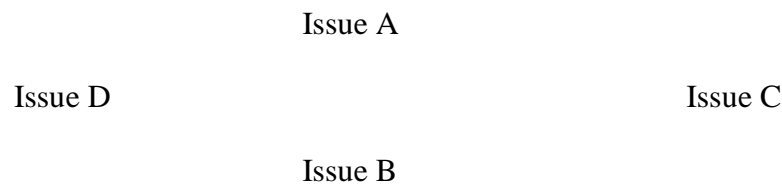
**(4) Freeing issues from sequencing and scheduling**

Methodologies of critical path analysis work well with inanimate activities but do not work in negotiations as the sequence depends upon the consent and cooperation of the other party and it is not available in many negotiation processes. Skilled negotiators tend to plan around each issue in a way that is independent of the sequence. This is illustrated below:

### **Average Negotiators**

Issue A followed by Issue B followed by Issue C and then followed by Issue D

### **Skilled negotiators**



Each issue is planned independent of the other without any regard to their sequence.

### **(5) Concentrating on long term and not short term issues**

Both skilled and average negotiators seem to be more pre-occupied with short term issue. However, skilled negotiators commented twice as often on long term considerations that the average negotiators. In the union-management negotiations, many times in India employees' and employers' expectations seem to be arising from unacceptable propositions.

### **(6) Setting limits about objectives**

As a part of the planning process, skilled negotiators set the range in which they would secure the agreement compared with average negotiators who plan a fixed point objective. Psychologists link setting up the range of objectives with the aspiration levels – higher the aspiration level, higher is the outcome achieved. They suggest three levels – maximum, minimum and target value.

## **17.5 PROCESS OF NEGOTIATIONS**

As an integral part of learning about negotiation skills, students must understand the process of negotiation as incorporating these steps in planning for negotiations increases the power of persuasion. Although every one negotiates, some of us are more aware of it than others:

Advocates, procurement managers, union officials and diplomats are aware of it and they even call it 'negotiations'. Most others, being not conscious about it, refer to these meetings as:

- Management meetings

- Conflict resolution sessions
- Team building
- Joint problem solving
- Handling inter-personal issues

Based on the experience of training personnel for negotiation skills, following three patterns of the process of negotiations have been identified:

**(1) Giving one's viewpoint**

This is the pattern followed by novice negotiators like young sales persons. The position is shown in the diagram below:



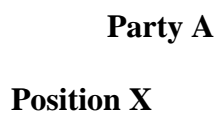
Negotiator A spends all his efforts to persuade Negotiator B to accept Position X and tries to anticipate all objections that he must overcome. However, he is not aware of the Position of B. Approach of A would look like as below:

It has the following disadvantages:

- Negotiator A is fostering a conflict situation
- Negotiator A is underestimating the impact of having two parties in a negotiation

**(2) Giving one's viewpoint and analyzing B's objections and own counters**

By now Negotiator A has become more aware of Negotiator B. He has become aware of the opposite party and anticipates its objections and counterproposal / position Y. Diagrammatically it looks like as below:



**Party B**

**Position Y**

A knows that persuading B is tough. He has prepared himself for all objections and justifications for not moving beyond Position X. The process would look as shown below:

If B has planned likewise and chances are that he would have, reaching an agreement will be hard, emotional experience because both would have to agree to all issues and move away from their respective positions – moving to a middle position from extreme conflicting positions is very difficult.

Many negotiators stay in this mode as they remain focused on issues of maximum resistance.

A small minority would move to the next pattern.

**(3) Finding the common ground of agreement**

Negotiators following this pattern are fully aware of the probable conflict issues and pros and cons of each option. Party A spends considerable effort in determining how common ground can be introduced in to the negotiation. This situation can be represented as shown:

**Party A**

**Position X**

**Party B**

**Position Y**

The shaded portion represents the common ground that offers the greatest opportunity for cooperative action. Common ground also includes areas in which there are no disagreements. Negotiators must remember that these include:

- Past history of shared successes
- Commonality of overall goals
- Working for the same company
- Working for the same industry
- Having common enemies

The above act as binders and remind parties that they are not adversaries but allies working to solve problem(s) jointly or seize opportunities that have mutual advantages. These type of negotiators plan how and when to focus on it and build upon the common ground.

There are two ways to move towards common ground as illustrated below:

Of these two options enlarging the common ground as shown on the right is better than moving from Position X and Y by the two negotiating parties. The pattern of planning for negotiation looks as below:

Skilled negotiators use the third pattern for negotiations for the process, thereby ensuring mutually acceptable outcomes.

## 17.6 NEGOTIATION STYLES

Researches have confirmed the following four styles of negotiators:

- Factual style
- Intuitive style
- Normative style
- Analytical style

Each of these styles is detailed below:

### (1) Factual style

Such persons make the basic assumption that facts speak for themselves.

#### (i) Behaviours exhibited

They:

1. Point out facts in a neutral way
2. Keep track of what has been said
3. Remind people of their statements made earlier
4. Know most of the details of issues discussed
5. Share details with others
6. Relate facts to experience and clarify
7. Are low key in their reactions
8. Look for proof and documents of statements
9. Use keywords like: clarify, define, explain, facts etc

#### (ii) Guidelines

1. Be precise in presenting facts
2. Refer to what has been carried out
3. Know the dossier complete with details
4. Document what they say

### (2) Intuitive Style

These persons work on the basic assumption that imagination can solve any problem,

#### (i) Behaviours exhibited

They:

1. Make warm and enthusiastic statements
2. Focus on the entire problem
3. Pin-point the essentials of problem(s)
4. Make projections in to the future
5. Are imaginative and creative in analyzing the situation
6. Go beyond the facts

7. Come up with new ideas all the time
8. Push and withdraw from time to time
9. Put two and two together very quickly
10. Get their facts wrong sometime
11. Use deductive logic
12. Use keywords like: creative, essential, idea, tomorrow etc

**(ii) Guidelines**

1. Focus on the situation as a whole
2. Tap the imagination and creativity of the team
3. Build on the reaction of other persons

**(3) Normative style**

They operate on the basic assumption that negotiating is bargaining.

**(i) Behaviours used**

They:

1. Assess, judge and evaluate facts according to their personal values
2. Approve or disapprove, agree or disagree based on own norms of behaviour
3. Use loaded words
4. Offer bargains
5. Propose rewards and incentives
6. Appeal to emotions and feelings to reach a fair deal
7. Are demanding, threatening and coercing
8. Use authority, power and status
9. Correlate with other people
10. Make effective statements
11. Focus on people and their reactions
12. Judge others' responses
13. Pay attention to communication and other group processes
14. Use keywords like: wrong, right, good, bad, like etc

**(iii) Guidelines**

1. Establish sound relationships
2. Identify partners' values and adjust to them
3. Appeal to partners' feelings

**(4) Analytical style**

These negotiators work on the basic assumption that logic leads to the right conclusions.

**(i) Behaviours used**

They:

1. Formulate reasons and logic to the case under negotiations
2. Argue in favour of own position and against others' position
3. Divide, analyze and break down each situation and its cause and effect
4. Identify relationships of parts
5. Put things in logical order
6. Weigh pros and cons thoroughly
7. Make identical statements
8. Use linear reasoning, being inductive in logic
9. Use keywords like: because, consequently, in order to, then, therefore etc

**(iii) Guidelines**

1. Use logic while arguing
2. Look for causes and effects
3. Analyze options with pros and cons

Standard toolkit of questionnaires is available for determining one's style of negotiation and has emerged as a powerful tool for enhancing individuals' negotiation skills.

## **17.7 NEGOTIATING POWER**

Negotiation may be understood as a process of conferring and communicating with two or more parties for the purpose of influencing their decisions for an agreement. However, the concept of negotiating power is a little difficult to comprehend – it is one's ability to influence others' decisions and depends upon others' perception of one's capability and not what he actually has. In essence, negotiation power is all a matter of perception!

### **(1) Myths about negotiating power**

Two popular myths that must be overcome are:

**(i) Negotiating power is the physical force**

Physical force is considered to be both necessary and sufficient element of negotiating power. It must be understood that the total negotiating power depends up on many factors and enhancing the total power is building up the combined potential of all of them. Effective negotiating power is orchestrating all the factors so as to maximize their cumulative effect.

**(ii) Start tough as one can always go soft later**

It is also influenced by the concept of physical power and leads to the belief that starting the negotiations with the threat of consequences of non-agreement is preferable. It is true that if other things are equal, more extreme initial position of either demanding high price or offering a low price, final outcome



is likely to be more favourable. However, opening with low offer is quite different than opening with the threat of painful consequences if offer is not accepted because if one is committed to threat at an early stage of negotiations, it can severely damage one's negotiating power,

## **(2) Sources of enhancing negotiating power**

Following should be used as a checklist for enhancing the negotiating power of individuals:

- Power of skill
- Power of knowledge
- Power of good relationship
- Power of good alternative to negotiations
- Power of elegant solution
- Power of legitimacy
- Power of commitment

These are detailed below:

### **(i) Power of skill**

As discussed above, skilled negotiators have much advantage in being able to secure good agreement that has high degree of implement-ability and stick-ability. These skills can be acquired and persons should have them prior to actual negotiations.

### **(ii) Power of knowledge**

Knowledge may be of general type regarding procedural options, awareness of members' style of negotiation and impact of cultural differences if any. A person with a repertoire of examples, precedents and illustrations can enhance his persuasive power.

Specific knowledge of particular issues under negotiations can make one even more powerful. Followings can strengthen one's ability to influence:

1. Knowledge about persons involved in the negotiations
2. Knowledge about the interests involved
3. Knowledge about the facts of the issues

### **(iii) Power of good relationships**

Good working relationship does not imply approval of each others' conduct although mutual respect and affection may help. Two important aspects of good relationship are:

#### **(a) Trust**

It comes from building referent power over time through honesty, integrity and commitment to promises made. Individuals' power comes from the perception of others of whether they trust the person involved in negotiations.

**(b) Ability to communicate**

The process of communication is at the heart of negotiations – the ability to influence others to a common objective. Inter-personal communication is a difficult issue especially among adversaries when chances of miscommunication are the greatest.

Knowing and working with one another for a longer period help to improve mutual understanding and communications can be more effective and meaningful. A relationship that has the history of resolving issues amicably can lead to building relationship of cooperation and trust.

**(iv) Power of devising good alternative to negotiations**

In learning how to enhance one's negotiation skills, we ask individuals to develop 'Best Alternative to Negotiated Settlement' (BATNA). The idea is to develop the most promising solution / agreement and then improve it to the extent possible. The greater the ability to develop an alternative outside of negotiations, higher would be the power of that person to secure a favourable negotiated settlement.

**(v) Power of elegant solution**

In any negotiation, there are several shared and conflicting interests. Although skilled negotiators initiate brainstorming sessions with the team to generate many options to satisfy legitimate interests of both parties, inventing a good, elegant solution enhances the negotiating power of the negotiators. It enables the negotiators to secure a more favourable outcome.

**(vi) Power of legitimacy**

The proposed solution should be legitimate as that enhances its acceptability. An outcome is legitimate when:

1. It is fair
2. Law requires it
3. It is consistent with precedent
4. It is the industry practice
5. It is based on sound policy
6. It is legitimate applying some other standards
7. It is legitimate in the eyes of the other side

Such solutions increase the negotiating power of individuals as they become more acceptable.

**(vii) Power of commitment**

Although planning for commitment is done in advance, commitments are made during the negotiations only. Every commitment involves decision making. Broadly there are two types of commitment:

**(a) Affirmative commitments**

These are:

- Offers that a party is willing to agree
- Offers that a party is willing to accept under certain conditions, failing agreement

Every offer ties up negotiators' hands. Power of positive commitment has the power of invitation to the other party. A skilled negotiator formulates the offer in a manner that would maximize all the above powers of negotiation. It has, therefore, the highest chance of being accepted.

**(b) Negative commitments**

These are:

- Unwilling to make certain agreements even though they would be better than no agreements
- Threat, failing agreement, to engage in certain negative conduct even though it would be worse than having no agreement

Negative commitment is the most controversial and troublesome element of negotiating power. It is also the last resort of the negotiators. The earlier a negotiator announces a 'take-it-or-leave-it' position, less likely it would be that he has maximized the cumulative impact of all the elements of negotiation power.

Analysis of the negative commitments suggests:

- It is a mistake to attempt to influence the other side by negative commitment at the early stages of negotiation without having made use of other elements of negotiating power.
- If it is made as a last resort, it should be formulated to reinforce and complement other elements of negotiating power and not undercut them. Even then, it should be done in line with the tradition of maintaining good working relationship and concepts of legitimacy.

## **17.8 NEGOTIATIONS AND BARGAINING**

Both individual and collective forms of employee relations depend upon negotiations – they involve bargaining.

**(1) Two Extreme Positions**

Such bargaining situations should always be thought in terms of the following diagram with two poles at the extreme points as shown:

- Pure Negotiations
- Joint Problem Solving

**(i) Pure Negotiations**

When management and union are incompatible, opposed and mutually destructive, it is lose-lose situation. Important forces are keeping them apart and negotiations tend to be distributive when size of the cake is known and it is to be shared.

**(ii) Joint Problem Solving**

This is the other extreme situation. It represents the integrative approach. Such behaviours take place when objectives of both the union and management are compatible, supportive and mutually reinforcing. It is win-win situation. Although it is rare, efforts should be made to move as near to this situation as possible.

Managers tend to operate between the two polarities. The extent to which a negotiator can move towards the joint problem solving position depends upon the followings:

- The Issue
- The situation
- The people involved
- The negotiating behaviours displayed

## **(2) Model for Bargaining**

There are several models available for bargaining. However, a popular one by Lyons (1988) has the following four stages:

### **(i) Initial positioning stage**

Two sides set out their bargaining position and typically, both parties seem to be rigid and unwilling to compromise. Heated discussions may be marked with a great deal of hostility at this stage. The gap between two positions may be so great that negotiations may seem doomed to failure.

### **(ii) Testing stage**

After protracted and fruitless debate, negotiations move to the stage of informal probing. Each party checks out details of the other side's demands to identify issues that are:

- Really un-modifiable
- Open to compromise

### **(iii) Concession stage**

Some concessions emerge leading to exchange of tentative proposals.

### **(iv) Settlement stage**

A breakthrough happens and bargaining leads to an agreement that is finally signed and sealed.

## **(3) Skills required for effective bargaining**

Lyons (1988) has identified the following skill sets that can enhance skills for bargaining:

### **(i) Analysis**

Negotiators should have the ability to analyze the situation from own and other sides' perspective quickly. Negotiators should be able to think through the complete process from the beginning and decide on:

- Items that can be agreed on win-win basis
- Items that can be agreed on win-lose basis

Negotiators must remember that winning a small concession is not worthwhile if it damages the working relationship long term. Win-win deals happen when both sides feel they have gained and are always preferred.

### **(ii) Effective argument**

Effective communication requires a great deal of patience. Good negotiators have to achieve a balance between aggressive and submissive styles of conversation by being assertive when one conveys one's viewpoint while simultaneously listening to the contrarian views. Abusive and petty-mindedness destroy mutual respect. It is necessary to keep communication open however unsuccessful bargaining may be.

**(iii) Signals of cooperation**

Skilled negotiators are able to sense and seize small signs and clues of compromise, consensus and cooperation. They use tit-for-tat principle and return every compromise offered with a concession from their side. Every offer should be conditional to cooperative response.

**(iv) Attention to details**

Negotiations should be comprehensive and negotiators should have an eye for details. In bargaining, there is no room for late withdrawal of an offer made!

**ACTIVITY**

In an enterprise, four types of negotiations dominate the scene viz. (1) Sales Negotiations (2) Purchase Negotiations (3) Negotiations for securing term loans (4) Negotiations between employees' union and management .....

Students are advised to take separate assignments of exploring these subjects and bring out the special features for each of the above types of negotiations.

**17.9 SUMMARY**

Negotiation is a process of conferring, discussing and bargaining with two or more parties with different needs and wants to reach agreement. Negotiation is at the heart of selling any product or service, clinching orders for purchasing / procurement and resolving conflicts / disagreements among management and union, nations, communities and individuals.

Successful negotiators are rated as effective by the parties in dispute, have a track record of significant success and have low incidence of implementation failures. They have markedly different behaviour as they avoid use of 'irritators', offer fewer counter proposals, avoiding getting in to 'defend- attack spiral' and avoid dilution of agreement. They often give advance indication of behaviour supporting agreement, give reasons before indicating disagreement, resort to testing understanding by summarizing, seek more information and share own feelings to build trust.

Negotiations must be planned meticulously by spending quality time in preparations, exploring range of options available, focusing on common grounds, freeing issues from sequencing and scheduling, concentrating on long term issues and setting the maximum, the minimum and the target values for issues under negotiations.

In general, process of negotiations follows three patterns – firstly, giving ones’ point of view, secondly, giving ones’ point of view while simultaneously analyzing others’ objections and own counters and thirdly, finding and enlarging common grounds of agreement. Skilled negotiators adopt the third pattern.

Researchers have identified four styles of negotiations – factual, intuitive, normative and analytical. Individuals should determine own style of negotiations and enhance their negotiation skills.

Negotiating power is individuals’ ability to influence others’ decisions and is dependent upon others’ perception of ones’ capability. Negotiating power is not a physical force nor does it advocate starting tough and soften up later. Sources of negotiating power are linked to power of skills, knowledge and good relationships. This negotiating power can also flow from seeking good alternatives to negotiations, finding elegant solutions and remaining legitimate and committed.

Bargaining is integral to the process of negotiation and is more pronounced in individual and collective forms of employee relations. In such situations there are two extreme positions – pure negotiations or joint problem solving. Several bargaining models are available but the most popular one has four stages viz. initial positioning, testing positions, giving concessions and arriving at settlement. Bargaining involves skills of analysis, ability to argue effectively, signal cooperation and an eye for details.

## 17.10 KEYWORDS

- (1) **Irritators** – These are the words, phrases used by negotiators that provoke, annoy, excite anger among others as they get peeved, sore and harsh.
- (2) **Counterproposal** – It is a proposal that is made contrary to or in opposite manner and for striking / attacking the opponent.
- (3) **Attack-defend spiral** - It is a wordy fight that continues endlessly as parties move in the form of a coil that increases / decreases in size changing planes constantly.
- (4) **Disagreement** – These are discrepancies, incongruities and differences of opinion or issues of dispute / quarrel.
- (5) **Testing understanding** – It is checking / inspecting of the grasp, awareness, opinion, belief and perception about issues and reasons thereof.
- (6) **Exploration** – It is finding reasons and doing analysis for clarifying, elucidating and understanding meaning and significance of a thing or situation.
- (7) **Common grounds** – These are the similarity of views, opinions among the negotiating parties about the area, field, territory, sphere and arena under discussions.
- (8) **Intuitive** – It is going by hunch, feel, surmise, instinct or sixth sense.
- (9) **Normative** – It is going by the standards, rules or average, representative guidelines or criteria.
- (10) **Elegant** – It is some thing that is refined, dignified, tasteful, polite and polished.

- (11) **Inductive** – It is a process of inducing, persuading the other party to own viewpoint by logic and reasoning.

### **17.11 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS**

- 1 Describe the process of negotiation and its importance to individuals and business enterprises.
- 2 What are the traits of successful negotiators?
- 3 Describe the essential components of planning for successful negotiations.
- 4 Describe the common patterns observed in business negotiations.
- 5 Explain the different styles of business negotiations and their impact on the outcome.
- 6 Identify the sources of negotiating power and how their awareness helps negotiators clinch deals.
- 7 Describe the various stages of a typical bargaining model used in management-union negotiations.

### **17.12 SUGGESTED FURTHER READINGS**

- 1 Bovee, Courtland L., Thill, John V. (1992). Business Communication Today. New York, NY: McGraw Hill Inc.
- 2 Herta A Murphy, Herbert W Hilderbrandt (1991). Effective Business Communications. New York, NY: McGraw Hill Inc.
- 3 Ross, R Reed, Brian G Long ( 2004). The Win / Win Negotiator: How to Negotiate Favourable Agreements That Last. Singapore: Pocket Books.



## **UNIT 18    CROSS CULTURAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

### **STRUCTURE**

- 18.0 Objectives
- 18.1 Introduction
- 18.2 Central Role of Culture
- 18.3 Importance of Cross Cultural Communication Skills
- 18.4 Understanding Culture
- 18.5 Distinguishing Culture and Recognizing Differences
- 18.6 Proximics or Language of Personal Space
- 18.7 Impact of Culture on Non-verbal Communications
- 18.8 Impact of Culture on Oral Communications
- 18.9 Impact of Culture on Written Communications
- 18.10 Summary
- 18.11 Keywords
- 18.12 Self Assessment Questions
- 18.13 Suggested Further Readings

### **18.0 OBJECTIVES**

After learning this unit, students shall be able to:

- Appreciate the increasing relevance of cross cultural communication skills in the emerging global economy
- Understand the central role of culture in communications as it deeply influences everyone's thoughts, speech and actions
- Grasp the strategic importance of becoming excellent cross cultural communicators
- Identify layers of culture that influence interactions with own surroundings
- Describe the distinguishing traits of culture that enable recognition of differences among cultures
- Explain the boundaries of personal spaces that vary with culture and individuals are very protective about
- Describe how cultural influences the non-verbal, oral and written communication processes

## **18.1 INTRODUCTION**

With liberalization of national economies and increasing pace of globalization, communication levels have increased among individuals, groups and companies across communities, countries and continents. People with different backgrounds, mindsets and cultures are interacting through conferences, correspondence and non-verbal communication leading to more willing cooperation. Human civilization is developing, progressing and moving forward at a much faster rate than ever before, removing age-old disparities of race, religion and colour. The differences in culture occupy the central stage of emerging global world where progress would largely depend upon how well managers and leaders are able to communicate across varied cultures to achieve common goal of progress for all.

## **18.2 CENTRAL ROLE OF CULTURE**

Culture has a powerful influence on individuals' way of thinking, saying or doing things:

- Thinking encompasses beliefs, assumptions, values, myths and folklores
- Saying, being the essence of living, determines the way of interacting with ones' surroundings – machines, tools, natural resources, food, clothing, shelter etc
- Doing signifies norms of behaviour that include own customs, laws, regulations, ceremonies, fashions, etiquettes etc

Culture provides the meaningful context in which people gather together, think about themselves and interact with the surroundings. It must be remembered that a culture is rational and logical to a community although it may appear irrational and illogical to any one outside that culture. Thus working across culture presents both the biggest challenge and opportunity in a world that is shrinking in terms of time, distance and ability to communicate.

Modern managers are required to acquire and possess high degree of skills in communications across diverse cultures. Increasingly managers are interacting with persons from different cultures and learning the ways they meet, greet, and communicate with others creates a lasting influence and paves the way for mutually beneficial encounters leading to productive cooperation to accomplish common, agreed objectives.

## **18.3 IMPORTANCE OF CROSS CULTURAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

In the modern world of business, acquiring and sharpening cross cultural communication skills is a strategic asset as it can:

- Propel ones' career path
- Prop ones' success in competitive environments
- Reflect ones' commitment to quality and excellence
- Make one confident in diverse settings of people from all walks of life

- Help develop an admirable code of conduct for groups and enterprises

## 18.4 UNDERSTANDING CULTURE

Understanding a culture is like peeling an onion. It has several layers that can be peeled off to develop a keen insight of the culture. Broadly, we think in terms of following three layers:

### (i) Outer layer

It is what other people associate with that culture, its visual realities:

1. Behaviour
2. Dress
3. Food
4. Language
5. Habitats

It is also referred to as the '**Explicit Culture**'.

### (ii) Middle Layer

It refers to the values and norms the community holds – these may be right or wrong, good or bad.

### (iii) Inner Layer

It is the deepest level and understanding - it leads to the core of it. It is the key to working successfully with other cultures. The core consists of:

1. Basic assumptions
2. Rules
3. Methods of solving or coping with problems

These rules and methods become so embedded in the members who take to it much like breathing, without even stopping to think about them. It is very difficult for outsiders to recognize these. It is also known as the '**Implicit Culture**'.

## 18.5 DISTINGUISHING CULTURE AND RECOGNIZING DIFFERENCES

Since culture has profound impact on all aspects of communication skills, everyone must develop a good understanding of the cultural background and recognize the differences between own culture and the one they are interacting with.

### (1) Distinguishing traits of culture

Members of a group would have a lot of similarities in the way they think, speak and do work. A major culture may have several subcultures too. Culture can be identified with geographical areas, professions, hobbies etc. Culture of a management group may be different than that of accountants or lawyers. There may be some common features between football fans and cricket fans. Several distinguishing traits are:

**(i) Stability of culture**

Whether culture is stable or it is changing rapidly.

**(ii) Complexity of culture**

Whether it is easy to discern or has several layers that take time to grasp.

**(iii) Composition of culture**

Whether it has several subcultures as in India or it is homogenous as in USA.

**(iv) Acceptance of outsiders**

Whether it is closed to outsiders or it accepts outsiders readily.

Everybody needs special training before they become comfortable with a different culture.

**(2) Recognizing cultural differences**

It is useful to be able to recognize cultural differences. A person in south India nods his head in affirmation differently from a north Indian. If one is not aware of it, it is very easy to take no for yes. In USA, one cannot call a spade a spade because in the American slang, spade is used for black American. Similarly an Australian may compliment someone by saying that 'he is a good bastard' whereas it may offend an Indian. A few major aspects of culture that distinguish them are:

**(i) Religion**

North Americans in USA and Canada follow puritan religion and are influenced by their ethics although both the countries have a large number of immigrants settling from many countries of the world. They view material comfort as a sign of superiority and believe money can solve many problems. There are also many societies who condemn materialism.

**(ii) Values**

People in countries like USA and Canada are more goal-oriented and want work to be done efficiently. It may not be so in India and South Asian countries where unemployment is very high. Managers tend to employ two persons where one would suffice.

**(iii) Role play**

Culture determines the role people play – what they communicate to whom and in what way. For example in some cultures women play a significant role in business whereas it is not so in Middle East and North African countries.

**(iv) Decision making**

In many countries in the west, business is dominated by one person, often the CEO who says yes or no to many decisions / deals as is the case in USA and even in Pakistan. In China and Japan, decision-making is a laborious process of reaching consensus otherwise they do not feel comfortable with the decision.

**(v) Social behaviour and etiquettes**

Culture has deep influence on the social behaviour and etiquettes of the people. Polite manners in one country may be considered to be rude in another. These rules of etiquettes may be formal or informal. Formal rules can be learnt and taught, for example, table manners etc. Informal rules are more difficult to identify and are learnt by observation and then emulating them. Informal rules relate to:

- How males and females should behave
- When and how people can touch one another
- When it is appropriate to call a person by first name

Violation of these informal rules can cause a great deal of discomfort although people loathe talking about them.

**(vi) Concept of time**

People from USA and Europe tend to be more particular about time – they also want to clinch deals quickly. It is not so in most of Asia, Mexico and Latin America. Japanese are aware of American impatience and say, ‘You Americans have one terrible weakness. If we make to wait long enough, you will agree to anything’. Also called ‘**chronomics**’, it is emerging as a new area of interest for distinguishing the attitude of people from different cultures towards time and timing.

## **18.6 PROXIMICS OR LANGUAGE OF PERSONAL SPACE**

Animals, birds and fish guard their territories rather aggressively and so do nations. Within a nation, there are well-defined boundaries among different smaller communities. People living within these territories have an allegiance to it and protect these territories even ferociously

American anthropologist, Edward T Hall, concluded that every human being has a territory that it considers to be its own. The area or the space delineated around the

body is claimed to be his own like the air space around him. Edward T Hall called it '**Proximics**' – study of the spatial needs of human beings.

Personal space around each one of us have a critical implication for communication and interaction with others and consequently on our behaviour and relations with them. Like all other living beings, humans carry a kind of air envelop around them all the time. However, size of the air-envelop can vary among different cultures. It can also vary between a villager and a city dweller. Besides, status of a person also influences the distance at which a person stands with respect to that person.

### **(1) Spatial Zones**

Edward Hall has identified following four zones that are in the form of concentric circles around human body. Since the distances vary among cultures, density of population and status, each zone has been indicated with a range of distances:

#### **(i) Intimate zone**

This zone extends up to 0.5 metre from the body and is considered to have the most important influence on the behaviour of individuals. This is a zone that an individual guards as if it is his own property. Only those very close to the individual are permitted to enter this zone viz., spouse, parents, lovers, close friends and relative. With these persons, not many words are used in communication – whispers take the place of spoken words. Eye contacts, handshake and pat at the back are noticed often. Nature of communication is more intimate.

It has a sub-zone extending to first 0.15 metre from the body. This is a close intimate zone that can be entered only during physical contact.

#### **(ii) Personal zone**

This covers the space from 0.5 to 1.2 metres from the body. This is the distance observed during friendly gatherings, social functions, office parties etc. People speak in monotones or use low pitch voice with close friends, colleagues, associates and visitors. Communication is more personal and is carried out in a relaxed and casual way. Much of the responses are spontaneous, leading to important decisions which is the hallmark of this space.

**(iii) Social zone**

This space extends from 1.2 to 3.5 metres. This space is ideal for formal parties and relationships are mostly official. Most of the business is carried out in this space - a lot of reason and logic comes into play and much of the future planning is done. A man is a social being and this space becomes critical for a person on the move in the hierarchy of business and thus forms the most critical zone.

**(iv) Public zone**

This zone covers the space beyond 3.5 metres from the body and covers the distance at which people can hear and see. The distance between the person and the group he is addressing or making presentation to would be over 3.5 metres. This zone requires use of more formal language; communication is more detached and impersonal in perception. One has to raise the voice to be heard clearly.

**(2) Organizational Proxemics**

The subject of proxemics is expanding to cover the contents in the spatial zones as they have major influence on dealing and interacting with people - this area of specialization is referred to as 'Organizational Proxemics' and covers the followings:

- Landscaping
- Colour schemes and other physical settings
- Ergonomics
- Signs, signals, paintings, sculptors and other arte-facts
- Furnishings and interior decoration etc

**(3) Implications of Proxemics**

Knowledge of Proxemics is being used to secure following advantages in business:

- 1 Every culture has a well-defined personal space; violation of spatial zones can create wrong impressions, leading to loss of business.
- 2 In multi-cultural groups, individuals should observe the spatial zones of different groups and interact with them accordingly.
- 3 Even in small groups, one must find out the boundary limits of spatial zones so as to preclude 'bubble-bursts' arising from irritation and discomfort.

- 4 According to Gary Kreps, people have strong territorial emotions about their possessions or objects of which they claim ownership viz., clothes, books, homes and automobiles. Since they protect these territories vigorously, people should ensure that they do not step on someone's toes.
- 5 People from high-context cultural countries including India prefer greater distances than low-context culture nations who have carefree and casual approach to it.
- 6 The concept of proxemics is also reflected in the way meetings are arranged – a round table encourages participation among members.
- 7 In organizations, people are very sensitive about their seating places, furniture and equipment.
- 8 Small offices with low ceilings and no windows can generate a feeling of being boxed up, sullen and depressed.
- 9 Open offices are becoming more popular now as they facilitate greater communication, instant feedback and improved inter-personal relationships.

## **18.7 IMPACT OF CULTURE ON NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATIONS**

Culture influences non-verbal communications as much of the gestures, expressions etc result from 'clan culture'. Besides, experts in communication are now convinced that non-verbal communications play a very critical role in every day living:

- They form an integral part of oral, face-to-face communications
- They form the backbone of written communication in terms of layout and other visual aspects of written communication

In modern business communications, non-verbal communications can be at the conscious and unconscious levels. Managers must be conversant with both to be able to use them effectively in cross cultural interactions.

### **(1) Conscious forms of non-verbal communications**

There are several aspects of conscious non-verbal communication that help to create the 'first impression' on the people. Although these aspects are largely influenced by the climate and other specific conditions, local culture has a profound impact on:

#### **(i) Dress**

Most people form opinions about others in the first seven seconds of their meeting. A good sense of dressing contributes greatly to making the right first impression. Dressing appropriately is an art that needs to be acquired although changes in dress codes are happening in many countries rather fast because as the world globalizes, dress sense is also becoming global.

Dress should also include footwear, accessories and even cosmetics / perfumes used.

#### **(a) Business Attire for men**



Professional dress may include suit, trousers, sports coat, shirt with collar, necktie etc. Many companies are allowing staff to wear casual dress at work once a week. This may include sports shirts, polo shirts, trousers, sweaters that can be stylish as well as comfortable.

**(b) Business Attire for women**

Attires for business women include dresses, suits, skirts no shorter than three inches above the knees, pants with blouses etc. Inappropriate dresses are: too tight or too loose blouses, sleeveless, denim, shorts, backless / strapless dresses, sweatshirts, hats etc.

Jewellery, accessories etc should be minimal. It is better to stick to ear studs; make up, to suit but should appear natural.

**(ii) Grooming**

Besides dressing properly, one should not forget to wear his smile. Remember that one is not dressed for the day until he has worn his smile. Attitude at work should be positive, cooperative and willing to accept responsibilities.

**(iii) Business cards**

Business card is ones' calling card. It represents the person when he is not there; it speaks of the person and his business. Ensure that the business card is attractive, appealing and easy to read. It should convey the message that the person wants people to remember.

**(iv) Handshake**

Handshake is a common form of greetings when one meets someone. Ones' style of handshake tells a lot about him. The correct form of handshake is 'to keep thumbs up and toughing webs before wrapping the fingers around the other persons' hand. While introducing oneself, the person is expected to offer his hand irrespective of the man or woman except in certain cultures that prohibit women shaking hands with men.

Other forms of greeting like embracing or kissing on the cheeks should be avoided in business gatherings.

**(2) Unconscious forms of non-verbal communication**

There are several of them and involve:

- Facial Expressions
- Eyes
- Head
- Shoulders
- Hands and fingers
- Body posture

Gestures, expression etc provide cues and clues that supplement ones' oral communication. They are vital and yet they should not be learnt as they look artificial. They are not consciously worn as they are intuitive, outward expressions of inward feelings or thoughts. Gestures should be read in clusters and in the context they are made. Single gesture is like a single word that can have many meanings.

Following gestures are best avoided:

- A pointing finger
- A clenched, raised fist
- A finger raised and put vertically on the lips
- Frown on the face

## **18.8 IMPACT OF CULTURE ON ORAL COMMUNICATIONS**

It is more difficult to deal with problems arising from the way people speak a language. They continue to speak the foreign language in the same way as they speak own language. Those who have tried learning a different language would know that it is easier to write in the language than to speak in it.

Another source that adds to the difficulty of understanding the language is when the speakers use idiomatic expressions. These expressions may be well understood in one country but may not make any impression on people from another region.

A few useful tips for oral communication in cross cultural environments are:

### **(1) Clear pronunciation of words**

Foreigners should put in a little extra effort in pronouncing words by pausing at every punctuation sign. This eliminates 'noise' in communication.

### **(2) Look for feedback from listeners**

Be alert and sensitive to the expressions and gestures of the audience by maintaining good eye contact. In case they show signs of confusion, do not hesitate to check back by asking a straight question like, 'Is it clear?'

### **(3) Rephrase sentences**

If speakers feel that audience has not understood them, they should rephrase their sentences in simpler language by choosing words that are easily understood. Do not repeat the same sentence more loudly.

### **(4) Avoid talking down to audience**

Do not blame the audience for lack of comprehension. It is more appropriate to ask, 'Am I going too fast?'

**(5) Allow people to finish what they have to say**

If interrupted, audience may miss something useful. Similarly, speakers should not let others complete their sentences.

## **18.9 IMPACT OF CULTURE ON WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS**

Written communication is the art of correspondence. Written language is the vehicle of the cultural ethos of the country or region. Although it is a common practice to translate the written message in to the local language, it is well known a good translation requires mastery of both the languages and more importantly, a deep understanding of the cultures and cultural differences involved.

Although English has emerged as the language of business internationally, we do come across correspondence in French, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, Hindi, Urdu etc. It is a major challenge to translate the product catalogue, literature and advertisements in other languages. Besides, translations are required for documents relating to strategy, systems and procedure.

In the contemporary business scenario, people are learning foreign languages to bridge the gap between consumers and product offerings. Even so problems abound and until a good understanding of the cross cultural issues develops, constraints / impediments to communication across cultures would continue.

A few guidelines are:

**(1) Use simple, short words**

Select simple, short words that do not have multiple meanings.

**(2) Rely on specific terms**

Specific terms improve understanding. Avoid abstractions and illustrate with examples.

**(3) Avoid slang, jargons and idioms**

Slang, jargons and idioms do not translate well. Even abbreviations are not understood well across cultures; avoid them.

**(4) Construct simple short sentences**

Simple short sentences also improve comprehension compared with the long sentences one uses in language one is fluent in.

**(5) Use short passages**

Stick to the rule of one idea per passage and make it short.

**(6) Use transitional devices to facilitate understanding train of thought**

Use of transitional words like ‘In addition, besides, first, second, third etc’ makes it easier for the reader / listener not conversant with the language.

**(7) Use numbers and pre-printed forms**

Wherever possible use numbers and pre-printed forms as they are easy to understand.

**(8) Emphasize neatness in layout and presentation**

Printers and publishers are using different colours for heading and adding other embellishments in printed, written matters to attract attention of readers and retain their interest by inducing them to read on.

**ACTIVITY**

An entrepreneur is engaged in the manufacturing of automobile components in Gurgaon, Haryana (India) and has earned a good name in the replacement market. He is now interested in expanding his product range with the help of technical and financial collaboration from American or Japanese firms and move in to the market of original equipment supplier to the rapidly growing automobile market of India.....

Besides technical, legal and commercial aspects of negotiations, detail out the cultural aspects the Indian entrepreneur should acquire to be able to interact successfully with American and Japanese negotiators.

**18.10 SUMMARY**

With globalization of businesses and economies, people with different background, mindsets and cultures are interacting more frequently and human civilization is moving forward faster overcoming disparities of race, religion, colour etc. Progression of modern global managers would increasingly depend upon how well they are able to communicate across varied cultures to achieve common goal of progress of all communities, countries and continents.

Culture has a powerful influence on individuals’ way of thinking, saying and doing things. It provides a meaningful context on the way people meet, greet and communicate with others for productive cooperation to accomplish common, agreed goals.

Acquiring and sharpening ones’ cross cultural communication skills assumes strategic importance as it can propel ones’ career, prop success in competitive environments, reflect individuals’ commitment to quality / excellence, make them more confident in diverse settings of people from all walks of life and help develop an admirable code of conduct for groups and enterprises.

A culture has three layers – the outer layer or the explicit culture relates to visual realities of dress, food, language, behaviour, habitats etc, the middle layer relates to

values and norms of community and finally the inner layer or the implicit culture comprises of assumptions, rules and methods of solving / coping with problems.

Culture may also be identified with geographical areas, profession, hobbies etc. Distinguishing traits of a culture are its stability, complexity, composition and acceptance of outsiders. Culture may also be distinguished on the basis of religion, values, role play, process of decision-making, social behaviour / etiquettes and sense of time and timing.

Like communities and countries, every individual has a territory around himself that he considers as his own. Called 'proximics' – the study of spatial needs of human beings, it recognizes four spatial zones – intimate, personal, social and public. Their distances vary among cultures and over time, it is now recognized that even contents of these spaces – landscaping, colour schemes, ergonomics, sculptures, artifacts, furnishing, interiors etc, also influence the quality and experience of human interactions.

Culture impacts on non-verbal communication both at conscious level covering dress, business attire for men / women, grooming, business cards, handshake etc and at unconscious level relating to facial expressions, eye-contact, movements of head, shoulders, hand, fingers, body postures, walking etc.

Culture also influences oral communications as people continue to speak foreign language in the same way as they speak own language. It is easier to learn to write than to speak in a foreign language. Speakers must use clear pronunciations of words, look for feedback from listeners, rephrase sentences, avoid talking down to audience and not allow people to finish what they have to say.

Written communications reflect the cultural ethos of a country or region and a good translation requires mastery of both the languages and cultures involved. A few useful tips for writers are using simple / short words, sentences and passages, relying on specific terms, avoiding slang, jargons and idioms, using transitional devices to assist grasping the train of thought and using numbers and pre-printed forms.

## 18.11 KEYWORDS

- (1) **Culture** – It is the refinement of thoughts, emotions, manners, taste etc relating to concepts, habits, skills, arts, instruments, institutions of people in different time periods.
- (2) **Values** – These are the ideals, ethics, credo, belief, percept, tenet etc that lay the foundation for goals, purposes, objectives, mission and vision of individuals, groups and enterprises.
- (3) **Explicit culture** – These are those elements of culture that are visible, distinct, definite, clear, stated and open realities and is also known as the outer layer of culture.
- (4) **Implicit culture** – These are the assumptions and characteristics that are unexpressed, unspoken, latent, ingrained, intrinsic, inherent etc and form the inner layers of culture that are invisible but steadfast.

- (5) **Homogenous culture** – Culture that is uniform, consistent, similar and monolithic.
- (6) **Acceptance of outsiders** – It is the approval of outsiders and considering them to be adequate and admissible.
- (7) **Etiquettes** – These are manners, customs and conventions that cover rules of politeness, civility and propriety.
- (8) **Chronemics** – It is the study of impact of time and timing on the attitude, behaviour and conduct of people.
- (9) **Proximics** – It is the study of nearness, closeness and adjacency on the attitude, behaviour and conduct of people.
- (10) **Conscious level of culture** – It is those parts of body language that people are aware, alive and alert of and their use is deliberate, studied and intentional.

### 18.12 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- 1 Describe the increasing importance of cross cultural communication skills in the emerging scenario of globalization.
- 2 Describe the impact of culture on interactions among human beings at the individual, group and enterprise level.
- 3 How modern global managers can benefit from acquiring cross cultural communication skills?
- 4 Describe the various layers of culture and distinguish between explicit and implicit culture.
- 5 Describe the distinguishing features of a culture.
- 6 Describe chronemics and its relevance to interaction among human beings.
- 7 Explain proximics and highlight the spatial zones and how their knowledge can enhance effectiveness of speakers.
- 8 Describe how culture influences the oral, written and non-verbal communication skills.

### 18.13 SUGGESTED FURTHER READINGS

- 1 Bovee, Courtland L., Thill, John V. (1992). Business Communication Today. New York, NY, USA: McGraw Hill Inc.
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