

# COMMUNICATION

## MEANING OF COMMUNICATION

Communication is the process by which we exchange meanings, facts, ideas, opinions or emotions with other people. The word communication has been derived from a Latin word 'Communis' which means 'commonness' or 'to share' or 'to participate'. The presence of minimum of two minds is essential for communication. In fact, communication means to convey a message by one person to another so that another person may understand, follow and implement the message. If one person is unable to follow the message of another, it can't be called communication.

It is important to note that communication does not mean merely written or oral messages. It includes everything that may be used to convey meaning from one to another person. For example, movement of lips or the wink of an eye or wave of hands may convey more meanings than even spoken or written words.

## DEFINITION OF COMMUNICATION

- 1) "Communication is the sum total of all the things that a person does when he wants to create an understanding in the mind of another. It involves a systematic and continuous process of telling, listening and understand." - Louis A. Allen
- 2) "Communication in its simplest form in conveying of information from one person to another." - Cyril L. Hudson
- 3) "The act of making one's ideas and opinions known to others." - Fred. G. Meyer
- 4) "Communication is an exchange of facts, ideas, opinions or emotions by two or more persons." - Newman and Summer
- 5) "Communication is the interchange of thought or information to bring about mutual understanding and confidence of good human relations." - American Society of Training Directors
- 6) In the words of Theo Haimnan, "Communication is the process of passing information and understanding from one person to another... It is the process of imparting ideas and making oneself understood by others."

In a nutshell, it is a systematic and continuous process of conveying ideas, emotions, and opinions from one person to another in order to bring about mutual understanding and confidence of good human relations.

## FUNCTIONS OF COMMUNICATION

Lee Thayer, a prominent management thinker in his book 'Communication and Communication System' has divided the functions of communication into following four categories:

- 1) **The information function:** It serves to provide knowledge to the individuals who need guidance in their actions. It also fulfils the workers' desires for awareness of things that affect them.
- 2) **The command and instructive function:** This function makes the employee aware of his obligations to the formal organisation and provides him with additional guidance on how to perform his duties adequately.
- 3) **The influence and persuasive function:** This function motivates, directs and guides the employees to act and influence the behaviour and attitudes of the people through arguments and persuasion.
- 4) **The integrative function:** Communication, if properly handled, integrates the activities and efforts of the workers. As a result, they move in a single desired direction and the whole organisation becomes a well-knit system.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNICATION

- 1) **Communication involves Plurality of Persons-** One single person can't communicate. At least two persons are involved in every communication one is communicator and other is communicatee. Communicator or the sender is a person who wants to make his opinions, through feelings or ideas common or shares with others or even a person who speaks, writes a letter or issues some instructions. Communicatee or receiver is the person with whom the communicator wants to share his message. There has to be a receiver to complete the communication process.
- 2) **Existence of a Message:** A message is a subject-matter of communication. The message may be the orders, instructions or information about the managerial plans, policies, programmes sent by the superior to subordinate. A message can also be from subordinate to superior in the forms of reports, suggestions, complaints, problems.
- 3) **Communication is a Continuous Process:** Communication is not an art or event at an instance of time rather it is a continuous process incorporating various events and activities that are inter-related and inter-dependent.
- 4) **Communication is a Two-Way Process:** Simple transmission of the message by the sender does not make the communication complete rather it also needs

understanding of the message in the same manner of receiver. So receiver after receiving the message must try to understand the idea behind the message and respond accordingly.

5) **Communication may be Written, Oral or Gestural:** Communication is the sum of all the things one person does when he wants to create understanding in the mind of another. It is generally understood as spoken or written words but in reality it is more than that. It includes everything that may be used to convey meanings from one person to another.

- **Written Communication:** It includes those decisions policy statements, rules, procedures, orders, instructions, and agreements etc. which are expressed on paper.
- **Oral Communication:** It implies conveying of message through spoken words. It is face to face communication and includes communication through telephone and public speech etc.
- **Gestural Communication:** It implies expressions through body parts. It includes facial expressions, movement of lips, nodding of head, and movement of hands. It is used as a supplementary method of communication. For example, while delivering his speech a person by thumping the desk/table can communicate to audience that this part of his speech is more important.

6) **Primary purpose is to motivate a Response:** The primary purpose of the communication is to influence human behaviour. Communication can motivate employees by clarifying to them what is to be done, how well they are doing and what can be done to improve their performance if it below standard.

7) **Communication may be Formal or Informal:** Formal communication is that which flows through well-established levels or hierarchical positions of the organization. For example, when a chief executive issues decisions and instructions to the subordinates or when subordinate reports to the superior. Formal communication may take place in the following forms:

(1) Conferences, (2) Director's meeting, (3) Interviews, (4) Departmental staff meeting, (5) News Bulletins etc.

Informal communication takes place on the basis of informal and social relations among people in an organization. Such communication does not follow the formal channels, i.e., rules and structure of the organization. For example, if a superior and

subordinate while sitting in the club or in cafeteria share any information it is informal communication.

- 8) **Communication may be Vertical, Horizontal or Diagonal:** The communication which flows from higher level to lower level position is known as downward communication. The message transmitted from superior to subordinate or from manager to assistant manager is downward communication. They are in the form of: (1) Circulars, (2) Letters, (3) Memos, (4) Annual reports, (5) Group meetings, (6) Loudspeakers announcements.

Upward communication is from subordinates to superior as that from worker to foreman, from foreman to manager, from manager to general manager and from general manager to chief executive or board of directors. They may be the following form:

(1) Opinions, (2) Ideas, (3) Complaints, (4) Grapevine, (5) Union publications, (6) Appeals, (7) Grievances etc.

Communication that takes place directly between two persons having equal ranks in the managerial hierarchy or between two subordinates under same manager is called Horizontal Communication or Lateral Communication.

Diagonal Communication is like downward or upward communication, so we can say that it implies exchange of information between persons who are at position at different levels of hierarchy and also at different departments. This type of communication increases organizational efficiency by speeding up information and cutting across departmental barriers.

- 9) **Communication is Unavoidable:** Communication is always existing and unavoidable phenomenon. Not to talk of facial expressions, positive gestures and other behavioural ways, even silence also conveys a lot about person's attitude.
- 10) **Communication is a Universal Process:** It is a universal phenomenon. All the living beings whether it is humans, animals, insects or birds communicate through their own symbols and signs.
- 11) **Communication is a Social Process:** As it enables everyone in the society to satisfy his basic needs and desires through exchange of written, spoken or non-verbal message. It is through communication that two or more persons interact and influence each other and consequently bridge the gap in their understanding.

## ELEMENTS OF COMMUNICATION

The basic elements of communication are:

- 1) **Communicator** - The sender, speaker, writer or issuer who intends to convey or transmits the message.
- 2) **Communicatee** - The receiver, listener, reader for whom the communication or information is meant.
- 3) **Message** - It is the content or subject matter of communication. It may be an idea, opinion, information, order, suggestion or complaint etc.
- 4) **Media or channel**- It refers to the method through which the message is passed on from the sender to the receiver. It serves as a link between the communicator and communicatee.
- 5) **Response**- The effect or reply or reaction of the message made by the communicatee. Purpose of every communication is to motivate a positive response. It is possible only when the message is meaningful and the receiver thoroughly understands it.

## OBJECTIVES OF COMMUNICATION OR IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION TO MANAGERS

Communication is the vehicle through which basic management functions are carried out. The success of an enterprise depends upon the effectiveness of the communication. Managers cannot plan, organise, direct and control without communication. It is no exaggeration to say that communication is the means by which organizational activity is unified, behaviour is modified, change is effected and goals are achieved. A manager typically spends 3/4th of his working day on communication and his success depends largely on communication skills. Now-a-days employers give high weightage to the communication skills at the time of their appointment as well as promotion.

In the words of Peter F. Drucker, "The manager has specific tool information. He does not handle people; he motivates, guides, organises people to do their own work. His tool, his only tool-to do all this is the spoken or written word or the language of numbers." Thus it is obvious that communication is the life blood and foundation stone of the successful working of an organisation. The necessity for effective communication in management has been widely recognised in recent years. The major responsibilities of an organiser in an industry lie in the establishment and effective utilisation of a communication system. The importance of communication in management can be judged from the following points:

- 1) ***Smooth and unrestricted running of the enterprise:*** The smooth and unrestricted running of an enterprise depends in an effective system of communication.
- 2) ***Quick decision making:*** Communication helps the administration in arriving at vital decisions. In decision making process
  - i. Management identify various alternatives to solve any problem.
  - ii. Management evaluate the alternatives.
  - iii. Management select the best alternative and obtain feedback during and after its implementation.

In fact, the qualities of managerial decisions depend on the information or data and facts gathered through communication. Moreover, the decision and plans of the management need to be communicated to the subordinates.

- 3) ***Proper planning and coordination:*** Communication also helps a lot in planning and co-ordination. The widest possible participation in planning is a pre-condition for getting the task done, and this can be effectively secured only through the media of communication. It is a common experience of all managements that in each industrial enterprise the work to be done is always subdivided between those who direct and those who accept the directions. Co-ordination between these groups is a must for the efficient functioning of the enterprise. Well, to a large degree this co-ordination and co-operation depends upon adequate and effective system of communication at all levels of management and in all areas of organisation.
- 4) ***Maximum productivity with the minimum cost:*** Greater, better and cheaper production is the aim of all prudent managements. Gone are the days of small-scale production manufacturing we confined to the four walls house under the supervision of a family boss (Karta' of family), who could easily instruct any member-worker of his family for any task. But in this age of mass- scale production, our industrial unit has no longer remained a close knit family unit as it used to be; with the result that direct and face to face contact between the employees is almost not-existent. Whatever may be the form of organisation-Departmental, Line and Staff or Functional—today the information passes through a variety of filters and there is always a chance for its misinterpretation. Effective system of communication can play a vital role in avoiding this illusion.
- 5) ***Democratic management:*** Under an effective system of communication it is quite convenient for the employees to express their grievances if any, bring, all

their problems to the notice of the management and get proper adjustment. Such an amicable atmosphere can tone down many tensions. If the grievances are not addressed on time, they may take a serious turn and there remain chances of strikes or lockouts leading to industrial unrest. Most of the conflicts in business are not basic but are caused by misunderstood motives and ignorance of the facts. Proper communications between the interested parties reduce the point of friction and minimise those that inevitably arise.

- 6) **Promotion of Co-operation and Industrial Peace:** Economical production which is of excellent quality is the aim of every management. It can be possible only when there is industrial harmony between management and workers. The two-way communication promotes co-operation and mutual understanding between both the parties. The efficient and downward communication helps the management to tell the subordinates what management actually expects from them. The upward communication helps the workers in putting their grievances, suggestions and reactions before management which ultimately helps in achieving the desired goals.
- 7) **Improve Public Relations:** A sound communication system, ensuring free flow of information between the organisation and various components of the society like customers, suppliers, bankers, government agencies and public at large, helps in building a good image in the minds of the public. Public generally has faith in only those organisations which are open and responsive to the needs of the community.
- 8) **Helps in Providing job Satisfaction:** An employee obtains satisfaction from his job only when he is able to perform his job in a desired manner. For proper performance of the job, it is necessary that an employee is fully aware of his duties, responsibilities, authorities and the role or importance of the job in the pursuit for organisational goals. All this awareness can be generated only through sound communication system.
- 9) **Helps in Selection of Best Employees:** Communication plays a very important role in the selection of employees of the organisation. Scientific selection procedure, which can eliminate the inefficient and unqualified persons, has to be laid down to avoid misfits in the organisation. Communication system helps the personnel manager in obtaining the detailed information about the mental ability, character, physical health, attitude and behaviour of the persons. These information can be gathered by the conduct of tests, interviews and checking

the references given by the candidate. Conducting of tests, interviews etc. are possible only through communication.

10) **Basis of control:** The system of maintaining control over the activities of the organisation consists of:

- Firstly, laying certain objectives or targets,
- Secondly, measuring actual performance,
- Thirdly, comparing actual performance with the targets, and
- Fourthly, taking corrective action in case of deviations.

All these things are possible if there exists an effective communication in the organisation.

11) **Help in motivation and leadership:** Management can motivate and lead employees through communication only. The employees have to be told what they have to do and how they have to do. If the employees are not aware of the expectations of the management, how and for what goal will they strive for? It is through communication that a formal leader, that is the manager, guides and supervises his employees.

12) **For running internal administration:** There is a great need of maintaining effective communication within the organisation as well. The management has to issue day-to-day instructions to subordinates and employees as to what work is to be done by them and how it is to be done. In upward communication, subordinates communicate their problems, complaints, progress reports to their superiors.

13) **Liaison with outside world:** For running the business, managers need knowledge about external world. They have to know about market trends, competitors, technological developments, government policies, business cycles, conditions of war and peace and what not. Communication provides this information to the managers on the basis of which they take decisions about product line and evolve marketing strategies.

14) **Public image:** Existence of good communication system in the organisation helps in projection of a good image of the organisation in the eyes of the people dealing with it. Good communication is another name for good public relations. If an outsider writes a letter to the organisation and promptly receives a correct and complete answer, naturally he will think high of the organisation. Effective and prompt communication helps in projecting



organisation's plans and policies to outsiders and getting their reactions to them.