



TenStep Supplemental Paper

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Organizational Communication

Communication is the most frequently discussed dynamic within an organization. Effective communication is a prerequisite for the attainment of organizational objectives. In the past, management gave very little emphasis to communication and considered it to be a natural process. Chester Barnard, in his classic functions of the executive, was the first to develop the idea of communication as the major shaping force in an organization. He ranked it, along with common purpose and willingness to serve, as one of the three primary elements of the organization. He listed seven specific elements of communication, which are:

- The channels of communication should be definitely known.
- There should be a definite formal channel of communication to every member of an organization.
- The line of communication should be as direct and short as possible.
- The complete formal line of communication should be used.
- The persons serving as communication centers must be competent.
- The line of communication should not be interrupted while the organization is functioning.
- Every communication should be authenticated.

This concept of Barnard's was challenged, and it went through a paradigm shift.

What is communication? Communication is essentially a two-way process, with a sender and receiver using media to convey a message. This process can be called communication only if the receiver deciphers the message in the way the sender had envisioned it.

The different types of communication are:

Non-verbal communication. At the opposite end of the continuum from sophisticated communication is non-verbal communication. It is also called the silent language. It is largely comprised of gestures and facial expressions. There are numerous forms of non-verbal communication.

- The most recognized form of non-verbal communication is body language.
- There are certain ways in which people verbalize important dimensions of nonverbal communication. These include factors such as voice quality, volume, speech, etc. This is called paralanguage.

Here are some suggestions to improve non-verbal communication.

- Look at what is happening in the situation: when nonverbal behavior is an emotional response, it reflects what is going on. It gives a better understanding of the situation.



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- Consider the discrepancies between verbal and non-verbal behaviors. If there is a mismatch, it requires examination.
- Watch for subtleties in non-verbal behavior.

Downward communication. This is one of the most dominant themes in organizational communication. It is a communication process used only to give specific directions about job instructions and procedures. This type of communication promotes an authoritarian atmosphere.

Downward communication affects the receivers in the following ways.

1. People's interpretations of communications follow the path of least resistance.
2. People are more open to messages that are consistent with their existing ideas, beliefs, and values.
3. Messages that are congruent with values tend to cause more resistance than messages that are incongruent with rational logic.
4. The total situation affects communication - a message interpreted as congruent in one situation may be interrupted as incongruent in another.

Upward communication. This is an interpersonal communication. However, in organizational practice, it has traditionally been used only for feedback. This type of communication is usually from subordinate to superior.

Horizontal communication. A flat organizational structure demands horizontal communications. This is considered to be the most effective of the various methods available. It is a communication between equals where both the parties assume equal roles.

It is imperative that, regardless of the communication method followed, there is an uninterrupted flow of information.