## Information and Knowledge; Communication

## The Vitality of Business Communication

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**Abstract:** Communication entails the transfer of ideas, thoughts or feelings by the sender to receiver via verbal or nonverbal means. This transfer gains special significance in business especially in the service sector, since the service providers work with humans and what distinguishes humans from any other species is their ability to communicate with others. Communication affects a wide variety of business issues including productivity and job satisfaction via improving the conveyance of information in every level of the organization. Thus, in order to establish effective communication, the managers in an organization has to channel the receiver what they mean to communicate in a simple, direct and precise manner whether it be on the oral or written modality. To achieve this end, they should also take into consideration the gender and cultural variations in terms of communication.

**Keywords:** Verbal and nonverbal communication; business management; gender and cultural differences

**Jel Classification:** D80, D83

## 1. Introduction

Needless to say, communication is essential almost in every field of life, from home to work. Although we are trained in our specialization areas, in economics, in management, or whatever it is, we do not acquire any communication skill directly. It is a social process that starts from babyhood to death for us as human beings.

Some jobs need less communication capability, as computer programming or truck driving, some need more, as being a receptionist or hotel administrator. Especially in hotel business, that is generally an international setting, in every step of the work if you are not a good communicator you have little chance to be successful. Smithson presents that, in the book, *Business Communication Today*, managerial success builds on good communication. In spite of its importance, many of the workers in hotel business overlook this point in practical world. It is something that is talked about much but done little.

Despite the fact that there are many different definitions of communication, they share some common points, as "transferring", "interaction" and "sharing with others".

Baguley (1994) defines communication as *"the process that occurs when ideas, information and feelings are conveyed between individuals or groups of individuals for deliberate purposes"*. We comprehend that it is not only about transformation of information but also that of feelings, thoughts, needs and observations.

Business communication is defined as "*the communication required of an organization in both its internal and external environments"* (Boone, Kurtz & Block, 1997). In business internal communication can be three ways; it can be upward with superiors, downward with subordinates and lateral with peers. External communication can be between customers and service suppliers.

Our aim to communicate is numerous, however the purpose of most of our communications is to affect the other(s)' feelings, thoughts or even behaviors we are communicating with.

Message can be passed through different means; linguistic (content, meaning, speech qualities) and non-linguistic (body language, body contact, distance, appearance etc).

Communication is a two-way process that receiver and transmitter may take part at the same time. Transmitter knows how his message is understood by the receiver's feedback. We will mention details of the receiver, transmitter, feedback and the other components of communication process later on.

## 2. Why Is Communication Important in Business?

Regardless of the size of your company, communication is fundamental for business success.

Communication is the process that enables materialization and achievement of public relation goals. Communication process is vital since it is done to inform, convince, motivate and provide mutual understanding (Genc, 2009). In other words, public relations experts should know what communication is first, and then they should know how to use communication tools effectively. They also ought to be aware of how message is transferred from source to receiver and how the message is perceived by the receiver.

Today, developments in technology provide opportunities for communication tools. By means of these developments communication tools gain ground for public relations. So, communication stands on a more central position than it did before.

In tourism industry, for public relation campaigns it is vital in the sense that how these communication tools are used and what kind of messages are transferred to consumers. These messages should be appropriate, meaningful, recollective, comprehensible and reliable. Furthermore, it is important to know by which intentions that the messages are pervaded.

In every kind of industry and specifically in tourism industry, the public relation campaigns use communication tools for various purposes. The communication tools are used in order to;

- Give messages to target consumer population and pervade the messages

- Distribute the messages correctly

- Convince target consumer population that the messages are correct

- Change target populations consumer attitudes by messages

- Change target population consumer behaviors by messages (Genc,2009)

Organizational intelligence and organizational integration are the two key terms in understanding communication. Through giving and taking messages, these two terms as consequences of organizational communication are fulfilled. As people settle exchange of messages in an organization, they may start to have common expectations and meanings that are transferred by messages (Figure 1).
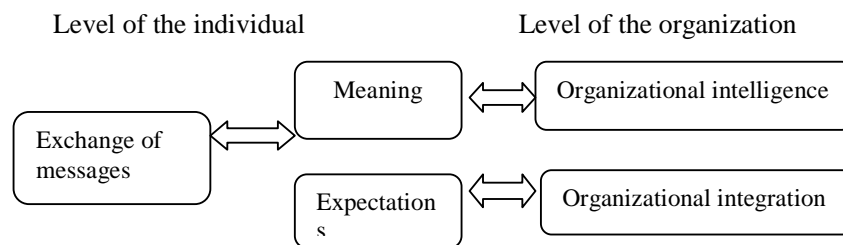
Level of the individual     Level of the organization

Meaning ⟷ Organizational intelligence

Exchange of messages ⟷

Expectations ⟷ Organizational integration

**Figure 1. Key terms in the definition of communication as an organizing process**

## 2.1. Communication & Productivity

Although the amount of the effect differs according to type of the business, or job design, or conceptualization of productivity, employees present a relationship between communication in job environment and their productivity (Clampitt & Downs, 1993).

The study showed that successful businesses were those which "more frequently provide channels for upward communication and listen to what their employees say" (Sanchez, 1999). In addition, successful businesses are better at downward communication patterns because of the fact that employees are more informed appropriately just in time, as well as they achieve "better understanding of organizational goal" (Sanchez, 1999).

Kress (2005) suppose five points of explanation to enlighten the relationship between productivity and communication;

- *Demonstrating the organization's investment in employees;*

- *Educating employees about how payment is determined;*

- *Reinforcing reward-and-recognition programs;*

- *Recognizing contributions in noncash ways;*

- *Soliciting employee feedback on issues that affect job performance.*

## 2.2. Communication & Job Satisfaction

In the literature, the relationship between communication and job satisfaction was found to be positively strong (Downs, 1988). Especially supervisory communication and subordinate communication have effect on employee satisfaction to a greater degree (Clampitt & Downs, 1993). Also Pincus' research in 1986 reached similar conclusions indicating the association between communication and job satisfaction.

Better upward communication gives to employee a sense of being taken into consideration by the employers since it creates an atmosphere of active participation in the organization which consequently results in employee job satisfaction.

### 3. The Elements and Process of Communication

#### 3.1. Sender (Source)

The one who send messages to a receiver or receivers is called sender. Sender credibility, that is, how much the receiver trusts the sender, changes how the receiver behaves.

For hotel and restaurant setting, hotel or restaurant manager is the source of the communication through the feature of starting the process. The aim of the hotel or restaurant is to access its customers who are determined as target group before.

#### 3.2. Receiver

The target person(s) is the receiver. But receiver is not a passive agent. S/he has experiences, set of ideas up to that time. If your listener is not interested in the topic you are talking about it is hard to point out his/her attention.

Customer is the receiver for the sector. According to the receiver, message should be organized. If so, managers should be aware who she or he wants to attain to.

#### 3.3. Message

Any thought, idea, feeling, information that is transmitted in a written, oral or nonverbal way. It may be the pitch of your voice or a business letter or a mimic that gives clues about your anger. The contradiction between your body language and your words results in misunderstanding. Not being precisely transferring the message leads to less effective communication.

According to Genc (2009) if the message is given in tourism settings some points should be considered;

- The degree to which the message arouses interest at aimed receiver

- How the message will be evaluated by the receiver

- The degree to which the message leads customer's needs and demands

- Consistency between the message and cultural and psychological characteristics of the customer.

### 3.3. Channel (**Method or Tools***)

The tool that the sender and receiver communicate with is called the channel. From telephone to sense organs, to newspapers are channels of communication. They can be mass communication tools or more personal ones. Type of the method or tool should be determined regarding the message the sender want to transfer. Noise deforms the message's transference physically or its meaning.

### 3.4. Feedback

Feedback is often the immediate reaction of the receiver and how message is understood by the receiver. The only way for sender to understand, whether the receiver got the message correctly or not, is through feedback. It can be either verbal or nonverbal. As it may be a verbal response, it may also a gesture, a smile or a sigh. The sender changes or calls off the message accordingly. If the message is written getting feedback usually takes time.

Feedback is vital for hotel and restaurant public relations. Public relation experts - actually the manager- has the opportunity to know the quality of the communication. Was the customer satisfied? Were his or her needs met? Does he or she come to the same restaurant or hotel again if it is possible? Answers of these questions help the organization to establish its aims.

In parallel with communication literature in general, in public relations strong necessity has been realized in the sense that communication is not a one-way process. In contrast, customer-centric approaches increasingly have become more popular.

### 3.5. Context

Environment, cultural context and everything linked to the situation have an effect on communication. If there are lots of stimuli around the receiver, since attention has limits, the message may not be able to be received by him/ her properly. Culture is another common differentiating factor that may cause misunderstandings between the two parties. It will be examined in culture part of this chapter.

## 4. Effective Communication

Problems in the organizations mainly arise from poor communication or troubles in the communication skills. Since most of our communication appears spontaneously, there is a not unique formula.

The answer of the question, "should the relations be formal or informal" depends on the type of the restaurant or hotel. If it is a deluxe dinner house or let's say Sheraton, it may require more formal relationship while a restaurant that addresses teenagers or a hostel may prefer more informal language.

Communication climate of the organization, which values are promoted by the organization, represents the effectiveness of communication in the work place. Managers' approach to employees and customers influences effective communication generation. Managers should be aware of the fact that they work in service sector. By its name, it implies they should focus on customers' needs and differences. Giving more emphasis on receiver, namely customer, brings success in communication.

The way of successful communication starts at understanding the audience and his response carefully. Regardless of the fact that the response you take is or is not parallel to you or your ideas, you should be able to keep the friendly atmosphere. In addition, shaping audience's response is one of the successful communication signs. That partly depends on how much you are trustworthy. If you can convince that your message is credible, the effectiveness of the communication increases.

Although there may be style differences among enterprises, there are some common points that can be applied by them:

- Staff should be aware of the fact that it is a service-oriented job.
- Complaints shall be regarded as valuable.
- Explanation about things going wrong is not interest of the customer.
- Point of view of customer and staff are not the same.
- Staff should be sensitive to customers' wishes.
- Gentle smile should not be overlooked.
- Teamwork is essential.
- Gestures are regarded thankfully by customers.

**4.1. Repeating the message**

U.S Navy used a technique containing;

- Tell them what you will tell

- Tell them

- Tell them what you told (Bazzett, 1999)

**4.2. 5 W 1H**

Bazzett (1999) presents the importance of 5w 1h questions;

- Asking yourself *why* you will communicate, what your purpose is by transferring this or that data and importance level of this communication.
- Asking yourself *what* you will communicate, in what extent you want to give details, in which borders of your information are.
- Asking yourself *who* is your audience, whom you want to reach, are they customers, or are they managers.
- Asking yourself *where* the communication takes places. What facilities the place has.
- Asking yourself *when* it is. How long it will possibly goes on, being quicker is often regarded as better than being slower.
- Asking yourself *how* you will communicate via phone, via letter or face to face. Since it determines what materials you will use it is essential to know the answer of the "how" question.

**4.3. The role of the executive**

According to Barnard, "serving as a channel for communication" is an essential role of the executive. He stated seven items (Barnard, 1938):

1. Channels of communication should be definitely known

2. Objective authority requires a definite formal channel of communication every member

3. The line of communication must be as direct or short as possible

4. The complete line of communication should be used

5. The competence of the persons serving as communication centers, that is, officers, supervisory heads, must be adequate

6. The line of communication should not be interrupted during the time when the organization is to function

7. Every communication should be authenticated.

## 5. Oral/ Verbal Communication & Listening

Different from written communication oral communication feedback is accessible for the communicator easily. He can reach the audience's reaction immediately. He can also give his message more properly since he uses his voice and body language with the exception of phone calls.

### 5.1. Listening

By saying listening we do not mean only the process that occurs in the ear. It implies "reading" whatever the other sends. In some sources, listening is qualified as an art. We will call desirable type of listening in successful communication as "effective listening".

Boone, Kurtz and Block (1997) mentioned a survey that explains the biological aspect of the failure of effective listening; "*average person talks about 150 words per minute, the brain can actually handle 400 words per minute- an overcapacity that can lead to inattention, misinterpretation, and boredom*". Human mind is faster at listening than speaking.

While we usually remember half of the conversation right after the conversation, we usually remember most probably only quarter of the conversation a few days later (Boone, Kurtz & Block, 1997).

### 5.1.1. Stages of Listening

*Sensation:* The first stage of listening is physiological phase. It is basically hearing the voice. Attention is crucial at his stage. The influence of physical conditions is inevitable. Not surprisingly, a noisy street may not be so appropriate to communicate for complex issues.

*Interpretation:* The second stage is interpretation, that is, giving meaning to what is sensed.

*Evaluation:* Audience evaluates the message. S/he makes decision about it.

*Reaction:* At this phase one behaves according to the message that is received.

## 6. Non-Verbal Communication

As we use language and words in communication, we benefit from nonverbal features. They include voice qualities and body language (eye contact, facial expression, mimics and gestures, head movements, postures, clothing, hair style, make up etc).

### 6.1. Voice Patterns

Qualities of voice, such as tone, pitch, volume, speed of voice, have some effect on your message. While a high pitch voice may say the audience something, a low pitch voice may say something different. We have an idea about the person's mood by his / her tone, pitch or volume of voice. High volume may give the impression of anger, one using low volume may start to talk about something not commonly known. However culture effect exists. People tend to speak louder in some countries.

### 6.2. Body Language / non verbal communication

According to nonverbal communication literature, the words we use effect 7%, our voice qualities (tone, pitch etc) 38%, while body language effects 55% on our speech.

Goman (2008) touch on the similarity between computer and body language in her book, *The Nonverbal Advantage*. We appreciate the importance of both the computers and our body language in terms of communication. However, we do not know, in advance, how to use those two languages in the service of effective communication. People cannot display with their body language what they aimed. Goman (2008) supposes it is not the matter of what the sender feels, it is the matter of what the target receives.

### 6.2.1. Eye Contact and Facial Expression

Face is the starting point that the audience receives information about your feelings and thoughts.

The ones who can look into receiver's eyes are more successful communicators than the ones who cannot look into the receiver's eyes. Eye contact provides two outcomes. First through eye contact you make the receiver think you have self-esteem and you believe in what you explain. Secondly, especially in the settings receiving many people, losing audiences' attention is one of the main issues for speakers. Eye contact helps the sender to catch the receiver's concentration and interest. Goman states that "looking at someone's eyes transmits energy" (2008).

### 6.2.2. Gestures and postures

We use gestures to support our messages. While you are saying "I am so happy" with your words, your slow hand movements and low shoulders are saying you are sad or tired, that would cause confusion in audience's mind. We can send messages intentionally or unintentionally with our bodies.

### 6.2.3. Physical Appearance

Physical appearance is the main element of the first impression. Combination of clothing, make-up, hair dressing or accessories expresses something to the others. People like or don't like you according to what they see immediately.

### 6.2.4. Physical Contact

Communication can be oral or written, people can transmit messages through touching, as well. By the act of touching, you can show warmth, friendliness, and understanding. However one should be careful to what extent the person he is speaking to allow. The nature of the relationship also is vital for touching behavior.

## 7. Writing

Although not being the most effective way of communication, e-mail was pointed out as main channel by 90% of employers (Sanchez, 1999).

Opposed to oral communication, written communication gives opportunity to control over the message. Written communication tools include a wide range of different forms such as memos, postings, reports, letters, presentations, resume.

Regardless of which form your writing is, your thoughts should be well organized and well constructed. Unless you know exactly what you want to say, the success probability of your writing is low. If so how will you achieve this goal?

Thill and Bevoée (1996) suggest three main phases for communicators:

a)    *Planning:* The communicator determines his / her aim to communicate, who his /her audience is, which channel or mean she / he will use.

b)    *Composing:* After the communicator organizes his thoughts he gives form his thoughts by maintaining sentences and the body of the writing.

c)    *Revising*: The communicator checks out his composition if he wrote as he purposed or not. If necessary he edits and re-writes the passages. He corrects spelling, grammar errors and arrangement.

Mind mapping is basically designing a figure that you put your thoughts and ideas linked to your main idea. Since it has very little constraints in comparison to outlining, it is a useful method. You can create more ideas in a more free way.

Written materials are not welcomed by its receivers. People only scan the text quickly. Catching the reader attention links to interesting headlines, subheads, bullets, pictures, graphs, illustrations etc.(Alessandra & Hunsaker, 1993).


### 7.1. Memos

Memos/memorandums include reminding or informing about a meeting or conference or making announcement or giving instructions or asking information. It can be sent to one person or more.

Your memos should be short, simple, accurate and clear as far as possible. Memos are generally one or two pages long. It should contain the sender's, the receiver's names and subject. Since reader has a short time to read, one should take into consideration what the reader needs.


### 7.2. Reports

People should be careful while they are writing reports since reports are long and detailed materials. Good reports also have an effect on the person's career as well as bad ones.

Business reports should be well-organized. While usage of charts, graphs, figures helps the writer in his/her explanation, it also facilitates the understanding of the reader.

Alessandra and Hunsaker (1993) advices some questions to be asked oneself writing a report:

- What is the familiarity of the reader with the problem?
- What expertise does the reader have in this area?
- What conclusions are of importance to the reader?
- What are the preconceived notions of the reader?
- Why was the report requested?
- What does the reader need to know in order to make a decision?

### 7.3. Letters

Business letters are formal, long-lived recordings that are written to other companies or customers for public relations purposes. According to the letter's function, one should arrange its formation.

As it is effective in other forms of writing, in letters, being precise, short and brief makes the communication more successful.

### 7.4. Presentation

Stage fright is the tension that is felt before any performance. Experience of the symptoms can change from person to person. Dry mouth, shaking legs and hands, tachycardia, butterflies in the stomach are only some of them.

Being sure about the purpose, why you are presenting that thing, is essential for preparation of the presentation.

Introduction is the most critical part of your presentation. Generally speaking, either you get your audience's attention or you lose them at the beginning. It can be a joke, an exercise that the audiences can participate in or a quotation that is relevant to your topic.

Conclusion is the other important part that should be paid attention. Most of the people cannot bear thing they hear for the first time in their mind at once. Primacy effect is the tendency of remembering the first elements in a series of elements

whereas recency effect is the tendency of remembering the last elements. Conclusion is important in this sense, repeating your main points at the end of your presentation will refresh and enhance the audience's memory about your presentation.

One of the main problems that presenter may encounter is the timing problem. In order not to go beyond the time or to finish early than expected, the presenter may write word by word his presentation for himself. By keeping time, he might know how much his presentation continues. However, at the presentation time, in front of his audiences he should not stand with his full-lecture at hand. Instead of this, he can hold his short notes as the plot of his speech. If the lecturer uses power point slides, he shouldn't put too many words and long sentences to his slides, as well. Finally, reading the slides is one of the common mistakes and causes for failure. Audiences, whether they are customer or co-workers, ought to feel you are well prepared for them. By that, they evaluate the importance you gave themselves as well as yourself.

We mentioned the significance of body language for communication before. Doing the same actions, like swinging on two legs distracts the audience. Meaningful jests and gestures keep audiences' attention alive. Furthermore, the second vital component of communication is the voice qualities. Changing tone, pitch and volume of the voice also helps the presenter to capture receivers' interest.

## 8. Communication and Gender

One should be careful when s/he is talking about gender differences. First of all we should remind the constructed nature of gender opposed to regarding gender as innate.

Women are not allowed to promote to highest positions at work since glass-ceiling effect remains (Davidson and Burke, 2004; Ryan and Haslam, 2005). However, investigating gender issue according to west and east countries may help us more in terms of tourism.

In the west side of the world, it is claimed for international business communication that women can be successful as soon as their communication tone resembles men's. It means accepting leadership effectiveness equals to masculinity (Rosener, 1997).

In the literature, there are two essentialist approaches due to sex; gender difference as a result of socialization and gender dominance as a result of economic power of men (Barett and Davidson, 2006).

One of the famous best seller writers Tannen (1990), a linguistic professor, believes that men and women impose different meanings to conversation, thus rapport talk vs. report talk. According to Tannen, while women seek for relationship (shaping rapport) and use language of intimacy, men's purpose is information, thus, is reporting to people. She also suggests that women use more indirect, "polite" language in comparison to men.

It was suggested that both hemispheres of women brain include speech-specific and language-specific areas. In Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development research, involving 32 nation, girls performed higher at reading and boys performed higher at math (Sokoloff, 2001). For instance Hall (1984) and Everhart, Schucard, Quatrin and Schucard (2001) claimed women "conform more, are more susceptible to influence, and are more adept in encoding and decoding nonverbal communications." These findings may indicate not only the differences between men and women but also why women are better at understanding "details" in communication.

## 9. Culture

Behavior is directly affected by culture. Understanding the effect of culture is critical to manage, to work and to be involved in tourism sector since hotels or restaurants are inevitably international settings for success.

Many features of organizational communication are influenced by cultural norms and values. Style of problem solving differs from culture to culture. In a survey, Van Dausen et al. (2002) found a culture effect that result in diversion in problem solving ways and quality. The survey is occurred in seven countries including South Korea, US, New Zealand and the others. For instance Chinese workers do not report the problem until the manager realizes it. On the other hand, in Western countries, pointing out a problem is rewarded by the managers.

Culture is generally classified as high-context and low-context. High-context refers to implicitness of most of message. They pay more attention to organization thoroughly and slowly. Japanese, Arabic and Latin American cultures may be examples of high-context cultures. On the other hand, low context refers to

explicitness of the information. They demand quickness opposed to the former. German, North American are defined as low-context cultures.

Lawrence & Edwards (2000) studied European countries with respect to their communication skills. While British managers are good at communication, Scandinavians try to stay away from conflicting situations. In Spanish countries oral communication is more common opposed to French choice of writing. In Turkey, managers are aware of the importance of communication.

Griffith (2002) suggests that managers' success is linked to his cognitive, affective and behavioral competences.

Cognitive competence is defined as one's competence at discovering intended message that a source gave by verbally or nonverbally (Applegate & Sypher, 1988; Kim, 1991).  Cognitive competencies make people more easily adapt to different environmental settings.

Affective competence is about emotional flexibility of the person. Motivational and attitudinal openness to experiences can give rise to affective competence (Kim, 1991).

Behavioral competence has connection with the person's adjustability of his/her behaviors to the present atmosphere. While behaviorally more competent managers can create new and more effective communication, behaviorally less competent managers can create less effective communication (Griffith, 2002).

He asked if so how a manager can act for better communication in intercultural settings. The reply is the figure below:

**Figure 2. A manager's guide to establish better communication in intercultural settings**

As we mentioned glass-ceiling for women in gender part of this chapter, it stands for minorities, as well.

In order to manage a hotel or a restaurant more effectively, one should overcome the invisible ongoing barriers of the countries by using communication tools in a powerful manner.

What can be done to improve communication in multicultural settings? As we mentioned, manager stands on critical point with respect to his job status. Firstly, training programs teaching how to manage intercultural settings may be useful.

Lippitt and Hoopes advice some crucial points for managers;

- *be aware of values that are inherent in the host culture;*
- *become familiar with the significant unique characteristics of the culture;*
- *take considerable interest in what people in the culture do;*
- *be able to greet people in their language and know certain key phrases;*

- *ask the individuals to indicate cultural and technical pitfalls, expectations, and potential problems a manager might experience before the assignment;*
- *ask clear open-ended questions; and develop the attitude that the host organizational system is "not problem people" but "people with a problem."* (p. 28)

Language is one of the most vital barriers that cannot be totally overcome in multi-cultural settings but when you can learn more about cultural diversities, you have the opportunity to communicate effectively. Not only speaking the language but also being conscious of cultural variations and nuances is important for interaction. Even though you are sensitive about these issues, there can still be confusing situations. In case of that kind of ambiguity, trying to be easy-going helps both sides. Keeping in mind that every culture all around the world deserves to be regarded as worthy, helps getting rid of barriers.

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