

SUBJECT: Communication and Secretarial Practices

COURSE CODE: MC 102

Author: Ms. Richa Verma

Lesson: 01

Vetter: Prof. M. S. Turan

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION: AN INTRODUCTION

Objective: The main objective of this lesson is to make the students learn about the concept of business communication and its importance for the success of any business organization.

Lesson Structure:

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Importance of Business Communication
- 1.3 Communication Cycle/Process
- 1.4 Types of Communication
- 1.5 Communication Networks
- 1.6 Summary
- 1.7 Self Assessment Exercises
- 1.8 Suggested Readings

1.1 INTRODUCTION

We spend more of our time in communicating than doing anything else. A large part of each day is spent in talking and listening and otherwise in reading, writing, gesturing, drawing etc. All these activities are forms of communication. In every

business organization, the basic aim of human group is to achieve certain objective. This objective can be effectively achieved when every individual working in the organization is connected with the work of other individuals. In order to have proper connection or coordination among various working groups, the exchange of ideas is very important which is possible only through communication. According to Sherlekar and Sherlekar, “Communication pours life into an organization”.

Communication is the basic ingredient for the existence of any business organization. It is the basic vehicles through which the activities or functions of the management are carried out. Communication is derived from Latin word ‘communis’ which means ‘common’. It means common among two or more than two people in equal measures. If a person effects communication, he has established a common ground of understanding. Communication is sharing of thoughts among two or more than two people in such a manner that the listener is receiving them in the same spirit with which they are being told. Thus communication involves imparting a common idea and covers all types of behaviour resulting there from. According to Peter Little,

“Communication is the process by which information transmitted between individuals and/or organization so that an understanding response results”.

No organization can think of its existence without effective communication. Communication is a managerial skills required for leading and motivating the employees at work. A manager spend more than 60 percent of his time in communication with others like in conferences or meetings, giving direction or

receiving information that can be in writing or orally. A manager who is good in communication can easily get the subordinates' cooperation for achieving the objective of the organization. Haimann considers communication as vital to all managerial functions. 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. Communication in its broad sense means both the act of communicating something and the manner of communication such as letter, notice or circular. Thus, the above discussion clearly reveals the importance of business communication in any organization. According to William Scott,

“Administrative Communication is a process which involves the transmission and accurate replication of ideas ensured by feedback for the purpose of eliciting actions which will accomplish organizational goal”.

1.2 IMPORTANCE OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

Communication is as important to the organization as blood is to the body. Communication is a medium through which works being done in the organization can be explained, change can be effected, a feeling of cooperation can be aroused by establishing uniformity among the works of various people working in the organization, clear human relation can be established and finally the objective of the organization are realized. No business can develop in the absence of effective internal and external communication. The top hierarchy in an organization spends most of the time in communication while the people at the lower level spend

comparatively less time in communication process. The importance of communication in management can be understood through the following points:

1. *Basis of decision making:* In the absence of communication it is not possible for the top management to take any decision. Much information has to be collected for decision making and for giving final shape to any idea. The information connected with the taking of decision can be obtained only through communication. With effective communication it can be ascertained as to what was said? What was done? What is being done? And what is to be done?
2. *Effective communication promotes spirit of cooperation and coordination:* An atmosphere of mutual trust and confidence between employer and employee can be possible with the existence of effective communication. Through this the management can collect required information related to limitation and potential of employees and the employees can be well aware of what is expected from them. In this way, mutual understanding can be build between employer and employee. This leads to job satisfaction to employees and good return to employers. Thus, the work can be accomplished only when there is coordination and cooperation among the people working in the organization.
3. *Effective Control:* Communication has an important place in the process of controlling. The managers get information about the work performance through communication on the basis of which they can improve upon the irregularities well in time. On the basis of the information received the future plans can also be amended.

4. *Basis of Motivation:* An efficient system of communication helps the managers in changing the point of view of the subordinates, raising their morale and presenting a basis of satisfaction. In any organization the differences emerge out of the wrongly defined objectives and ignorance of facts. A timely communication can settle the disputes among various sides and reduce the possible difference of opinion. In this way everybody gets greatly attached with the enterprise and the work goes on smoothly.
5. *Establishment of Effective Leadership:* In order to be a successful leader a manager must have the knowledge of the art of communication. In other words, leadership can not be imagined without effective communication. A manager can be an efficient leader by improving upon his art of communication. A good communication system brings the employees close to one another and removes their difference of opinion.
6. *Basis of organizational image:* Business communication also help in improving relationship with outside parties like the government authorities, foreign trade officials, licensing and custom authorities, bankers and financial institutions, income tax and sales officials, transporters, distributors, retailers and customers. With the help of communication the enterprise increases its reputation by giving information about its progress to the outside parties. The enterprise discharges its social responsibilities by informing the entire human community as to what improvement is being done to preserve their interests and this results in achieving their confidence. Thus, communication gives information about the level of work performance of the organization.

7. *Business activity has become extremely complex:* For the success of a big industrial unit, the work is performed by different functional department like production, planning, sales, stores, advertising, finance, accounts etc. There will be no coordination among these departments if there is no communication. Example- A project manager have made a plan to work on a new project, but later on realize that no finance and man power are available to work on it. This situation arises because of lack of communication among different departmental heads.
8. *High weightage in job and promotion:* The communication skills vary with the nature of job. Effective communication is required in the area of personnel, public relation, marketing, sales etc. Editors, writers, teachers, advocates, researchers also need highly developed ability to communicate. Executives are required to make speeches, brochures, pamphlets and give interviews to media in order to improve organizational image. The successes of the individual to write highly persuasive letters and to produce very concise reports increase the chances of promotion. It is believed that communication skills of the employees are given due weightage at the time of their appointment as well as promotion.

The above-mentioned facts make it clear that communication is the key to the success of a business enterprise. Success is automatic for an enterprise whose employees are acquainted with the art of communication. *Good communication is the foundation of sound management.*

1.3 COMMUNICATION CYCLE/PROCESS

Communication has been defined as a continuous process in which the exchange of ideas and information takes place among different persons. The transmission of sender's ideas to the receiver and the receiver's feedback or reaction to the sender constitutes the communication cycle. A purpose as message should be expressed or conveyed before communication. The message is encoded, is passed through a medium to receiver, who retranslates the message initiated by a sender. The following diagram-1.1 depicts the communication cycle:

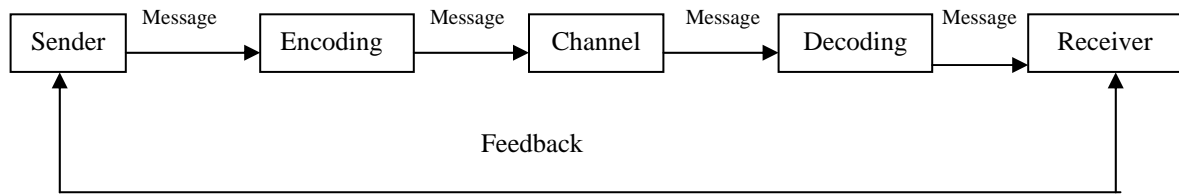


Diagram- 1.1 The Communication Cycle

1. *Sender:* He is the person who sends his ideas or message to another person, as a manager wants to inform his subordinate about a work plan. Here the manager acts as a sender.
2. *Message:* It is the subject matter of communication. It is the actual physical product which sender encodes. It means that whatever sender wants to convey is a message. For example- an individual speaks, write, gesture, paint, etc. The message includes codes and symbols to transfer some meaning. The message includes opinions, feelings, views, attitude, orders, suggestions etc. For example- the work plan to be explained by the manager is in the shape of a message.

3. *Encoding:* Whatever the sender is communicating is necessarily thought of. Communicating the idea or thinking with the help of symbols, words, actions or diagrams is called encoding. It is conversion of communication message to symbolic form. For example, a manager receives an order to supply some material. The manager wants to communicate this message to subordinates (This mental state is an idea). When this idea is expressed in words this situation is known as encoding. For example, 5000 units of 'X' product are to be produced in the month of January.
4. *Media or Channel:* The channel is the medium through which the message travels. A person who wants to send a message has to make use of some medium for communication. The channel will be formal or informal is decided by the sender. The receiver must be considered while selecting a channel. Some people respond better to formal letters or communications than informal words. The channel, which is officially recognized by organization, is formal channel of communication. There can be many media of communication, like the face to face conversation, writing letters, through messenger, through telephone, through symbols etc. For example-if message were to be sent to some distant place quickly it would be proper to use telephone as a medium of communication.
5. *Receiver:* He is the person to whom message is sent. The communication process is incomplete without the existence of receiver of the message. The effectiveness of communication depends upon the knowledge of the receiver, which means how quickly he understands the feeling of the sender. It is the receiver who receives

and tries to understand the message. If the message does not reach the receiver, communication cannot be said to have taken place.

6. *Decoding*: The sender sends his idea briefly in the form of symbols or diagrams. Understanding it correctly is called decoding. The receiver's past experience, education, perception, expectation and mutuality of meaning affects his ability to understand the message. For example- a telegram carries a long message in the form of a few words and when the receiver tries to understand the message in detail on the basis of his experience and qualification, his efforts are called decoding.

7. *Feedback*: It checks on how successful the receiver has been in transferring the messages as originally intended. After receiving the message, the receiver will take necessary action and send feedback information to the communicator. It is a reversal of the communication process in which a reaction to the sender's message is expressed. The receiver becomes the sender and the feedback goes through the same steps as the original communication. After having got the feedback by the sender the process of communication is completed. Early feedback will enable the sender to know whether his message has been properly understood and carried out or not.

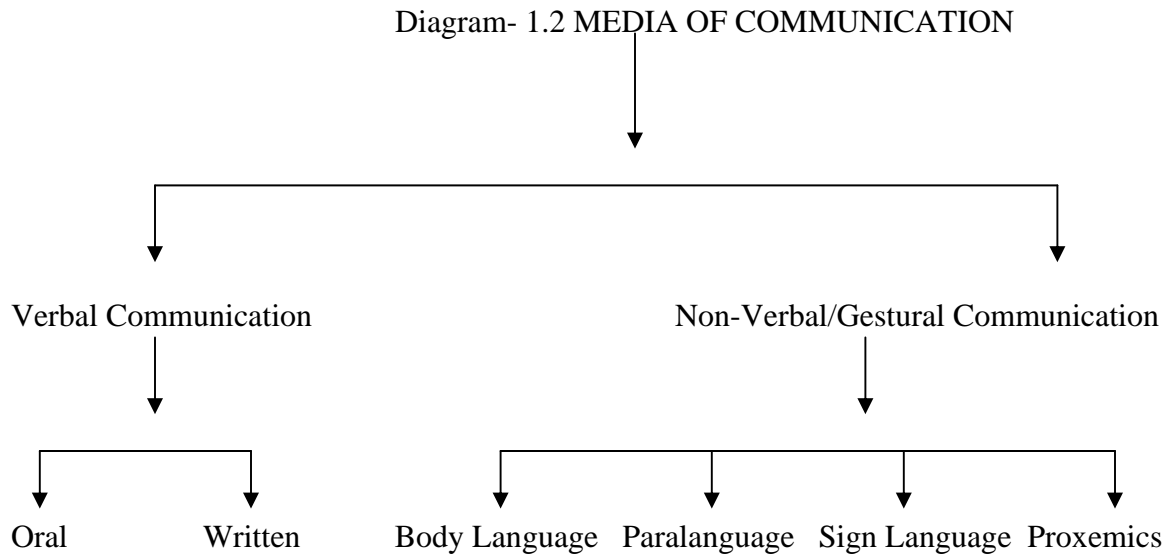
The process of communication is repeated time and again because the work continues unabated in a business organization and no work can be accomplished without completing the process of communication.

1.4 MEDIA OF COMMUNICATION

Communication channel, formal or informal, requires some subject matter for communication (message, idea, suggestion, complaint etc.) in the form of words, signs or diagrams, which are called media of communication. In the organization, the managing director wants to issue directions to different departmental heads then he can convene a meeting, summon them to his room, talk to them over the telephone, or send them a memo. All these are the media through which the managing director can communicate. The decision regarding the choice of media is dependent upon the nature and urgency of the message and on the other side on the emotional and intellectual level of the receiver. For communication to be effective the sender has to be very careful and judicious in choice of media. The media of communication can be divided as follows (diagram-1.2):

1. VERBAL COMMUNICATION: The communication through words, writing speaking and listening constitute verbal communication.
 - a) *Oral Communication:* Communication with the help of spoken words is known as oral communication. Oral communication may take place in the form of face-to-face conversation and through mechanical devices which include conversation over the telephone, radio broadcasts, interviews, group discussions, meetings, conferences and seminars, announcements over the public address system, speeches, etc. When the communication is oral the sender can ask questions, describe or can make the receiver understand something that is not clear. There are various forms of oral communication depending upon the situation. These are personal instructions, lectures,

meetings and conferences, interviews, social and cultural affairs, union channels etc.



Advantages of Oral Communication

- **Quickness in Exchange of Ideas:** The ideas can be conveyed to distant places quickly because this medium does not require message to be written.
- **Immediate Feedback:** Oral communication helps in understanding the extent to which the receiver has understood the message through his feelings during the course of conversation.
- **Flexibility:** Oral communication has an element of flexibility inherent in it. Flexibility means changing ideas according to the situation or changing ideas according to the interest of the receiver.

- **Economic Sources:** It is an economic source of communication because the message is communicated only orally.
- **Personal Touch:** Oral communication has a personal touch. Both the sides can understand each other's feelings, being face to face. The conversation takes place in a clean environment, which increase mutual confidence.
- **Effective Source:** Oral Communication leaves much impression on the receiver. It is said that sometimes a thing can be communicated more effectively with the help of some sign. The use of signs or gesticulation can only be made in oral communication.
- **Saves time and increases efficiency:** This communication consumes less time and the superiors can utilize the time saved in some other more important works. As a result of this the efficiency of sender increases.

Disadvantages of Oral Communication

- **Unfit for Lengthy Message:** Oral communication is profitable in having a brief exchange of ideas only. It is not possible for receiver to remember long message.
- **Unfit for Policy Matters:** Where policies, rules or other important messages is to be communicated, oral communication has no importance.
- **Lack of Written Proof:** In the case of oral communication no written proof is left for future reference. Therefore, sometimes difficulty has to be faced.
- **Expensive Method:** When less important information is sent to distant places through telephone, etc. oral communication proves costly.

- Lack of Clarity: This is possible when there is little time for conversation. Sometimes wrong can be uttered in a hurry, which can lead to adverse results.
 - Misuse of time: Oral communication is considered a misuse of time when during meetings the conversation is lengthened unnecessarily. Parties involved in the communication waste their time in useless talks.
 - Presence of Both the Parties Necessary: In the oral communication it is essential for the sender and the receiver to be present face to face, it does not mean in physical sense. But in written communication one party is required.
- b) *Written Communication*: When information is exchanged in the written form, it is called as written communication. It includes personal letters, circulars, memos, telegrams, annual reports, forms and questionnaires, manuals, magazines, newspapers, bulletins, complaint procedures, policy manuals, house journals, trade journals, correspondence, agenda forms, notice board, posters, etc. The limitations of oral communication like the presence of both the parties, lack of proof in the context of future, etc., can be overcome by written communication.

Advantages of Written Communication

- Suitable for Lengthy Message: The lengthy message can clearly communicate with the help of written communication.
- Written Proof: Some documents with regard to some special facts have to be kept for future reference. This is possible only through written communication.
- Clear Message: A message may be long or short, it can be made understandable in a written communication. There is no fear of anything being left out in such a system.

- **Less Expensive Method:** Messages are to be sent to distant places, if there is no urgency involved, it can be sent at a little expense through this method. But if the message is to be sent a distant place quickly, this method is not useful.
- **Time saving:** Under the written communication there is no open conversation with a big human group. Hence, time is not lost in useless talks.
- **Presence of both the parties not necessary:** In this system it is not necessary that the receiver should be present before the sender.
- **True and effective:** The written communication is true and hence effective. A sender sends the information after careful consideration because of written proof it carries with it.
- **Communication at different places:** When messages have to be sent to different places, written communication proves to be useful.

Disadvantages of Written Communication

- **Unfit for Uneducated Persons:** The written communication has no significance for the uneducated people. They can only be made to understand orally.
- **Lack of secrecy:** Because of written proof, nothing can remain secret.
- **Wastage of time:** Because of the organizational constraints it is essential to send less important facts in writing, it shall be the wastage of time, labour and money.
- **No quick information about feedback:** Some difficulty is felt when the reactions of the receivers are not known immediately. It also becomes difficult to bring an immediate change in the message.

2. NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION OR GESTURAL COMMUNICATION

It uses gestures for exchange of feeling or information. In this messages are conveyed through body movements, facial expression or gesticulation. For example, saying 'yes' or 'no' by the movement of neck. An efficient manager can quickly get the feedback with the help of facial expressions. If there is face to face conversation between two persons, they can better understand the feelings, attitude and emotions of each other. The gestures taken by the listener can help the communicator to know their reactions.

Gestural communication is very important to motivate the subordinates, as for instance, handshake with the subordinate or a pat on the back of the subordinate. In this we are concerned with body movements, space, time, voice tone/pitch, general characteristics of environment, colour, layout/design, and any other kinds of visual and/or audio signals that the communicator may devise. The different forms of gestural communication are gestural news at television, indication by umpire in sports, to accept honour by waving hands.

Advantages of Gestural Communication

- Quick sending of information.
- Less expensive system.
- Quick Feedback.
- Increase in efficiency.
- Time saving.

Disadvantages of Gestural Communication

- Lack of Secrecy.
- Useful for small amount of information.
- Gestures can be misunderstood.
- It is necessary for both the parties to be face to face with each other.
- Lack of written proof.
- Useful only for small messages.

Forms of Non-Verbal/Gestural Communication

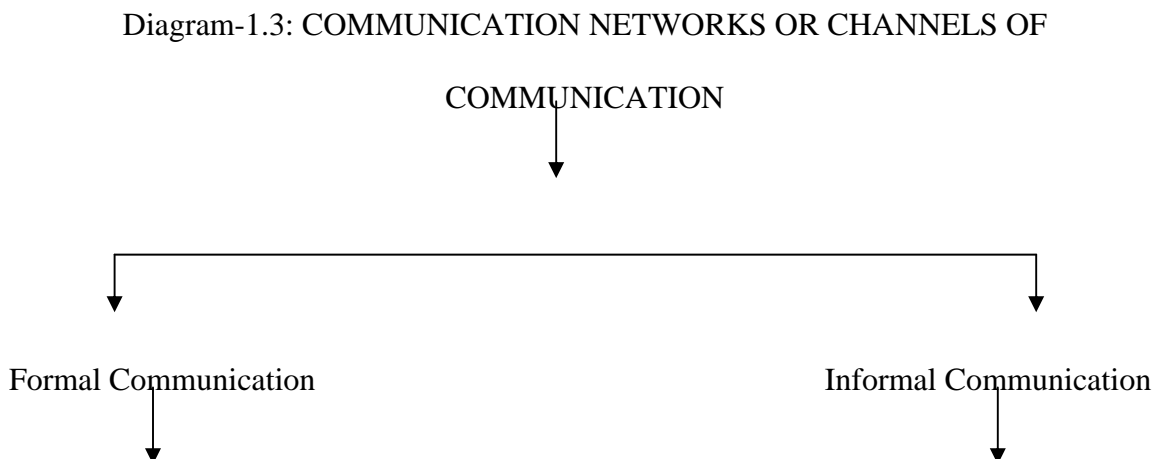
1. *Body Language*: It is reflection of our thoughts, feelings and our position in the organization. Body language works through facial expression, eye contact, gestures, head position, body shape, posture and appearance. Like, if an individual slouches or jiggles his feet, he gives the impression of being indifferent, uninterested or distressed. This example shows that body language adds intensity to the process of communication. A resourceful manager should make effective use of it. This results in improving the overall atmosphere and looks of the organization.
2. *Paralanguage*: It means 'Like' language. It is concerned with the manner in which a speaker conveys his meanings through words. It tells a lot about a speaker's educational background, national regional background, his mental state and his place in the organization. Like the word stress makes speech convincing. Proper words stress gives words intended meaning.
3. *Sign Language*: Signs i.e. visual and audio/sound signals have been in use since time immemorial. Visual signals like pictures, posters, photographs, cartoons, maps, diagrams, drawings and lights, etc economize on verbal communication.

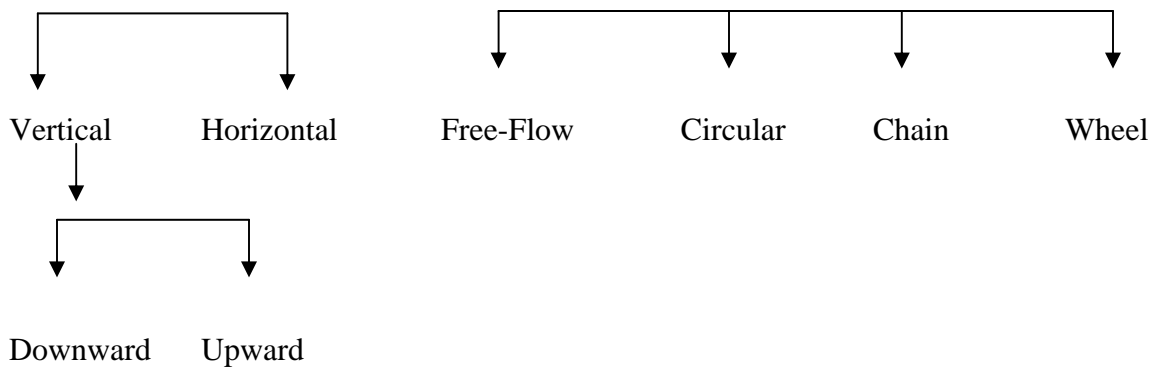
These make communication interesting and motivate the receiver of the message. Drumbeats, alarm signals like sirens/hooters, buzzers, bell ringing are the most commonly used sound signals. These sound signals are important in time management.

4. *Proxemics*: It is study of space language. The distance between the people tells about their relations. Social space is best used for formal/official purposes. For instance the people who begin conversation and those who are seated at the front are usually considered as the leaders of the group. People seated around a round/oval table will most likely communicate in the form of conference.

1.5 COMMUNICATION NETWORKS

A proper pattern is followed to carry out activities in the business. The board of directors takes the policy decisions, managing directors executes the policy, the departmental managers issue instructions, supervisors give orders and clerks and operatives actually perform the task. All these parties are connected through some channels of communication. The sum total of these channels is known as communication networks. It includes as depicted in diagram 1.3 shown below:





1. **FORMAL COMMUNICATION:** It refers to official lines of communication, which follows chain of command. It is the path of communication, which is institutionally determined by the organization. In this exchange of ideas and information is done under the planned organizational structure. It makes it possible for the information to reach the desired place without any hindrance, at a little cost and in a proper way.

Characteristics of Formal Communication

- It can be oral as well as written. Daily works are handled through oral communication, while the policy matters require written communication.
- This communication is adopted where the sender and receiver have some sort of organizational relationship.
- It is related with the authorized organizational messages only, the personal messages are out of its scope.
- Some deliberate efforts are require for the creation of this kind of communication. It is decided in view of the objective of the organization.
- While moving from one person to another i.e. from worker to foreman, foreman to manager, this kind of communication has to pass through definite channel.

Advantages of Formal Communication

- If helps in maintaining constant relationship between superior and the subordinates as a result of which the dignity of line superiors is maintained. Consequently, it is convenient to control the subordinates and fix their responsibility.
- In formal communication both the superiors and subordinates understand the capability and feeling of each others as they are in direct contact with each other. The manager, thus, makes the information available to the subordinates, as he is well aware of their requirements. Hence, formal communication is clear and effective.

Disadvantages of Formal Communication

- In this kind of communication the messages are routed through definite channels. In big business organization where the number of messages is large this kind of communication consumes much of the times of superiors and as a result of this the important works are left unattended.
- This method can be a hindrance in flow of information. If the distance between sender and receiver is big the information will pass through many hands, as a result of this the final receiver receives the distorted information.

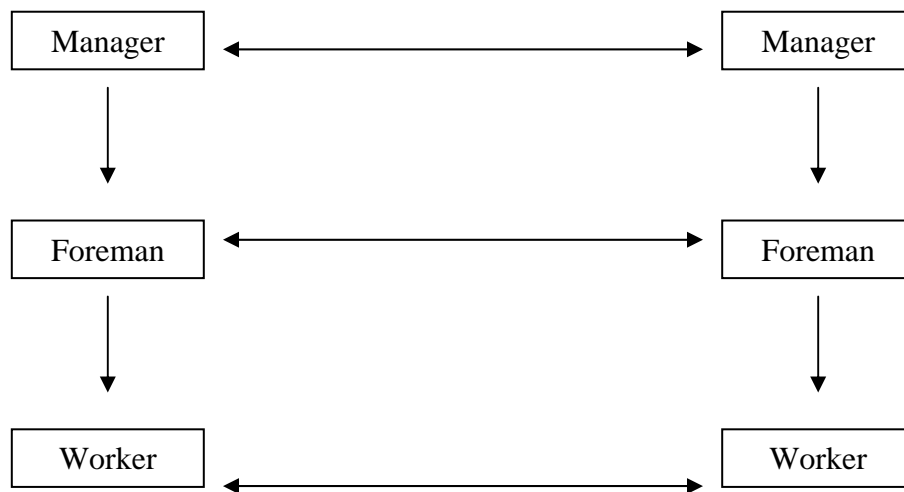
Types of Formal Communication

- a) *Horizontal Communication:* It is also known as sideward communication. It refers to transmission of information positions at same levels. The same level officers use it to solve the problem of the similar nature and profit by the experience of the other people. The subject matter of horizontal communication includes information, requests, suggestions, mutual problems and coordination related information. In the diagram the communication between a manager and a

manager, between a foreman and a foreman and between a worker and a worker is horizontal communication.

b) *Vertical Communication*: It may move both downward as well as upward.

- **Downward Communication**: It represents the flow of information from the top level to the lower level of the organization. The basic purpose of downward communication is to communicate policies, procedures, programs and objectives and to issue orders and instructions to the subordinates. It can be possible through verbal or written orders and instructions, notices, circulars, letters, memos, posters, periodicals, publications, group meetings, etc.



Downward Communication Horizontal Communication Upward Communication

- **Upward Communication**: It is communication from the lower level to the higher authorities. The subject matter of this communication is suggestions, reactions, reports, complaints etc. A clean environment in the organization can be maintained by removing the subordinates' problems. It helps the superiors in taking the decision. The upward communication is successful when the

relationship between superiors and subordinates is good, otherwise the subordinates never prefer to give right information to superiors and the information, which may harm their interest.

2. **INFORMAL COMMUNICATION:** It refers to communication among people through informal contacts. In this case the position and status of parties have no relevance. The communication is entirely based upon the informal relationships like friendship, membership of the same club, same place of birth etc. In this communication the superiors will get such information which is not possible to collect through the formal channels. Such communication includes comments, suggestions etc. It takes place through gesticulation, moving of head, smiling and by remaining quite. It is also called as 'Grapevine Communication' because there is no definite channel of communication.

Characteristics of Informal Communication

- In this kind of communication no superior-subordinate relationship is there. This kind of communication is possible only through social relationships.
- It includes the communication of organizational as well as the individual messages. In other words the information about the work as well as the individual is collected through this kind of information.
- It is beyond the restriction of the organization, as it follows no definite channels.
- It makes news spread like wild fire. People not only make addition in the existing messages, but also they sometimes change the real meaning of the communication.

Advantages of Informal Communication

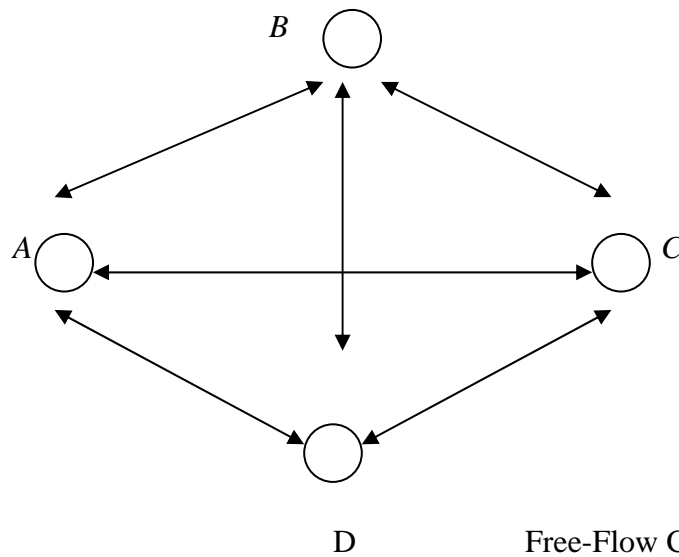
- In this type of communication the messages move fast and their effect is great on the people.
- It is done in a free environment. It means that no organizational pressure is there. The opinion of the people about the organization can be easily collected.

Disadvantages of Informal Communication

- This communication is totally unsystematic and the possibility of information to reach the concerned person is very less.
- Most of the information collected through this channel is unreliable and no important decision can be taken on its basis.

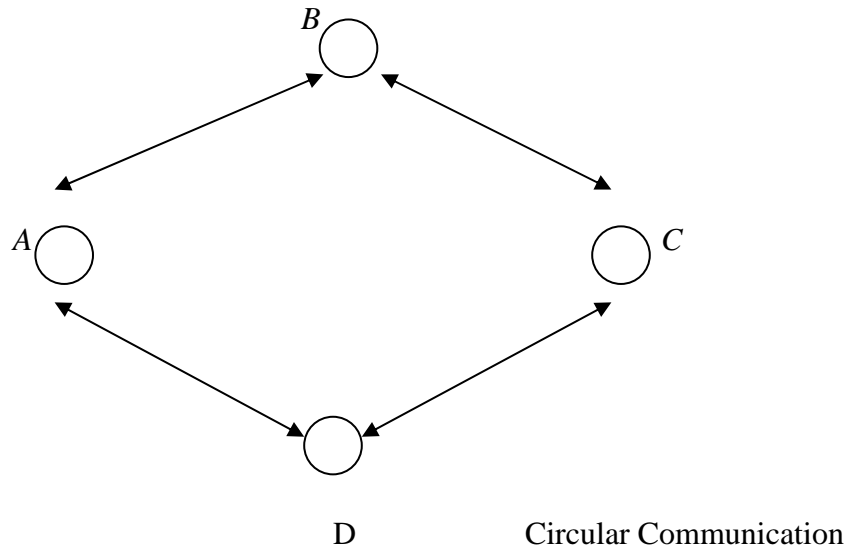
Types of Informal Communication

a) *Free-Flow Communication or All Channel Communication:* Under this no restriction is there on flow of communication. Everyone is free to communicate with each other. This communication is unstructured and flexible.

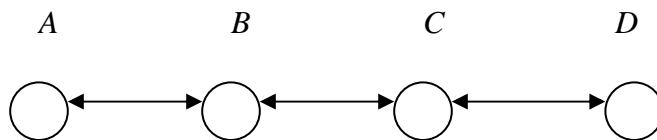


Free-Flow Communication

- b) *Circular Communication*: In this the message moves in cycle. Each person can communicate with his two neighborhood colleagues. The basic disadvantage of this communication is that it is very slow.

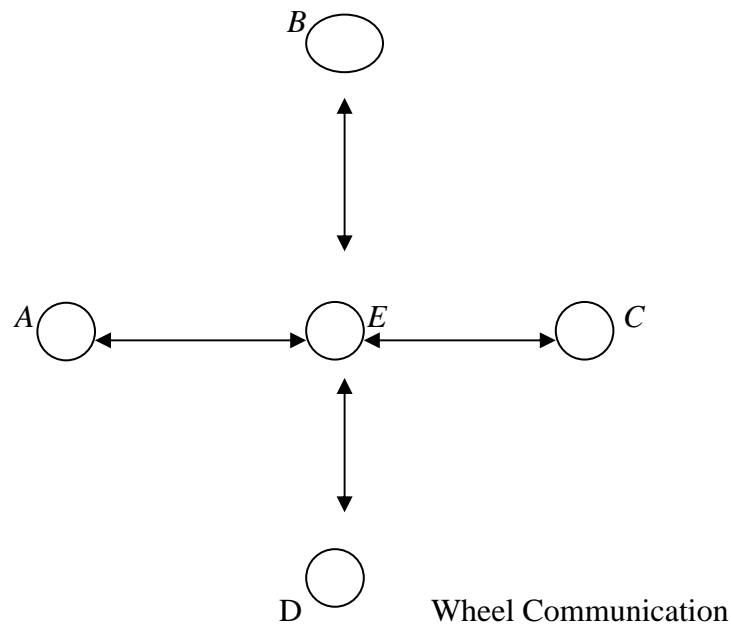


- c) *Chain Communication*: In this the message flows in a direct vertical lines along the scalar chain of command. It can flow from top to bottom and bottom top in a line. Thus the flow of communication takes place through proper channels. No horizontal communication is here.



Chain Communication

- d) *Wheel Communication*: In this all communications pass through the manager who acts as a central authority like the hub of a wheel. The subordinates can communicate with and through one manager. All the instructions and guidance will pass through one person.



1.6 SUMMARY

The above analysis makes it clear that communication is an art of transferring ideas, facts and feelings, etc from one person to another and making them understandable. It means that if we tell something to somebody else but cannot make him understand this message, the process of communication is incomplete. In order to complete the process of communication, it is enough to understand the message rather than believe in them and agree with them. As communication is a pre-requisite of congenial climate necessary for the overall advancement and productivity, the manager must update himself with the latest innovations in the field of communication technology. The speed and accuracy of communication is very crucial for the success of organization in modern world.

1.7 SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1. Define communication. Why communication has assumed importance in modern industrial organizations?
2. “Good communication is the foundation of sound management” Comment.
3. What are the various channels of communication? Write detailed notes on the importance, advantages and limitations of them.
4. What do you mean by ‘media’ of communication? Broadly discuss the relative merits and demerits of each.
5. “The single most significant characteristic of the human race is the ability to communicate”. Discuss.

1.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

1. Lesikar, Raymond V. and Pettit John D, Business Communication: Theory and application, 6th edition, Richard D Irwin publication.
2. Fred Luthans, Organizational Behaviour, Boston, McGraw-Hill, 8th edition, 1998.
3. Varinder Kumar, Raj Bodh, Business Communication, Kalyani Publishers, New Delhi, 2001.
4. Ramesh, M.S., Pattanshetti, R.Chand & Co, 22nd edition, New Delhi.
5. K. Aswathappa, Organization Behaviour, Himalaya, 1991, Delhi.
6. Robbins, Stephen P., Organization Behaviour- Concepts-controversies, PHI, New Delhi, 7th edition, 1996.

SUBJECT: Communication and Secretarial Practices

COURSE CODE: MC 102

Author: Ms. Richa Verma

Lesson : 02

Vetter: Prof. M. S. Turan

BARRIERS AND GATEWAYS IN COMMUNICATION

Objective: The main objective of this lesson is to make the students learn about the barriers in business communication and the measures to overcome these barriers.

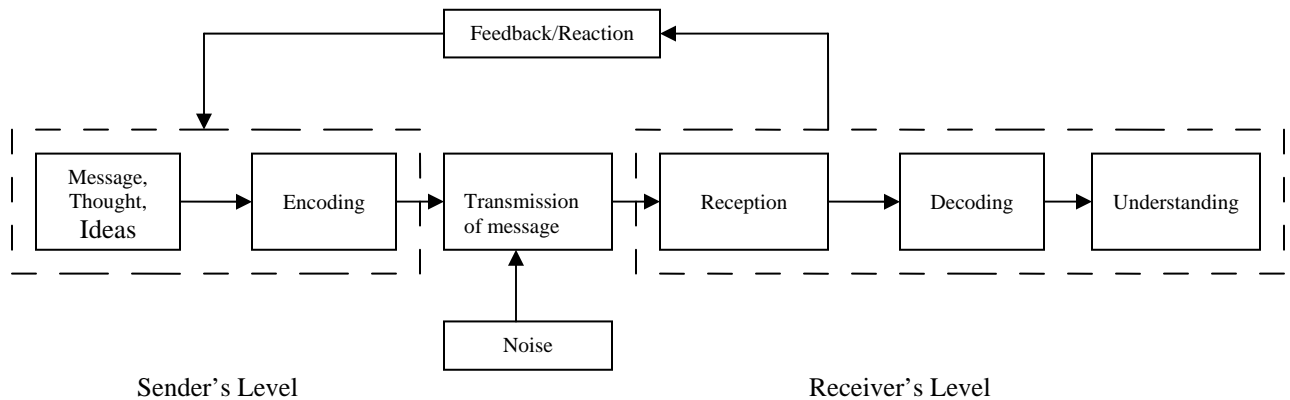
Lesson Structure:

- 2.1 Barriers of Business Communication
- 2.2 Measures to Overcome Barriers in Communication
- 2.3 Summary
- 2.4 Self Assessment Exercise
- 2.5 Suggested Readings

2.1 BARRIERS OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

Communication has a special place in every organization. It is the process of transmitting information to those who need it, by those who have it. If the receiver receives the information transmitted by the sender in wrong sense, then it proves to be barrier in communication. Following diagram (Figure-1) represents the process of communication and the levels at which the barriers of communication may arise.

FIGURE-2.1: PROCESS OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATION



- (a) The barrier at sender's level occurred- formulating/organizing thought, ideas, message; and encoding the message
- (b) The barrier at receiver's level occurred- receiving the message; decoding the received message; and understanding and interpreting the message.
- (c) Transmission level where 'noise' occurs.
- (d) The feedback/reaction level that is a necessary condition of the completion of the entire process.

Barriers or obstacles in communication cause breakdowns, distortions and inaccurate information. The barriers can be in the form of wrong use of language or haste on the part of the receiver in understanding the information received or some other reason. These barriers nullify the importance of communication and as a result of these the enterprise may have to face serious consequences. For achieving perfection in communication there is need of overcoming these barriers. The main barriers to communication are discussed below:

1. LANGUAGE OR SEMANTIC BARRIERS: There is always a possibility of misunderstanding the feelings of the sender of the message or getting a wrong

meaning to it. The receiver in the light of his experience explains the words, signs, and figures used in the communication, which creates doubtful situations. This happens because the information is not sent in simple language. The chief language related or semantic barriers are as follows:

- a) *Faulty Translation:* A manager receives much information from his superiors and subordinates and he translates it for all the employees according to their level of understanding. Hence, the information has to be moulded according to the understanding or environment of the receiver. If there is a little carelessness in this process, the faulty translation can be a barrier in the communication.
- b) *Unclarified Assumption:* It has been observed that sometimes a sender takes it for granted that the receiver knows some basic things and, therefore, it is enough to tell him about the major subject matter. This point of view of the sender is correct to some extent with reference to the daily communication, but it is absolutely wrong in case of some special message. Special messages should be made absolutely clear; otherwise there is a possibility of some wrong action in the absence of clarification.
- c) *Interpretation of Words:* Because of the obscurity of language there is always a possibility of wrong interpretation of the messages. This barrier is created because of wrong choice of words, uncivil words, the wrong sequence of sentences and frequent repetitions. A word has variety of meanings and there is possibility that the receiver do not assign the same meaning to a word as the transmitter had intended. This may lead to miscommunication. For example-

the word 'run' has 110 meanings i.e. 71 meanings as a verb, another 35 as a noun and 4 more as an adjective.

- d) *Use of Technical Language:* Generally, it has been seen that the people working in an enterprise are connected with some special technical groups who have their separate technical language. This technical group includes industrial engineers, production development manager, quality controller, etc. Their communication is not so simple as to be understood by everybody. This leads to bypassing instructions, which means that sender and receiver of the message attribute different meanings to the same word or use different words for the same meanings. Hence, technical language can be a barrier in communication.
- e) *Denotations and Connotations:* It is believed that the words with denotative or connotative meaning are barriers to communication. Denotative meaning of the word informs and names objects without indicating any positive or negative qualities. The words like table, book, accounts, meetings are denotative. The connotative meanings lead to qualitative judgements and personal reactions. Like the words honest, competent, cheap, sincere are connotative. So whenever possible an individual should choose the words with positive rather than negative connotations.
2. **ORGANIZATIONAL BARRIERS:** So far as communication is concerned organizational structure greatly affects the capability of the employees. Some major organizational hindrances in the way of communication are as follows:

- a) *Organizational Policies:* Organizational policies determine the relationship among all the persons working in the enterprise. For example, it can be the policy of the organization that communication will be in the written form. In such a situation anything that could be conveyed in a few words shall have to be communicated in the written form. Consequently, things get delayed.
- b) *Organizational Rules:* These become barriers in communication by determining the subject matter, medium, etc., of communication. Troubled by the definite rules the senders do not send some of the messages.
- c) *Status Relationship:* In organizations all the employees are divided into many categories on the basis of their level. The formal division acts as barrier in communication especially when the communication moves from the bottom to the top. For example, when a lower level employee has to send his message to his superior at the top level there is a lurking fear in his mind that the communication may not be faulty, and because of this fear he cannot convey himself clearly and in time. It delays taking of decisions.
- d) *Complexity in Organizational Structure:* The greater number of managerial levels in an organization makes it more complex. It results in delay in communication and information gets changed before it reaches the receiver. In other words, negative things or criticism are concealed. Thus, the more the number of managerial levels in the organization, the more ineffective the communication becomes.
- e) *Organizational Facilities:* It means making available sufficient stationery, telephone, translator, etc. where these facilities are sufficient in an

organization, the communication will be timely, clear and in accordance with necessity. In the absence of these facilities communication becomes meaningless.

3. **SITUATIONAL BARRIERS:** Barriers may arise due to specific situations i.e. physical conditions like noise or insignificant light or information overload etc. The situational barriers are as follows:

- a) *Noise:* In factories oral communication is difficult due to loud noise of machines. This also causes interference in communication by telephone or loudspeaker system. Noise also includes physical interference like illegible handwriting, smudged copies of duplicate type script, poor telephone connection, etc.
- b) *Time and distance:* Use of telephone and computer technology has made the communication faster and this overcomes the space barriers. However, mechanical breakdowns sometimes make these barriers effective. Sometimes the distance between the receiver and sender becomes a barrier. Faulty seating arrangements in room make communication ineffective because nobody can have eye contacts with each other.

The other types of situational barriers are:

- c) When there is a notice or a number of persons are speaking simultaneously then communication can not be effective.
- d) If the executive is overloaded with information and does not have time to organize the information, he will not be able to communicate effectively.

4. **PERSONAL BARRIERS:** The barriers, which are directly connected with the sender and the receiver, are called as personal barriers. They are divided into two parts:

a) *Barriers related to Superiors:* These barriers are as follows:

- **Attitude of Superiors:** The attitude of the superiors means the importance they give to communication. It means whether the superiors want to send their ideas to others or not. The attitude of the executives or superiors directly affects the flow of communication.
- **Fear of Position:** Everybody desires to have higher position in there organization. In this hope they always try to conceal their weaknesses by not communicating their ideas. There is always fear of position in their mind, that in case the reality comes to light they may have to move to lower level.
- **Lack of Confidence in Subordinates:** The superiors always think that the lower level employees are less capable, and therefore, they ignore the informations or suggestions sent by them. In order to increase their own importance, the superiors ignore the communication from their subordinates. Consequently, the self-confidence of the employees is lowered.
- **Shortage of Time:** The executives are overburdened with excessive work, so it is not possible for them to organize the informations. Thus due to shortage of time they do not pay much attention to communication.
- **Lack of Attention:** In some circumstances, the superiors do not pay attention to importance and utility of communication. As a result of this the flow of

communication gets impeded. Consequently the work performance gets affected and due to delay in activities the enterprise has to face much inconvenience.

b) *Barriers Related to Subordinates:* Subordinates related barriers are the following:

- **Unwillingness to Communicate:** Sometimes the subordinates do not want to send any information to their superiors. They prefer to conceal the information if they feel that the information can have negative effect on their position. If it is necessary to send the information they always prefer to send it in modified or amended form so as to make it acceptable to the superior. Thus, by not clarifying the facts, the subordinates become a hindrance in communication.
- **Lack of Proper Incentive:** Lack of incentive to the subordinates creates a hindrance in communication. It is because of the fact that their suggestions or ideas are not given any importance. If at any occasion the superiors ignore the subordinates, they prefer not to exchange any information in future.

5. **DIFFERENT COMPREHENSION OF REALITY:** Reality is not a fixed concept, it is complex, finite and continually changing. Every individual has limited sensory perception and a unique mental filter. The reality of an object, an event or a person is not identical to two persons. On the basis of different evaluations individuals comprehend the reality in different way. This leads to miscommunication. The point of different comprehensions are:

- a) *Abstracting*: It is a process of focussing attention on some details and omitting others. It helps in saving time, space and money. But sometimes we believe that whatever we know or say about an object or event is worth knowing or saying about it and less we know, the more sure we feel that we know it all. We can overcome these barriers, if we make our abstract as fairly representative of the whole situation as possible. We should realize that the others can pick different ideas and facts from the same situations and we should be mentally prepared to consider what they have to say about it.
- b) *Slanting*: It means giving a particular slant to reality. We are aware of different aspects but we deliberately select a few and make them representative of the whole. If an individual is accustomed to reality, we consider him a drunkard and tend to forget that he is our good friend and a kind-hearted man. This happens because we are not objective in our observations and assessments. To avoid this we should not make judgement on the basis of fraction of facts.
- c) *Inferring*: It means the drawing inferences from the observations. Whatever an individual feel, taste, hear, see, smell or immediately verify, constitute fact? And our statements and conclusions beyond these facts are called as inferences. These inferences should be reliable and based upon verifiable facts. The experts of one field i.e. marketing, advertisers, architects, engineers, designers etc. always draw the verifiable observation about his field, but a non-expert always draw inferences without the verifiable facts, thus, wrong

inferences can surely be barrier to communication. Thus to avoid this barrier, the inferences should be based upon verifiable facts.

6. PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIERS: Importance of communication depends on the mental condition of both the parties. A mentally disturb party can be a hindrance in communication. Following are the psychological barriers in the way of communication:

- a) *Premature Evaluation*: Sometimes the receiver of information tries to dig out meaning without much thinking at the time of receiving or even before receiving information, which can be wrong. This type of evaluation is a hindrance in the exchange of information and the enthusiasm of the sender gets dampened.
- b) *Poor Retention of Information*: It means that with every transfer of information its reality gets reduced. According to some researchers, in oral communication there is a loss of 30 percent in every transfer of information. This happens due to carelessness of human nature and limited memory.
- c) *Attitude and Opinion*: Individual's attitude and opinions often act as a barrier to communication. If an information is in consonance with our opinion we tend to accept it favorably otherwise we do not favorably react to that. If the new policy is in the employee's favor, they welcome it, otherwise they reject it. Similarly, different people have different attitudes and opinions and as such their interpretations of the same thing will be dissimilar.
- d) *Emotions*: Some people are emotional by nature and loss their mental balance quickly and easily. If a superior happens to get agitated quickly, his

communication, howsoever, argumentative, is likely to be rejected. Similarly, if the receiver of the message is mentally upset or disturbed he will find unfavourable meaning to it. Thus, a person in different emotional states is more likely to give different meanings to the same cues or information.

e) *Closed Mind*: If the listener has closed mind, he will always evaluate the things from his own point of view and will not be receptive to new ideas. Such a person is not open to conviction and persuasion. Thus it is very difficult to communicate with him. Therefore, it is rightly said that we see what we want to see and hear what we want to hear.

7. OTHER BARRIERS: Other barriers to communication are explained below:

a) *Source*: The source from where the message emanates is very important. People with predetermined and preoccupied attitudes are prejudices towards some persons who they wish to contact. If these (senders) are the sources of message, they may behave in a hostile manner towards the other people (receiver). The receiver may read into the message something more or something less, than what is apparent. Hence source of communication is important in an organization to pass on essential and required communication.

b) *Cultural Barriers*: Cultural differences often cause communication problems. The same category of words, phrases, symbols, actions, colours mean different things to people of different countries/cultural backgrounds. For example, in Western countries black colour is associated with death and mourning while in the far East white is the colour of mourning. In United States people love to be called by their

first name while in Britain people are more formal and like to be addressed by their title or last name.

- c) *Distortion*: If the messages are not received properly or they are not properly translated, due to several distractions of the speakers, say his behaviour, makes the receiver not to receive the message fully, thus, cause barriers to communication.

Language is the most important tool of communication. Thus, for occupying a higher position, there is need for effective communication. The communication can be effective only after overcoming above barriers.

2.2 MEASURES TO OVERCOME BARRIERS IN COMMUNICATION

In view of the importance of business communication, it is essential to curb the barriers of communication. Following are some of the important ways to remove these barriers:

1. *Clarity of Ideas*: The sender of the message should be clear in his mind about the message that he wants to communicate. The purpose of the message and the sequence of the ideas to be conveyed should be clear in his mind. As far as possible the message should be brief and priority should be given to the language of the level of the receiver. Instead of using technical words, attempt should be made to use commonly understandable words and sentences.
2. *Positive Attitude*: There should be change in the attitude of superiors and subordinates so that open communication is possible all the times. To achieve the organizational objective, the superiors should from time to time inform the policies and programmes of the concern to the subordinates and should also

- remain in touch with subordinates regarding their problems, suggestions and emotions.
3. *Active Listening:* Active or 'participative' listening is as important as any other element in the process of communication. It shows that communication is a joint responsibility of both the sender and the receiver.
 4. *Consistency of Message:* The information sent to the receiver should not be self-contradictory. It should be in accordance with the objectives, policies, programmes and procedures of the enterprise. Whenever a new message is to be sent in the place of the old one then changes should be described otherwise the message can be misleading.
 5. *Free Flow of Information:* The system of communication should be so designed that shorter lines of information flow are there. The information can be vertically and horizontally flowed. To speed up communication proper delegation and decentralization of authority should be encouraged.
 6. *Completeness of Message:* The message should be complete in every respect. The message should be sent in time; otherwise it would lose its significance. While sending the message it should be checked that no important thing is left out, otherwise the message can be misunderstood. Incomplete message delays work performance and increases cost.
 7. *Environment of Mutual Confidence:* Every individual working in the organization performs communication. Therefore, it can be made more effective with the help of mutual confidence with cooperation.

8. *Eliminate Noise:* Every possible effort must be made to eliminate the elements of noise that distorts communication at the transmission stage. It becomes especially important in the wake of modern technological advancement. Anything going wrong with the equipment or any disturbance in the transmission line is bound to defeat the very purpose of communication.
9. *Selection of Proper Channel:* The medium of communication is proper as far as nature of the message and the aim of receiver are concerned. Choosing a method thoughtfully helps to make the communication effective. Besides formal communication, it is necessary that informal communication is given due importance.
10. *Completeness:* One must also endeavor to send a complete message that furnishes all necessary facts and figures. Incomplete communication annoys the receiver as a result of which proper feedback will not be possible. The message should be so organized that the receiver should not be left with any doubt related to any aspect of message.
11. *Conciseness:* Completeness does not mean inclusion of unnecessary details or diversions. An effective communication is concise and crisp. The sender should be clear headed and properly focused in his vision.
12. *Feedback:* It means making efforts to know whether the receiver has properly understood the message or not. The feedback information can be flowed upward and downward. The reaction of the sender can be understood better in face to face communication. But in respect of the written or some other form of

- communication the sender should adopt some appropriate method of getting the feedback.
13. *Open Mind:* The parties to communication must have open minds. The information should not be withheld for personal interest or prejudice. The information should be interpreted without any bias. The parties should be receptive to new ideas that they come across.
 14. *Proper use of Body Language:* Proper use of body language is of paramount importance, especially in oral communication. No oral communication can be successful if we do not take care of our body language. There should be proper eye contact with the person to whom we are speaking. The movement of our hand and feet must be graceful. Every listener observes carefully how we walk and how we talk. Holding head straight on our shoulders shows confidence. In fact, our overall appearance can really make our communication effective.
 15. *Simple Organizational Structure:* Communication can be effective when the rules and procedures in the organization are simple. There should be few levels of management so that the flow of communication moves on unimpeded.
 16. *Communication Skills:* An individual should have the necessary skill to share information with the superiors, subordinates and peers. This will help in improving interpersonal relationship in the organization and finally result in greater productivity.
 17. *Flexibility:* A good system should be flexible enough to adjust to the changing requirements. The new techniques should be absorbed without much resistance. Use of wide range of media such as oral and written messages, face-to-face

contacts, telephonic calls, group meetings, etc., should be encouraged without any hesitation.

2.3 SUMMARY

The above description makes it clear that an effective communication is the key to success of the organization. There are many impediments in the way of communication. An efficient manager can easily accomplish the objectives of the organization by clearly understanding the obstacles in communication and their solutions. One cannot get rid of the communication process just for the fear of these barriers but they need to be circumvented.

2.4 SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

6. What are the common barriers to communication in an organization? Explain with examples.
7. Describe the instances of communication breakdown in an organization. How each might be avoided?
8. Explain how does wrong choice of channel of communication act as a barrier to communication?

2.5 SUGGESTED READINGS

1. Lesikar, Raymond V. and Pettit John D, Business Communication: Theory and application, 6th edition, Richard D Irwin publication.
2. Fred Luthans, Organizational Behaviour, Boston, McGraw-Hill, 8th edition, 1998.
3. Varinder Kumar, Raj Bodh, Business Communication, Kalyani Publishers, New Delhi, 2001.

4. Ramesh, M.S., Pattanshetti, R.Chand & Co, Business Communication, 22nd edition, New Delhi.
5. K. Aswathappa, Organization Behaviour, Himalaya, 1991, Delhi.
6. Robbins, Stephen P., Organization Behaviour- Concepts-Controversies, PHI, New Delhi, 7th edition, 1996.
7. Sinha K.K., Business Communication, 2nd edition, Galgotia publication, New Delhi.

Subject: Communication and Secretarial Practices

Course: M. Com

Author: Dr. Karam Pal

Course Code: MC-102

Vetter: Prof. Harbhajan Bansal

Lesson: 3

Essentials of Business Communication

Objective: The foremost objective of this lesson is to generate the thoughtful ideas in the consciousness of students with regard to the essentials of business communication.

Lesson Structure

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 The Communication Environment
- 3.3 Essentials of Business Communication
- 3.4 Essentials of Effective Communication Skills
- 3.5 Summary
- 3.6 Self Assessment Exercise
- 3.7 Suggested Readings.

3.1 Introduction

Human communication, at least the verbal part of it, is far from being a natural function; that is, it is not the sort of thing we would do if left to nature's devices, as we would many of our other activities. Our hands, for example, would perform their natural functions of picking up and handling things whether we grew up with jungle animals or with civilized people. Likewise, our mouths would take in food and our teeth and jaws would chew it in either event. And most of our other body parts would function

naturally without instruction from other human beings. However, we cannot say the same about the major organs used in communication. Our vocal apparatus would not make words if we were not taught to make them. Neither would our brains know them nor do our hands write them without instruction. Clearly, communication is a function that we must learn. It was originated by human beings, and it must be acquired from human beings.

It may be clear from the definition of communication discussed in the earlier lessons that two-way communication takes place when the receiver provides feedback to the sender. For instance, giving an instruction to a subordinate and receiving its acceptance is an example of two-way communication. In case of one-way communication, feedback is absent. Here the sender communicates without expecting or getting feedback from the receiver. A policy statement from the chief executive is an example of one way communication. One-way communication takes less time than two-way communication. In certain situations, one-way communication is more effective to get work from the subordinates.

A conventional analysis of communication begins with a definition of the term. Many such definitions exist, so we would have no difficulty finding one suitable for our use. But our approach is not conventional. We do not use words to define words, for, as we will see, such definitions are dangerous. Instead, we use an operational definition. By operational definition we mean one that demonstrates how something works. The following pages present an operational definition in the form of a model.

In this presentation of the model, we strive to look with scientific diligence into the phenomenon of human communication. We take the event involving one human being communicating with another. We choose a

face-to-face oral communication event because this is the communication situation with which we are best acquainted. Later in the chapter, we adapt the model to written communication. Our plan is to take the communication event and place it under the microscope of our minds. Our goal is to show how the process works and how it does not work.

In developing our model, we must incline heavily on the theoretical aspects, as we are not dealing with a subject that has received total factual support. The theoretical material presents authoritative thinking on the subject: and research is constantly producing facts that lend support to this thinking. Regardless of its factual base, this presentation gives us a meaningful understanding of communication and provides us with principles that we can successfully apply to real-life communication.

3.2 The Communication Environment

The study of the communication process logically is preceded by analysis of the environment in which communication occurs. This is the sensory environment, in which we find ourselves every moment. It is made up of all the signs existing in the world of reality that surrounds us. Your sensory environment consists of all the signs your senses can detect. More specifically, it is all you can see, taste, smell, hear, or feel in that part of the world that surrounds you.

By ‘world of reality’ or ‘real world’ we mean that what actually exists. It contrasts with the world that exists only in people's minds i.e. world of imagination. Of course, one may argue that what exists in the mind also is real that, right or wrong, the content of a mind exists in that mind. For our purpose, however, we must allow this variation in our definition. It is important to distinguish between what actually is in the world around a

communicator and what the communicator says or thinks it is. Often the two are not the same.

By signs we mean everything from the real world that can act as a stimulus to us. In other words, it is anything that our sensory receptors can detect. It is what our eyes can see, our ears can hear, our nostrils can smell, our tongues can taste, and our flesh can touch. It may be a spoken word, the sound of objects crashing together, a printed word, the aroma of a flower, or the movement of a bird. Thus, an individual sign is a portion of the real world that can create a response within us.

From the preceding comment we can deduce the meaning of sensory receptors: those body organs that we use to detect the signs in the real world. Specifically, the term refers to our eyes, noses, ears, mouths, and flesh with its ability to detect surface and temperature differences.

1. Sign Detection

Our sensory receptors continuously pick up some of the infinite number of signs existing in our communication environment. Stated another way, the signs around us continuously produce responses within us through our receptors. Perhaps this phenomenon can best be explained by an example.

At this very moment, you are looking at this printed page. On it is the words (signs) that your eyes are picking up. We hope that these are the primary signs you are receiving, but there are others. Probably you are picking up some of them from time to time. Perhaps there are various noises around you -- voices from another

room, the ticking of a clock, a radio playing in the distance, a roommate's movements and sounds. From time to time you may become aware of being hot or cold, or your back may itch, or your sitting position may become uncomfortable. Thus, as you read these pages your sensory receptors are continuously picking up signs from all these parts of the reality that surrounds you.

2. Sensory Limitations

The number and types of signs we can detect from the real world, however, are limited by our sensory abilities. In short, the human sensory receptors are not capable of detecting all the signs that we know exist in the real world. For example, our eyes can detect only a small part of the total spectrum of wavelengths; and the ability to detect within these wavelengths varies from person to person. We can see only a fraction of the distance a hawk can see. Our ears can pick up only a narrow band of the vast range of air vibrations, and people's ability to pick up sounds within these ranges varies. As we all know, dogs and birds can hear much that we cannot. Likewise, we can smell only the stronger odors around us, while dogs and most other animals do a much better job of smelling and so. Clearly, our senses are limited and can detect only a small portion of the reality surrounding us.

3. Selective Perception

Although incapable of detecting all that exists in the real world, our sensory receptors select some signs and ignore others. Place yourself, for example, in a room full of talking people, and notice how it is possible to tune in on one conversation and ignore others. Or notice how you are able to focus your vision on one minute

object and then expand your view to a much broader picture. All of us have this ability to varying extents, and we can make use of it with all of our senses.

4. Varying Alertness and Perception

Our detection or non-detection of signs also depends on our receptiveness to signs. There are times when we are keenly alert to our communication environment and times when we are less alert. Certainly you have experienced occasions when you were sleepy, in a daze, or just daydreaming. During such times, you missed many of the signs in your communication environment. When you are asleep, you detect almost none.

3.3 Essentials of Business Communication

To this point we have seen how each of us lives in an environment of signs and how these signs are with us throughout each day. We have also seen how our ability to detect these signs varies, how we can tune them in or tune them out, and how our alertness to them varies across time. With this knowledge of the communication environment as a foundation, we are now ready to describe the essentials of business communication.

The main purpose of all communication in an organization is the general welfare of the organization. Effective communication is needed at all stages in order to ensure this welfare. At the planning stage, information is needed on the various aspects of the enterprise, the feasibility of the project being undertaken, finances involved, man-power required, marketing conditions, publicity campaigns, etc. At the execution stage, orders are issued to the employees to start work, the workers associated with the project are constantly motivated and kept involved, a sense of discipline is cultivated among them and their morale is kept high. All this requires

constant two way communication between the managers and the employees. At the assessment stage, the manager is again required to communicate with various sources, both internal and external, to assess the success of the project, and if a need is felt, to envisage modifications in the future plans. In view of this elaborated and complex commercial structure, communication can be used for any or more of the following objectives:

1. INFORMATION

One of the most important objectives of communication is passing or receiving information about a particular fact or circumstance. It can be done either through spoken or written language or by using other system of signs or signals. Managers need complete, accurate and precise information to plan and organize; employees need it to translate planning into reality.

External information

Information on the following aspects is vital for the existence and welfare of any organization:

- Information about its products: (i) consumer response to its products in comparison to competing products with reference to quality as well as price, (ii) whether they are being produced in conformity with the latest trends.
- Information about the availability of credit: the nature of the various financial institutions and the terms and conditions on which credit is offered by them.
- Information about the availability of raw materials: how better quality raw materials can be procured on easier terms, or if cheaper substitutes are available.

- Information about the Government rules and regulations: what kind of effect the rules and regulations of the Government and the changing political scene can have on the product policy of the organization.
- Information about the advertising media: their efficiency, suitability, relative merits and the expenses involved.
- Information about the latest development in the fields of science and technology: how innovations can be used to modernize the production techniques either to improve the quality of the products or to effect economy in labour, time, money, etc.

Internal information

Internally, information should be freely given to the employees on the following points:

- Information on job assignments and procedures governing them: Information about the precise nature of every employee's job, its scope and the procedures governing it should be readily available with every employee as well as in the files of the organization.
- Information on status and decision-making powers: The exact designation of the officers and their decision-making powers enjoyed by them should be clearly defined.
- General information on the policies and activities of the organization: If the employees are kept well informed about the policies of the organization and other related aspects, it inculcates a sense of belonging and gives them greater job satisfaction. It also helps them to acquire self confidence.

2. ADVICE

Giving advice is another important objective of communication. Information is always factual and objective. But advice, since it involves personal opinions, is likely to be subjective. Information is neutral in itself. When it is offered to a person, he may use it as he likes. But advice is given to him either to influence his opinion or his behaviour. It may prove helpful, but it may also lead to disaster.

Importance of advice

Commercial activities in the modern world have become extremely complex. Each individual activity needs specialized handling, which cannot be expected from people working single-handed. However competent a businessperson may be, he cannot have specialized knowledge of all branches like finance, taxation, publicity, engineering, public relations, etc. If he wants to run his business successfully, he will have to seek expert advice quite frequently.

Within the organization, the supervisory staff is required to advise the junior employees. Supervisors are usually persons of long standing and have a great deal of experience at their command. Being in close contact with their superiors (usually the board of directors) they are well familiar with the policies and functioning of the organization. They are, therefore, in an excellent position to guide, counsel or advise their subordinate staff.

Advice flows horizontally or downwards

Advice by its very nature flows horizontally or downwards. Expert advice from outside flows horizontally. The boards of directors advising one another on some policy matter are also engaged in a kind of horizontal communication. But advice soon starts flowing down to the management personnel, the supervisory staff and the subordinate staff or the operatives.

How to make advice effective

While offering advice, the advisor should keep the following points in mind:

- Advice should be both man-oriented and work-oriented, i.e., it should be related to a specific piece of work, and should be given in such a way that it suits the individual needs of the recipient. It means that while explaining the complexities and subtleties of a job, the adviser ought to keep in mind the understanding power of the person he is advising.
- Advice should not be given to a person to make him feel conscious of his inferior knowledge or skill. If the adviser assumes a patronizing tone, the other person may resent it. So the adviser ought to be very friendly in his attitude.
- The only justified motive of giving advice is the betterment of the worker. The adviser should genuinely feel this motive. And he should give this very feeling to the worker. He should so mould his tone and phrase his language that he makes the other persons feel absolutely at ease.
- If offered in a right tone, advice can often promote better understanding between the adviser and his subordinates. It can prove that the adviser is taking personal interest in his subordinate staff and is, therefore, interested in their welfare.
- If the subordinate staff is given freedom to react, advice can become a two-way channel of communication. It may perhaps bring about some excellent suggestions for the improvement of the organization's functioning.

3. COUNSELING

Counseling is very similar to advice. Only, counsel is objective and impersonal. The counselor is a man of greater skill or knowledge on some specific subject and offers his counsel without any personal interest or involvement. Advice has a personal touch about it; counsel is almost professional. Advice is often unsought and is unwelcome; counsel is eagerly sought.

A number of large business houses now have their counseling departments, which offer the employees advice on domestic or personal problems. Even an efficient employee may become tardy and indifferent if he is facing some personal problems at home. This may adversely affect the working of the organization. It may also infect other employees and lower their morale. Such employees are encouraged to consult the counseling department, which has on its staff a panel of doctors, psychologists and social workers. These experts hold a series of sittings with the employees and thrash out their problems. The employees are restored to their mental and physical health and the conditions in the organization are brought back to the normal.

4. ORDER

Order is an authoritative communication. It is a directive to somebody, always a subordinate, to do something, to modify or alter the course of something he is already doing, or not to do something. Whatever be the nature and size of an organization, orders are absolutely necessary for it. The downward flow of information is dominated by orders.

Types of order

Keeping different aspects of orders in mind, we can classify orders in various ways:

(a) Written and oral orders.

Written orders are usually given in the following cases:

- The order is of a highly responsible nature. It is essential to keep a record of it and to make it absolutely specific.
- The task is repetitive in nature. It is cumbersome and inconvenient to issue oral orders every time the task is to be done.
- The person being ordered is remotely situated and it is not possible to give him oral orders.

Oral orders are given in the following cases:

- The job is required to be done immediately.
- It is ordinary job and there is no need of maintaining any written record.
- There is a kind of permanent superior-subordinate relationship between the giver and the receiver of the order and the order-giver does not feel the need of entering into the cumbersome process of issuing written orders.

(b) General and specific orders.

If orders are related to one particular activity, they are specific. If there are a number of activities having operational similarities, general orders may be issued to cover all of them. Again, in case it is not possible to foresee all the attendant situations connected with an activity, it may become necessary to issue general orders.

(c) Procedural and operational orders.

Procedural orders specify procedures to be adopted. They are general by nature. Operational orders are more closely related to the job in hand. They specify how a particular job is to be done.

(d) Mandatory and discretionary orders.

Mandatory orders have to be obeyed. Discretionary orders are usually in the nature of recommendations. They suggest what is desirable, what should be done. But it is up to the receiver to see their feasibility and to decide whether he ought to carry them out or not. The Head Office may issue discretionary orders to the branch manager, for the branch manager, being present on the spot, knows better whether the orders are to be carried out or not.

Characteristics of an effective order

- It must be clear and complete so that the person who receives the order knows exactly what to do, how to do and when to do it.
- Its execution should be possible, that is, the person who has to execute it has the materials, tools, equipment, time and ability to execute it. If any hurdles are likely to be experienced, the order should specify how they are to be overcome.
- It should be given in a friendly way so that it is not resented and is not carried out reluctantly.

5. INSTRUCTION

Instruction is a particular type of order in which the subordinate is not only ordered to do a job but is also given guidance on how to do it. If the accounts officer asks one of his clerks to prepare a voucher, he has issued an order. If he shows the clerk how to prepare a voucher and then asks him to prepare more, he has issued instructions.

6. **SUGGESTION**

It would be wrong to presume that the best ideas on a subject come only from the supervisory staff or the directors. The lower staff, in fact being actually in touch with the operative aspect, is capable of giving some positive suggestions on procedural and operational aspects.

Suggestion enjoys one great advantage over other means of communication like advice or order. Advice comes from an expert; order comes from a higher authority. In either case, the recipient of the communicator, is slightly conscious of his inferiority and may resent it. Accepting a suggestion is at his discretion, so a suggestion is usually welcome.

Suggestion is supposed to be a very mild and subtle form of communication. Still, since it flows horizontally or vertically upwards, it may hurt someone's ego to recognize its utility and readily accept it. But enlightened executives should set aside the ridiculous notions of false self-importance and welcome positive, constructive suggestions with an open mind.

These days, progressive houses make a provision for suggestion boxes, which are placed at some convenient place in the office or the factory. Workers are encouraged to drop their suggestions into these boxes. Sometimes these suggestions have to be written on specially prepared cards. If an employee does not want to reveal his name, there is a provision for it. These suggestion boxes are opened at regular intervals, the suggestions received are scrutinized and the employees offering the best suggestions are awarded prizes.

7. **PERSUASION**

Persuasion may be defined as an effort to influence the attitudes, feelings, or beliefs of others, or to influence actions based on those attitudes, feelings, or beliefs. Persuasion is an important objective of communication. Buyers have often to be persuaded to buy a particular article available with the seller in place of the one they actually wanted to buy. In the office of the factory, the lazy, the incompetent and the disgruntled workers have to be persuaded to do their work.

Human nature is not amenable to coercion or repression. Whenever force is applied to command a particular action, it breeds resentment and indignation. It is better to use persuasion than compulsion. But even persuasion seeks to change beliefs and attitudes, which people do not like at all. So in order to be successful, persuasion has to be indirect and suggestive. The buyers and the workers should be so manipulated that they change their mind without getting conscious of the change, or if they are conscious, they believe that the change is to their advantage. Persuasion is an art, which has to be learnt with great care.

The art of persuasion

- Persuasion needs conviction on your part. You should be genuinely convinced that the alternative course of action being suggested by you is in the interest of the organization as well as in the receiver's interest. You must not try to persuade others from a purely selfish motive.
- Do not impose yourself on the receiver of your communication. Do not overwhelm him with arguments. Give indirect hints and subtle suggestions. Gently channelise his thinking in such a way that he

adopts the point of view or the course of action suggested by you as if he had arrived at it as a result of his own thinking.

- If the other person is docile and has a flexible mind, he will be easily persuaded. But if he is headstrong, a self-opinionated person, try to meet him half-way. Concede a few points to him in the beginning. Then gradually bring him round on the other points.
- Bring yourself to the level of the other person. Try to look at the issue from his point of view and mould your arguments accordingly. Of the numerous arguments available with you, select those that may have special appeal to him.

The art of persuasion consists of four important steps:

- Analyzing the situation. This is the preparatory step. The communicator analyses the situation to find out why the need of persuasion has arisen and what will be the advantages and disadvantages of the new course of action being suggested. He also studies the psychology of the man to be persuaded in order to plan a suitable strategy.
- Preparing the receiver. It is but natural that people resent being persuaded to change their views or behaviour. The receiver has to be prepared for it. This can be done by putting him in a pleasant frame of mind. He may be complimented on some of his outstanding qualities and achievements. An appeal may be made to his adaptability and open-mindedness. The points on which the communicator agrees with him may be mentioned first, so that a kind of meeting ground for the communicator and the receiver is prepared. It is also necessary that the communicator discusses the whole issue from the receiver's point of view.

- Delivering the message. The third step is to deliver the message. The message should be delivered stage by stage, with the help of forceful arguments, beginning with those parts of the message, which are easier to accept, and delaying the unpleasant parts as much as possible.
- Prompting action. Prompting action is but a logical consummation of the first three steps. If the first steps have been taken carefully, the receiver of the message will be easily persuaded to adopt a different course of action (or hold a different view).

8. EDUCATION

Education is a very conscious process of communication. It involves both teaching and learning and extends over considerably long periods. The main purpose of education is to widen knowledge as well as to improve skills. It is carried on at three levels: (a) at the management level; (b) at the level of the employees; and (c) at the level of the outside public.

- Education for the management: Knowledge is multiplying fast. Each new day brings with it innovations, which if suitably applied can revolutionize the working of an organization. Managers are required to keep themselves abreast of the latest innovations. In other words, they have to be educated. Their education can take place through books, lectures, seminars, case studies, study tours, etc. Junior managers have to be educated to assume responsibility when they succeed to higher positions.
- Education for the employees. Just as the managers are required to learn about innovations in the field of commerce and technology, when these innovations are introduced in the office or the factory, the employees have to be educated to use them. Such a programme

of education is called reorientation. Employees can be educated through talks, demonstrations, bulletins and house organs.

- Education for the outside public. The outside needs knowledge on the new products being introduced into the market, the relative merits of the various brands already existing, the availability of the substitutes, complementary and supplementary products, comparative prices, concessions and discounts, if any. This useful knowledge is offered through advertisements, specially sponsored features in the newspapers, information talks and articles.

9. WARNING

If employees do not abide by the norms of the organization, or violate the rules and regulations, it may become necessary to warn them. Tardiness, negligence, defiance, tempering with the records, mishandling equipment, lack of regularity and punctuality, gossiping, pilfering office stationery and material, spreading rumours, misleading new employees are some of the actions that call for a reprimand or a warning. Warning is a forceful means of communication, for it demands immediate action. But in order to retain its effectiveness, it should be used sparingly and discreetly. While issuing warnings, the following points should be kept in mind:

- Some warnings are general. 'No smoking', 'No talking', 'Beware of the dog' are general warnings. They are not aimed at any particular person, nor are they likely to hurt anybody's feelings. Such warnings are usually given in the form of notices. They are almost akin to information.
- More often, warnings are given to particular persons. They involve disciplinary action in the form of reprimand. Reprimands are very demoralizing; they may also evoke resentment. Before reprimanding an

employee, it is very important to ascertain the truth of the charges leveled against him. Reprimand should never spring from personal prejudices. It should be as fair and dispassionate as possible. And it should never be accompanied with a display of rage.

- Reprimand should not be administered to a person in the presence of others. It will make him feel humiliated and nobody likes to be humiliated. The worker should be summoned in the privacy of the supervisor's room and dispassionately talked to. He should be given an opportunity to explain himself. If his arguments fail to convince the supervisor, he should, without losing temper, clearly tell the worker what is expected of him.
- It is also useful to investigate the causes of the worker's undesirable behaviour. He may be burdened by some domestic or personal problems. Or he may be nursing some personal grudge against the supervisor or the organization. If the supervisor can succeed in talking him out of his problems, the warning given to him will become constructive.
- The aim of giving a warning should be the betterment of the organization. It should not be used to cause disruption. It is very important to be judicious in the choice of words used in administering warning and reprimands.

10. RAISING MORALE

Moral stands for mental health. It is the sum of several qualities like courage, fortitude, resolution and confidence. High morale and efficient performance go hand in hand. It acts as a kind of lubricant among people, binds them with a sense of togetherness and impels them to work in cooperation with one another in the best interest of their organization.

Factors conducive to the creation of a high morale

- Every worker gets work suited to his physical and intellectual caliber. He feels his work is important and it is appreciated by the authorities. He is free to do his work as he likes. He is encouraged to give suggestions.
- The atmosphere in the premises is congenial. The superiors are efficient and their attitude is constructive. They enjoy the worker's respect.
- Promotional avenues are available to the workers.
- Genuine grievances of the workers are promptly removed.

11. MOTIVATION

Motivation energizes and activities a person and channelize his behaviour towards the attainment of desired goals. Motivation and behaviour are intimately related to each other. In case of order and persuasion, the communicator enjoys an upper hand. But in motivation he keeps himself in the background. He does not order his employees to work; he motivates them so that they work willingly and eagerly. A motivated worker does not need much supervision. He does his work as if it were his own, as if his own interests were closely tied up with the successful performance and completion of the work entrusted to him. An office or factory that enjoys the support of motivated workers shows much better results than another office or factory in which workers are commanded to work.

Offering monetary incentives is perhaps the most effective form of motivation. People working on contract basis are always motivated to work, for their earning increase in proportion to their work. People work reluctantly during the office hours but willingly stay back to work overtime.

However, it may not be always possible or even desirable, to offer monetary incentives. Such a practice is likely to set unhealthy precedents with the implication that whenever such motives are absent, the workers will just refuse to work.

Though earning money may be the most important motive for working harder, it is not the only motive. Other factors like job satisfaction, prestige, a sense of belonging to a great organization can also induce or motivate workers to work sincerely and efficiently. Motivation as a form of communication deals with these factors.

Human minds are not identical and are not stimulated to the same extent by the forces. It is for the supervisor to clearly understand all the motivating forces, analyze the psychological needs of the individual workers and to use proper motivation to make all his workers work in cooperation.

The following points deserve consideration in discussing motivation as a form of communication:

- Workers should be invited to give suggestions and to participate in the decision-making process, if a suggestion coming from a junior employee is accepted, he will feel motivated to work hard and prove that his suggestion was really good.
- If clear achievement goals are set before the workers so that they know what they are working for, they will work hard to achieve these goals.
- Apart from the satisfaction of their basic human needs like food, clothing and shelter, all human beings yearn for security, healthy social relationships and a dignified and respectable existence. They would

definitely feel motivated to work in an organization capable of offering them these things. The management should take effective steps to offer the workers security of work and a congenial atmosphere in which they can work in harmony with their colleagues.

- Example, they say, is better than precept. If the supervisory staff is so sincere and competent that it can command the respect and confidence of the workers, the latter will feel motivated to work harder.

3.4 Essentials of Effective Communication Skills

In any business environment, adherence to the 7 C's and the 4 S's helps the sender in transmitting his message with ease and accuracy. Let us first take a look at the 7 C's:

1. Credibility

Builds trust: If the sender can establish his credibility, the receiver has no problems in accepting his statement. Establishing credibility is not the outcome of a one-shot statement. It is a long-drawn out process in which the receiver through constant interaction with the sender understands his credible nature and is willing to accept his statements as being truthful and honest.

2. Courtesy

Improves relationships: Once the credibility of the sender has been established, attempts should be made at being courteous in expression. In the business world, almost everything starts with and ends in courtesy. Much can be accomplished if tact, diplomacy and appreciation of people are woven in the message.

Example

- (a) Jane: "You can never do things right. Try working on this project. If you are lucky you may not have to redo it."
- (b) Jane: "This is an interesting project. Do you think you would be able to do it? I know last time something went wrong with the project, but everyone makes mistakes. Suppose we sat down and discussed it threadbare I'm sure you would be able to do wonders".

The two statements convey totally different impressions. While the first statement is more accusative, the second is more tactfully and appreciative of the efforts put in by the receiver at an earlier stage. The crux of the message in both the statements is the same: You want an individual within an organization to undertake a project. The manner in which it is stated brings about a difference in approach. Further, expressions that might hurt or cause mental pain to the receiver should, as far as possible, be ignored. For this it becomes essential that the "I" attitude be discarded in favour of the "you" attitude. Development of interest in the "you" will perforce make the other individual also see the point of view of the other. At the time of emphasizing the "you-attitude", only the positive and pleasant "you-issues" should be considered. If it is being used as a corrective measure, then the results are not going to be very positive or encouraging.

3. Clarity

Makes comprehension easier: Absolute clarity of ideas adds much to the meaning of the message. The first stage is clarity in the mind of the sender. The next stage is the transmission of the message in a manner, which makes it simple language, and easy sentence constructions, which are not difficult for the receiver to grasp, should be used.

4. Correctness

Builds confidence: At the time of encoding, the sender should ensure that his knowledge of the receiver is comprehensive. The level of knowledge, educational background and status of the decoder help the encoder in formulating his message. In case there is any discrepancy between the usage and comprehension of terms, miscommunication can arise. If the sender decides to back up his communication with facts and figures, there should be accuracy in stating the same. A situation in which the listener is forced to check the presented facts and figures should not arise. Finally, the usage of terms should be nondiscriminatory, e.g., the general concept is that women should be addressed for their physical appearance whereas men for their mental abilities. This, however, is a stereotype and at the time of addressing or praising members of both the sexes, the attributes assigned should be the same. Similarly for occupational references. In the business world almost all professions are treated with respect. Addressing one individual for competence in his profession but neglecting the other on this score because of a so-called 'inferior' profession alienates the listener from the sender.

5. Consistency

Introduces stability. The approach to communication should, as far as possible, be consistent. There should not be too many ups and downs that might lead to confusion in the mind of the receiver. If a certain stand has been taken, it should be observed without there being situations in which the sender is left groping for the actual content or meaning. If the sender desires to bring about a change in his understanding of the situation, he should ensure that the shift is gradual and not hard for the receiver to comprehend.

6. Concreteness

Reinforces confidence. Concrete and specific expressions are to be preferred in favour of vague and abstract expressions. In continuation of the point on correctness, the facts and figures presented should be specific. Abstractions or abstract statements can cloud the mind of the sender. Instead of stating: "There has been a tremendous escalation in the sales figure", suppose the sender made the following statement: "There has been an escalation in the sales figures by almost 50% as compared to last year". The receiver is more apt to listen and comprehend the factual details.

7. Conciseness

Saves time. The message to be communicated should be as brief and concise as possible. Weighty language definitely sounds impressive but people would be suitably impressed into doing precisely nothing. As far as possible, only simple and brief statements should be made. Excessive information can also sway the receiver into either a wrong direction or into inaction. Quantum of information should be just right, neither too much nor too little, e.g. In most cases it has been seen that the date of the policy ... Usually the policy date... In the first example, the statement is rather long and convoluted. However, the second example gives it the appearance of being crisp, concise and to the point.

C's of Business Communication

C's	Relevance
Credibility	Builds trust
Courtesy	Improves relationships
Clarity	Makes comprehension easier
Correctness	Builds confidence
Consistency	Introduces stability
Concreteness	Reinforces confidence
Conciseness	Saves time

4 S's of Business Communication: **An understanding of the 4 S's is equally important.**

1. Shortness

Economizes. "Brevity is the soul of wit", it is said. The same can be said about communication. If the message can be made brief, and verbosity done away with, then transmission and comprehension of messages is going to be faster and more effective. Flooding messages with high sounding words does not create an impact. Many people harbour a misconception that they can actually impress the receiver, if they carry on their expeditious travails. Little do they realize how much they have lost as the receiver has spent a major chunk of his time in trying to decipher the actual meaning of the message.

2. Simplicity

Impresses. Simplicity both in the usage of words and ideas reveals clarity in the thinking process. It is normally a tendency that when an individual is himself confused that he tries to use equally confusing strategies to lead the receiver in a maze. Reveal clarity in the thinking process by using simple terminology and equally simple concepts.

3. Strength

Convinces. The strength of a message emanates from the credibility of the sender. If the sender himself believes in a message that he is about to transmit, there is bound to be strength and conviction in whatever he tries to state. Half-hearted statements or utterances that the sender himself does not believe in add a touch of falsehood to the entire communication process.

4. Sincerity

Appeals. A sincere approach to an issue is clearly evident to the receiver. If the sender is genuine, it will be reflected in the manner in which he communicates. Suppose there is a small element of deceit involved in the interaction or on the part of the sender. If the receiver is keen and observed, he would be able to sense the make-believe situation and, business transactions, even if going full swing, would not materialize.

3.5 Summary

“She's so cold and uncommunicative. She never shows any emotion. Why does he talk like that? I wish he would get straight to the point instead of beating around the bush that way. He's so direct and brash. Doesn't he know that it's rude to keep people waiting like this? He's an hour late! She talks so much. I get tired just listening to her talk...”

We often hear remarks like the above made by people around us. In fact, we may even have made some of these remarks ourselves. Sometimes these remarks are justifiable; at other times they may not be so. But what actually triggers such remarks? Usually we make such remarks about other people when they display behaviors that we consider inappropriate or unacceptable in our culture. But what is deemed acceptable in our culture may be considered strange or totally inappropriate in other cultures. So when the target of the above remarks are people who come from cultures different from ours, there may actually be no justification at all for making such remarks because the behaviors displayed may be perfectly acceptable in their cultures.

With more and more companies going global in today's changing business environment, it is not at all uncommon to walk into an office and to find

ourselves looking at a multinational multi-cultural workforce. In fact, this is becoming the norm of these days. Gone are the days when developing intercultural communication skills were relevant only to business executives who had to cross national borders for overseas assignments. Today, you don't even have to leave your own country to find yourself in face-to-face contact with people whose cultures are markedly different from yours. So, in order to succeed at the workplace today, it is important for you to develop effective inter-cultural communication skills.

Indispensable to Human Behaviour or the art of dealing or interacting with people is communication. When one relates with people, he has to communicate with them, either through verbal or non-verbal language, or both. Verbally, one communicates by using words, figures and symbols. Non-verbally, he communicates through gestures, facial expressions and other forms of body language. Clarity is one of the essential ingredients to effective communication. Thus, care in the proper choice of words is crucial towards enhancing mutual understanding, rapport and support.

Positive Thinking is equally important in communicating and relating with people. A person who strives to communicate positive thoughts and actions is readily able to maintain Smooth Interpersonal Relationships (SIR) and easily gains the respect and esteem of those around him.

Thus, these were the various spices which must be added to make each and every element of the communication process is of its utmost importance and with the absence of any of these elements the communication can't be effective or we can say that the absence of any of the above elements makes the communication process same as a handicap person living his life in the absence of any important part of the body.

3.6 Self Assessment Exercise

1. What do you think can be the major objectives of communication? Briefly explain any two of them.
2. Do you agree that the basic objective of all human communication is to obtain an understanding response? How can this be applied to the objectives of business communication?
3. If you are appointed the manager of a business organization with declining business, what objectives of communication will you use to check the decline in business?
4. Discuss and illustrate with suitable examples the effective skills required in communication

3.7 Suggested Readings

1. Pal, Rajendra and Korlahalli, J. S., Essentials of Business Communication.
2. Kaul, Asha, Effective Business Communication.
3. Lesikar, R. V. and Pettite J. D., Business Communication.
4. Sharma, R. C. , Business Communication and Report Writing.
5. Shinha, P., Business Communication.

Subject: Communication and Secretarial Practices

Course: M. Com

Author: Dr. Karam Pal

Course Code: MC-102

Vetter: Prof. Harbhajan Bansal

Lesson: 4

Business Correspondence: Letter Writing

Objective: This lesson educates the students as to how to communicate clearly and effectively through business correspondence letters. It explains the basic skills necessary to write various types of commercial or business letters.

Lesson Structure

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Do's and Don't of Business Correspondence Letters
- 5.3 Summary
- 4.4 Self Assessment Exercise
- 4.5 Suggested Readings

4.1 Introduction

A business letter differs from other kinds of writing activities in several ways. First, it is usually addressed to only one specific person. Therefore, it is important for the writer to think about the reader with a you-viewpoint or a you-attitude. Second, every business letter can become a legal document or contract, so it is critical to maintain an appropriate service attitude. It is also important to have a good strategy or heuristic. There are three basic types of strategies for business letters: the good news or neutral letter, the bad news or problem-solving letter, and the sales letter. The heuristics in each of these three types can be very important to the outcome or success. For each type of letter, there are some characteristic strategies, which will

allow the writer to achieve the best results with specific cases. Look at the format for letters in the examples provided in the text content, particularly the use of block form and semi-block form. Let us elaborate the brief outline of the different parts of the formal letter in terms of: the letterhead block with address and date; the inside address block, presented as on the envelope; the salutation, with the various problems of gender and identity address; the body (block form, no indentation, single-space within / double-space between paragraphs) usually in three paragraphs on a single page; the signature block, with legible signature and the addendum (p.s., enc., cc:).

4.2 Do's and Don't of Commercial Letter

Individual words are our basic units of commercial letter writing, the bricks with which we build meaningful messages. All writers have access to the same words. The care with which we select and combine words can make the difference between a message that achieves its objective and one that does not. Discussed below are five principles of words choice to help you write more effectively.

4.2.1 Write Clearly

The basic guideline for writing, the one that must be present for the other principles to have meaning, is to write clearly – to write message in such a way that the reader can understand, depend on, and act on. You can achieve clarity by making your message accurate and complete, by using familiar words, and by avoiding dangling expression and unnecessary jargon.

Be Accurate: A writer's credibility is perhaps his or her most important asset, and credibility depends greatly on the accuracy of the message. If by

carelessness, lack of preparation, or a desire to manipulate, a writer misleads the reader, the damage is immediate as well as long lasting. A reader who has been fooled once may not trust the writer again.

Accuracy can take many forms. The most basic is the truthful presentation of facts and figures. But accuracy involves much more. For example, consider the following sentence from a memo to a firm's financial backers; The executive committee of Mitchell Financial Services met on Thursday, May 28, to determine how to resolve the distribution fiasco.

Suppose, on checking, the reader learns that May 28 fell on a Wednesday this year – not on a Thursday. Immediately, the reader may suspect everything else in the message. The reader's thinking might be, "If the writer made this error that I did catch, how many errors that I didn't catch are lurking there?"

Now consider some other subtle shades of truth. The sentence implies that the committee met, perhaps in an emergency session, for the sole purpose of resolving the distribution fiasco. But suppose this matter was only one of five agenda items being discussed at a regularly scheduled meeting. Is the statement still accurate? Suppose the actual agenda listed the topic as "Discussion of Recent Distribution Problems." Is fiasco the same as problems?

The accuracy of a message, then, depends on what is said, how it is said, and what is left unsaid (see, for example, the following section on the importance of completeness). Competent writers assess the ethical dimensions of their writing and use integrity, fairness, and good judgment to make sure their communication is ethical.

Be Complete: Closely related to accuracy is completeness. A message that lacks important information may create inaccurate impressions. A message is complete when it contains all the information the reader needs – no more and no less – to react appropriately.

As a start, answer the five Ws: Tell the reader who, what, when, where and why. Leaving out any of this information may result either in decision based on incomplete information or in extra follow-up correspondence to gather the needed information.

Use Familiar Words: Your message must be understood before someone can act on it. So you must use words that are both familiar to you (so that you will not misuse the word) and familiar to your readers.

Avoid Dangling Expressions: A dangling expression is any part of a sentence that does not logically fit in with the rest of the sentence. Its relationship with the other parts of the sentence is unclear; it dangles. The two most common types of dangling expressions are misplaced modifiers and unclear antecedents.

To correct dangling expressions, (1) make the subject of the sentence the doer of the action expressed in the introductory clause; (2) move the expression closer to the word that it modifies;

Don't: After reading the proposal, a few problems occurred to me. (As written, the sentence implies that “a few problems” read the proposal).

Do: After reading the proposal, I noted a few problems.

Don't: Dr. Ellis gave a presentation on the use of drugs in our auditorium.
(Are drugs being used in the auditorium)?

Do: Dr. Ellis gave a presentation in our auditorium on the use of drugs.

Don't: Robin explained the proposal to Joy, but she was not happy with it.
(Who was not happy – Robin or Joy).

Do: Robin explained the proposal to Joy, but Joy was not happy with it.

Avoid Unnecessary Jargon: Jargon is technical vocabulary used within a special group. Every field has its own specialized words, and jargon offers a precise and efficient way of communicating with people in the same field. Nevertheless, problems arise when jargon is used to communicate with someone who does not understand it. For example, to a banker the term CD means a “certificate of deposit,” but to a stereo buff or computer user it means a “compact disc.” Even familiar words can be confusing when given a specialized meaning.

Does the field business communication have jargon? It does – just look at the Key Terms list at the end of each chapter. The work jargon itself might be considered communication jargon. In this text, such terms are first defined and then used to make communication precise and efficient. Competent writers use specialized vocabulary to communicate with specialists who understand it. And they avoid using it when their readers are not specialists.

4.2.2 Prefer Short, Simple Words

Short and simple words are more likely to be understood, less likely to be misused, and less likely to distract the reader. Literary authors often write to impress; they select words to achieve a specific reader reaction, such as amusement, excitement, or anger. Business writers, on the other hand, write to express; they want to achieve comprehension. They want their

readers to focus on their information, not on how they convey their information. Using short, simple words helps achieve this goal.

Don't:To recapitulate, our utilization of adulterated water precipitated the interminable delays.

Do: In short, our use of impure water caused the endless delays.

It is true, of course, that quite often short, simple words may not be available to convey the precise shade of meaning you want. For example, there is not one-syllable replacement for ethnocentrism (the belief that one's own cultural group is superior). Our guideline is not to use only short and simple words but to prefer short and simple words. (As Mark Twain, who was paid by the word for his writing, noted, "I never write metropolis for seven cents because I can get the same price for city. I never write policemen because I can get the same money for cop").

Here are some examples of needlessly long words, gleaned from various business documents, with their preferred shorter substitutes shown in parentheses:

Ascertain (learn)	Endeavor (try)
Enumerate (list)	Fluctuate (vary)
Indispensable (vital)	Initiate (start)
Modification (change)	Recapitulate (review)
Substantial (large)	Termination (end)
Utilization (use)	However (but)

You need not strike these long words totally from your written or spoken vocabulary; any one of these words, used in a clear sentence, would be acceptable. The problem is that a writer may tend to fill his or her writing with very long words when simpler ones could be used. Use long words in moderation. Heed the following advice from author Richard Lederer:

When you speak and write, no law says you have to use big words. Short words are as good as long ones, and short, old words like sun and grass and home are best of all. A lot of small words, more than you might think, can meet your needs with strength, grace, and charm that large words lack.

Big words can make the way dark for those who hear what you say and read what you write. They add fat to your prose. Small words are the ones we seem to have known from birth. They are like the hearth fire that warms the home, and they cast a clear light on big things: night and day, love and hate, war and peace, life and death.

Short words are bright, like sparks that glow in the night; sharp, like the blade of a knife; hot, like salt tears that scald the cheek; quick, like moths that flit from flame to flame; and terse, like the dart and sting of a bee.

If a long word says just what you want, do not fear to use it. But know that our tongue is rich in crisp, brisk, swift, short words. Make them the spine and the heart of what you speak and write. Like fast friends, they will not let you down.

Leader practices what he preaches. All 223 words in these four paragraphs are one-syllable words! Similarly, 71% of the words in Lincoln's Gettysburg Address (190 out of 267) are only one syllable long.

You have probably heard the advice "Write as you speak." Although not universally true, such advice is pretty close to the mark. Of course, if your conversation were peppered with redundancies, jargon, and clichés, you would not want to put such weaknesses on paper. But typical conversation

uses mostly short, simple words – the kind you do want to put on paper. Don't assume that the bigger the words, the bigger the intellect. In fact, you need a large vocabulary and a well developed word sense to select the best word. And more often than not, that word is short and simple. Write to express – not to impress.

4.2.3 WRITE WITH VIGOR

Vigorous language is specific and concrete. Limp language is filled with clichés, slang, and buzz words. Vigorous writing holds your reader's interest. But if your reader isn't even interested enough to read your message, your writing can't possibly achieve its objective. A second reason for writing with vigor has to do with language itself. Vigorous writing tends to lend vigor to the ideas presented. A good idea looks even better dressed in vigorous language, and a weak idea looks even weaker dressed in limp language.

Use Specific, Concrete Language: As discussed in the lesson of communication barriers caused by over abstraction and ambiguity, when possible, choose specific words – words that have a definite, unambiguous meaning. Likewise, choose concrete words – words that bring a definite picture to your reader's mind.

Don't: The vehicle broke down several times recently.

Do: The delivery van broke down three times last week.

In the first version, what does the reader imagine when he or she reads the word vehicle – a golf cart? Automobile? Boat? Space shuttle? Likewise, how many times is several –two? Three? Fifteen? The revised version tells precisely what happened.

Sometimes we do not need such specific information. For example, in “The president answered several questions from the audience and then adjourned the meeting”, the specific number of questions is probably not important. But in most situations, you should watch out for words like several, recently, a number of, substantial, a few, and a lot of. You may need to be more exact.

Likewise, use the most concrete word that is appropriate; give the reader a specific mental picture of what you mean. That is, learn to talk in pictures:

Don’t:The vice president was bored by the presentation.

Do: The vice president kept yawning and looking at her watch.

Be sure that your terms convey as much meaning as the reader needs to react appropriately. Watch out for terms like emotional meeting (anger or gratitude?), bright color (red or yellow?), new equipment (postage meter or cash register?), and change in price (increase or decrease?).

Avoid Cliches, Slang, and Buzz Words: A cliché is an expression that has become monotonous through overuse. It lacks freshness and originality and may also send the unintended message that the writer couldn’t be bothered to choose language geared specifically to the reader.

Don’t:Enclosed please find an application form that you should return at your earliest convenience.

Do: Please return the enclosed application form before May 15.

As noted earlier, slang is an expression, often short-lived, that is identified with a specific group of people. If you understand each word in an expression but still don’t understand what it means in context, chances are

you're having trouble with a slang expression. For example, read the following sentence:

It turns my stomach the way you can break your neck and beat your brains out around here, and they still stab you in the back.

To anyone unfamiliar with American slang (a nonnative speaker, perhaps), this sentence might seem to be about the body because it refers to the stomach, neck, brains, and back. The real meaning, of course, is something like this:

I am really upset that this company ignores hard work and loyalty when making personnel decisions.

Same Rules the World Over: The strategies for writing effective business messages discussed in this chapter are universal. The passage below, from a business communication text for Chinese business executives, recommends substituting concise phrases for long, empty ones.

Wordy	Concise	<i>Wordy</i>	Concise
enclosed herewith	enclosed	under separate cover	separately
enclosed you will find	enclosed is	a long period of time	a long time
please don't hesitate	please write us	continuous and uninterrupted	continuous
to call upon us		during the year 1971	during 1971
please feel free to write	please write	endorse on the	endorse this
prior to	before	back of this check	check

Avoid slang in most business writing, for several reasons. First, it is informal, and much of business writing, although not formal, is still businesslike and calls for standard word usage. Second, slang is short-lived. A slang phrase used today may not be in use – and thus may not be familiar – in three years, when your letter is retrieved from the files for reference. Third, slang is identified with a specific group of people, and others in the general population may not understand the intended meaning. For these reasons, avoid these terms in most business writing:

can of worms	pay through the nose
chew out	play up to
go for broke	security blanket
hate one's guts	use your noodle
knock it off	wiped out
once-over	zonked out

A **buzz word** is an important-sounding expression used mainly to impress other people. Because buzz words are so often used by government officials and high ranking business people – people whose comments are “newsworthy” – these expressions get much media attention. They become instant clichés and then go out of fashion just as quickly. At either end of their short life span, they cause communication problems. If an expression is currently being used by everyone, it sounds monotonous, lacking originality. If it is no longer being used by anyone, readers may not understand the intended meaning. Here are examples of recent “in” expressions:

bottom line	paradigm
done deal	parameter
impact (verb)	scenario
interface	user-friendly

no-brainer

vision statement

Be especially careful of turning nouns and other types of words into verbs by adding-ize. Such words as agendize, prioritize, unionize, and operationalize quickly become tiresome.

4.2.4 Write Concisely

Businesspeople are busy people. The information revolution has created more paperwork, giving businesspeople access to more data. Having more data to analyze (but presumably not being able to read any faster or having more time in which to do so), managers want information presented in the fewest possible words. To achieve conciseness, make every word count. Avoid redundancy, wordy expressions, hidden verbs and nouns, and other “space-eaters”.

Avoid Redundancy: Redundancy is unnecessary repetition of an idea that has already been expressed or intimated. Eliminating the repetition contributes to conciseness.

Don’t: Signing both copies of the lease is a necessary requirement.

Do: Signing both copies of the lease is necessary.

Don’t: Combine the ingredients together.

Do: Combine the ingredients.

Don’t confuse redundancy and repetition. Repetition – using the same word more than once – is occasionally effective for emphasis (as we will discuss in the next Chapter). Redundancy, however, serves no purpose and should always be avoided.

Some redundancies are humorous, as in the classic Samuel Goldwyn comment, “Anybody who goes to a psychiatrist ought to have his head examined,” or the sign in a jewelry store window, “Ears pierced while you wait”, or the statement in an automobile advertisement, “Open seven days a

week plus weekends”. Most redundancies, however, are simply verbiage – and hence must be avoided.

Do not use the unnecessary word together after such words as assemble, combine, cooperate, gather, join, merge, or mix. Do not use the unnecessary word new before such words as beginner, discovery, fad, innovation, or progress. And do not use the unnecessary word up after such words as connect, divide, eat, lift, mix, and rest. Also avoid the following common redundancies (use the words in parentheses instead):

advance planning (planning)	over again (over)
any and all (any or all)	past history (history)
basic fundamentals (basics or fundamentals)	repeat again (repeat)
but nevertheless (but or nevertheless)	sum total (sum or total)
each and every (each or every)	true facts (facts)
free gift (gift)	when and if (when or if)

Avoid Wordy Expressions: Although wordy expressions are not necessarily writing errors (as redundancies are), they do slow the pace of the communication and should be avoided. For example, try substituting one word for a phrase whenever possible.

Don’t: In view of the fact that the model failed twice during the time that we tested it, we are at this point of time searching for other options.

Do: Because the model failed twice when we tested it, we are now searching for other options.

The original sentence contains 28 words; the revised sentence, 16 You’ve “saved” 12 words. In his delightful book *Revising Business Prose*, Richard Lanham speaks of the “lard factor”: the percentage of words saved by “getting rid of the lard” in a sentence. In this case,

$$28 - 16 = 12; 12 \div 28 = 43\%$$

Avoid Hidden Subjects: Like verbs, subjects play a prominent role in a sentence and should stand out, rather than being obscured by an expletive beginning. An expletive is an expletive via an expression such as there is or it is that begins a clause or sentence and for which pronoun has no antecedent. Because the topic of a sentence that begins with an expletive is not immediately clear, you should use such sentences sparingly in business writing. Avoiding expletives also contributes to conciseness.

Don't: There was no indication that it is necessary to include John in the meeting.

Do: No one indicated that John should be included in the meeting.

Imply or Condense: Sometimes you do not need to explicitly state certain information; you can imply it instead. In other situations, you can use adjectives and adverbs instead of clauses to convey the needed information in a more concise format.

Don't: We have received your recent letter and are happy to provide the date you requested.

Do: We are happy to provide the data you recently requested.

Don't: This brochure, which is available free of charge, will answer your questions.

Do: This free brochure will answer your questions.

4.2.5 Prefer Positive Language

Words that create a positive image are more likely to help you achieve your objective than are negative words. For example, you are more likely to persuade someone to do as you ask if you stress the advantages of doing so rather than the disadvantages of not doing so. Positive language also builds goodwill for you and your organization and often gives more information

than negative language. Note the differences in tone and amount of information given in the following pairs of sentences:

Don't: The briefcase is not made of cheap imitation leather.

Do: The briefcase is made of 100% belt leather for years of durable service.

Don't: We cannot ship your merchandise until we receive your check.

Do: As soon as we receive your check, we will ship your merchandise.

Don't: I do not yet have any work experience.

Do: My two terms as secretary of the Management Club taught me the importance of accurate record keeping and gave me experience in working as part of a team.

Expressions like cannot and will not are not the only ones that convey negative messages. Other words, like mistake, damage, failure, refuse, and deny, also carry negative connotations and should be avoided when possible.

Don't: Failure to follow the directions may cause the blender to malfunction.

Do: Following the directions will ensure many years of carefree service from your blender.

Don't: We apologize for this error.

Do: We appreciate your calling this matter to our attention.

Don't: We close at 7 p.m. on Fridays.

Do: We're open until 7 p.m. on Fridays to give you time to shop after work.

Sometimes you can avoid negative language by switching to the subjunctive mood, which uses words like wish, if, and would to refer to conditions that are impossible or improbable. Such language, softens the

impact of the negative message, making it more palatable to the reader. Here are two examples:

Don't: I cannot speak at your November meeting.

Do: I wish it were possible for me to speak at your November meeting.

Don't: I cannot release the names of our clients.

Do: Releasing the names of our clients would violate their right to privacy.

In short, stress what is true and what can be done rather than what is not true and what cannot be done. This is not to say that negative language has no place in business writing. Negative language is strong and emphatic, and sometimes you will want to use it. However, unless the situation clearly calls for negative language, you are more likely to achieve your objective and to build goodwill for yourself and your organization by stressing the positive.

Because words are the building blocks for your message, choose them with care. Using short simple words, writing with clarity, vigor, and conciseness; and using positive language will help you construct effective sentences and paragraphs. If you are one of the many students learning business communication for whom English is a second language, see Spotlight 13, “So You’re an ESTL Speaker,” on page 138.

Writing Effective Sentences :A sentence has a subject and predicate and express at least one complete thought. Beyond these attributes, however, sentences vary widely in style, length, and effect. They are also very flexible; writers can move sentence parts around, add and delete information, and substitute words to express different ideas and emphasize different points. To build effective sentences, use a variety of sentence types, and use active and passive voice appropriately.

4.2.6 Use a Variety of Sentence Types

There are four basic sentence types – simple, compounds, complex and compound-complex – all of which are appropriate for business writing.

Simple Sentence A **simple sentence**: It contains one independent clause (a clause that can stand alone as a complete thought). Because it presents a single idea and is usually (but not always) short, a simple sentence is often used for emphasis. Although a simple sentence contains only one independent clause, it may have a compound subject or compound verb (or both). All of the following sentences are simple.

I quit.

Individual Retirement Accounts are a safe option.

Both individual Retirement Accounts and Simplified Employee Pension Plans are safe and convenient options as retirement investments for the entrepreneur.

Compound Sentence A **Compound sentence**: This contains two or more independent clauses. Because each clause presents a complete idea, each idea receives equal emphasis. (If the two ideas are not closely related, they should be presented in two separate sentences). Here are three compound sentences:

Stacey listened, but I nodded.

Morris Technologies made a major acquisition last year, and it turned out to be a disaster.

Westmoreland Mines moved its headquarters to Prescott in 1984; however, it stayed there only five years and then moved back to Globe.

Complex Sentence A **complex sentence**: It contains one independent clause and at least one dependent clause. For example, in the first sentence below, “Two scanners will save valuable input time” is an independent clause because it makes sense by itself. “Although it cost \$235” is a dependent clause because it does not make sense by itself.

Although it cost \$235, the scanner will save valuable input time.

George Bosley, who is the new CEO at Hubbell, made the decision.

I will be moving to Austin when I assume my new position.

The dependent clause provides additional, but subordinate, information related to the independent clause.

Compound-Complex Sentence A **compound-complex sentence**: This contains two or more independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses.

I wanted to write the report myself, but I soon realized that I needed the advice of our legal department. (two independent clauses and one dependent clause).

If I can, I'll do it; if I cannot, I'll ask Shelia to do it. (two independent clauses and two dependent clauses).

Sentence Variety: Using a variety of sentence patterns and sentence lengths helps keep your writing interesting. Note how simplistic and choppy too many short sentences can be and how boring and difficult too many long sentences can be.

The sentences in these paragraphs should be revised to show relationships between ideas more clearly, to keep readers interested, and to improve readability. Use simple sentences for emphasis and variety, compound sentences for coordinate (equal) relationships, and complex sentences for subordinate relationships.

The first two sentences in the revision are complex, the third sentence is simple, and the last sentence is compound. The lengths of the four sentences range from 12 to 27 words. To write effective sentences, use different sentence patterns and lengths. Most sentences in good business writing range from 16 to 22.

4.2.7 Use Active and Passive Voice Appropriately

Voice is the aspect of a verb that shows whether the subject of the sentence acts or is acted on. In the **active voice**, the subject performs the action expressed by the verb. In the **passive voice**, the subject receives the action expressed by the verb.

Active: Inmac offers a full refund on all orders.

Passive: A full refund on all orders is offered by Inmac.

Active: Shoemaker & Doerr audited the books in 2002.

Passive: The books were audited in 2002 by Shoemaker & Doerr.

Passive sentences add some form of the verb to be to the main verb, so passive sentences are always somewhat longer than active sentences. In the first set of sentences just given, for example, compare offers in the active sentence with is offered by in the passive sentence.

In active sentences, the subject is the doer of the action; in passive sentences, the subject is the receiver of the action. And because the subject gets more emphasis than other nouns in a sentence, active sentences emphasize the doer, and passive sentences emphasize the receiver, of the action. In the second set of sentences, either version could be considered correct, depending on whether the writer wanted to emphasize Shoemaker & Doerr or the books.

Use active sentences most of the time in business writing, just as you naturally use active sentences in most of your conversations. Note that verb voice (active or passive) has nothing to do with verb tense, which shows the time of the action. As the following sentences show, the action in both active and passive sentences can occur in the past, present, or future.

Don't: A very logical argument was presented by Hal. (passive voice, past tense).

Do: Hal presented a very logical argument. (Active voice, past tense)

Don't: An 18% increase will be reported by the eastern region. (Passive voice, future tense)

Do: The eastern region will report on 18% increase. (Active voice, future tense)

Passive sentences are most appropriate when you want to emphasize the receiver of the action, when the person doing the action is either unknown or unimportant, or when you want to be tactful in conveying negative information. All the following sentences are appropriately stated in the passive voice:

Protective legislation was blamed for the drop in imports. (Emphasizes the receiver of the action).

Transportation to the construction site will be provided. (The doer of the action not important).

Several complaints have been received regarding the new policy. (Tactfully conveys negative news)

Words, sentences, and paragraphs are all building blocks of communication. You have seen how using a variety of sentence types and using active and passive voice appropriately can help make your sentences more effective. Now you are ready to combine these sentences to form logical paragraphs.

Developing Logical Paragraphs: A paragraph is a group of related sentences that focus on one main idea. The main idea is often identified in the first sentence of the paragraph, which is then known as a topic sentence. The body of the paragraph supports this main idea by giving more information, analysis, or examples. A paragraph is typically part of a longer message, although one paragraph can contain the entire message, especially in such informal communications as memorandums and email.

Paragraphs organize the topic into manageable units of information for the reader. Readers need a cue to tell them when they have finished a topic, so

that they can pause and refocus their attention on the next topic. To serve this purpose, paragraphs must be unified and coherent, be stated in parallel structure, and be of an appropriate length.

4.2.8 Keep Paragraphs Unified and Coherent

Although closely related, unity and coherence are not the same. A paragraph has unity when all its parts work together to develop a single idea consistently and logically. A paragraph has coherence when each sentence links smoothly to the sentences before and after it.

Unity A unified paragraph gives information that is directly related to the topic, presents this information in a logical order, and –omits irrelevant details. The following excerpt is a middle paragraph in a memorandum arguing against the proposal that Collins, a baby-food manufacturer, should expand into producing food for adults:

Don't: [1] We cannot focus our attention on both ends of the age spectrum. [2] In a recent survey, two-thirds of the under -35 age group named Collins as the first company that came to mind for the category “baby food products”. [[3] For more than 50 years we have spent millions of dollars annually to identify our company as the baby-food company, and market research shows that we have been successful. [4] Last year, we introduced Peas ‘N Pears, our most successful baby-food introduction ever. [[5]’ To now seek to position ourselves as a producer of food for adults would simply be incongruous. [6] Our well-defined image in the marketplace would make producing food for adults risky.

The paragraph obviously lacks unity. You may decide that the overall topic of the paragraph is Collins’s well-defined image as a baby-food producer. So Sentence 6 would be the best topic sentence. You might also decide that

Sentence 4 brings in extra information that weakens paragraph unity and would be left out. The most unified paragraph, then, would be Sentences 6, 3, 2, 5 and 1, as shown here:

Do: Our well-defined image in the marketplace would make producing food for adults risky. For more than 50 years we have spent millions of dollars annually to identify our company as the baby-food company, and market research shows that we have been successful. In a recent survey, two-thirds of the under 35 age group named Collins as the first company that came to mind for the category “baby-food products” . to now seek to position ourselves as a producer of food for adults would simply be incongruous. We cannot focus our attention on both ends of the age spectrum.

A topic sentence is especially helpful in a long paragraph. It usually appears at the beginning of a paragraph. This position helps the writer focus on the topic, so the paragraph will have unity. And it lets the reader know immediately what the topic is.

Coherence: A coherent paragraph weaves sentences together so that the discussion is integrated. The reader never needs to pause to puzzle out the relationships or reread to get the intended meaning. The major ways to achieve coherence are to use transitional words and pronouns, to repeat key words and ideas, and to use parallel structure.

Transitional words help the reader see relationships between sentences. Such words may be as simple as first and other indicators of sequence.

Ten years ago, Collins tried to overcome market resistance to its new line of baby clothes. First, it mounted a multimillion-dollar ad campaign featuring the Mason quintuplets. Next, it sponsored a Collins Baby look-

alike contest. Then it sponsored two network specials featuring Dr. Benjamin Spock.

Finally, it brought in the Madison Avenue firm of Morgan & Modine to broaden its image.

The words first, next, then, and finally clearly signal step-by-step movement. Now note the following logical transitions, aided by connecting words:

I recognize, however, that Collins cannot thrive on baby food alone. To begin with, since we already control 73% of the market, further gains will be difficult. What's more, the current baby boom is slowing. Therefore, we must expand our product line.

Transitional words act as road signs, indicating where the message is headed and letting the reader know what to expect. Here are some commonly used transitional expressions grouped by the relationships they express:

Relationship	Transitional Expressions
addition	also, besides, furthermore, in addition, moreover, too
cause and effect	as a result, because, consequently, hence, so, Therefore, thus
comparison	in the same way, likewise, similarly
contrast	although, but, however, in contrast, nevertheless, On the other hand, still, yet.
illustration	for example, for instance, in other words, to illustrate
sequence	first, second, third, then, next, finally
summery/conclusion	at last, finally, in conclusion, to summarize, therefore
time	meanwhile, next, since, soon, then

A second way to achieve coherence is to use pronouns. Because pronouns stand for words already named, using pronouns binds sentences and ideas together. The pronouns are underlined here:

If Collins branches out with additional food products, one possibility would be a fruit snack for youngsters. Funny Fruits were tested in Columbus last

summer, and they were a big hit. Roger Johnson, national marketing manager, says he hopes to build new food categories into a \$200 million business. He is also exploring the possibility of acquiring other established name brands. These acquired brands would let Collins expand faster than if it had to develop a new product of its own.

A third way to achieve coherence is to repeat key words. In a misguided attempt to appear interesting, writers sometimes use different terms for the same idea. For example, in discussing a proposed merger a writer may at different points use merger, combination, union, association, and syndicate. Or a writer may use the words administrator, manager, supervisor, and executive all to refer to the same person. Such “elegant variation” only confuses the reader, who has no way of knowing whether the writer is referring to the same concept or to slightly different variations of the concept. Avoid needless repetition, but use purposeful repetition to link ideas and thus promote paragraph coherence. Here is a good example:

Collins has taken several steps recently to enhance profits and project a stronger leadership position. One of these steps is streamlining operations. Collins’s line of children’s clothes was unprofitable, so it discontinued the line. Its four produce farms were likewise unprofitable, so it hired an outside professional team to manage them. This team eventually recommended selling the farms.

Ensure paragraph unity by developing only one topic per paragraph and by presenting the information in logical order. Ensure paragraph coherence by using transitional words and pronouns and by repeating key words.

4.2.9 Use Parallel Structure

The term parallelism means using similar grammatical structure for similar ideas – that is, matching adjectives with adjectives, nouns with nouns, infinities with infinities, and so on. Much widely quoted writing uses

parallelism: for example, Julius Caesar's "I came, I saw, I conquered" and Abraham Lincoln's "government of the people, by the people, and for the people". Parallel structure smoothly links ideas and adds a pleasing rhythm to sentences and paragraphs, thereby enhancing coherence.

Don't: The new dispatcher is competent and a fast worker.

Do : The dispatcher is competent and fast.

Don't: The new grade of paper is lightweight, nonporous, and it is inexpensive.

Do: The new grade of paper is lightweight, nonporous, and inexpensive.

Don't:The training program will cover.

1. Vacation and sick leaves
2. How to resolve grievances
3. Managing your workstation

Do: The training program will cover

1. Vacation and sick leaves
2. Grievance resolution
3. Workstation management

Don't: One management consultant recommended either selling the children's furniture division or its conversion into a children's toy division.

Do: One management consultant recommended either selling the children's furniture division or conversion it into a children's toy division.

Don't: Gladys is not only proficient in word processing but also in desktop publishing.

Do: Gladys is proficient not only in word processing but also in desktop publishing.

In the last two sets of sentences above, note that correlative conjunctions (such as both/and, either/or, and not only/but also) must be followed by words in parallel form. Be especially careful to use parallel structure in report headings that have equal weight and in numbered lists.

4.2.10 Control Paragraph Length

How long should a paragraph of business writing be? As with other considerations, the needs of the reader, rather than the convenience of the writer, should determine the answer. Paragraphs should help the reader by signaling a new idea as well as by providing a physical break. Long blocks of unbroken text look boring and needlessly complex. And they may unintentionally obscure an important idea buried in the middle. On the other hand, a series of extremely short paragraphs can weaken coherence by obscuring underlying relationships.

Essentially, there are no fixed rules for paragraph length, and occasionally one or ten-sentence paragraphs might be effective. However, most paragraphs of good business writers fall into the 60 to 80 word range – long enough for a topic sentence and three or four supporting sentences. Although a single paragraph should never discuss more than one major topic, complex topics may need to be divided into several paragraphs. Your purpose and the needs of your reader should ultimately determine paragraph length.

4.3 Style in Business Correspondence

Writing business letters and memos differs in certain important ways from writing reports. Keep the following advice in mind when you write and especially when you revise your business letters or memos.

State the main business, purpose, or subject matter right away. Let the reader know from the very first sentence what your letter is about. Remember that when business people open a letter, their first concern is to know what the letter is about, what its purpose is, and why they must spend their time reading it. Therefore, avoid round-about beginnings. If you are writing to apply for a job, begin with something like this: "I am writing to apply for the position you currently have open..." If you have bad news for someone, you need not spill all of it in the first sentence. Here is an example of how to avoid negative phrasing: "I am writing in response to your letter of July 24, 1997 in which you discuss problems you have had with an electronic spreadsheet purchased from our company." State the main purpose or business of the letter right away. The problem version just starts flailing away from the very outset. The revised version at least establishes the purpose of the letter (and then starts flailing).

If you are responding to a letter, identify that letter by its subject and date in the first paragraph or sentence. Busy recipients who write many letters themselves may not remember their letters to you. To avoid problems, identify the date and subject of the letter to which you respond:

Dear Mr. Stout:

I am writing in response to your September 1, 19XX letter in which you describe problems that you've had with one of our chainsaws. I regret that you've suffered this inconvenience and expense and...

Dear Ms. Cohen:

I have just received your August 4, 19XX letter in which you list names and other sources from which I can get additional information on the manufacture and use of plastic bottles in the soft-drink industry....

Keep the paragraphs of most business letters short. The paragraphs of business letters tend to be short, some only a sentence long. Business letters are not read the same way as articles, reports, or books. Usually, they are read rapidly. Big, thick, dense paragraphs over ten lines, which require much concentration, may not be read carefully--or read at all.

To enable the recipient to read your letters more rapidly and to comprehend and remember the important facts or ideas, create relatively short paragraphs of between three and eight lines long. In business letters, paragraphs that are made up of only a single sentence are common and perfectly acceptable. Throughout this section, you'll see examples of the shorter paragraphs commonly used by business letters.

"Compartmentalize" the contents of your letter. When you "compartmentalize" the contents of a business letter, you place each different segment of the discussion--each different topic of the letter--in its own paragraph. If you were writing a complaint letter concerning problems with the system unit of your personal computer, you might have these paragraphs:

- A description of the problems you've had with it
- The ineffective repair jobs you've had
- The compensation you think you deserve and why

Study each paragraph of your letters for its purpose, content, or function. When you locate a paragraph that does more than one thing, consider splitting it into

two paragraphs. If you discover two short separate paragraphs that do the same thing, consider joining them into one.

Provide topic indicators at the beginning of paragraphs. Analyze some of the letters you see in this section in terms of the contents or purpose of their individual paragraphs. In the first sentence of any body paragraph of a business letter, try to locate a word or phrase that indicates the topic of that paragraph. If a paragraph discusses your problems with a personal computer, work the word "problems" or the phrase "problems with my personal computer" into the first sentence. Doing this gives recipients a clear sense of the content and purpose of each paragraph. Here is an excerpt before and after topic indicators have been incorporated:

Problem: I have worked as an electrician in the Decatur, Illinois, area for about six years. Since 1980 I have been licensed by the city of Decatur as an electrical contractor qualified to undertake commercial and industrial work as well as residential work.

Revision: As for my work experience, I have worked as an electrician in the Decatur, Illinois, area for about six years. Since 1980 I have been licensed by the city of Decatur as an electrical contractor qualified to undertake commercial and industrial work as well as residential work. (*Italics not in the original.*)

List or itemize whenever possible in a business letter. Listing spreads out the text of the letter, making it easier to pick up the important points rapidly. Lists can be handled in several ways, as explained in the section on lists.

Place important information strategically in business letters. Information in the first and last lines of paragraphs tends to be read and remembered better. Information buried in the middle of long paragraphs is

easily overlooked or forgotten. Therefore, place important information in high-visibility points. For example, in application letters which must convince potential employers that you are right for a job, locate information on appealing qualities at the beginning or end of paragraphs for greater emphasis. Place less positive or detrimental information in less highly visible points in your business letters. If you have some difficult things to say, a good (and honest) strategy is to de-emphasize by placing them in areas of less emphasis. If a job requires three years of experience and you only have one, bury this fact in the middle or the lower half of a body paragraph of the application letter. The resulting letter will be honest and complete; it just won't emphasize weak points unnecessarily. Here are some examples of these ideas:

Problem: In July I will graduate from the University of Kansas with a Bachelor of Science in Nutrition and Dietetics. Over the past four years in which I have pursued this degree, I have worked as a lab assistant for Dr. Alison Laszlo and have been active in two related organizations, the Student Dietetic Association and the American Home Economics Association. In my nutritional biochemistry and food science labs, I have written many technical reports and scientific papers. I have also been serving as a diet aide at St. David's Hospital in Lawrence the past year and a half. *(The job calls for a technical writer; let's emphasize that first, then mention the rest!)*

Revision: In my education at the University of Kansas, I have had substantial experience writing technical reports and scientific papers. Most of these reports and papers have been in the field of nutrition and dietetics in which I will be receiving my Bachelor of Science degree this July. During my four years at the University I have also handled plenty of paperwork as a lab assistant for Dr. Alison Laszlo, as a member

of two related organizations, the Student Dietetic Association and the American Home Economics Association, and as a diet aide at St. David's Hospital in Lawrence in the past year and a half.

Problem: To date, I have done no independent building inspection on my own. I have been working the past two years under the supervision of Mr. Robert Packwood who has often given me primary responsibility for walk-through and property inspections. It was Mr. Packwood who encouraged me to apply for this position. I have also done some refurbishing of older houses on a contract basis and have some experience in industrial construction as a welder and as a clerk in a nuclear construction site. *(Let's not lie about our lack of experience, but let's not put it on a billboard either!)*

Revision: As for my work experience, I have done numerous building walk-through and property inspections under the supervision of Mr. Robert Packwood over the past two years. Mr. Packwood, who encouraged me to apply for this position, has often given me primary responsibility for many inspection jobs. I have also done some refurbishing of older houses on a contract basis and have some experience in industrial construction as a welder and as a clerk in a nuclear construction site.

Find positive ways to express bad news in your business letters. Often, business letters must convey bad news: a broken computer keyboard cannot be replaced, or an individual cannot be hired. Such bad news can be conveyed in a tactful way. Doing so reduces the chances that business relations with the recipient of the bad news will end. To convey bad news positively, avoid such words as "cannot," "forbid," "fail," "impossible," "refuse," "prohibit," "restrict," and "deny"

as much as possible. The first versions of the example sentences below are phrased in a rather cold and unfriendly negative manner; the second versions are much more positive, cordial and tactful:

Problem: Because of the amount of information you request in your letter, simply cannot help you without seriously disrupting my work schedule.

Revision: In your letter you ask for a good amount of information which I would like to help you locate. Because of my work commitments, however, I am going to be able to answer only a few of the questions....

Problem: If you do not complete and return this advertisement contract by July 1, 19XX, you will not receive your advertising space in this year's Capitol Lines. If we have not heard from you by this deadline, we will sell you your advertisement space to some other client.

Revision: Please complete the enclosed contract and return it to us by July 1, 19XX. After this deadline, we will begin selling any unrenewed advertisement space in this year's Capitol Lines, so I hope we hear from you before then.

Problem: While I am willing to discuss changes in specific aspects of this article or ideas on additional areas to cover, I am not prepared to change the basic theme of the article: the usability of the Victor microcomputer system.

Revision: I am certainly open to suggestions and comments about specific aspects of this article, or any of your thoughts on additional areas that you think I should cover. I do want, however, to retain the basic theme of the article: the usability of the Victor microcomputer system.

Focus on the recipient's needs, purposes, or interests instead of your own.

Avoid a self-centered focusing on your own concerns rather than those of the recipient. Even if you must talk about yourself in a business letter a great deal, do so in a way that relates your concerns to those of the recipient. This recipient-oriented style is often called the "you-attitude," which does not mean using more you's but making the recipient the main focus of the letter.

Problem: I am writing you about a change in our pricing policy that will save our company time and money. In an operation like ours, it costs us a great amount of labor time (and thus expense) to scrape and rinse our used tableware when it comes back from large parties. Also, we have incurred great expense on replacement of linens that have been ruined by stains that could have been soaked promptly after the party and saved.

Revision: I am writing to inform you of a new policy that we are beginning, effective September 1, 19XX, that will enable us to serve your large party needs more often and without delay. In an operation like ours in which we supply for parties of up to 500, turn-around time is critical; unscraped and unrinsed tableware causes us delays in lean-up time and, more importantly, less frequent and less prompt service to you the customer. Also, linens ruined by stains that could have been avoided by immediate soaking after the party cause you to have to pay more in rental fees.

Problem: For these reasons, our new policy, effective 1 September 1, 19XX, will be to charge an additional 15% on unrinsed tableware and 75% of the wholesale value of stained linens that have not been soaked.

Revision: Therefore, in order to enable us to supply your large party needs promptly and whenever you require, we will begin charging 15% on all unrinsed tableware and 75% of the wholesale value of stained linens that have not been soaked. This policy we hope will encourage our customers' kitchen help to do the quick and simple rinsing and/or soaking at the end of large parties that will ensure faster and more frequent service.

Avoid pompous, inflated, legal-sounding phrasing. Watch out for puffed-up, important-sounding language. This kind of language may seem business-like at first; it's actually ridiculous. Of course, such phrasing is apparently necessary in legal documents; but why uses it in other writing situations? When you write a business letter, picture yourself as a plain-talking, common-sense, down-to-earth person (but avoid slang). Check out Figure 1-3 for a serious dose of bureaucratese. Avoid pompous, officious-sounding writing. Not only is the tone of the problem version offensive, it is nearly twice as long as the revised version!

Give your business letter an "action ending" whenever appropriate. An "action-ending" makes clear what the writer of the letter expects the recipient to do and when. Ineffective conclusions to business letters often end with rather limp, noncommittal statements such as "Hope to hear from you soon" or "Let me know if I can be of any further assistance." Instead, or in addition, specify the action the recipient should take and the schedule for that action. If, for example, you are writing a query letter, ask the editor politely to let you know of his decision if at all possible in a month. If you are writing an application letter, subtly try to set up a date and time for an interview. Here are some examples:

As soon as you approve this plan, I'll begin contacting sales representatives at once to arrange for purchase and delivery of the microcomputers. May I expect to hear from you within the week?

I am free after 2:00 p.m. on most days. Can we set up an appointment to discuss my background and this position further? I'll look forward to hearing from you.

4.4 Summary

Writing business letters and memos differs in certain important ways from writing reports. Keeps the proper sequence of letter writing in mind when you write and especially when you revise your business letters or memos. The heading contains the writer's address and the date of the letter. The writer's name is not included and only a date is needed in headings on letterhead stationery. The inside address shows the name and address of the recipient of the letter. This information helps prevent confusion. Also, if the recipient has moved, the inside addresses helps to determine what to do with the letter. In the inside address, include the appropriate title of respect of the recipient; and copy the name of the company exactly as that company writes it. When you do have the names of individuals, remember to address them appropriately: Mrs., Ms., Mr., Dr., and so on. If you are not sure what is correct for an individual, try to find out how that individual signs letters or consult the forms-of-address section in a dictionary.

The salutation, the "Dear Sir" of the letter, is followed by a colon (except when a friendly, familiar, sociable tone is intended, in which case a comma is used). Notice that in the format, the salutation line is eliminated altogether. If you don't know whether the recipient is a man or woman, traditionally you write "Dear Sir" or "Dear Sirs" and just not worry about it. More recently, however, salutations such as "Dear Sir or Madame," "Dear

Ladies and Gentlemen," "Dear Friends," or "Dear People" have been recommended. Deleting the salutation line altogether or inserting "To Whom It May Concern" in its place, however, is not always a good solution; it's quite impersonal.

Try to get a person's name within the organization; make a quick, anonymous phone call to get a name. Or, address the salutation to a department name, committee name, or a position name: "Dear Customer Relations Department," "Dear Recruitment Committee," "Dear Chairperson," "Dear Director of Financial Aid," for example.

As shown in the subject line replaces the salutation or is included with it. The subject line announces the main business of the letter. The actual message of course is contained in the body of the letter, the paragraphs between the salutation and the complimentary close.

The "Sincerely yours" element of the business letter is called the complimentary close. Other common ones are "Sincerely yours," "Cordially," "Respectfully," or "Respectfully yours." You can design your own, but be careful not to create florid or wordy ones. Notice that only the first letter is capitalized, and it is always followed by a comma.

Usually, you type your name four lines below the complimentary close, and sign your name in between. If you are a woman and want to make your marital status clear, use Miss, Ms., or Mrs. in parentheses before the typed version of your first name. Whenever possible, include your title or the name of the position you hold just below your name. For example, "Technical writing student," "sophomore data processing major," or "Tarrant County Community College Student" are perfectly acceptable.

Just below the signature block are often several abbreviations or phrases that have important functions. To make sure that the recipient knows that

items accompany the letter in the same envelope, use such indications as "Enclosure," "Encl.," "Enclosures (2)." For example, if you send a resume and writing sample with your application letter, you'd do this: "Encl.: Resume and Writing Sample." If the enclosure is lost, the recipient will know.

If you send copies of a letter to others, indicate this fact among the end notations also. If, for example, you were upset by a local merchant's handling of your repair problems and were sending a copy of your letter to the Better Business Bureau, you'd write this: "cc: Better Business Bureau." If you plan to send a copy to your lawyer, write something like this: "cc: Mr. Raymond Mason, Attorney."

Business letter communication is a complex process, involving the encoding, translation and decoding of messages. Effective communication through commercial letter requires the communicator to translate their messages in a way that is specifically designed for their intended audience. Creating and drafting an effective commercial letter requires a basic understanding of the communication process. Most commercial letters require the clear and unambiguous communication of a message in a way that can be clearly understood by the recipient. It is human nature to assume that when we communicate we are doing so effectively, and that if anything goes wrong consequently the responsibility for that must rest with the recipient.

In a commercial letter, the writer of the letter should understand very clearly the following steps:

- Step 1: Organize your writing.
- Step 2: Know what is and is not appropriate
- Step 3: Write an informative beginning
- Step 4: Write a revealing exchange of information
- Step 5: Avoid clumsy phrases and complex vocabulary
- Step 6: Apply the skills to good news and bad news messages

- Step 7: Use short, clear sentences and simple punctuation
- Step 8: Write a clear, meaningful subject line
- Step 9: Convey your message in as few words as possible
- Step 10: Use headings, generalizations, and paragraphs
- Step 11: Write a cordial, informative conclusion
- Step 12: Edit and proofread your writing.

Your intention and the needs of someone who reads your letter should at the end of the day make a decision as to what a letter need to carry.

4.5 Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Define the concept 'commercial letter'. Discuss the essentials of a commercial letter. Also give a specimen of such letter.
2. "The single most significant characteristic of the commercial letter is that it must have a human face." Discuss.
3. "Communication is the sum of all things one person does when he wants to create understanding in the mind of another. It is a bridge of meaning. It involves a systematic and continuous process of telling, listening and understanding." Is it true in case of commercial letter? Argue your viewpoint with suitable examples.

4.6 Suggested Readings

1. Pal, Rajendra and Korlahalli, J. S., Essentials of Business Communication.
2. Kaul, Asha, Effective Business Communication.
3. Lesikar, R. V. and Pettite J. D., Business Communication.
4. Sharma, R. C. , Business Communication and Report Writing.
5. Shinha, P., Business Communication.

Subject: Communication and Secretarial Practices

Course: M. Com

Author: Dr. Karam Pal

Course Code: MC-102

Vetter: Prof. Harbhajan Bansal

Lesson: 5

Company Correspondence: Report Writing

Objective: The primary objective of this lesson is to make the students learn about the basics of business corporate reports and also make them understand as how the effective reports are written.

Structure

- 5.1 Introduction**
- 5.2 Types of Business Reports**
- 5.3 Characteristics of A Good Report**
- 5.4 Structures of Business Reports**
- 5.5 Summary**
- 5.6 Self Assessment Exercise**
- 5.7 Suggested Readings.**

5.1 Introduction

Corporate managers, often, are required to write business reports of one sort or another. In fact, such writing can be lucrative and the organizations that do not have the need or budget to hire a full time manager look for hiring such business executives who can discharge the work on part time basis. Therefore, if you have read many business reports, you know they tend to be dull and turgid. They do not have communication balance that they need to have. While writing a business report won't let you use all your creativity, you can apply the principles of good writing to create a

document that communicates the meaning with its underlying spirit and at the same time it needs to be readers' friendly.

As always, knowing to whom the report is more critical, implicit in that knowledge is the question, "What do they want to know?" As a rule, readers of business reports are looking for two things: the bottom line and how will it affect them. It is also safe to say that your readers are busy, often extremely so, use these facts to well structure the report.

All too often business reports start with some sort of introduction that includes a bit of history and, perhaps, the approach taken to getting the results or items being reported. Usually, however, the readers already have this information, so start with the bottom line. This might involve money or it may be the action the report recommends, or both.

Make sure assertions and recommendations are backed up with solid information. History and methods can often be used as back-up information, but it will usually need to be rewritten so it fits. Business readers scan for the information they need. Well-written headlines and subheads will help or guide them to the parts of the report they actually need.

If possible, write in the first person, as a ghostwriter. Avoid the passive voice like the plague. Even if the samples you are given use a lot of passive language, use the active voice; chances are the company will be delighted.

Groups of numbers should probably go into some sort of table or chart. They not only break up large blocks of text, they also can clarify the information. Once you have a handle on the information, create an abstract or executive summary. Include the recommended action and put this section right up front.

Now you have been introduced with a business report that communicates the needed information easily. A complete business report must concentrate on: understanding the readers' expectations; objectives and specifications for the research report; facts, conclusions, inferences, and judgments; moving data to messages objectively; organizing; using guideposts for clarity; writing clearly; writing user-friendly audit reports; editing and writing concisely

5.2 Types of Business Reports

A report is a 'basic management tool used in decision-making'. Hence, it is extremely important for business executives. In a one-man business, the functions of reporting and decision-making are combined in one man-the proprietor. He knows his business inside out and is capable of making on-the-spot decisions. Therefore, he does not need any reports. But large-scale organizations are engaged in multifarious activities, which are being handled by different departments. Their top executives cannot keep a personal watch over all these activities. So they have to base their decisions on the reports they get from the heads of various departments. For large organizations, reports are just indispensable.

A report carries information from someone who has it someone who needs it. A report; is a basic management tool used in decision-making.

Types of Business Reports: We can classify business reports in various ways. On the bass of legal formalities to be complied with, we can have (1) informal reports, and (2) formal reports.

1. **Informal reports.** An informal report is usually in the form of a person-to-person communication. It may range from a short, almost fragmentary statement of facts on a single page, to a more developed

presentation taking several pages. An informal report is usually submitted in the form of a letter or a memorandum.

2. **Formal reports.** A formal report is one, which is prepared in a prescribed form and is presented according to an established procedure to a prescribed authority.

Formal reports can be statutory or non-statutory: A report prepared and presented according to the form and procedure laid down by law is called a statutory report. Reports submitted at the Statutory Meeting of Shareholders, Directors' Report to the Annual General Meeting, Annual Return, Auditors' Report are statutory reports.

Formal reports which are not required under any law but which are prepared to help the management in framing policies or taking other important decisions are called non-statutory reports.

On the basis of the frequency of issue, a report can be periodic or special.

1. **Periodic or Routine reports** are prepared and presented at regular, prescribed intervals in the usual routine of business. They may be submitted annually, semi-annually, quarterly, monthly, fortnightly, weekly or even daily. Generally, such reports contain a mere statement of facts, in detail or in summarized form, without an opinion or recommendation. Branch Managers of banks submit periodic reports to the Head Office on the quantum of business transacted during a particular period.
2. **Special reports** are related to a single occasion or situation. Reports on the desirability of opening a new branch or on the unrest among staff in a particular branch are special reports. Special reports deal with non-recurrent problems.

On the basis of function, a report can be (1) informative, or (2) interpretative.

If a report merely presents facts pertinent to an issue or a situation, it is **informative**. On the other hand, if it analyses the facts, draws conclusions and makes recommendations, it may be described as **analytical, interpretative, or investigative**.

If a report presents production figures in a particular period, it is informative. But if it goes into the causes of lower production in that period, it becomes analytical, interpretative or investigative.

On the basis of the nature of the nature of the subject dealt with, we can have a (1) problem-determining report, or (2) fact-finding report, or (3) performance, or (4) technical report, etc.

In a problem-determining report, we try to determine the causes underlying a problem or to ascertain whether the problem actually exists. In a technical report, we present data on a specialized subject, with or without comments.

On the basis of the number of persons entrusted with the drafting of reports, we can have (1) reports by individuals, and (2) reports by committees or sub-committees.

Reports submitted by the Branch Manager, Personnel Manager, Marketing Manager, the Company Secretary, The Auditor, the Solicitor, etc., are reports by individuals. These reports are naturally related to the work in their own departments.

Sometimes reports are needed on subjects that concern more than one department, or they are so important that it is thought advisable to associate more than one person with them. In such cases, committees or sub-

committees are formed to prepare reports. These reports are formal in style and impersonal in tone and are prepared after a careful and cautious deliberation of the members.

Research Proposals and Report: Because research is a cost to the organization in terms of personnel time and monetary expenses, superiors want to know, what they will gain in return for expending these resources. Thus, a research proposal is a structured presentation of what you plan to do in research, why you plan to conduct the research, and how you plan to accomplish it. The proposal gives those concerned with your research effect on opportunity to evaluate your research approach. Every step of your proposal should be developed with extreme care. Once it has been accepted, any substantive changes you may wish to make must receive prior approval.

Research proposal formats vary depending upon the desires and needs of those who will appraise your work. It includes the following sections:

1. **Heading:** Provide a neutral, descriptive title for your project, being careful not to promise more than you can deliver. Include as a subtitle “A Research Proposal,” your name, and the submission date. The subtitle (but not the title) may be omitted from this page if you include a separate title page that includes this information.
2. **Introduction:** Establish a definite need for your study. Include here the background information about the problem, explaining enough to establish a situation and to orient the reader. For credibility, include any information from published sources that help to establish a need for your project. (More complex research proposal may contain a separate “Review of Literature” section, which would then immediately precede the “Procedures” section.)
3. **Problem:** On the basis of what you said in the previous section, a problem needs answering. Introduce the problem statement and

then, using neutral language, state in question form the specific problem to be investigated (avoid yes-or-no questions because your problem is probably more complex than that). Then introduce the sub-problems, listing them in logical order. Taken together, the answers to your sub-problems must provide a complete and accurate answer to your problem statement.

4. **Scope:** The scope of the problem describes the boundaries you have established for your research problem. It may rely on geographical boundaries, a segment of a universe, a time period, or any combination of these. The scope (also called “delimitations”) indicates those parts of the topic that normally might be considered a part of such a study but that you do not wish to include in your study. Your report title and problem statement must reflect any major delimitation imposed on your study. If you are using any terms in your study that may be subject to different interpretations or that may be unfamiliar to the reader, define them here.
5. **Procedures:** Explain how you will conduct your investigation. Describe your sources of data and methods of collection. To ensure that adequate data is available to answer your problem, you should have identified most of your secondary sources prior to writing your proposal. Likewise, you should be certain that people whose help is needed for your study are available and willing to cooperate. Regardless of how you organize this section, plan your procedures carefully and present them in such a way that the reader has confidence that they will enable you to provide an accurate and complete answer to your problem statement.
6. **Conclusion:** Don’t leave the reader hanging by ending your report abruptly. Include an appropriate ending paragraph that provides a sense of closure for your research proposal.

7. Reference: Include here the published sources (including Internet citations) to which you actually referred in your proposal in your proposal. The author/year style of citation shown in Model 18 is typical for business reports, but you should use the citation style preferred by your reader or organization. (If your list of sources is extensive, begin the list on a separate page – as would be done in the final research report.)

There is a loosely defined category of reports also and that is very important in technical and business report writing. These reports are variously called feasibility reports, recommendation reports, evaluation reports, assessment reports, and who knows what else. They all do roughly the same thing--provide carefully studied opinions and, sometimes, recommendations. There are some subtle differences among some these types, but there are absolutely no universally agreed-upon names for them:

- *Feasibility report:* This type studies a situation (for example, a problem or opportunity) and a plan for doing something about it and then determines whether that plan is "feasible"--which means determining whether it is technologically possible and whether it is practical (in terms of current technology, economics, social needs, and so on). The feasibility report answers the question "Should we implement Plan X?" by stating "yes," "no," but more often "maybe." Not only does it give a recommendation, it also provides the data and the reasoning behind that recommendation.
- *Recommendation report:* This type starts from a stated need, a selection of choices, or both and then recommends one, some, or none. For example, a company might be looking at grammar-checking software and want a recommendation on which product is the best. As the report

writer on this project, you could study the market for this type of application and recommend one particular product, a couple of products (differing perhaps in their strengths and their weaknesses), or none (maybe none of them are any good). The recommendation report answers the question "Which option should we choose?" (or in some cases "Which are the best options?") by recommending Product B, or maybe both Products B and C, or none of the products.

- *Evaluation report:* This type provides an opinion or judgment rather than a yes-no-maybe answer or a recommendation. It provides a studied opinion on the *value* or *worth* of something. For example, for over a year the city of Austin had free bus transportation in an attempt to increase ridership and reduce automobile traffic. Did it work? Was it worthwhile?--These are questions an evaluation report would attempt to answer. This type of report compares a thing to a set of requirements (or criteria) and determines how well it meets those requirements. (And of course there may be a recommendation--continue the project, scrap it, change it, or other possibilities.)

As you can see, these distinctions are rather fine; and they overlap. In real-world writing, these types often combine--you might see elements of the recommendation report combine with the feasibility report, for example. Of course, the writers of these reports don't care which type they are writing--and well they shouldn't! They're trying to get a job done.

5.3 Characteristics of A Good Report

1. **Precision:** In a good report, the writer is very clear about the exact purpose of writing it. *His investigation, analysis and recommendations are directed by this central purpose.* Precision gives a kind of unity and coherence to the report and makes it a valuable document.
2. **Accuracy of facts:** The scientific accuracy of facts is very essential to a good report. Since reports invariably lead to decision-making, *inaccurate facts may lend to disastrous decisions.*
3. **Relevance:** The facts presented in a report should be not only accurate but relevant also. While it is essential that every fact included in a report has a bearing on the central purpose, it is equally essential to see that nothing relevant has escaped inclusion. *Irrelevant facts make a report confusing; exclusion of relevant facts renders it incomplete and likely to mislead.*
4. **Reader-orientation:** A good report is always reader-oriented. While drafting a report, it is necessary to keep in mind the person(s) who is (are) going to read it. A report meant for the layman will be different from another meant for technical experts.
5. **Objectivity of recommendations:** If recommendations are made at the end of a report, they must be impartial and objective. *They should come as logical conclusions to investigation and analysis.* They must not reveal any self-interest on the part of the writer.
6. **Simple and unambiguous:** A good report is written in a simple, unambiguous language. It is a kind of scientific document of practical utility; hence it should be free from various forms of poetic embellishment like figures of speech.

7. **Clarity:** A good report is absolutely clear. Clarity depends on proper arrangement of facts. The report writer must proceed systematically. He should make his purpose clear, define his sources, state his findings and finally make necessary recommendations. He should divide his report into short paragraphs giving them headings, and insert other suitable signposts to achieve greater clarity.
8. **Brevity:** A report should be brief. It is difficult to define brevity in absolute terms. Nor can brevity be laid down as a rule. All that can be said is that a good report is as brief as possible. Brevity should not be achieved at the cost of clarity. Nor should it be at the cost of completeness. Sometimes the problem being investigated is of such importance that it calls for a detailed discussion of facts. Then this discussion should not be evaded. Brevity in report is the kind of brevity one recommends for a précis. *Include everything significant and yet be brief.*
9. **Grammatical accuracy:** The grammatical accuracy of language though listed at number 9 in the characteristics of a good report is of fundamental importance. It is one of the basic requisites of good report as of any other piece of composition. Who is going to read a report if its language is faulty? Besides, faulty construction of sentences makes the meaning obscure and ambiguous.

Selecting a suitable type of report: **Before a writer undertakes to prepare a report, he must consider the following points:**

- What kind of report is requested or expected?
- How much time has been allowed to prepare the report?

- What is the purpose of the report?
 - What exactly is to be examined?
 - What facts are to be furnished?
 - For whom is the report meant?
1. The reporter may have been instructed to prepare a specific kind of report or there may be precedents to follow. But in majority of instances he will have to decide for himself whether he is to prepare an informal or a formal report, or if it is a formal report, whether it is a statutory or non-statutory report. It is important that a reporter, right in the beginning, is clear about the lines along which he is to plan the content, form and style of the report.
 2. The length of time the writer has been allowed to prepare the report can give him valuable guidance of the type of report expected. An informal report highlighting some important aspect of a problem may be acceptable if the time is short.
 3. The purpose of a report is perhaps the most important factor to bear in mind before deciding the type of report needed. If the writer has been asked to prepare a report on whether his company should set up a new branch that involves considerable initial expenditure or on advisability of merging into or collaborating with another company, these are matters of vital importance and they need very carefully written formal reports.
 4. Just as it is important to keep in mind the purpose of the report, it is also important to be constantly aware of what exactly is to be examined, to be studied. Such an awareness will eliminate much redundant labour, at the same time it will help in the inclusion of all that is pertinent to a problem and will help in making the report a document complete in all respects. Let

us suppose the Development Manger of a bank has been asked to report on the feasibility of setting up a branch of the bank in a new colony. Exactly what is to be examined? (a) What type of colony is this- residential, commercial or industrial? (b) If it is primarily industrial or business houses? (c) If it is residential area, what is its population, what is the general standard of the resident, and what could be their saving capacity? Will the study of these facts suffice? Or, has something of crucial importance been overlooked?

5. While studying the old file of the company or conducting a market survey, the proprietor is likely to come across a number of interesting facts that appear to be relevant but in reality are not. The temptation to include them in the report will have to be resisted.
6. The last point to be kept in mind is: who is going to read the report? If the report is going to the Research Director, it ought to contain a detailed, step-by step account of the investigations carried out, along with detailed, minutely described findings. On the other hand, if the report is going to the Managing Director, who you know has implicit faith in you and is more interested in your recommendations, it is these recommendations, which will have to be emphasized both in the beginning and at the end. B. Maude beautifully makes this point.

Preparing a report: **Once you are clear about the purpose of writing a report, the persons for whom it is meant, the facts to be examined and the facts to be included, and the time at your disposal, and know what the of report you are going to write, it is time to start the work. In Write Better, speak better the following five steps are suggested to write a report.**

1. **Investigating the sources of information:** Investigating the sources of information is a kind of spadework. It is to be done right in the beginning.

The extent of investigation will, of course, depend on the length and importance of the report. Major sources of information are: company files, personal observation, interviews, letters, questionnaires, and library research.

- Most of the relevant information is already contained in the old files of the Company. Sometimes there are precedents, and old findings and recommendations may be of considerable help. So it is very important to get through the old files of the Company. Declining sales or rising cost of production are recurring phenomena. And their causes are also usually similar. In these cases, old files may be containing some valuable information.
- In reports on a fire accident or on the progress of a project, personal observation will be great help. It needs on the spot enquiry to ascertain the cause of a fire or to find out why the work of installing a new plant is going on rather slowly.
- Complaints from customers about unsatisfactory service being provided by a branch might necessitate interviews. Interviews with the members of the staff may also be of some help. These interviews should be carefully recorded, clearly indicating the persons interviewed and the time and place of the interview. Sometimes, instead of holding personal interviews, letters may be written to different people.
- When a large number of people are to be contacted, the only practical method is to make use of questionnaires. Such questionnaires are often prepared by large business houses to ascertain the popularity of their products or to find out the possibility of introducing some new products into the market. Questionnaires should never be lengthy.

Questions should be prepared in such a way that they do not call for writing lengthy answers. Questions that just require ticking off one of the many alternatives suggested are the best. If the results of the questionnaire are incorporated in the report, a copy of the questionnaire should also be included.

- In reports on subjects of general nature, library research may be found useful. This includes reference to standard reference books and past as well as current issues of newspapers, trade publications and magazines.
2. **Taking notes:** In the course of investigations, the writer keeps on taking notes of anything that appears to be related to the subject. Then there is no time to analyze them and determine how they will be of help in the final report. But as the writer keeps turning them in his mind over and over again, a kind of pattern starts emerging and he begins to be clear about what is relevant and what is not. It is a very general kind of pattern but it gives the writer at least a starting point.
 3. **Analyzing the data:** Now is the time to analyze the collected data in the light of the pattern that has evolved. A lot of data will have to be rejected while a need might be felt to collect more data. The final pattern will emerge at this stage. The writer should never hurry through this stage, since this is the most important stage in writing a report.
 4. **Making an outline:** Once the final pattern of the report has taken shape in the writer's mind he should prepare an outline to write the report. In this outline the problem is stated, the facts are recorded, they are briefly analyzed, and the logical conclusion is arrived at. An outline is not essential, but it should be found extremely helpful in writing a systematic report.

5. **Writing the report:** The last stage is that of writing the report. It will need a constant shuttling between the outline and the notes. First a rough draft of the report is prepared. Then it is revised, pruned and polished. If the writer has some more time at his disposal, he will find it advantageous to come back to his rough draft after, say, a couple of days. This short interval will make his revision work really meaningful. The writer should also be careful that the language of the report is simple, unambiguous and free from grammatical errors. It is now time to type it out in a proper form and submit it.

5.4 Structures of Business Reports

Business reports are used extensively in organizations, and it is valuable for any executive to develop an effective report writing style. Business reports come in many forms, from lengthy formal reports to the shorter variations used within departments. Therefore, the writing style should reflect the nature of the report content.

A report can be organized in three ways: Letter form; Memorandum form; and Letter text combination form.

1. **Letter form:** In the case of brief, informal reports, the arrangement followed in business letter is adopted. Its main parts are: heading or the title, date, address, salutation, the body, complimentary close, and signature. It is usually written in the first person- I or we. The body of the letter can be further divided into the following parts:
 - **Introduction:** The introductory paragraphs present the terms of reference and the subject of study. Here the writer states the problem confronting him in the light of the terms of reference and the relevant circumstances.

- **Findings:** The next few paragraphs present the finding of the investigation.
 - **Recommendations:** Recommendations that logically follow the findings are given in the last paragraph of the body.
2. **Memorandum form:** Adopting the memorandum form is a simpler way of presenting the report, since here the formalities of the letterform are done away with. The data is mentioned at the top. It is followed by the name of the person to whom the report. Next follows the actual text and the conclusion. As in the letterform, the text of the report is divided into paragraphs with headings and sub-headings. Large business houses have different types of printed forms to send reports. This simplifies the procedure and ensures uniformity of style.
 3. **Letter-text combination form.** Long reports are usually written in the letter –text combination form.

Structure of Formal Reports: In general, long formal reports follow a recognized structure, made up of a title page, table of contents, executive summary, introduction section, the main body of the report, conclusions section, recommendations and appendices.

Title Page: The title page, as its name suggests, identifies the report, so that it can be distributed to those individuals who are authorized to receive it. The title page should also contain sufficient information to enable the report to be retrieved easily once it is in storage. This page should be attractively laid out, as it is the first page that the reader sees, and first impressions are important!

Table of Contents: The table of contents lists the main sections or chapters that appear in the report and the page number for each.

Executive Summary: The executive summary plays an important role in the business report. Its function is to provide busy individuals with an overview of the report contents. Therefore, the summary should be interesting enough to encourage the executive to return to the report when he/she is less busy! The normal length of the summary is between 350 – 550 words, and the summary should contain the objective(s) of the report, main findings, conclusions or recommendations. However, some extensive reports concentrate on presenting an overview of the conclusions or recommendations.

Introduction Section: The introduction should set out the aims and objectives of the report and provide background information about the matter being investigated or discussed. In addition, the author(s) of the report should explain how the data presented in the report has been gathered, and how the report itself is structured.

Main Body of Report: This section presents the main findings concerning the report's subject matter. These findings should be laid out in a clear and logical fashion, so that it is easy for the reader to follow the author(s) train of thought. It is usual to put the most important findings at the beginning of the section. It is important to use a system of headings, sub-headings and numbers to break large chunks of text down into smaller paragraphs.

Conclusions Section: In the section, the main findings are assessed. Any conclusions presented should be fair and unbiased, and should not be used as a means of highlighting the author's subjective opinions.

Recommendations: Recommendations for further action should only be made when the specific aims of the report, or terms of reference, dictate

that recommendations be provided in the final report. Any recommendations made should be presented in order of importance and be written in a very precise manner, so that the readers are clear about the author's intentions.

Bibliography: If the report is based on extensive research, the works consulted by the writer are given in the bibliography. The bibliography may also include works recommended for further study.

Appendices: There are times when large amounts of data or statistics cannot be easily inserted into the main findings. Therefore, this information can be placed in an appendix at the end of the report. Clear references should be made to the appendix in the main body of the report. This approach is very valuable where several long tables of data must be contained in the report.

Glossary: It is the list of technical words used in the reports and their explanations. Whether these words are to be given in the beginning or the end or in footnotes is entirely a matter of the writer's choice. Besides, whether the glossary is needed at all depends upon who is going to read the report. If it is going to be read by knowledgeable people who are already familiar with the terms, there is no need to include the glossary in the report.

Signature: A report must be dated and signed by the person(s) who has (have) submitted it. In the case of a report prepared by a committee or a sub-committee, if it is very important, all the members may sign it, otherwise the signature of the Chairman will suffice. If the report is not unanimous, it may be signed only by the assenting members. The dissenting members may submit a separate minority report or they may sign the majority report with a note of dissent

Finally, it is wise to proof-read the report before it is printed to ensure that there are no spelling errors, and that the page numbers indicated in the table of contents match exactly the pages on which headings appear in the report!

5.5 Summary

Whatever shade of feasibility or recommendation report you write, whatever name people call it--most of the sections and the organization of those sections are roughly the same. Now remember! Your specific writing project may not require all of these sections, nor in the order shown here--plus you may need other sections not mentioned here.

The structural principle fundamental to this type of report is this: you provide not only your recommendation, choice, or judgment, but also the data and the conclusions leading up to it. That way, readers can check your findings, your logic, and your conclusions and come up with a completely different view. But, more likely, they will be convinced by all your careful research and documentation.

Introduction: In the introduction, indicate that the document that follows is a feasibility report (or whatever it is called). Instead of calling the report by name (which might not mean anything to most readers), you can indicate its purpose. Also, provide an overview of the contents of the report.

For some feasibility reports, you'll also be able to discuss the situation and the requirements in the introductions. If there is little to say about them, you can merge them with the introduction, or make the introduction two paragraphs long.

Technical Background: Some feasibility reports may require some technical discussion in order to make the rest of the report meaningful to

readers. The dilemma with this kind of information is whether to put it in a section of its own or to fit it into the comparison sections where it is relevant. For example, a discussion of power and speed of laptop computers is going to necessitate some discussion of RAM, megahertz, and processors. Should you put that in a section that compares the laptops according to power and speed? Should you keep the comparison neat and clean, limited strictly to the comparison and the conclusion? Maybe all the technical background can be pitched in its own section--either toward the front of the report or in an appendix.

Background on the Situation: For many feasibility reports, you'll need to discuss the problem, need, or opportunity that has brought about this report. If there is little that needs to be said about it, this information can go in the introduction.

Requirements and Criteria: A critical part of feasibility and recommendation reports is the discussion of the requirements you'll use to reach the final decision or recommendation. If you're trying to recommend a laptop computer for use by employees, there are likely to be requirements concerning size, cost, hard-disk storage, display quality, durability, and battery function. If you're looking into the feasibility of providing every ACC student with an ID on the ACC computer network, you'd need define the basic requirements of such a program--what it would be expected to accomplish, problems that it would have to avoid, and so on. If you're evaluating the recent program of free bus transportation in Austin, you'd need to know what was expected of the program and then compare its actual results to those requirements.

Requirements can be defined in several basic ways:

- *Numerical values:* Many requirements are stated as maximum or minimum numerical values. For example, there may be a cost requirement--the laptop should cost no more than \$900.
- *Yes/no values:* Some requirements are simply a yes-no question. Does the laptop come equipped with a modem? Is the car equipped with air conditioning?
- *Ratings values:* In some cases, key considerations cannot be handled either with numerical values or yes/no values. For example, we might want a laptop that has an ease-of-use rating of at least "good" by some nationally accepted ratings group. Or we may have to assign a rating ourselves.

The term "requirements" is used here instead of "criteria." A certain amount of ambiguity hangs around this word; plus most people are not sure whether it is singular or plural. (Technically, it is plural; "criterion" is singular, although "criteria" is commonly used for both the singular and plural. Try using "criterion" in public--you'll get weird looks. "Criterias" is not a word and should never be used.)

The requirements section should also discuss how important the individual requirements are in relation to each other. Picture the typical situation where no one option is best in all categories of comparison. One option is cheaper; another has more functions; one has better ease-of-use ratings; another is known to be more durable. Devise a method by which you can pick a "winner" from situation where there is no clear winner.

Discussion of the Options: In certain kinds of feasibility or recommendation reports, you'll need to explain how you narrowed the field of choices down to the ones your report focuses on. Often, this follows right after the discussion of the requirements. Your basic requirements may well narrow the field down for

you. But there may be other considerations that disqualify other options--explain these as well.

Additionally, you may need to provide brief descriptions of the options themselves. Don't get this mixed up with the comparison that comes up in the next section. In this description section, you provide a general discussion of the options so that readers will know something about them. The discussion at this stage is not comparative. It's just a general orientation to the options. In the laptops example, you might want to give some brief, general specifications on each model about to be compared.

Category-by-Category Comparisons: One of the most important parts of a feasibility or recommendation report is the comparison of the options. Remember that you include this section so that readers can check your thinking and come up with different conclusions if they desire. This should be handled category by category, rather than option by option. If you were comparing laptops, you'd have a section that compared them on cost, another section that compared them on battery function, and so on. You *wouldn't* have a section that discussed everything about option A, another which discussed everything about option B, and so on. That would not be effective at all, because the comparisons must still be made somewhere. (See Figure 9-3 for a schematic illustration of these two approaches to comparisons.)

Each of these comparative sections should end with a conclusion that states which option is the best choice in that particular category of comparison. Of course, it won't always be easy to state a clear winner--you may have to qualify the conclusions in various ways, providing multiple conclusions for different conditions.

If you were doing an evaluation report, you obviously wouldn't be comparing options. Instead, you'd be comparing the thing being evaluated against the

requirements placed upon it, the expectations people had of it. For example, Capital Metro had a program of more than a year of free bus transportation--what was expected of that program? did the program meet those expectations?

Conclusions: The conclusions section of a feasibility or recommendation report is in part a summary or restatement of the conclusions you have already reached in the comparison sections. In this section, you restate the individual conclusions, for example, which model had the best price, which had the best battery function, and so on.

But this section has to go further. It must untangle all the conflicting conclusions and somehow reach the final conclusion, which is the one that states which is the best choice. Thus, the conclusion section first lists the *primary conclusions*--the simple, single-category ones. But then it must state *secondary conclusions*--the ones that balance conflicting primary conclusions. For example, if one laptop is very inexpensive and has poor battery function, but another is rather expensive but has good or even excellent battery function, which do you choose, and why? The secondary conclusion would state the answer to this dilemma.

And of course as already mentioned, the conclusions section ends with the *final conclusion*--the one that states which option is the best choice.

Recommendation or Final Opinion: The final section of feasibility and recommendation reports states the recommendation. You'd think that that ought to be obvious by now. Ordinarily it is, but remembers that some readers may skip right to the recommendation section and bypass all your hard work! Also, there will be some cases where there may be a best choice but you wouldn't want to recommend it. Early in their history, laptops were heavy and unreliable--there may have been one model that was better than the rest, but even it was not worth having.

The recommendation section should echo the most important conclusions leading to the recommendation and then state the recommendation emphatically. Ordinarily, you may need to recommend several options based on different possibilities. This can be handled, as shown in the examples, with bulleted lists.

In an evaluation report, this final section would state a final opinion or judgement. Yes, the free-bus-transportation program was successful, or at least it was, based on its initial expectations. No, it was a miserable flop--it lived up to none of its minimal requirements. Or, it was both a success and a flop--it did live up to some of its requirements, but did not do so in others. But in this case you're still on the hook--what's your overall evaluation? Once again, the basis for that judgment has to be stated somewhere in the requirements section.

Thousand of reports, long or short, formal or informal, crucial or ordinary, special or routine are written everyday. A supervisor, at the end of the day, reports to the manager the progress of the work carried on in his supervision. The manager of bank sends a periodic report to the Head Office on the sate of deposits, advances, overdraft limits, etc.

C.A. Brown offers a very simple definition: A report is a communication from someone who has some information to someone who wants to use that information.

A report is a 'basic management tool used in decision-making'. Hence, it is extremely important. In a one-man business, the functions of reporting and decision-making are combined in one man-the proprietor. He knows his business inside out and is capable of making on-the-spot decisions. So he does not need any reports. Nevertheless, large-scale organizations are

engaged in multifarious activities, which are being handled by different departments. Their top executives cannot keep a personal watch over all these activities. So they have to base their decisions on the reports they get from the heads of various departments. For large organizations, reports are just indispensable.

Throughout this lesson, we have made a strong case for the increasingly important role that business reports play in the successful management of the contemporary organization. However, too much of a good thing is a bad thing. Without proper management, report – especially computer printouts – can backfire, becoming a nuisance and contributing to information overload.

With the increasing availability of data and the ease with which that data can be manipulated, copied, and distributed, managers sometimes tend to generate every type of report possible and then submit them all to higher-level management. Some managers seem to devote more energy to generating reports than to analyzing and making use of their contents.

Thus, someone in the organization – preferably someone in higher management – should be assigned the task of controlling reports. Periodically, (typically, annually) this individual should make an inventory of all recurring reports and determine the continuing usefulness of each one. Some reports may be eliminated altogether, some modified, others merged, and, where justified, new reports authorized.

This review process will guarantee that business reports continue to serve management rather than the reverse. With or without such controls, all managers should ensure that the reports they write serve some actual purpose, stick to that purpose, and avoid including extraneous computer data just because it's easily available.

As you reread and revise your business report, watch out for problems such as the following:

- *Write a good introduction in which you indicate the situation and the audience and provide an overview of the contents.*
- *State requirements--those factors that influence the decision or the choice of options. (And remember to state how important requirements are in relation to each other.)*
- *Indicate how the field of options was narrowed to the ones being compared.*
- *Organize the comparison of the options using the point-by-point approach. Don't use the whole-to-whole approach.*
- *At the end of each comparative section, state the best choice in terms that point of comparison.*
- *Include a summary table, if possible, in which you summarize all the key data in table form.*
- *Provide technical background, if necessary for understanding the comparative discussion.*
- *Discuss the background on the problem or opportunity--what brought about the need for the report.*
- *Include a conclusions section where you restate all the key conclusions from the comparison section.*
- *State secondary conclusions in the conclusions section--and based them on requirements that you state in the requirements section of the report.*
- *State a final conclusion in the conclusions section--one that states which is the best choice.*

- *Include a recommendation section where you make the recommendation. Briefly mention the key factors influencing the recommendation.*

5.6 Self-Assessment Exercise

1. "The single most significant characteristic of the business report is the ability to define the structure of a report." Discuss.
2. "Communication is the sum of all things one person does when he wants to create understanding in the mind of another. It is a bridge of meaning. It involves a systematic and continuous process of telling, listening and understanding." Discuss the statement in the light of business report writing.
3. Write a note on the need and importance of business report. What are the ideal features of such report..
4. What is the desirable structure of a business report? How many ways a report can be written?
5. Your manager has asked you to determine whether or not the office staff would welcome the introduction of canteen facilities. Most of the staff have indicated that they would, but only if the facilities were of a high standard. Some of the staff would prefer luncheon vouchers. Make your recommendation in a report to your manager.

5.7 Suggested Readings

1. Pal, Rajendra and Korlahalli, J. S., Essentials of Business Communication.
2. Kaul, Asha, Effective Business Communication.
3. Lesikar, R. V. and Pettite J. D., Business Communication.
4. Sharma, R. C. , Business Communication and Report Writing.
5. Shinha, P., Business Communication.

Subject: Communication and Secretarial Practices

Course: M. Com

Author: Dr. Karam Pal

Course Code: MC-102

Vetter: Prof. Harbhajan Bansal

Lesson: 6

Business Communication: Company Meetings

Objective: The primary objectives of this lesson are to develop and use an agenda to lead discussion of the meeting's key objectives; to understand the politics of meeting with subordinates, peers or superiors; to identify personality types and target your own message for maximum impact; and to encourage participation, so that all of the decisions made are owned by the group.

Lesson Structure

- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Preparation & Follow Up for Meeting
- 6.3 The Meeting Agenda
- 6.4 Meeting Minutes – General Guidelines
- 6.5 Summary
- 6.6 Self Assessment Exercise
- 6.7 Suggested Readings.

6.1 Introduction

Most people must have heard the story of the American corporate president who had the hourly salaries of his senior board members entered into an electronic display, which updated the cost of each meeting as it progressed. The president would periodically turn to the display and ask the meeting participants if they had justified the accumulated cost. No doubt this was an effective way of keeping minds focused, but even that approach seriously underestimates the true cost of a meeting.

Simple salary based calculations take no account of the other costs associated with a meeting. Every meeting has associated with it a time and a cost – but how many half hour meetings actually last 30 minutes? Far more overrun than finish early, so even quantifying the time of the meeting isn't that easy.

6.2 Preparation & Follow Up

You would normally expect to spend some time ahead of a meeting - preparing for it. You would also spend some time following the meeting in pursuing tasks that have arisen from it. Typically, a meeting could occupy three to five times the scheduled duration of the meeting.

Overhead and Administration costs: This category includes the fixed costs of the meeting venue, whether it is in-house or external, as well as the cost of hiring any presentation equipment that may be required. It will include all of the communication and production costs associated with the meeting - items such as stationery, printing, telecommunications and postage. If the meeting uses videoconferencing, then this can be quite a significant cost.

Travel costs : People often travel quite long distances in order to attend meetings and not only must this cost be factored in, but also an appropriate allowance for any non-productive time.

Opportunity costs: Whilst people are in meetings they are not able to carry out their normal duties. For example, a sales meeting may take a number of key sales staff off the road for a day. Sales opportunities will inevitably be

missed and this needs to be considered when estimating the true cost of the meeting?

Reducing the Number of Meetings You Attend: **Learning to say no to unnecessary meetings will be an important part of your meetings strategy. It is only by declining inappropriate, or poorly planned, meetings that you will find the time to prepare for and attend those that are of real value.**

How often have you agreed to attend a meeting, only to find out that there was nothing to it that couldn't have been dealt with via email or the telephone?

How many meetings have you attended where your presence was entirely superfluous? What about those meetings where the other party's agenda meant that you were put on the spot, and you wished you hadn't attended?

If you start to take responsibility for every meeting, whether you are chairing it or just attending, you will soon find that you are going to fewer and better meetings. You will become more specific about what it is that you want to accomplish and you'll be more focused on achieving a positive outcome.

If you decide that there are some meetings that you would either like to avoid or would like to see restructured, then there are a variety of approaches that you can adopt. For example:

Ask for clarification of the objective : If you ask the leader of a forthcoming meeting to clarify the meeting objective, this will encourage them to re-evaluate the best way that this might be achieved. You could also ask about other aspects of the proposed meeting: are the planned

attendees the best group, is the timing right and is all relevant information available?

Identify the deficiencies : If your main objection to a forthcoming meeting is that one or more aspects of it are missing or poorly planned, you should communicate this to the meeting leader. This is best done in a constructive working environment, where these comments are unlikely to cause insult or confusion. This strategy works well because it not only affects the meeting in question, but should result in better planned meetings in the future.

Question the need for your attendance : This is easier to do if the meeting leader is your subordinate or a peer, rather than your boss. Where you wish to extricate yourself from a meeting called by your boss a good approach can be to couch your request in terms of an opportunity cost. For example, “Two other people from my section are already attending, so I think it would be a better use of my time to complete the plan for the new project, rather than attend this meeting”. This couches your request in terms of an opportunity to complete another urgent task. Always make these requests from the team player perspective and stress the benefits, which should be in the best interests of your boss.

Try making your contribution on the telephone : Calling the meeting leader to make your contribution ahead of the meeting may preclude the need for you to attend it. You may wish to follow this up with a written contribution that the leader can table on the day. This approach is can prove very useful if your involvement is superficial, for example if you are needed for your technical opinion in a fairly narrow area.

Simply be unavailable : In some cases you will have other commitments that mean you cannot attend a meeting. You may choose to use this as a valid excuse for skipping a meeting. You may even distance yourself from the message by asking a secretary or colleague to communicate this on your behalf.

Deciding which meetings to attend, or influence in some way, is best done in a considered and direct way. It is in everyone's best interest to attend effective and well-structured meetings. Remember, your time is your responsibility, if you decide that you should not attend a meeting, then take action to avoid it.

Clarify Your Objectives : How often do you enter a meeting with a clear idea of what you hope to achieve, what decision should be made or what problem will be solved?

This is not the same as a general perception of what the meeting is about. A lot of meetings are called and run on the basis that everybody knows what the goal of the meeting is. Don't assume that this is the case or that you all share a common purpose. Without a clear consensus about the goal of a meeting, the chance of success is minimal. Generally speaking, the fewer tasks that are undertaken, the more successful the meeting is likely to be. It is important to set measurable objectives prior to each meeting that you attend, especially if your role is that of chairperson. This gives you something to strive for during the meeting, and you will know when the meeting ends whether or not it has been successful. Some meetings will lend themselves to readily identifiable success criteria whereas others will not. Here are some examples:

Sales Meeting : In a final sales meeting where success is measured by getting the written order the criteria for success would be to secure an order. Failure to do so would normally indicate a failed meeting.

Negotiation : You would usually enter a negotiation with a checklist of things you would like to secure from the other side, together with a list of points you would be willing to concede. These represent objective criteria against which the meeting can be assessed.

Presentation Meeting : At a meeting designed to inform, the success criteria could be the amount of information imparted. However, this takes no account of the information that is actually received and understood by the attendees. In reality, this makes objective success criteria very difficult to establish.

If you are able to set measurable objectives, then share them with the meeting group. Set out a route for the meeting with clear milestones and then assess its success in achieving the objectives you set for it. Adopting this approach may convince you that a meeting is not always the right course of action, and you may find yourself calling fewer meetings.

Think Ahead for Effectiveness: **Over the past decade meetings have started to consume an increasing proportion of the working day. This trend seems set to continue, with more and longer meetings occupying the time of senior staff. Despite predictions that the impact of high technology in the workplace would reduce the need for meetings, the reverse is proving to be the case.**

More than ever before, organizations need staff that possess total meeting skills, including the ability to limit and shape the increasing demand for meetings. Meetings that last too long or that are held too often will be seen for what they are, an expensive liability, wasting the organizations resources and money.

This course will help you to develop effective meeting skills, whether you are attending as the chairperson or as a participant. All aspects of meetings are covered in detail, including preparation, communicating effectively and maintaining control throughout the meeting process.

Meetings often represent the most dramatic and powerful events in the workplace. When a meeting works well the added value can be enormous. However, meetings that give rise to poorly considered decisions and inappropriate follow-up actions will leverage this failure throughout the organization.

Each type of meeting should be carefully planned to achieve its specific objective. For example: If the main objective of the meeting is to inform people, then the meeting will usually involve some form of presentation followed by a question and answer session. This type of meeting should focus on the person presenting the information and the opportunity for discussion will often be limited.

If the meeting is held to solve a problem or brainstorm new ideas then everyone should be encouraged to participate from the outset. This kind of meeting should be relatively unstructured, and free flowing discussion should be encouraged. This will be helped by selecting the most appropriate venue and seating arrangement.

When meetings are successful they achieve a dynamic interchange between the participants in which they can achieve more than they could by working alone - or by communicating by some other means. However, when the outcome is evaluated objectively, many meetings are not successful and often leave the participants feeling that the meeting was a waste of time.

Preparing Your Case: If you are presenting, or supporting, one case against another then you must give careful consideration to the preparation and management of your case. Carry out some background research before a meeting, to help you to make an informed contribution. Sources of information may well include: colleagues who have worked in similar fields, research material and other relevant publications and notes or minutes from previous group meetings. Your research should include finding out whatever you can about the other attendees, for example their views and interests in the areas being discussed.

If your views are likely to meet strong resistance, try to identify your opponents and negotiate a compromise, or at least an understanding, in advance. This way neither party will be undermined in public and the atmosphere at the meeting can be kept far more positive and constructive.

Plan the content of any case you will present at a meeting around the message or messages you want to convey, in order to achieve your objective. It is important to keep the focus of your presentation on the message and not on the information and facts that underpin that message. This can be very difficult; especially when the message is supported by a multitude of facts that you think the audience should know.

If your presentation does consist of a series of facts and supporting evidence, then the audience is likely to assimilate these and draw their own conclusions. If this happens you will lose the opportunity to influence and shape the audiences' interpretation. It is far more effective to communicate your messages and then support them with an adequate level of facts and information - so that your meeting partners can line them up behind the message you wish to convey.

6.3 The Meeting Agenda

The best way to ensure that those attending a meeting are clear about its purpose is to send them an agenda well in advance. The agenda should state which issues will be discussed and in what order. It suggests the outline for the meeting minutes and to some extent predicts the results of the meeting. An agenda should be short, simple and clear.

The meeting agenda has three distinct purposes. Firstly, it acts as a reference against which to prepare for a meeting. Secondly, it is a script for the meeting itself a mechanism for control and order. Finally, it represents a standard by which the meeting can be judged a success or failure.

It is often said that the person who controls the agenda controls the meeting. The agenda is often treated with almost legal reverence by those attending the meeting. When you are leading a meeting you owe it to yourself and your meeting partners to have prepared and circulated an agenda.

If you are asked to attend a meeting expect, or even request, an agenda. Attending a meeting with an unseen agenda could leave you vulnerable to an issue for which you are not prepared.

The Meeting Agenda Illustrated

Finance Committee Meeting ¹ 24 February 09.30 - 11.45 hrs Board Room	Finance Committee Meeting ² 24 February 09.30 - 11.45 hrs Board Room
<p>1. Apologies for Absence</p> <p>2. Minutes of Last Meeting Approval of minutes of meeting of November 10, Minutes are attached.</p> <p>3. Chairpersons Remarks This will be an opportunity for a general discussion, report attached.</p> <p>4. Budget for Next Fiscal Year Action item. Next years budget was approved, in principle, by the Board at their January meeting. Action was then deferred pending receipt of a report on the research budget allocated to project Lazarus. A copy of this report is available to all meeting attendees from the Finance Secretary. Approval of the budget is being recommended.</p>	<p>5. Committee Reports (a) Ethics Committee : Action Item. The management summary from this report is attached, together with recommended actions. The full report is filed in the study room.</p> <p>(b) Planning Committee : Discussion Item. The management summary from this report is attached, together with recommended actions. The full report is filed in the study room. We are expecting to seek approval for this at the next meeting (May).</p> <p>6. Any Other Business</p> <p>7. Adjournment</p>

The best way to ensure that those attending a meeting are clear about its purpose is to send them an agenda well in advance. The agenda should state which issues will be discussed and in what order. It suggests the outline for the meeting minutes and to some extent predicts the results of the meeting. An agenda should be short, simple and clear.

The agenda should be headed with the date, time and location of the meeting. The overall time should be shown on the agenda. In this example, the duration is indicated at the top; an alternative to this is to place a start time against each item on the agenda. It is important that an agenda displays the overall duration of the meeting as this enables participants to plan their day in advance. Furthermore it enables the chairperson to keep control of the meeting with reference to the published time-frame.

It is usual to number each item on the agenda and to formally introduce each one. The apologies for absence, involves naming those who were invited but unable to attend. Minutes of last meeting, this is a formal process, normally involving agreement followed by the chairpersons' signature. Specific headings are then given for each topic that needs to be addressed.

Any other business: Many organizations prefer to drop this item from agendas, restricting the meeting to specific items. The risk with including this option is that it can invite almost any point of discussion and meetings can drag on indefinitely.

Any relevant background information should be sent out with the agenda. Aim to make the agenda as informative as practical, it should encourage participants to turn up and play as full a role as possible. If the agenda is dull then the attendees are less likely to prepare well, or they may even decide not to turn up at all.

Remember, the key items discussed at the meeting are presented in the same order within the meeting minutes as was shown on the meeting Agenda.

6.4 Meeting Minutes – General Guidelines

The following is a guide for how to record the minutes of a formal meeting:

- Make sure that all of the essential elements are noted, such as type of meeting, name of the organization, date and time, name of the chair or facilitator, main topics and the time of adjournment. For formal and

corporate meetings include approval of previous minutes, and any relevant resolutions.

- Prepare an outline based on the meeting agenda (see the content of Meeting Agenda on this website). Leave plenty of white space within the minutes for your notes. By having the topics already written down, you can jump right on to a new topic without pausing
- Prepare a list of expected attendees and check off the names as people enter the room. Or, you can pass around an attendance sheet for everyone to sign as the meeting starts. The degree of formality used here will reflect the significance of the meeting and it's future accountability.
- To be sure about who said what, make a map of the seating arrangement, and make sure to ask for introductions of unfamiliar people.
- Don't make the mistake of recording every single comment, but concentrate on getting the general meaning of the discussion and taking enough notes that you can summarize it later. Remember that minutes are the official record of what happened, not exactly what was said, at a meeting.
- Use whatever device is comfortable for you, a notepad, a laptop computer, a tape recorder, a steno pad or even shorthand. Many people routinely make an audio-recording of important meetings as a backup to their notes.
- Be prepared! Study the issues to be discussed and ask a lot of questions ahead of time. If you have to fumble for understanding while you are making your notes, they may not make much sense to you later – when you need to type the minutes up.

- Don't wait too long to type up the minutes, again recency is the key to producing an accurate record of the events. Make sure that you have them approved by the chair or facilitator before distributing them to the meeting attendees.

Don't lose sight of the fact that this is an important task. You may be called upon many times to write meeting minutes, and the ability to produce concise, coherent minutes is widely admired and valued.

Meeting Minutes – Example Meeting Minutes

<p>Avon Sports Club - Meeting Minutes ¹ 24 February 7pm-8pm Clubhouse</p> <p>Present : Sally Scott, Di Wells, Helen Clarke, John Mills, Barrat Singh.</p> <p>1. Apologies for Absence were received from Sandy Taylor and Alison Jones.</p> <p>2. Minutes of the last meeting on January 8th were approved as a correct record.</p> <p>3. Junior Section Fundraising Activities. Sally Scott to arrange sponsored cycle. SS John Mills to organise spring BBQ. JM</p>	<p>Avon Sports Club - Meeting Minutes ² 24 February 7pm-8pm Clubhouse</p> <p>4. Sponsorship from Local Companies. It was agreed that local companies who have sponsored the club in the past should be approached with a view to sponsoring the club again this year. Di Wells to approach Novotek. DW Helen Clarke to approach CJN Engineering. HC</p> <p>5. Any Other Business There was no other business.</p> <p>6. Date of next Meeting. The next meeting will take place on March 24th.</p>
---	---

This screen illustrates the sort of detail that might appear in the minutes of a routine sports club committee meeting. Therefore, here we are looking at minutes at the entry level of what might be classed as a formal meeting. Minutes should always reflect the agenda. Note that the date and venue are listed. The names of the participants are recorded. Absentees are noted, and the key items discussed are presented in the same order as shown on the meeting Agenda.

The final copy of the minutes should follow the same format as the agenda, even if items were discussed in a different order. There is often a set style for a given organization, which enables the minutes of meetings to be filed and compared more easily.

The name, or initials, placed in an action column on the right hand side of the minutes can serve as a useful reminder to those who were allocated specific follow-up tasks during the course of the meeting.

Example Meeting Minutes (Formal)

MEETING MINUTES - DRAFT

TOPIC: Intranet Working Group (IWG)

DATE: 15-10-2005

ATTENDEES:

Bell	Jeremy Ironwork	
	Ian Fradgmousse	
	France Noveau	
CCTA	Sheila Legwell	
Industry Rep	Sarah Glass	
Micro-est	Larry Grayson	
SRCI	Gordon Gofor	
	Herbert Lecter	Chair
	Trevor Hearn	Recorder
	Fritz Burger	
	Pam King	
	Donna Spring	

PURPOSE: 1) Review status reports from sub working group chairs.

Meeting Summary:Discussion / Topics

1. Minutes of meeting 15-102005 be accepted.
2. Each sub group chair provided a summary of progress since the last CISC meeting; these verbal reports have been documented in the attached progress report submitted by the chair at the CISC meeting on January 05, 2002.
3. There was general discussion on two items which are contentious in the planning group. These are also documented in the attached progress

report. JRS indicated he would raise the issues at the CISC meeting for steering committee direction.

4. Confirmed next meeting is scheduled for February 11, 2005

6.6 Self-Assessment Exercise

1. "The single most significant characteristic of the business meetings is the ability to present the agenda in effective format." Discuss.
2. "Communication is the sum of all things one person does when he wants to create understanding in the mind of another. It is a bridge of meaning. It involves a systematic and continuous process of telling, listening and understanding." Discuss the statement in the light of business corporate meetings.
3. Write a note on the need and importance of business meetings. What are the ideal features of such meetings?

6.7 Suggested Readings

1. Pal, Rajendra and Korlahalli, J. S., Essentials of Business Communication.
2. Kaul, Asha, Effective Business Communication.
3. Lesikar, R. V. and Pettite J. D., Business Communication.
4. Sharma, R. C. , Business Communication and Report Writing.
5. Shinha, P., Business Communication.

Subject: Communication and Secretarial Practices

Course: M. Com

Author: Dr. Karam Pal

Course Code: MC-102

Vetter: Prof. Harbhajan Bansal

Lesson: 7

Correspondence Relating to Inquiries and Instruction

Objective: The primary objectives of this lesson are to develop the communication skills relating to inquiries and other associated aspects.

Lesson Structure

- 7.1 **The Concept of Inquiry**
- 7.2 The Concept of Instruction
- 7.3 Correspondence and Answers to Inquiries
- 7.4 Self Assessment Exercise
- 7.5 Suggested Readings.

7.1 THE CONCEPT OF INQUIRY

The inquiry is useful when you need information, advice, names, or directions. Be careful, however, not to ask for too much information or for information that you could easily obtain in some other way, for example, by a quick trip to the library.

There are two types of inquiry: *solicited* and *unsolicited*. You have solicited inquiry when a business or agency advertises its products or services. For example, if a software manufacturer advertises some new package it has developed and you can't inspect it locally, write a solicited letter to that manufacturer asking specific questions. If you cannot find any information on a technical subject, an inquiry letter to a company involved in that subject may put you on the right track. In fact, that company may supply

much more help than you had expected, provided of course, that you write a good inquiry letter.

You are unsolicited if the recipient has done nothing to prompt your inquiry. For example, if you read an article by an expert, you may have further questions or want more information. You seek help from these people in a slightly different form of inquiry letter. As the steps and guidelines for both types of inquiry letters show, you must construct the unsolicited type more carefully, because recipients of unsolicited letters of inquiry are not ordinarily prepared to handle such inquiries.

Inquiry Letters: Contents and Organization

1. Early in the letter, identify the purpose — to obtain help or information (if it's a solicited letter, information about an advertised product, service, or program).
2. In an unsolicited letter, identify who you are, what you are working on, and why you need the requested information, and how you found out about the individual. In an unsolicited letter, also identify the source that prompted your inquiry, for example, a magazine advertisement.
3. In the letter, list questions or information needed in a clear, specific, and easy-to-read format. If you have quite a number of questions, consider making a questionnaire and including a stamped, self-addressed envelope.
4. In an unsolicited letter, try to find some way to compensate the recipient for the trouble, for example, by offering to pay copying and mailing costs, to accept a collect call, to acknowledge the recipient in your report, or to send him or her a copy of your report. In a solicited letter, suggest that the recipient send brochures or catalogs.

5. In closing an unsolicited letter, express gratitude for any help that the recipient can provide you, acknowledge the inconvenience of your request, but do not thank the recipient "in advance." In an unsolicited letter, tactfully suggest to the recipient will benefit by helping you (for example, through future purchases from the recipient's company).

The example of an inquiry letter is given hereunder:

1102 West 30th
Lawrence, KS 66321
August 4, 19XX

Dr. Maria Gomez-Salinas
Director of the Diabetes Clinic
St. David's Hospital
1000 Greenberg Lane
Wichita, KS 66780

Dear Dr. Gomez-Salinas:

I am writing you in hopes of finding out more about how the new Glucoscan II blood glucose monitoring system, which a representative at Lifescan informed me that your clinic is currently using.

Originally, I saw Lifescan's advertisement of this new device in the January 19XX issue of Diabetes Forecast and became very interested in it. I wrote the company and got much useful information, but was recommended to write several current users of the system as well.

For a technical report that I am writing for a technical writing class at Johnson County Junior College, I need some help with the following questions:

- How often does the Glucoscan II need to be calibrated in practical, everyday use conditions?
- How accurate is the Glucoscan II compared to other similar systems that your patients have used?
- What problems do your patients experience with this new device?

The Lifescan representative indicated that your clinic is one the leaders in implementing new technology for diabetics, and therefore I am eager to hear from you. In the report I will acknowledge your contributions, and I will send you a copy of the completed report if you wish.

Thank you for your time, and I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

Anita Teller
Student, Medical Technology
Johnson County Junior College

7.2 THE CONCEPT OF INSTRUCTION

As you know, instructions are those step-by-step explanations of how to do something: how to build, operate, repair, or maintain things. This focuses on description, definition, or one of the other information structures. These are common elements in technical writing. Rather than documents type of their own, they more commonly appear as elements or parts of other

documents, such as instructions in this case. However, you can imagine description, for example, being used heavily in reports on accidents, property appraisals, and product specifications. The content, organization, and format suggestions discussed in the information-structures section will give you a good foundation to write these other kinds of documents. In this, you actually write two assignments in one: a set of instructions and an information structure (such as description, definition, or other) integrated within those instructions. This scenario gives you experience with two key types of technical writing but in a way that saves two to three weeks in the semester. This enables you to have more time toward the end of the semester to work full time on your technical-report project.

One of the most common and one of the most important uses of technical writing is instructions--those step-by-step explanations of how to do things: assemble something, operate something, repair something, or do routine maintenance on something. But for something seemingly so easy and intuitive, instructions are some of the worst-written documents you can find. Like me, you've probably had many infuriating experiences with badly written instructions. What follows in this chapter may not be a fool-proof, goof-proof guide to writing instructions, but it will show you what professionals consider the best techniques.

Ultimately, however, good instruction writing not only requires these techniques but also:

- Clear, simple writing
- A thorough understanding the procedure in all its technical detail
- Your ability to put yourself in the place of the reader, the person trying to use your instructions

- Your ability to visualize the procedure in great detail and to capture that awareness on paper
- Finally, your willingness to go that extra distance and test your instructions on the kind of person you wrote them for.

By now, you've probably studied headings, lists, and special notices--writing a set of instructions with these tools probably seems obvious. Just break the discussion out into numbered vertical lists and throw in some special notices at the obvious points and you're done! Well, not quite, but that's a great start. This unit explores some of the features of instructions that can make them more complex. You can in turn use these considerations to plan your own instructions.

At the beginning of a project to write instructions, it's important to determine the structure or characteristics of the particular procedure you are going to write about.

Audience and situation: Early in the process, define the audience and situation of your instructions. Remember that defining an audience means defining its level of familiarity with the topic as well as other such details.

Most importantly, you'll need to describe your audience on a separate sheet of paper and hand that in with your instructions. This will enable your instructor to assess your instructions in terms of their rightness for the intended audience. And remember too that in this technical-writing course it is preferable to write for nonspecialist audiences--this is much more of a challenge to you as a writer.

Number of tasks: An important consideration is how many tasks there are in the procedure you are writing instructions for. Let's use the term *procedure* to refer to the whole set of activities your instructions are

intended to discuss. A *task* is a semi-independent group of actions within the procedure: for example, setting the clock on a microwave oven is one task in the big overall procedure of operating a microwave oven.

A simple procedure like changing the oil in a car contains only one task; there are no semi-independent groupings of activities. A more complex procedure like using a microwave oven contains plenty of such semi-independent tasks: setting the clock; setting the power level; using the timer; cleaning and maintaining the microwave, among others.

Some instructions have only a single task, but have many steps within that single task. For example, imagine a set of instructions for assembling a kids' swing set. In my own experience, there were more than a 130 steps! That can be a bit daunting. A good approach is to group similar and related steps into phases, and start renumbering the steps at each new phase. A *phase* then is a group of similar steps within a single-task procedure. In the swing-set example, setting up the frame would be a phase; anchoring the thing in the ground would be another; assembling the box swing would be still another. (The instructions on installing a wall cabinet, starting on page, are organized by phases.)

Best approach to the step-by-step discussion: Another consideration, which maybe you can't determine early on, is how to focus your instructions. For most instructions, you can focus on tasks, or you can focus on tools (or features of tools).

In a *task approach* to instructions on using a phone-answering machine, you'd have sections on recording your greeting, playing back your messages, saving your messages, forwarding your messages, deleting your messages. These are tasks--the typical things we'd want to do with the machine.

On the other hand, in a *tools approach* to instructions on using a photocopier, there would be sections on the copy button, the cancel button, the enlarge/reduce button, the collate/staple button, the paper tray, the copy-size button, and so on. If you designed a set of instructions on this plan, you'd write steps for using each button or feature of the photocopier. Instructions using this tools approach are hard to make work. Sometimes, the name of the button doesn't quite match the task it is associated with; sometimes you have to use more than just the one button to accomplish the task. Still, there can be times when the tools/feature approach may be preferable.

Groupings of tasks: Listing tasks may not be all that you need to do. There may be so many tasks that you must group them so that readers can find individual ones more easily. For example, the following are common task groupings in instructions: unpacking and setup tasks; installing and customizing tasks; basic operating tasks; routine maintenance tasks; troubleshooting tasks; and so on. (For the purposes of this technical writing course, you won't need to cover all of these possibilities--but in a real-world set of instructions, you would.)

Structure and Format of Instructions

Normally, we imagine a set of instructions as being formatted as vertical numbered lists. And most are in fact. Normally, you format your actual step-by-step instructions this way. There are some variations, however, as well as some other considerations:

- *Fixed-order steps* are steps that must be performed in the order presented. For example, if you are changing the oil in a car, draining the oil is a step that *must* come before putting the new oil. These are numbered lists (usually, vertical numbered lists).

- *Variable-order steps* are steps that can be performed in practically any order. Good examples are those troubleshooting guides that tell you to check this, check that where you are trying to fix something. You can do these kinds of steps in practically any order. With this type, the bulleted list is the appropriate format.
- *Alternate steps* are those in which two or more ways to accomplish the same thing are presented. Alternate steps are also used when various conditions might exist. Use bulleted lists with this type, with OR inserted between the alternatives, or the lead-in indicating that alternatives are about to be presented.
- *Nested steps*. In some cases, individual steps within a procedure can be rather complex in their own right and need to be broken down into substeps. In this case, you indent further and sequence the substeps as a, b, c, and so on.
- *"Stepless" instructions*. And finally there exist instructions that really cannot use numbered vertical list and that do little if any straightforward instructional-style directing of the reader. Some situations must be so generalized or so variable that steps cannot be stated. (Let's ignore this possibility for this assignment, however.)

Supplementary discussion: Often, it is not enough simply to tell readers to do this or to do that. They need additional explanatory information such as how the thing should look before and after the step; why they should care about doing this step; what mechanical principle is behind what they are doing; even more micro-level explanation of the step--discussion of the specific actions that make up the step.

The problem with supplementary discussion, however, is that it can hide the actual step. You want the actual step--the specific actions the reader is to take--to stand out. You don't want it all buried in a heap of words. There are at least techniques to avoid this problem: you can split the instruction from the supplement into separate paragraphs; or you can bold the instruction.

Writing style: The way you actually write instructions, sentence by sentence, may seem contradictory to what previous writing classes have taught you. However, notice how "real-world" instructions are written--they use a lot of imperative (command, or direct-address) kinds of writing; they use a lot of "you." That's entirely appropriate. You want to get in your reader's face, get her or his full attention. For that reason, instruction-style sentences sound like these: "Now, press the Pause button on the front panel to stop the display temporarily" and "You should be careful not to ..."

A particular problem involves use of the passive voice in instructions. For some weird reason, some instructions sound like this: "The Pause button should be depressed in order to stop the display temporarily." Not only are we worried about the Pause button's mental health, but we wonder who's supposed to depress the thing (are you talking' to me?). Or consider this example: "The Timer button is then set to 3:00." Again, as the person following these instructions, you might miss this; you might think it is simply a reference to some existing state, or you might wonder, "Are they talking to me?" Almost as bad is using the third person: "The user should then press the Pause button." Again, it's the old double-take: you look around the room and wonder, "Who me?"

Another of the typical problems with writing style in instructions is that people seem to want to leave out articles: "Press Pause button on front

panel to stop display of information temporarily" or "Earth person, please provide address of nearest pizza restaurant." Why do we do this? Do we all secretly want to be robots? Anyway, be sure to include all articles (*a, an, the*) and other such words that we'd normally use in instructions.

As you reread and revise your instructions, watch out for problems such as the following:

- Make sure you provide real instructions--explanations of how to build, operate, or repair something.
- Write a good introduction--in it, indicate the exact procedure to be explained and provide an overview of contents.
- Make sure that you use the various types of lists wherever appropriate. In particular, use numbered vertical lists for sequential steps.
- Use headings to mark off all the main sections and subheadings for subsections. (Remember that no heading "Introduction" is needed between the title and the first paragraph. Remember not to use first-level headings in this assignment; start with the second level.)
- Use special notices as appropriate.
- Make sure you use the class style and format for all headings, lists, special notices, and graphics. If that's a problem, get in touch with your instructor.
- Use graphics to illustrate any key actions or objects.
- Provide additional supplementary explanation of the steps as necessary.
- Remember to create a section listing equipment and supplies, if necessary.

- Follow the guidelines in Appendix for the information structure (description or definition, for example) that you incorporate with these instructions.

As you reread and revise your description, watch out for problems such as the following:

- Make sure you write a real description--discussion of the physical characteristics of a thing.
- Make sure you divide the thing you describe into parts, characteristics, or both.
- Make sure to use as many of the sources of description as is appropriate for the situation.
- Handle abbreviations, symbols, and numbers appropriately.
- Use headings to mark off the discussion of the individual parts or characteristics.
- Use an illustration to show the thing you are describing.

7.3 CORRESPONDENCE AND ANSWERS TO INQUIRIES

Sep 2nd 2005

From The Economist print edition

We regret that the great pressure of matter in this number has rendered it necessary to leave out several articles prepared for it, especially on Economical Science and Agriculture.

We have received a number of applications respecting Agents for THE ECONOMIST in the various towns of the country. We have no present intention of appointing Agents, as our friends can be regularly and

promptly supplied through any metropolitan or provincial Bookseller or Newsvender with who they are in the habit of dealing. Or orders may be sent direct to the Office of THE ECONOMIST, addressed to the Publisher, who will hand them to respectable Newsvenders, through whom they will be regularly supplied.

Many letters have poured in upon us since the “Preliminary Number” of THE ECONOMIST, some of which have been from agricultural friends, kindly and encouraging in their tone, and, to us, strikingly indicative of the great change going on amongst the agricultural constituencies. The following letter is from a plain, honest, intelligent Northumberland farmer:—

“Northumberland, 29th of August, 2005

“Sir,—A friend having put the specimen number of THE ECONOMIST into my hands, I cannot refrain from offering my hearty approval of design which will, nay, must, prove of so much benefit to the community at large. Although only a humble and obscure farmer, I was, like my brethren, alive to those attempts of the Legislature to bolster up the agricultural interest, which have given rise to so much discussion and dissatisfaction. I attempted to form an opinion for myself, and found that to do so required not a slight smattering of political economy, and by making myself acquainted with a few of the leading truths of the science of wealth, I soon saw not only the impolicy of restrictive Corn Laws, but also the reason of their utter inefficiency, and can now lament the ignorant prejudices of the men who allow themselves to believe in our grandmother’s errors. I am, therefore, convinced, that if any person will but make himself acquainted with the doctrines of Adam Smith, the scales must fall from his eyes, and that he will at once perceive the absurdity and folly of protection to any

class as being in reality nothing but making an article scarce and hard earned—in fact, acting contrary to common sense, when thousands are every day, by inventions and discoveries, making commodities of every description cheaper and more easily accessible to every person, and thus increase the wealth, comfort, and happiness of every nation which fully adopts the Free Trade system; in fact, I look upon the opposite theory, if carried fully out, as most assuredly ruining every community who are so foolish as to legislate upon such palpable errors,—would it not warrant us in breaking up all machinery and employing manual labour in the production of those articles which now do not require one-tenth of the work, as the only way to set industry to work?—would it not warrant the statesman in shutting our ports to every article of foreign produce, and even attempting to grow in England our cotton, coffee, tea, and sugar, though at a hundred times the cost?—nay, would it not induce our farmers to neglect the best soils and resort to the worst, as yielding less for labour and making corn dearer, and thus increasing the wealth of the community?

“I find that one great cause of its little progress amongst men of business is the contradiction these seem to imply when understood in the sense generally attached to them instead of that restricted or adopted meaning of the school;—take , for instance, the word wealth, how many still attach the meaning of the commercial theory of money alone, and many of my brother farmers are still harping upon the effects of a free trade in corn as allowing the foreigners to take the gold out of the country and leave us poor and miserable. Their objection appears to be based upon the commercial and agricultural theories so ably exposed by Dr Adam Smith.

“I hope to see your project succeed, as I am convinced nothing but a general acknowledgment of the truth can restore our country to prosperity and happiness, and should I find leisure this winter, I shall gladly assist in

dispelling the errors respecting the corn trade, which have done so much harm for twenty years.”

Having had many inquiries as to our opinions respecting the policy of an immediate or graduate adoption of the principles of Free Trade, we have no hesitation in stating that we have the strongest conviction that commercial changes are always attended with the least inconvenience to all parties, when made decidedly and at once, and that gradual or delayed changes only tend to prolong the inconvenience and frequently to realise, by anticipation, difficulties which exist only in the imagination, and which, in the reality, would never be experienced. We shall take an early opportunity of explaining our views on this point at the greater length which it deserves.

In reply to N.O., Liverpool, the following are the quantities of wheat imported and delivered for consumption in the United Kingdom, in the first seven months of the year:

	Imported	Delivered for consumption
January	7,016	223
February	7,916	644
March	8,123	846
April	13,360	1,532
May	47,276	5,937
June	35,910	1,978
July	66,067	1,363
Totals	185,672	12,527

In reply to E. & Co., of Leeds, the entire import of flax this year up to the 5th of August, has been 774,659 cwts. Against 608,111 cwts. for the same period of last year. The exports of linen manufactures, for the first seven months of this year, have increased to 1,645,970l., against 1,463,484l. in 1842.

J.S. & Co., Glasgow.—Article six, of the last Treaty of Commerce with Austria, provides, in distinct terms, that all articles which can be legally imported into each country, shall be subject to the same rates of duty, whether such goods be imported in the ships of one or the other country: and Article seven provides, that goods so imported into either country can be bonded; and if re-exported and not taken for consumption, the re-exportation can take place in the ships of either country, on the same terms in every respect, and subject only to the same charge.

P. & Co., Bristol.—The difference to which they allude in the rate of duty charged on a cargo of sugar at Antwerp, varying from the duty in the tariff, arises from the facts that in Belgium, in addition to the rate of fixed duty; there are added 16 centimes per franc, called general additional duty, and 6 centimes per franc, called special general duty—thus:

	f. c.
50 Kilograms of Sugar imported by a foreign ship, pays	2 0
16 Centimes per franc, general additional duty	0 32
6 " " special, ditto	0 12
Total	2 44

Or about 1s. 5d. sterling.—A scheffle of wheat in Wurtemberg is equal to four-fifths of a Winchester bushel.

Complaint Letters

A complaint letter requests some sort of compensation for defective or damaged merchandise or for inadequate or delayed services. While many complaints can be made in person, some circumstances require formal business letters. The complaint may be so complex that a phone call may not effectively resolve the problem; or the writer may prefer the permanence, formality, and seriousness of a business letter. The essential rule in writing a complaint letter is to maintain your poise and diplomacy,

no matter how justified your gripe is. Avoid making the recipient an adversary.

1. In the letter, identify early the reason you are writing--to register a complaint and to ask for some kind of compensation. Avoid leaping into the details of the problem in the first sentence.
2. State exactly what compensation you desire, either before or after the discussion of the problem or the reasons for granting the compensation. (It may be more tactful and less antagonizing to delay this statement in some cases).
3. Provide a fully detailed narrative or description of the problem. This is the "evidence."
4. Explain why your request should be granted. Presenting the evidence is not enough: state the reasons why this evidence indicates your requested should be granted.
5. Suggest why it is in the recipient's best interest to grant your request: appeal to the recipient's sense of fairness, desire for continued business, but don't threaten. Find some way to view the problem as an honest mistake. Don't imply that the recipient deliberately committed the error or that the company has no concern for the customer. Toward the end of the letter, express confidence that the recipient will grant your request.

Adjustment Letters

Replies to complaint letters, often called letters of "adjustment," must be handled carefully when the requested compensation cannot be granted. Refusal of compensation tests your diplomacy and tact as a writer. Here are some suggestions that may help you write either type of adjustment letter:

1. Begin with a reference to the date of the original letter of complaint and to the purpose of your letter. If you deny the request, don't state the refusal right away unless you can do so tactfully.
2. Express your concern over the writer's troubles and your appreciation that he has written you.
3. If you deny the request, explain the reasons why the request cannot be granted in as cordial and noncombative manner as possible. If you grant the request, don't sound as if you are doing so in a begrudging way.
4. If you deny the request, try to offer some partial or substitute compensation or offer some friendly advice (to take the sting out of the denial).
5. Conclude the letter cordially, perhaps expressing confidence that you and the writer will continue doing business.

7.4 Self Assessment Questions

1. "The single most significant characteristic of the business inquiry is the ability to present the complaint in effective format." Discuss.
2. "Communication is the sum of all things one person does when he wants to create understanding in the mind of another. It is a bridge of meaning. It involves a systematic and continuous process of telling, listening and understanding." Discuss the statement in the light of business corporate inquiry and instructions.
3. Write a note on the need and importance of business inquiry. What are the ideal features of such inquiry? How it is different from business instruction?

7.5 Suggested Readings

1. Pal, Rajendra and Korlahalli, J. S., Essentials of Business Communication.
2. Kaul, Asha, Effective Business Communication.
3. Lesikar, R. V. and Pettite J. D., Business Communication.
4. Sharma, R. C. , Business Communication and Report Writing.
5. Shinha, P., Business Communication.

Subject: Business Communication Author: Dr. Karam Pal

Course: M. COM

Vetter: Dr. B. S. Bodla

Course Code: MC 102

Lesson: 8

Public Speaking and Presentation

Objective: The primary objective of this lesson is to make the students learn about the basics of public speaking aspects in business communication and to enable them to avoid the occurrence of such events in public speaking that do not add to the value of the speaker.

Structure

- 8.1 Introduction**
- 8.2 Encoding and Translating**
- 8.3 Understanding Your Audience**
- 8.4 Targeting Your Audience**
- 8.5 Designing a Presentation**
- 8.6 Preparing the Venue and Seating Arrangement**
- 8.7 Final Point and Getting Start**
- 8.8 What Style is Best?**
- 8.9 Self Assessment Exercise**
- 8.10 Suggested Readings.**

8.1 Introduction

Public speaking is a common source of stress for everyone. Many of us would like to avoid this problem entirely, but this is hard to do. Whether we work alone or with large numbers of people, eventually we will need to speak in public to get certain tasks accomplished. And if we want to be leaders or achieve anything meaningful in our lives, we will often need to speak to groups, large and small, to be successful.

Many of us have observed public speakers and thought to ourselves "Wow, I could never be that smart, calm, witty, entertaining, polished . . . or whatever." Well, you do not have to be brilliant, witty, or perfect to succeed. That is not what public speaking is all about. I know it may look that way, but it is not. You can be average. You can be below average. You can make mistakes, get tongue-tied, or forget whole segments of your talk. You can even tell no jokes at all and still be successful.

It is human nature to assume that when we communicate we are doing so effectively, and that if anything goes wrong consequently the responsibility for that must rest with the recipient. Here, we draw attention to six steps that constitute a typical two-way communication, and when the opportunities for mis-communication are considered you may view it as surprising how often communication works without a problem.

When, a speaker speaks to a recipient, we have the following possible processes:

- What the speaker thinks to say
- What he actually says
- What the recipient hears

None of these are necessarily the same and three chances already exist for a breakdown in communication. As a result of what a recipient hears, he may make a reply, giving:

- What he thinks to say
- What he actually says
- What the speaker thinks to hear.

Now, multiply that by the number of recipients that may be listening to the speaker and you begin to understand the opportunities for misinterpretations that may arise.

As you can see, communication is a complex two-way process this is why it so often breaks down and is ineffective. With the complexity apparent even in a simple communication, like the one illustrated, it should be apparent that there is a need for clarity and simplicity – as this will minimize the chance of misunderstandings.

Communication is a skill and like any skill, it requires practice. The skill enhancement is a gradual process through practice that differentiates a skill from one form to other forms of knowledge. Understanding the theory of communication and effective public speaking will not in itself make you a brilliant communicator or speaker but should make you aware of how to maximize the impact of your presentations.

The most important thing to remember is that the message that you intend to communicate is likely to be misunderstood. Therefore, in addition to carefully preparing and presenting your message, stay alert for any signs that your audience are mis-interpreting it. It is up to you, the speaker or presenter, to continually check that your message has been received, understood, correctly interpreted and filed in the receivers mind.

We will now examine each of the six steps of the communication model in slightly more detail - with a view to introducing some guidelines that should help to promote more effective two-way communication.

- Step1 - Ensure that your audience are tuned in and paying full attention to what you are about to say. Once you have the attention of the audience the communication of the message can begin.
- Step2 - Each recipient listens to the message.
- Step3 - Each recipient will have some feeling about the message and will interpret its meaning. This is often done in the light of individual attitudes and prejudices or alternatively with reference to previous experience or associations. Your

problem is that the audience may not feel and interpret in the way that you intended. The result may range from a simple failure for the message to hit home, through to a serious misunderstanding.

- Step4 - Each recipient may respond to the original message.
- Step5 - You have now become the receiver, and should listen carefully to the message.
- Step6 - You will feel and interpret something about this message. This may range from satisfaction that the communication is proceeding as you intended, to bewilderment at how your original message was mis-interpreted.

8.2 Encoding and Translating

The majority of people communicate in a way that is fundamentally flawed - in that they adopt the egocentric communication model. This involves the presenter deciding what they want to say and how they want to say it, with little or no regard for the characteristics or needs of their audience. This model is termed egocentric because of the significance that the presenter attaches to his or her own role in the communication process. The presenter is essentially adopting the following attitude: “I have decided what to say and the way I’m going to say it. I will then say it and assume that the audience agrees, more or less, with my interpretation”. This process, of packaging a message, is called encoding and it determines which human senses (hearing, vision, touch etc.) will be used to transmit the message.

The next step in a communication is to send the encoded message to the receiver. The receiver then has the difficult job of decoding the message in terms that they can relate to. It is at this point that they may misinterpret,

change, filter or edit the message to fit into their own preconceived framework. In this way, egocentric communication often fails to convey the intended message.

To minimize the chance of your message being misinterpreted another step should be added to the communication model. This new step is called translating and involves you encoding the message as before, but then translating the message, to take into account a variety of issues from the audience's point of view. By translating the encoded message for its intended audience, the chance of misinterpretation is greatly reduced.

When done properly the result of this translation step is to frame the message in terms that are better suited to the audience - in other words a far more relevant and focused message for the audience to decode. This process will produce a message that has more impact.

Think about how many times you and your colleagues have attended the same meeting or presentation and yet have come away with different interpretations about what was meant. When preparing your messages, try to think of the different ways that it could be interpreted by your audience and try to translate it in a way that will minimize inaccurate interpretations.

8.3 Understanding Your Audience

You should be clear on the aim of your presentation, identify the personality types in your audience and adjust your presentation accordingly.

You must be clear on the aim of your presentation at the outset in order that you can stay focused when preparing it. Think of your aim as the final destination, and your presentation as the journey.

Your objective is to ensure that the presentation delivers you, and your audience, to the correct and clearly defined destination. It is only if you are

clear about your aim that you will carry conviction in your forthcoming presentation. The purpose of nearly all business presentations is either to inform or to persuade. You should decide which applies and then prefix your presentation with an aim statement that is worded accordingly.

Once you have decided on your aim and written this down you can begin to consider the content of your presentation. However before you can plan the content in detail you will need to know how to analyze the audience that you will be presenting to - in order to help you to translate the message in an appropriate way.

Audience Classification: There are three questions that you need to ask concerning the characteristics and composition of the audience; Firstly, what personality types are likely to be in your audience? Secondly, how can we recognize them in advance? Finally, what happens if you are presenting to a mixed audience? Analysis of audience characteristics can be undertaken based on a simple but effective model that classifies people as being one of four types. Each candidate should be classified as one of the four personality types shown:

1. Emotive people are people-oriented and they tend to be; sociable, animated, spontaneous, unstructured and welcome change. They prefer the broad picture but cant be bothered with the details. Emotive people often have a short attention span, so keep the presentation short and focused and keep it at the overview level, avoiding discussion of any details.
2. Directive people are high in dominance but low in sociability. They tend to be; aggressive, intense, pushy, determined and opinionated. Their goal driven nature can be misinterpreted as unfriendly, especially if they encounter resistance to their aims at work. When presenting to these

people stick to the facts, cover each point clinically and proceed to the next.

3. Reflective people are low in both dominance and sociability. They tend to be; precise, questioning, aloof, serious, scientific and stuffy. They often occupy product related jobs - such as scientists and engineers, and they pay attention to detail. When presenting to these people supply lots of detail and have plenty of support information at hand in order to address the detailed questions that are likely to be raised.
4. Supportive people are high in sociability and low in dominance. Their traits make them easy to recognize, being; loyal, steady, solid and reliable good workers. The majority of people are from this group, but you should bear in mind that they tend to fear change and will worry if given cause. You should therefore avoid risking being seen as uncaring or aggressive and should take time to pre-empt any contentious issues.

8.4 Targeting Your Audience

It is important to target your message to the correct audience, if you prepare for reflective candidates and your audience is predominantly directive then they are likely to become bored - and being directives, they will probably make their feelings known.

Of course, this profiling depends, to some extent, on a familiarity with the audience. This will be easier with work colleagues than, for example, when creating a sales presentation for an external audience.

You will often have to piece together the audience profile from a variety of snippets of information - such as their job titles and ages. Other information that may prove useful includes any previous correspondence or conversations and anecdotal stories passed on by colleagues.

Audience profiling is an important precursor to preparing the content of your presentation and you may need to use all of your investigative instincts to get the most advantage from this process.

Targeting a Mixed Audience: Unfortunately presentations are normally targeted at an audience that is a mixture of personality types. So the question is who should you aim your presentation at? The answer will depend on the size and composition of the audience. Whilst there are an infinite number, of audience scenarios we will consider one example – to illustrate the kind of issues you should consider when deciding where to pitch your presentation.

In this scenario, you are presenting to a small mixed audience, but there isn't an identifiable key decision maker. Presenting to this kind of group will be your biggest challenge, and if you are unable to gain any further information about the group then your best strategy is likely to be to prepare a DIRECTIVE presentation.

This will keep any directives in the audience happy - and they are often influential. The emotive will be satisfied because your delivery will be fact based and punchy. To keep the reflective happy prepare a handout that will supply further details. The supportive will be influenced by the others during the presentation but may also warrant a pep-talk before or afterwards to address the specific concerns they may have.

Further Audience Analysis: As well as understanding the personality types that you will be presenting to there are some other key questions that you should ask about your audience.

- How many people will attend
- Why are they attending
- What do they want from the presentation
- How are they likely to react to the presentation
- What level of knowledge do they have already

Each of these questions should provide you with information that should help you to fine-tune the content of your presentation as well as making you better prepared when you come to deliver it. For example, audience members who have chosen to attend are likely to be more receptive than those who are there by obligation. In addition, an understanding of their existing knowledge will enable you to adjust the level at which you pitch your presentation.

The most important thing to remember is more you know about your audience the more you will be able to translate your presentation for them and therefore the clearer your message will be to them.

8.5 Designing a Presentation

Think of a presentation in terms of a journey; designed to take an audience to a pre-planned destination. Use this analogy to identify the key points of your message, prioritize them and allocate each one an appropriate time slot. Nearly all presentations should fit into a simple structure. This

comprises three clearly identifiable parts - an introduction, followed by a main body and finally a conclusion. This is often expressed as:

- Tell them what you're going to tell them,
- Tell them,
- Tell them what you have told them.

A good guide for the breakdown of a presentation is the 10/80/10 rule - whereby the introduction and conclusion are each allotted 10% of the presentation time, with the main body comprising 80%. For example, a 30-minute presentation would have a 3-minute introduction and conclusion and main body lasting 24 minutes. This formula can be applied to any length of presentation - as it reflects a good breakdown from the audience's perspective.

In researching and collating the material that you need and devising your key points you will have been concentrating on the main content of your presentation. This is fine, as the most effective and efficient way to prepare your presentation is to construct it in the order of: Introduction, Main Body, and then the Conclusion.

It is usually best to plan your presentation to have a question and answer session at the end. This will enable you to deliver your message and then end strongly with a clear and concise conclusion, before entering the relatively unpredictable area of tackling questions from the floor.

Identifying Key Points: *In structuring your presentation, you may find it useful to divide your journey into a series of stages. You are then faced with the challenge of deciding how many stages there should be and what should constitute a stage.*

It was also recommended that you should look at your aim statement and try to develop between three and five key points that you would like to drive home. This represents as much information as most people are able to take away from a presentation.

These key point messages can be considered as the intended destination for each stage of your journey. In other words key points are synonymous with stages in the same way that the aim statement is synonymous with the destination. If you are working in a familiar subject domain the key points may well be apparent; but what if the subject isn't familiar and the key points are not self-evident?

When you are preparing a presentation in an unfamiliar domain the most effective way to identify the key points is to ask other people. The people you should ask should be from a similar group as your intended audience. If they are predominantly directives, as is likely in the scenario of a sales manager making a case for equipping her field sales force with laptop computers then she should ask relatively senior people within the organization.

If she asked a colleague in the training department their comments would probably be heavily biased towards the training implications, whereas technical staff would be preoccupied with the specification and interfacing of IT systems. Neither group is likely to ask the sort of questions that are likely to be of most interest to senior management.

By asking a representative group, you should ensure that the key points are properly targeted and that the audience remains focused. You should ask them a question framed around your aim statement. 'What would you need

to know which would' . . . followed by your aim statement. In the current example what would you need to know which would . . . demonstrate the competitive advantage of equipping the field sales force with laptop computers? Ask as many people, from a representative group as you can, and record their comments as potential key points.

The biggest advantage of this approach is its speed. It is quite common for people to spend hours sifting through information, collating it and then editing down into digestible chunks - whilst still struggling to devise a suitable presentation structure for it. Asking other people is a fast and effective way of devising potential key points and has the added advantage that the key points will be non-egocentric that is they will reflect what your audience wants to hear and not just what you want to tell them.

Key Points Example: This screen illustrates the sort of responses that you might expect when asking the question: ‘What would you need to know which would . . . demonstrate the competitive advantage of equipping the field sales force with laptop computers?’

Here are some examples of what colleagues might ask when asked what the potential key point might be:

1. How will giving them laptops improve their sales volumes?
2. How much will all this cost and how long is the return on investment, in other words a detailed cost benefit analysis?
3. Would we be able to cut the sales force because of their increased productivity?

4. How long will it take to procure this equipment and software, and then how long will it take to carry out the training required?
5. What are the main business benefits, apart from cost-related issues - you know will the organization appear to be more professional, that kind of thing?

Prioritizing Key Points: *Starting with the main body of your presentation, your first task is to decide on what your key points will be and order them in a way that will address the needs of your audience. Once again, you should be prioritizing what it is that the audiences want from the presentation. The key points should be presented in the order that reflects their importance to the audience - with the most important first. If you do not do this you will find it difficult to hold their attention.*

It may prove useful to write each key point on a piece of card and shuffle them in a variety of different presentation sequences and consider the effect of each on your audience. Ask yourself, or others, which will have the most impact?

Your next task is to divide the presentation up so that the correct amount of time is allocated to each of your key points. This will ensure that the overall time allotted to the main body of your presentation does not overrun. For example if the main body is planned to last 10 minutes and there are three key points, as in this presentation, then you might divide it into two minute and one six minute segments. Alternatively, you might create three equal segments. Once again let the requirements of the audience determine this division.

Focus on the Message: The overall message of the presentation should be embodied in the aim statement. It is important to keep the focus of your presentation on the message and not on the information and facts that underpin that message. This can be very difficult; especially when the message is supported by a multitude of facts that you think the audience should know.

If your presentation does consist of a series of facts and supporting evidence, then the audiences are likely to assimilate these and draw their own conclusions. If this happens you will lose the opportunity to influence and shape the audiences interpretation. It is far more effective to communicate your messages and then support them with an adequate level of facts and information - so that the audience can line them up behind the message you wish to convey.

As you develop the content of the presentation you should devise a message, or messages, to communicate each key point. However, you should only include sufficient facts to support and validate these messages.

Depending on the size and scope of each stage, it may be necessary to devise one or more sub-messages to communicate the key point. Each message and sub-message should be supported by its own support facts and information.

From your research, you should have a surplus of facts and information available and the main challenge facing you should be the selection of an appropriate sub-set to support each of your messages. One of the best rules of thumb to adopt when screening your research information is to:

Stop adding facts when your point is clear and present them in order of importance. Remember, whilst quoting authoritative sources may be useful

when presenting support facts and information, your audience are unlikely to want a detailed explanation of all the processes and investigations that you have carried out.

Your Presentation Style: *Before creating a detailed presentation it is worth considering the pros and cons of the three presentation styles normally available to you. Firstly, you could memorize the presentation, secondly you could write a full script and read from it and thirdly you could use free, conversational speech aided by some form of notes or cue cards.*

Committing a presentation to memory represents an enormous overhead in terms of time and effort and is unnecessary except in some situations where you may be need to present the same subject time and time again. Another drawback with a memorized presentation is that you have to concentrate so hard on remembering what to say that the style can become stilted.

Reading from a fully scripted presentation invariably leads to a dull and boring monologue. It is also likely to reduce eye contact and general spontaneity, with a resultant loss of impact. These problems can generally only be overcome by employing a professional speechwriter to write a presentation that will be delivered by a professional actor.

The use of natural conversational language assisted by pre-prepared cues is usually the best style for a business presentation. Adopting this approach will help you to sound normal, natural and spontaneous and it will also create a less formal and more relaxed relationship between you and your audience.

The use of this cue-assisted natural presentation style underpins the remainder of this section. However in situations where you need to adopt an alternative approach - be it a memorized or scripted presentation, then the content planning can follow a similar approach - but with a greater level of detail being added.

By placing each fact or piece of information on a separate card, you will have the ability to move him or her around independently when devising the optimum support information for each message and sub-message. Placing all of the information relating to a given message on the same card would impose an artificial restriction on your ability to do this.

Your Presentation Structure: Placing the facts and information that you have collated into the correct position within your presentation structure is a critical process. One of the best ways to put the facts into their optimum sequence to support the messages is to write each fact and piece of information on a separate planning card - these are typically the size of a small postcard. Then by shuffling the order around you will be able to experiment until you find a sequence that you feel delivers the best effect.

During this process, you may decide to alter your original structure, changing the sequence and relationships between certain messages. Remember, that it is the impact and clarity of the messages that is important, and not sticking rigidly to a structure that can be improved. You may also find that certain facts and pieces of information are more effective in supporting an alternative message to the one that you had originally envisaged - if that is the case, move the facts.

Remember that the best rule of thumb to adopt when screening your research information is to: stop adding facts when your point is clear and present them in order of importance.

When you are happy that you have taken this level of planning as far as you can you should apply a simple but unambiguous numbering convention to all of your planning cards.

It is also useful to annotate each card with the approximate time that you think each fact or piece of information will take to present effectively. As each stage of the presentation has a pre-defined time, you will then become aware as you approach its time limit. This is one of the most effective ways of avoiding the common problem - of preparing a presentation that is too long. This may only become apparent when you rehearse the presentation - and then realize, at the eleventh hour, that a serious redesign is required.

Designing Cue Cards: At this time, you should have a clear picture of your presentation; you will know the overall message - that is encapsulated in the aim statement. You will have devised a series of key points and the messages and sub-messages that you need to present in a way that is clear and convincing. Furthermore, you will have organized, in order of importance, the facts and information that you are going to use - and these will be clearly numbered.

The amount of detail you require will depend upon the nature and complexity of the material you are presenting, your level of familiarity with it, and your experience and confidence as a presenter.

The planning cards that you have may represent a sufficient level of detail from which to deliver a spontaneous presentation. However, it is more likely that you will want to convert your planning cards to cue cards. These are a common presentation aid and their role is precisely as their name suggests - cuing the presenter.

Cue cards should hold the level of information necessary to enable you to present in a natural and seemingly spontaneous way. They are so widely used that it is usually acceptable for the presenter to hold them in one hand and refer to them openly, as required. The cards recommended for the planning phase are also ideally suited for use as cue cards.

The first principle is to ensure that a clear and unambiguous numbering convention is applied to all of the cards - so that if you drop during your presentation you can quickly re-arrange them into the correct sequence.

Only write on one side of each cue card - this avoids the distracting behavior of flipping and manipulating cards and confusion as to whether or not you have addressed both sides of each spent card. Only communicate one theme or idea on each card - this way when you have covered the point you will be confident that you can move onto the next card. Once again this avoids distracting behavior - of re-scanning cards that you have already dealt with.

8.6 Preparing the Venue and Seating Arrangement

It is important to arrive early in order to familiarize yourself with the venue and any audio-visual equipment that you will be using. If you are presenting in a familiar setting, for example within your own organization

the room and its layout will be familiar. However, you may be presenting at a location that you have never seen before - the boardroom of a host organization, a hotel suite or an exhibition. Where this is the case it is important to plan your arrival at the venue well ahead of time.

There are logistics involved when traveling to a remote location; organizing any travel tickets and accommodation, any specialist equipment and props, and packing the clothing and other belongings that you require, will need careful thought and planning. The best advice is to build in a significant safety factor - to allow for any unforeseen travel or accommodation problems.

When you are presenting at an external location you should try to pre-arrange access to the room that you will be presenting in. Even if it is being used immediately before your slot you could try and gain access to this event - as it is important to familiarize yourself with the surroundings. If you are unable to get there sufficiently early, then you should contact the venue in advance and request a copy of the floor plan and any seating arrangement options they offer.

The venue will set the mood for your presentation; an informal gathering in a small cheerful office will create a very different mood to a large conference room in a hotel. Where possible try to assess as many aspects of the room as you can - it's size, coloring, layout, lighting, position of power points, doorways, work surfaces and any refreshment facilities. Pay particular attention to the position that you, the presenter, will occupy and the location of any support equipment.

Stand in the position that you will occupy when presenting and check the line of sight to your audience. Are there any barriers to them seeing you clearly, such as columns or projection equipment? If so, can you alter the position of these obstacles or the seating arrangement? Practice speaking from the podium or stage to familiarize yourself with the surroundings and see how your voice carries. If you can, ask someone to stand at the back and confirm how you sound from there; but remember that your voice will carry less well when the room is full.

If you are able to adjust the temperature set it to just below what is comfortable as when the room fills up the temperature will rise. You don't want to be hot and flustered and neither do you want your audience dozing in excessive heat. If there is any chance of getting fresh air into the room this can help to keep your audience alert.

Make sure that any equipment you requested is present and working properly. It is very disconcerting to have to learn how to use unfamiliar equipment halfway through a presentation. Remember, even equipment that looks familiar may actually be a model you haven't used before. A single unfamiliar function or strangely placed button has the potential to stop you when you are in full flow.

Where your presentation will be dependent on a consumable item - such as an overhead projector bulb, check that you know how to replace it and ensure that a spare is handy. When you are presenting at an external location, make a note of the technical support extension number so that any equipment failure can be remedied as soon as possible.

Make sure that your audio-visual aids are installed in the correct position and sequence. If these include a slide show, it is worth checking through

them - to confirm they are all present, sequenced and the right way up. This will also enable you to check that your images are in focus, and familiarize yourself with adjusting this setting.

If you will be using a PA system then perform a sound check. Pay particular attention to avoiding acoustic feedback, which is affected by both the volume and the position of the microphone in relation to the speakers. Also, check that your microphone will not be rubbing against your clothing as you gesture and move around.

Place any pointers, pens, remote control units and other hand held devices where they are easily accessible. Having water or another drink handy is important, if you do dry-up, it is much easier to take a quick sip than to hack your way through the remainder of your presentation.

Seating Arrangement: In small and medium size venues you will probably have considerable discretion over the seating layout. It is important to get the right balance when seating your audience; comfort is an issue but try not to make them so comfortable that they fall asleep.

Spacing chairs out so that everybody has sufficient room to store their bags and briefcases will also create a less claustrophobic feeling. If your audience are likely to make notes during your presentation you might want to provide chairs with armrests or supply complimentary clipboards - which may carry your organizations logo.

Whilst the seating layout is often fixed in large venues, you can experiment with the seating plan at smaller venues. A series of straight and narrow rows stretching back from you may permit easy eye contact but may restrict the ability of people at the back to see and hear clearly.

If this plan is switched to wide rows in front of you, then the majority of the audience will be able to see and hear clearly but it will be difficult for you to make eye contact with those people sitting at the periphery.

A semi-circular, or n arrangement provides an effective format as both the acoustics and visibility work well for the audience. You will also find it easy to engage all members of the audience with eye contact. This arrangement takes up slightly more space than the other options but is well worth the effort where there is sufficient room.

If your presentation involves a lot of note taking, or includes workgroup-based interaction, you might want to include tables in the seating plan. The plan shown is the classic schoolroom type layout and this can be significantly improved simply by turning the end of the tables towards the presenter.

By doing this the members of the audience will have a better view of your visual aids and each table will be able to accommodate twice the number of people - which is ideal for any group based working. If you want to use group interaction during your presentation then arrange the audience so that they are sitting in groups of between five and eight.

Research shows that people are most likely to contribute to group sessions when there are enough people to create some energy within the group but not so many that they feel excluded. Groups of between five and eight people have been shown to optimize this.

8.7 Final Point and Getting Start

A final point regarding floor plans where your audience is an unknown quantity is that you may find it helpful to remove the back row of seats. This avoids the common problem where the audience filters in and head for the seats furthest from the presenter. By placing potentially surplus seats at the sides of the room, latecomers can help themselves to a seat and join at the back.

When planning any pre-presentation food and drink think carefully; you don't want to spend a lot of money on lavish food and drinks just to put your audience to sleep. As with your own personal preparation, light snacks and sandwiches are best and it is advisable to avoid alcohol where possible. If possible, hold over part of the catering - such as desserts and any alcoholic drinks until a post presentation gathering.

Depending on the size and level of formality of your presentation, it may be a good idea to welcome members of your audience as they arrive. If you are present but wait impassively, or are preoccupied, as the audience filters in this can create a cold and unwelcoming atmosphere that can be difficult to overcome - regardless of how good your presentation is.

Getting Started: There are two key points about any presentation. Firstly, it is important to start well and inform your audience of the presentations overall structure and the style of interaction you would prefer. Secondly, you should then Focus on delivering your message and avoiding self-analysis during your presentation.

When your presentation actually begins, if you find that you are suffering from last minute nerves, you can calm yourself by not speaking immediately. Consciously deepen your breathing as you take in your

audience, holding eye contact with two or three of them for 3-4 seconds. Then when you feel ready, start speaking as you maintain eye contact with one individual before moving on to another.

This is the time to switch your focus firmly onto the message. This does not mean that body language, eye contact and interaction with your audience are not important - they are. These vital presentation skills are dealt with in the next section.

Any presenter who asks he or she 'how am I doing?' is liable to deal his or her own presentation a critical blow. You cannot perform real-time self-assessments in mid-presentation. The human mind can only cope with one major task at a time and delivering your message should become that all encompassing task once your presentation has started.

8.8 What Style is Best?

How to Introduce: A good introduction will help to establish your credibility and will give the audience a clear expectation of what you are about to tell them. If you are being introduced, it may be worth clarifying your personal details, such as any relevant qualifications or experience that you possess, with the person who will introduce you.

Ideally, your introduction will inform your audience how long you will be speaking for, so that they can adjust their anticipated concentration span accordingly. It is also a good time to outline the overall structure of your presentation, and to mention the style of audience interaction you would prefer. For example you might welcome any question from the floor, as and

when they arise, or you might prefer to proceed uninterrupted until a formal question and answer session at end of your presentation.

Make sure that you start by speaking confidently and at a natural pace. Try not to refer to your notes more than once or twice in your opening segment. A confident opening style should establish you as a credible and authoritative speaker who is open and friendly. One very useful tip for generating a relaxed and friendly presentation style is to speak to your audience, regardless of its size, as though you were chatting to a friend in a far less formal environment.

Try to look at all of the members of your audience - so that they feel included, and hold brief eye contact with a handful of them. It can be worth seeking eye contact in a methodical way - by switching from the rear right corner of your audience to the center to front left, then back to rear left and so on. Adopting this approach should ensure you cover all areas of your audience. One final point regarding your opening is that you should make it crisp and telling - giving your audience something to think about right at the start. This will have the effect of gaining their attention; it is then your job to make sure that you keep it.

Presentation Styles: The presentation style that you adopt should be influenced by the size of your audience together with the level of formality that is appropriate. The following classification divides presentations into one of four broad categories:

Type 1

Examples of this type of presentation would be: a committee meeting, a sales pitch or an interdepartmental presentation. Here you

should establish eye contact with each member of the audience early on and remain facing them at all times, in order to hold their attention.

Type 2

Examples of this type of presentation would be: the introduction of new products to established suppliers or the briefing of work colleagues. Here it is often best to interact with the audience by soliciting questions and letting individuals make meaningful, but brief, contributions.

Type 3

When presenting at large formal events such as a conference or a corporate AGM, check early on that all sections of the audience can hear you clearly. Punctuate your presentation with links, clear summing-ups and by repeating your main points.

Type 4

An informal presentation to a large audience is relatively rare, but might for example occur if you were asked, at very short notice, to contribute from the floor when attending a conference or similar event. In this case, make sure that you keep your message simple and speak slowly with clear enunciation. Only expand on your general point if requested to do so.

8.9 Self Assessment Exercise

1. "The speaking and public presentation skills are primary requirements for a successful manager." Discuss the statement.
2. "Communication is the sum of all things one person does when he wants to create understanding in the mind of another through public presentation." Discuss and elaborate the statement.
3. Write a note on the need and importance of public speaking in business communication.
4. What are the precautions a presenter should keep in mind while going for non-verbal communication with three different groups of audiences?

8.10 Suggested Readings

1. Pal, Rajendra and Korlahalli, J. S., Essentials of Business Communication.
2. Kaul, Asha, Effective Business Communication.
3. Lesikar, R. V. and Pettite J. D., Business Communication.
4. Sharma, R. C. , Business Communication and Report Writing.
5. Shinha, P., Business Communication.

Subject: Business Communication Author: Dr. Karam Pal

Course: M. COM

Vetter: Dr. B. S. Bodla

Course Code: MC 102

Lesson: 09

Business Communication: Negotiations and Legal Aspects

Objective: The most important objective of this lesson is to make the students learn about the basics of business negotiation skills in communication.

Structure

- 9.1 Introduction**
- 9.2 Phases of a Negotiation**
- 9.3 Characteristics of a Negotiation**
- 9.4 Opening Negotiations**
- 9.5 Legal Aspects of Communication**
- 9.6 Summary**
- 9.7 Self-Assessment Exercise**
- 9.8 Suggested Readings.**

9.1 Introduction

The World is full of countries that prove the precept that those that live closer to the principles of free trade do better than those who have abandoned them. The famous economist Adam Smith spent 12 years, up until 1776 writing his seminal piece 'An Inquiry into The Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations'. In it he remarked on the propensity to truck, barter and exchange - which he found to be common to all people on the planet and yet was not present in any other species. - Smith wrote.

“Nobody ever saw a dog make a fair and deliberate exchange of one bone for another with another dog. Nobody ever saw one animal by its gestures and natural cries signify to another, this is mine; that is yours: I am willing to give this for that”.

If you want to trade you have to negotiate, the alternative is to accept what you are offered. There are many opportunities to negotiate better deals and terms, however these chances are often missed because neither side makes it clear that negotiating is an option. Many people wrongly assume that nothing is negotiable unless the other party indicates that this is the case - a more realistic view is that everything is negotiable.

The complexity of the negotiating process will vary according to the size and complexity of the proposed deal as well as the attitudes adopted by the parties involved. This course explains a comprehensive and detailed approach, which should be tailored to suit the needs of each particular negotiation. It is worth remembering that the time and effort that you invest in any round of talks should reflect the potential benefit that can be gained from them.

9.2 Phases of a Negotiation

Nearly all negotiations are characterized by four phases - preparation, opening, bargaining and closing. In large scale negotiations each of these phases are normally tackled sequentially., However, in smaller scale negotiations it is quite common for these phases to merge - possibly into a single unstructured process. Where this is the case, a good understanding of the logic that underpins the four-phase approach can guide you, even when you are negotiating smaller deals.

Preparation involves information gathering - knowing the state of the market, being aware of the supply and demand status, being aware of any current or imminent discounts and special offers and so on.

The **opening** phase of a negotiation involves both sides presenting their starting positions to one another. It usually represents the single most important opportunity to influence the other side.

In the **bargaining** phase, your aim is to narrow the gap between the two initial positions and to persuade the other side that your case is so strong that they must accept less than they had planned. In order to do this you should use clearly thought out, planned and logical debate.

The **closing** of a negotiation represents the opportunity to capitalize on all of the work done in the earlier phases. The research that you've done in the preparation phase, combined with all of the information that you've gained since should guide you in the closing phase.

9.3 Characteristics of a Negotiation

In business, we negotiate with both suppliers and customers. We also negotiate within our organizations, for example with colleagues and team members. Think for a minute about the hundreds of deals you make every year - with your boss, your customers, your suppliers and colleagues. Whilst there are an infinite variety of negotiation scenarios, most negotiations are defined by three characteristics: There is a **conflict of interest** between two or more parties. What one wants is not necessarily, what the others want. Either there is no established set of rules for resolving

the conflict, or the parties prefer to work outside of an established set of rules to **develop their own solution**. The parties prefer to **search for an agreement** rather than to fight openly, to have one side capitulate, to break off contact permanently or to take their dispute to a higher authority.

The principles of negotiation are not dependent on the identity of the parties involved, their cultures or the amounts at stake. The skill of negotiation can be applied universally - whether you are seeking a promotion, commissioning a nuclear power plant or simply buying a used car.

The Critical Factors: The actual negotiation process depends on the following factors:

- The goals and interests of the parties
- The perceived interdependence between the parties
- The history that exists between the parties
- The personalities of the people involved
- The persuasive ability of each party

Negotiation is a complex communication process, all the more so when one round of negotiations is just an episode in a longer-term commercial or political relationship. In these situations, considerations about the longer-term relationship will influence any specific round of talks - and reduce the tendency to maximize short-term gain at any expense.

Two Types of Approach: There are two types of negotiation process that differ fundamentally in their approach and in the relative prospects for the stability of the agreement that is reached.

The first is called the integrative or win/win approach. In these negotiations the prospects for both sides, gains are encouraging. Both sides attempt to reconcile their positions so that the result is an agreement under which both will benefit - therefore the resultant agreement tends to be stable. Win/win negotiations are characterized by open and empathetic communications and are commonly referred to as partnership agreements.

The second is called the distributive or win/lose approach. In these negotiations, each of the parties seeks maximum gains and therefore usually seeks to impose maximum losses on the other side. This approach often produces agreements' that are inherently unstable.

In real life negotiations both of these processes tend to be at work together. Therefore, rather than two negotiators adopting one or other of the approaches, negotiations tend to involve a tension between the two.

It should be apparent that where a long-term business relationship is involved that it is important to adopt a more integrative (win/win) approach to negotiations. The failure to work together with the other side in order to reach a mutually acceptable outcome is a common reason for the breakdown in many otherwise successful business relationships.

The Spirit of the Deal: The spirit of the deal can be as important as the terms of the contract and when seeking to expedite negotiations that will deliver a deal that suits the needs of both sides, you should:

Focus initially on each side's primary objective - ancillary-negotiating points can become a distraction in the early stages.

Be prepared to settle for what is fair - if an agreement is not seen to be equitable it is unlikely to be stable. Maintain flexibility in your own demands and interests, this makes it easier for the other side to be flexible as well.

Listen to what the other side wants and make efforts to meet their requests. Compromise on the main issues so that both sides can begin to attain their goals.

Seek to trade-off concessions - so that each side gets something in return for everything they give up.

Capable negotiators understand that the stability of the outcome is important and focus on more than simply maximizing the concessions that can be extracted from the other side.

The Use of an Agenda: You should try to follow your own clearly thought out agenda and use it to keep you focused on your goals and to keep the discussions on track. It may be advisable to agree the agenda up front, in the preparation phase of a negotiation. Beware of wasting time on issues that are of little importance to either side - this sometimes happens when both sides work too hard at avoiding contentious issues.

Use an agenda to:

- Formally, define what the discussions are about.
- Keep you focused on your goals.
- Allocate fixed periods to specific issues.
- Help to bypass any deadlock situations - by moving onto the next item.

The presence of a firm deadline on your agenda can be used to put the other side at a disadvantage. Their options may become more limited as they feel the pressure of time. You may decide to set a deadline arbitrarily, for example by letting the other side know that you will be unavailable after a certain date because you have other commitments or are starting another project. You may highlight or exploit an existing fixed date as a deadline in order to expedite the negotiation process, for example a forthcoming trade show or the launch of a new venture.

Paying Attention to Detail: Negotiations depend upon clear communication and it is vital that both sides understand one another. Misunderstandings are potential time bombs - set to go off just when both sides feel as though an agreement is within their grasp.

Always be explicit about:

- What point you are discussing
- Each offer you make to the other side
- What objections your side has to a given offer
- What changes remove or negate a current point of contention.
- What terms you think you are agreeing to

Try to draft notes about points of disagreement and about each point that is agreed on. Committing thoughts to paper can make both sides think more clearly about what has been agreed and reduces the chance of a misunderstanding arising.

The bargaining phase can be long and protracted. During this phase many options may be discussed and it is important that you note down all of the concessions that are offered by the other side - no matter how tenuous or how conditional they appear to be.

When it comes to detailing the terms of the final deal, the notes you have taken may put you in a position to request concessions that can substantially benefit your side's position. The other side may have volunteered concessions, at the time noted by you, that you can later request - for example making them conditional on you delivering the main deal in line with their expectations.

9.4 Opening Negotiations

It is important to make a tough but credible opening. In the early stages of bargaining it is important to follow this up by maintaining a firm stance, to demonstrate to the other side that you are unlikely to make substantial movements from your opening position (whether or not this is actually the case).

Your job as a negotiator is to put forward persuasive arguments that will compel the other side to agree with you and thereby make concessions. However, never verbally attack the other side, always be polite and if possible provide them with an escape route. Disagree firmly but don't try to make the other side look small. If you indulge in personal attacks the other side may dig in and a deadlock may result.

Listen, Anticipate and Compromise: Irrespective of your fundamental negotiating style, there are certain guidelines that you should follow:

Be willing to make small concessions. Identify what is important to you and focus on achieving gains from the other side on these issues. By making small concessions on a number of minor points a spirit of co-

operation can be fostered, whilst enabling you to keep referring back to your main issues and seeking accommodation on them.

Anticipate the other side's objections - and use this information to address them. By foreseeing obvious reservations that they may have you can address them and explain your point of view before the other side can raise them as a contentious issue. The one caution here is that you must be careful not to gift any arguments to the other side - by raising points that they may not have thought of.

Assertions of fact will have far more impact if they are backed up with published information. The use of domain experts may add a lot of weight to your position. If they are good communicators why not let them make the argument rather than just confirm your viewpoint.

Before you attempt to counter the other side's argument it is important that you understand their position, by listening carefully to what they are saying. The way in which an argument is countered will be heavily influenced by the personality and style of the individual negotiator.

Avoid Confrontation: In the same way there are certain guidelines that you should follow.

Don't talk too much yourself, as you may end up giving too much away and it is likely to reduce your ability to read signals coming from the other side. Wherever you can, ask the other side to justify their position on an item-by-item basis and make sure that you understand their reasoning clearly.

Don't just say no - if the other side wants something that you cannot give. Where possible, try to offer an alternative package. For example if you cannot meet the customers required delivery date, could you deliver part of the order on that date, followed by the remainder shortly afterwards.

Don't overstate your case. The use of emotive words and metaphors can add interest and aid understanding. However, if taken too far it can reduce the credibility of your main argument. It is often better to understate a strong case than to overstate a weak one.

Don't highlight your own shortcomings. Never use your own problems or shortcomings as bargaining chips, this almost inevitably backfires. For example if you try and justify a price rise as being the inevitable consequence of staffing problems, then it is likely that the customer will start to view your competitors in a better light.

Don't deny obvious weaknesses in your position. As you may jeopardize your credibility if you assert that, they are not really weaknesses. A better tactic is to downplay them in comparison to other areas - where your position is strong.

The Use of Concessions: To a large extent negotiating is the art of knowing how to exchange concessions. One of the major drawbacks with concession trading is that it can involve losses at two levels - both materially and from an image perspective.

Concessions can become a way of life, eating away at an organizations profit margin - particularly, for example, when sales targets are volume

based with little or no recourse to the bottom line. This is why it is important to plan carefully the concessions that you are willing to make.

Each concession made, may be read either as:

A goodwill gesture, or

A sign of weakness

Even in the best case scenario - where a concession is taken as a sign of goodwill - there is absolutely no compelling reason for the other side to respond in kind. Making goodwill concessions is not contagious. An experienced negotiator is more likely to accept the concession and feel confident that he can seek further movement from a party that is ready to make unilateral concessions.

If however, the concession is read as weakness on your part then the other side may very well adopt a tougher stance. The law of the jungle prevails at the bargaining table and one thing that you must try to avoid doing is to draw attention to any weaknesses in your case.

Concession Trading: The problem with making concessions is that making one from a position of weakness can lead to requests for you to make a series of follow-on concessions. Alternatively, if you are not in an obviously weak position, and are seen to be too ready to make concessions, then the other side may start to feel that the underlying deal must be biased to your advantage.

Another important aim during the bargaining phase is to get the other side used to making concessions. A good tactic here is to get them to make a

few minor concessions at the start of negotiations - as this will lay the groundwork for obtaining more important ones later on.

If the other side refuses to make any significant concessions then this may indicate that they are not negotiating in good faith. Furthermore, if the other side have got used to giving little, or nothing, away then they may assume that they are in the stronger position as the negotiations draw to a close.

The concessions made by both sides are key to the outcome of the negotiations. It is important to avoid making the first major concession, as the other side will gain a significant psychological advantage from it.

Concessions should be planned in the preparation phase and offered in reverse priority, contingent on the other side making some movement in return. Try to avoid making concessions when you are under pressure and make the other side work hard for any movement in your position.

Recognizing a Losing Trend: You need to know how to recognize and react to a losing trend in the negotiation process. You should also understand why negotiations can become derailed and appreciate a variety of options for dealing with deadlock.

In long negotiations, the advantage often swings back and forth between the two sides. However, sometimes you can find yourself on a losing trend when you feel that despite your best efforts you are consistently coming off second best.

As a rule consider a losing trend to be indicated by: A situation where you find yourself making three unilateral concessions in a row. You can't keep the other side focused on issues which you feel are important. You find yourself persuaded by the arguments of the other side on three or more successive points.

You should learn to recognize a losing trend and respond by either:

- 1 Taking a Break** - make an excuse and suspend negotiations while you reorganize your arguments and rethink your strategy. This could be a short coffee break; a lunch break or you could make an excuse for suspending negotiations overnight.
- 2 Moving the Focus** - a losing trend can result from the negotiations becoming centered on your weak areas. Try to move the debate on to areas where you are stronger.
- 3 Trading a Concession** - one sure way to stop a losing trend is to gain a concession from the other side. This may be worthwhile even if the trade seems generous from your perspective - as you may shift the momentum back to your side of the negotiating table.

Removing Deadlock: It is not uncommon in negotiations for an impasse to arise - where the two sides just cannot see eye to eye and progress is not being made. The key here is to remain calm and patient. Try to step back from the heat of the talks and understand what has led to the current situation.

Suggest taking a break, often it is tension and fatigue that lie behind many deadlock situations. Sometimes a few hours may be sufficient for you to recharge your batteries and see a new angle with which to address the impasse. The natural assumption is that the other party is at fault and often the best way to analyze the situation is to put you in their position.

It may be useful for the senior negotiators to have a round of discussions together, with a view to removing the deadlock in the absence of other team members who have developed a negative mind-set. Alternatively, a group brainstorming session may reveal an effective route around the block.

If the deadlock is proving to be immovable then it may be worth raising issues that are on a higher plane than the existing talks themselves. For example, the importance of your long term relationship, the advantages of reaching an agreement and the dangers of not doing so, as well as the fact that a negotiated settlement is in both of your interests whilst conflict is not. Factors such as these raised and discussed diplomatically may help by focusing attention on the bigger picture.

Salary Negotiation - Stress the Positive: An interview is best approached as a sales meeting. Your main challenge at interview is how to communicate your benefits to the interviewer, and how to avoid, or dilute, any negative aspects of your employment history.

When attending an interview it is your job to make as strong a case as you can for them offering you the position as you can. You are there to sell - yourself!

One of the keys to this is to ensure that you always remain positive. Good news tends to be accepted at face value, whereas bad news tends to make people sit up and pay attention. If you get the interviewer's attention in this way, they are likely to pursue this new line of enquiry aggressively. This would mean dwelling on bad news and facing awkward questions about something you really should not have brought up in the first place.

If you have some career skeletons in your closet, decide ahead of the interview how you can avoid giving too much information about these areas. Is it possible to avoid talking about these issues at the interview? You almost certainly won't have published negative information in your CV.

Alternatively, can you put a more positive interpretation on events, stressing the lessons you learned and how you have put these to practical effect since?

Salary Negotiation - Sell Your Sizzle: In treating the interview like a sales meeting, it is worth keeping a very common sales slogan in mind: Sell the sizzle, not the sausage. This slogan stresses that you sell the benefits and not the feature.

In an everyday sales arena a salesman might be selling an expensive gas fireplace, whilst operating in front of a live demonstration model in the showroom. Here, the customer can see all the features; like design, craftsmanship and the real-fire effect.

The good salesman won't waste his breath describing what is totally obvious to anyone looking at the fire; but will stress all the real benefits; like speed at heating a cold room, fuel efficiency self cleaning flue, etc.

Likewise, your features your skills experience and abilities are all clearly identified on your CV; so when you highlight these during the interview you should do so by linking your feature to a demonstrable benefit.

You are at the interview on the strength of your application to date, but you need to secure the job offer. To do that you need to convince the interviewer that your features have brought real benefits to previous employers. The association will be that you are a benefit bringer, and that pattern will continue for their organization.

In this mode you really are selling, you are presenting the interviewer with an irresistible package of benefits.

Salary Negotiation - Asking the Right Questions at Interview: Towards the end of an interview it is normal for the Interviewer to ask if you, the candidate, would like to ask any questions. At the point you start asking questions, you are effectively taking charge of the proceedings for the first time. Remember that you need to reinforce the impression that you would be a positive addition to the organization, so remain friendly and react positively to their replies.

When asking your questions don't interrogate the interviewer. Whilst the interview is a two-way process there is an inherent balance of power and you are in the weaker position.

Only ask questions that you think the interviewer is capable of answering. Asking inappropriate questions can lead to embarrassment and cause a rift between you. An example of this would be asking detailed technical questions of an interviewer from the HR department.

Don't ask questions that could have easily been answered by your own research ahead of the meeting. For example, asking about the organizations geographical offices or an overview of their product lines would be the type of question that a bright and inquisitive candidate should know before attending interview.

You must use your judgement to decide when to bring your questions to a close. Be aware of the time and the interviewers body language - if they start shuffling, clock watching or looking uncomfortable the time has come to wrap up quickly.

It is quite acceptable to have a prepared list of questions. You should write these in order of priority so that you ensure you ask the most important ones first. Intelligent and unique questions can leave a positive impression on the interviewer and help to set you apart from the other candidates.

Useful questions topics include:

- What are the key tasks and responsibilities of the job
- How are performance reviews conducted
- The attitudes of your future line manager
- What scope there is for promotion within the company
- Training and development opportunities

- Other expectations of the employer, such as travel etc
- Why the position has become vacant
- What is the largest challenge facing this section at present
- The decision-making process and line of authority issues

Salary Negotiation - Negotiating the Right Package: Salary negotiations may form an essential part of the interview process. It is important that you do not psyche yourself into a weak position before the negotiations begin and that you have an appreciation of a variety of factors, other than salary, that together constitute the employment package.

It is up to you to ensure that the employer recognizes your value and the contribution you can make to the organization. Remember, once you accept an offer, your salary is unlikely to change significantly until you get promoted.

The salary negotiation process depends on the following factors:

- The goals and interests of the parties
- The personalities of the people involved
- The persuasive ability of each party

As with any negotiation, your two major objectives are:

- To change the other party's impression of the strength of your position.
- To change the other party's impression of the strength of their position.

Most candidates are overly concerned with the power of the employer and the extent of the competition for the job. It is quite common for candidates to psyche themselves into a weak position by focusing on their misconceptions of these two critical issues – make sure you don't fall into this trap!

Salary Negotiation - Know Your Market Value: Before going into the negotiation make sure that you've done your homework. This will add to your confidence - something that is vital when negotiating.

Assess your market value based on advice from recruiters, adverts for similar jobs, the demand for people with your skills set, salary surveys in trade magazines and advice from colleagues who have a similar role to yours.

The golden rule is never to be the first party to mention a figure. Sometimes this can be difficult, but you can respond vaguely by talking about 'a package in the region of...' The purpose of this tactic is to avoid selling yourself short. Usually the job description will carry a salary range, but you will obviously want to get as much as you possibly can.

Once they have mentioned a figure, you must assess whether or not it is reasonable. If so, you should aim to maximize the package that you can secure.

If it is not, you can then begin leveraging them with comments such as; "How much room do we have for negotiation?" " What benefits does that include?" or even call their bluff by saying, "I'm really keen on the position, but I'll have to weigh it up against another offer I have been made."

Salary Negotiation - Challenging a Poor Offer: If their opening offer is unacceptable then you could make comments such as "I'll have to go away and consider if I can justify that salary to myself" or "I'm not sure if that's a very competitive salary".

This will indicate that they should consider an immediate improvement or the negotiations might stall. Sometimes, a surprisingly effective tactic is to look the interviewer straight in the eye and ask, "Is that the best you can offer?"

Not all remuneration is made as payment. Some benefits do have a genuine value, while others may even leave you out of pocket in the long run. Be well informed about common 'sweeteners' such as company cars, share options, profit share and pensions. Many of these are based on performance or the buoyancy of the economy.

Finally, take the time to consider and accept the right offer. Don't be afraid to turn down an offer and move onto another interview with added confidence. Beware of fancy titles, expectations of unpaid overtime, open promises and so-called 'opportunities for promotion'.

Salary Negotiation - What Happens Next: Ensure that you create a positive impression at the end of the interview by clarifying what happens next.

The interviewer will make it clear when the interview is over. Remember, let them take the lead; stay seated until they stand up. However, you can start gathering your personal items together, to avoid any awkward pauses. Now is the time to create a positive impression, by using a parting shot that

you have committed to memory. For example you could say something like “It’s been a pleasure meeting you and finding out more about what you do here”.

Unless they have already made it clear it is important to clarify precisely what happens next - a further interview, psychological tests, a medical, etc. You also need to establish what timeframe they are working to. Without this information you will be left in limbo, not knowing what happens next, or if and when to approach them for an update.

Requesting this information not only helps you to prepare for the next phase but it also shows them that you are professional and organized; you are demonstrating precisely the sort of approach that they will value in new member of staff.

Key questions to ask include:

- When will I hear from you?
- How will I be informed – is it by a written formal offer?
- Do you need any more information from me?
- Is there anyone else I should speak to?

Salary Negotiation - Review Your Experience: You should always review your interview experience as soon as possible after the interview. This is even more valuable following an interview where you have been successful - in gaining a job offer. Treat every interview as a learning experience, so that you can continue refining and improving your performance. You can’t be sure that this offer is the one you will accept and it isn’t even a firm offer until you have it in writing!

In conducting your post-interview analysis, ask yourself questions such as:

- Were you asked questions that caught you by surprise?
- Why did these questions surprise you?
- Could you have answered some questions better?
- How do you think you handled the non-verbal communication aspect?
- What kind of rapport did you manage to establish with the interviewer?

This approach will also help you to cope better with interview rejections, as you will still see that you gained something positive from them. Even if you do accept this job offer, you will be better prepared to handle your next promotion!

Salary Negotiation - Write a Simple Thank You Letter: Following through with a thank you letter is a popular way of reminding the interviewer of your enthusiasm, although they may not even acknowledge the gesture. The letter just needs to express how much you enjoyed the interview, appreciated their time and confirm your continued interest. It shows that you are keen and committed and that if offered the position you would be very likely to accept it. You may even benefit, for example if their first choice candidate turned them down. If you are seen as a keen candidate who will accept the job, it can only strengthen your position in relation to the other applicants.

Get Ahead in Business Negotiations: The information on this sheet is a very small subset of “**Get Ahead in Business Negotiations**” a world leading training course that exists both as an e-Book and a multimedia CD-

Rom training course. This course will teach you proven strategies for negotiating better deals by setting yourself ambitious goals and shows you how to achieve these goals by adopting a structured approach to the four phases of any negotiation.

This course will give you a detailed understanding of the whole negotiation process, from the preparation phase - where you can learn to maximize your advantage before negotiations even begin; right through to the closure phase - where you may need to deal effectively with the other side's last minute tactics.

You will learn how to:

- Prepare effectively, to maximize your advantage before negotiations even begin.
- Make the best possible opening, one that is both tough and credible.
- Become expert in the use of bargaining tactics and concession trading.
- Master the win/win and distributive approaches to get the best deal possible.
- Deal effectively with any last minute tactics and close the deal.

9.5 Legal Aspects of Communication

The legal writing skills trains anyone working in legal profession to write effectively, especially lawyers, attorneys, judges etc. Many a times, the business managers are also put in such a situation where they are supposed to know the legal aspects of business communications particularly while writing the letters and reports. They convene the meetings and attend the same as representative of their respective organizations. In such cases they are supposed to record the minutes as per requirements of different laws like company law, consumers protection law and income tax law, etc. Therefore, the business managers need to improve their legal orientation as well as business communication more particularly the written communication. The legal aspects

of business communication takes you through every step in the process of deciding with your company what types of minutes to take, preparing for taking minutes, recording your notes, translating the notes into clear minutes, and distributing the minutes.

As a matter of legal requirement, a business manager needs to have a clear objective of any such writing; should know the reader; should write with clear openings for new information; Use explicit guideposts for readers; Use strategies to have the impact you want; Quote and cite correctly; Use key words, definitions, explanations, and examples; Write using clear, simple words; Write clear, simple sentences; Write clear, simple paragraphs Write concisely; Use an attractive, easy-to-follow format; and ultimately should go for proofreading for legal correctness.

In order to make communication legally authentic, the manager needs to avoid letting personal biased and unfounded opinions influence your interpretation and presentation of the data. Sometimes you will be asked to draw conclusions and to make recommendations, and such judgments inherently involve a certain amount of subjectivity. You must make a special effort to look at the data objectively and to base your conclusions, solely on the data. Avoid letting your personal feelings influence the outcomes. Something the use of a single word can unintentionally convey bias.

Moreover, the business manager should give enough evidence to support your conclusions. Make sure that your sources are accurate, reliable, and objective and that is enough evidence to support your position. Sometimes your evidence (the data you gather) may be so sparse or of such questionable quality that you are unable to draw a valid conclusion. If so, simply present the findings and don't draw a conclusion. To give the

reader confidence in your statements, discuss your procedures thoroughly and cite all your sources.

Management needs comprehensive, up-to-date, accurate, and understandable information to achieve the organization's goals. Much of this information is communicated in the form of legal communications. The most common types of business legal communications are periodic legal communications, proposals, policies and procedures, and situational legal communications. Each of these types is discussed and illustrated in the following sections

Informational legal communications relate objectively the facts and events surrounding a particular situation. No attempt is made to analyze and interpret the data, draw conclusions, or recommend a course of action. Most periodic legal communications, as well as policies and procedures, are examples of informational legal communications. In most cases, these types of legal communications are the easiest to complete. The writer's major interest is in presenting all of the relevant information objectively, accurately, and clearly, while refraining from including unsolicited analysis and recommendations.

Authorized legal communications are written at the specific request of some higher authority. Thus, the reader has an inherent interest in the report. Voluntary legal communications, on the other hand, are prepared on the writer's own initiative. Therefore, the reader needs more background information and frequently more persuasive evidence than do readers of authorized legal communications. Authorized legal communications may be either periodic or situational. Periodic legal communications are submitted on a recurring, systematic basis. Very often, they are form legal

communications, with space provided for specific items of information. Readers of periodic legal communications need little introductory or background information because of the report's recurring nature. Readers of situational, one-time legal communications, on the other hand, need more explanatory material because of the uniqueness of the situation.

Some important factors naturally interfere with legal creativity and concentration. In addition, they undermine the writer's self-image and make him or her even more reluctant to tackle the next writing task. The treatment for writer's block lies in the strategies, from legal point view, discussed hereunder:

1. **Choose the appropriate legal environment:** The ability to concentrate on the task is one of the most important components of effective legal writing. The appropriate legal environment may not be the same desk where you normally do your other work. Even if you can turn off the phones and shut the door to visitors, silent distractions can bother you – a notation on your calendar reminding you of an important upcoming event, notes about a current project, even a photograph of a loved one. Many people write best in a library-type environment, with a low noise level, relative anonymity, and the space to spread out notes and other resources on a large table. Others find a computer room conducive to thinking and writing, with its low level of constant background noise and the presence of other people similarly engaged.
2. **Schedule a reasonable block of time:** If the legal writing task is short, you can block out enough time to plan, draft, and revise the entire message at one sitting. If the task is long or complex, however, schedule blocks of no more than two hours or so. After all,

writing is hard work. When your time is up or your work completed, give yourself a reward – take a break or get a snack.

3. **State your purpose in legal writing:** Having identified your specific purpose during the planning phase, write it at the top of your blank page or tack it on the bulletin board in front of you. Keep it visible so that it will be uppermost in your consciousness as you compose.
4. **Engage in free writing:** Review your purpose and your audience, then, as a means of releasing your pent-up ideas and getting past the block, begin **free writing**; that is, write continuously for five to ten minutes, literally without stopping. Although free writing is typically considered a pre-drafting technique, it can also be quite useful for helping writers “unblock” their ideas.

While free writing, do not look back and do not stop writing. If you cannot think of anything to say, simply keep repeating the last word or keep writing some sentence such as, “I’ll think of something soon.” Resist the temptation to evaluate what you have written. (If you are composing at a computer, you may want to darken your screen so that you will not be tempted to review what you have written thus far; this technique is called invisible writing.) At the end of five or ten minutes, take a breather, stretch and relax, read what you’ve written, and then start again, if necessary.

5. **Avoid the perfectionism legal syndrome:** Remember that the product you are producing now is a draft – not a final document. Do not worry about style, coherence, spelling or punctuation errors, and the like. The artist in you must create something before the editor can refine it.

6. **Think aloud with legal aptitude:** Some people are more skilled at speaking their thoughts than at writing them. Picture you are self-telling a colleague about what you are writing, and explain aloud the ideas you are trying to get across. Hearing your ideas will help sharpen and focus them.
7. **Write the easiest parts first:** The opening paragraph of a letter or memo is often the most difficult one to compose. If that is the case, skip it and begin in the middle. In a report, the procedures section may be easier to write than the recommendations. Getting something down on paper will give you a sense of accomplishment, and your writing may generate ideas for other sections.

9.6 Summary

This lesson educates you skills to successfully negotiate your way through life. Even if you were to measure it in narrow monetary terms this course would reward you enormously in all the big-ticket negotiations we do in our lives. But, even more important it gives you valuable lessons about setting goals; following a strategy and building a meaningful relationship with the people you interact with. This course is not just about negotiations - it is also an enlightening and entertaining educational experience about living more effectively.

Managers at every level must balance various working styles, build efficient management teams, and develop sharp negotiation skills to remain competitive. Business Negotiations offers a selection of the best thinking on negotiation practice and managing conflict in organizational settings – an invaluable training resource.

Negotiation is a critical skill needed for effective management. This multimedia course explores and explains the major concepts and theories of

the psychology of bargaining and negotiation, as well as the dynamics of interpersonal and inter-group conflict and its resolution. It is relevant to a broad spectrum of management students as well as all staff involved in professional negotiations and bargaining.

Try each of the legal strategies for avoiding writer's block at least once; then build into your writing routine those strategies that work best for you. Just as different athletes and artists use different legal strategies for accomplishing their goals, so do different writers. There is no single best way to make legal business communication, so choose what effective way of business communication for you is.

9.7 Self-Assessment Exercise

5. "The business negotiation skills are key to success to a corporate manager." Discuss the statement.
6. "Communication is the sum of all things one person does when he wants to create understanding in the mind of another through business negotiation." Discuss and elaborate the statement.
7. Write a note on the relevance of business negotiation in business communication.
8. What are the precautions managers should keep in mind while going for business negotiations with new entrants in the organization? Do he take care of some legal aspects as well?

9.8 Suggested Readings

1. Pal, Rajendra and Korlahalli, J. S., Essentials of Business Communication.
2. Kaul, Asha, Effective Business Communication.
3. Lesikar, R. V. and Pettite J. D., Business Communication.
4. Sharma, R. C. , Business Communication and Report Writing.
5. Shinha, P., Business Communication.

Course: Communication and Secretarial Practices

Course Code: MC-102

Author: Anil

Kumar

Lesson: 10

Vetter : Dr B S Bodla

AGENCY CORRESPONDENCE

Objective: **The objective of this lesson is to give the learners an understanding of agency correspondence, there by enabling them to draft various agency related letters.**

Structure

- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 Essentials of Agency Correspondence
- 10.3 Hints for Drafting Agency-related Letters
- 10.4 Some Sample Letters
- 10.5 Self-Assessment Questions
- 10.6 Suggested Readings

10.1 INTRODUCTION

Manufactures often appoint agents and/or franchisees to sell their products and services. With the growth of their business and expansion of their markets, manufacturers generally prefer agents and franchisees to new branches for economic reasons. It is easier and economically more viable to give agency or operate through a franchisee than to establish a branch and look customers in a new area. An agent is a person who represent a company or another person in an area. The company or person who appoints an agent is called the principal of that agent. Thus a principal appoints an agent to act for him. The agency is the agent's office or job that is to sell the goods or services for a commission. The agent and principal enter in to an agreement that is called agency agreement. The agency agreement govern the rate of commission, targets to be met during a fixed period, territory within which the agent has to operate, guarantee of payment/collection against credit sales and so on.

Agency can yield the best results only when there is perfect understanding and complete co-operation between a principle and his agent. Both the parties have, therefore, to be in continuous correspondence with each other. The correspondence between the principal and his agent includes a wide variety of letters on different occasions, such as:

- Offer of agency by the principal
- Agent's reply to the offer of agency by the principal
- Advertisement for appointment of agencies by the principal
- Application for agency by a prospective agent
- Principal's reply to the application for agency
- Announcement by the agent regarding obtaining agency
- Cancellation of agency and public notice by the principal

10.2 ESSENTIALS OF AGENCY CORRESPONDENCE

Many of the letters relating to agency share the features of sales letters. The objective of both is the same "to sell". A principal looking for agents sells his image and his product through the agent. In the same way a prospective agent, while applying for appointment, sells his image and standing in the market. The relationship between principal and agent is built up on mutual trust and shared benefits. Both use persuasive approach and 'you-attitude' in their correspondence. They say the best possible thing in their favour. Needless to say mutual appreciation and adjustment are indispensable for the agency related correspondence. Like all other kinds of sales letter, agency letters end on a positive, forward-looking note.

10.3 HINTS FOR DRAFTING AGENCY-RELATED LETTERS

1. Offer of Agency by the Principal

- ✓ Mention the recommendation on which you are offering agency.
- ✓ Refer to the potential market for your goods.
- ✓ Explain the merits of your goods – brand name; quality; variety; reasonable price; popularity of the goods elsewhere, *etc.*
- ✓ Persuade the addressee to handle your products.

- ✓ Mention the remuneration and other terms of agency – stocking, payment of advance, additional commission, area of operation, *etc.*

2. **Agent's Reply to the Offer of Agency by the Principal**

- ✓ Thank the correspondent for the offer of agency.
- ✓ Explain the market conditions – either favourable for the products in question or unfavourable, as the case may be.
- ✓ (a) If you accept the offer, communicate your decision; and if you have any suggestions regarding the terms of offer, put them down clearly.
(b) If you cannot accept the offer, say so in a courteous manner, and in all cases, with reason.
- ✓ If the offer is accepted, assure the correspondent your full co-operation in a mutually rewarding relationship.

3. **Application for Agency by a Prospective Agent**

- At the outset-
 - ✓ Point out that there is a good scope for the sale of the manufacturer's goods in a particular area or region and that you are prepared to act as an agent to push his goods in that market, in case the application is made on your own initiative.

or
 - ✓ Refer to the advertisement made by the manufacturer, if your application is made in response to it.

or
 - ✓ Mention the source from which you got the information that the manufacturer is willing to appoint an agent, if you are applying on the basis of such information.
- Emphasize your ability to sell the goods by referring to your-
 - ✓ Business standing and experience,
 - ✓ Knowledge of local business environment and conditions,
 - ✓ Business contacts,
 - ✓ Capacity of offer special facilities like show-rooms display windows, central situation of a building owned by you, delivery vans *etc.*
- Mention the terms on which you are ready to accept the agency or ask the manufacturer to state his terms for granting the agency.

- Give suitable Trade and/or Bank references, if you want the manufacturer to know more about you.
- Mention the security deposit you are prepared to offer in case you are willing to keep a large quantity of stocks.
- State any other ground that might support your claims.

4. Principal's Reply to the Application for Agency

- ✓ Acknowledge, with thanks, the correspondent's letter.
- ✓ Appreciate his interest in your products and also business standing.
- ✓ Inform whether you are prepared to grant the agency applied for.
- ✓ If the agency is granted, mention the terms of agency, either in the form of accepting the terms offered by the applicant (with change, if necessary) or by giving your own terms.

5. A Letter Announcing the Cancellation of an Agency

- ✓ Regretting the need for cancellation, mention the name of agent whose agency has been terminated.
- ✓ Request the correspondent not to deal with the agent in any manner in regard to business with you.
- ✓ Caution him of non-responsibility on your part if the correspondent deals with the agent for business with your firm.
- ✓ Express your concern for the inconvenience caused to the customers.
- ✓ Request them to send their orders directly to you until an alternative arrangement is made.

9.4 SOME SAMPLE LETTERS

Some agency- related letters are given below.

1. Offer of Agency by the Principal

Mysore Silks (P) Ltd.
125, M. G .Road, Bangalore.
Phone:

October 11, 2005

Messrs, K K Jain & Sons
167, Sector 17
Chandigarh-160017

Dear Sirs

Mr. S Sharma, the Sales manager of Padam Textiles (P) Ltd., was kind enough to recommend you as a firm of highly reliable, reputed and progressive agents in the states of Punjab and Haryana. In view of his recommendation we wish to offer you the Agency for our products in the state of Punjab and Haryana.

Mysore Silks have always been trend setters and fashion creators. Our innovative designs have been catching the imagination of all kinds of customers. Besides, our products are priced to suit all budgets. Priced at Rs. 225 to Rs. 2000 and above, our sarees are within the reach of most people and satisfy even the most critical buyer in respect of quality, designs, color combinations, variety and durability.

In view of the immense popularity our silk sarees, blouse pieces and other varieties of cloth enjoy in southern states, we are sure that our products will find a responsive market in Punjab and Haryana as well.

You only have to organize an impressive launching of our silks.

We wish you to work for us as a Sole Agent for the whole of Punjab and Haryana. You will be supplied with adequate stock periodically and your requirements between two regular supplies will be met with promptly. We appreciate the difficulties you may have to face in the initial stages of introduction and offer you the highest rate of 17% commission on net sales. Our interior decorators will be at your disposal to complete your window dressing jobs at places of your choice. We will also be taking up show- windows in important cities and your suggestions in selecting appropriate places will greatly facilitate our work.

We are sure our business relations will be mutually beneficial and we hope you will be happy to represent our company in your areas.

Sincerely yours,

[Click **here** and type your name]

[Click **here** and type job title]

2. Agent's Reply to the Offer of Agency by the Principal

Messrs, K K Jain & Sons

167, Sector 17
Chandigarh-160017

October 14, 2005

Mysore Silks (P) Ltd.
125, M. G .Road,
Bangalore.

Dear Sirs

Re: Sole agency for Punjab and Haryana

We thank you for your offer of sole agency for the states of Punjab and Haryana. It is really nice of Mr. Sharma to have recommended our name and we are thankful to him for the confidence he and his company have reposed in us.

We are aware of the popularity enjoyed by your silk products in southern states and are rather surprised you have overlooked the potential of our states so long. Though rather late, your decision to tap this market is a sound one and we visualize a long, mutually beneficial relationship with you.

Notwithstanding the superior quality and popularity of your products, you will concede that overcoming inherent customer resistance is initially difficult. Two major factors may be mentioned here. People are universally skeptical about the genuineness of silk. Secondly, there appears to be some preference for polyester-blended fabrics. However, we are confident that it will not take us very long to please the elite customers in the cities and towns of Punjab and Haryana.

Your terms of agency are acceptable to us, and we await your instructions to complete other formalities.

Meanwhile, please send us samples of the full range of your products. We would also like to suggest that you launch a special advertising campaign immediately to run through the entire Diwali festival when people have a natural desire to buy something new to wear.

Sincerely yours,

[Click **here** and type your name]

[Click **here** and type job title]

3. Application for an Agency

Messrs, K K Jain & Sons
167, Sector 17
Chandigarh-160017

October 17, 2005

Mysore Silks (P) Ltd.
125, M. G .Road,
Bangalore.

Dear Sirs

Re: Sole agency for Punjab and Haryana

Mr. S Sharma, Sales Manager, Padam Textiles (P) Ltd. has informed us that you are looking for sole agents for your silk products for Punjab and Haryana. We would be pleased to represent you as your sole agents in these two states.

We have been in the field of wholesale distribution for the last fifteen years and have earned a name for satisfactorily representing manufacturers and promoting the sale of their goods in our territory. Our specialization is sarees, and we can give you an impressive launching. You can consider these markets, wherein we wish to represent you, as a gateway for your entry into the northern regions. With our rich experience in the textile line and our business contacts throughout these two states, your products will have no difficulty in being successfully introduced to our customers. A special advertising campaign by you would help us to overcome whatever problems may have to be faced in the initial stages.

On our part, we will exhibit your products in all our showrooms and show windows which are situated at strategic places in the important cities of Punjab and Haryana. Our traveling salesmen have a wide knowledge of the customers and the market in the line of textiles of all types and varieties. We would, therefore assure your confidently of large sales of your products throughout the year.

We propose the following terms:

- a. Goods will be supplied to us F.O.R. Chandigarh.
- b. You will draw on us for each consignment a bill for 3 months.
- c. Our commission – 7.5% on invoice price, *del credere*, if you approve 3%.
- d. Every new design developed by you will be supplied to us immediately.

- e. Expenses on any special advertising campaign for your goods shall be shared by us equally.
- f. Since it is a sole Agency, we would insist that you do not entertain any direct orders.

For our standing and credit, you may refer to:

1. Mr. S Sharma, Sales Manager, Padam Textiles (P) Ltd., Mohali,
2. The Krishna Mills Ltd., Ludhiana and
3. Bank of India, Main Branch, Chandigarh.

We feel we are the right people to represent you in our territory. An effective distribution system is the life breath of a manufacturing unit, and that is precisely what we are offering you.

We await your decision in this matter.

Sincerely yours,

[Click **here** and type your name]

[Click **here** and type job title]

4. Principal's Reply to the Application for an Agency – Granting the Agency

Mysore Silks (P) Ltd.
125, M. G .Road, Bangalore.
Phone:

October 21, 2005

Messrs, K K Jain & Sons
167, Sector 17
Chandigarh-160017

Dear Sirs

Many thanks for your letter of 17th October. We appreciate your interest in developing a market for our goods. We have also received reports from your references and are now pleased to grant you the sole agency for our products in the states or Punjab and Haryana.

Your terms of agency are acceptable to us except that the *del cruder* commission would be 2.5% and not 3% since it is at 2.5% that we pay to our other agents. Further we shall not turn down direct orders from the customers but we shall execute them only after referring them to you and obtaining your approval.

The agency will be for a period of three years to start with and can be renewed thereafter.

Kindly complete the enclosed agreement bond and return it promptly along with a cheque/draft for Rs. 50,000 as security deposit which will earn you interest at 11% p.a.

Sincerely yours,

[Click **here** and type your name]

[Click **here** and type job title]

Encls. : Agreement bond in duplicate

5. Principal's Reply to the Application for an Agency – Refusing to Grant the Agency

Mysore Silks (P) Ltd.
125, M. G .Road, Bangalore.
Phone:

October 21, 2005

Messrs, K K Jain & Sons
167, Sector 17
Chandigarh-160017

Dear Sirs

While thanking you for your letter of October 21, 2005, offering your agency services for the Punjab and Haryana area, we regret to state that we are not in a position to accept your offer at present, as we have already given Agency to two firms at Ludhiana and Panipat, which cover the Punjab and Haryana areas respectively.

However, as we have plan to re-allocate the areas in the near future, we shall be glad to correspond with you the moment a final decision is taken in this regard.

Sincerely yours,

[Click **here** and type your name]

[Click **here** and type job title]

6. A Letter Announcing the Cancellation of an Agency

Mysore Silks (P) Ltd.

125, M. G .Road, Bangalore.

Phone:

December 5, 2010

Messrs, Chabbildas & Sons

107, Palika Bazar,

Chandigarh-160017

Dear Sirs

We regret to inform you that due to unavoidable circumstances it has become necessary for us to withdraw our agency arrangements with Messrs, K K Jain & Sons, of Chandigarh for the North region. We request you, therefore, not to deal with them in any manner in connection with booking orders, or obtaining any receipts from them for your recent remittances, if any.

We shall soon be writing to you about fresh arrangements. Meanwhile send your orders direct to us. We will execute your orders and attend to your other communication so promptly that your will not feel the absence of a regular agency system.

We earnestly seek your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely yours,

[Click **here** and type your name]

[Click **here** and type job title]

9.5 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Answer the following question in brief:
 - a. Why do manufacturers prefer appointing agents to opening new branches?
 - b. What facts would you include in your application for an agency?
 - c. What facts should be included in a letter offering an agency?
2. Draft a letter to the Calico Mills, Ahmedabad, requesting them to appoint you their sole agents for their Cali-ber suitings for Madhya Pradesh. Include in your letter all those details which you think will induce them to give you the agency.
3. Write a tactful letter to an applicant for an agency, pointing out that you are already represented adequately in his district but stating that his application will be filed for reference.
4. The Hindustan Electric Company, Bangalore, is the sole agents for southern India for “Clear Tone” Television in the important towns of southern province. You have a small business of your own in your district, and you desire to be appointed as subagents for your district.

Write a letter to the Hindustan Electric Company applying for the agency.
5. Write the Hindustan Electric Company’s reply to the above letter stating the terms on which the agency would be given to you.
6. (a) The Typewriter Company, London, who are trying to find an agent in India, have been advised to approach to Mr. M N Sinha, Patna. They write accordingly to Mr. M N Sinha, setting out the terms and conditions on which they are prepared to appoint him their sole agent for India and emphasizing the chief points in favour of their typewriters. Draft the letter.

(b) In his reply to the Typewriter Company, Mr. M N Shinha asks for a trial consignment pending the final acceptance by him of their offer of the sole agency. He also gives forwarding instructions regarding the consignment. Draft the reply.
7. (a) Without making invidious comparisons, inform one of your agents that his sales are very much lower than those of other agents in neighboring districts. In a frank and friendly fashion ask him if he can account for this..

- (b) Write a defensive reply to the above letter but avoid any attempt to repudiate any responsibility.
8. Draw your agent's attention tactfully to a decline in his sales and insist on forwarding reports more regularly. Point out that this is also in his own interest.
 9. Draw your principal's attention to certain delays in the forwarding of goods. Point out the serious effect this may have on your sales and ask him to take up the matter with his forwarding agents.
 10. You have been acting as agents for Premier Book Company, New Delhi, for over three years. Your Principal have written to you expressing dissatisfaction with the volume of business done by you for them and threatening to terminate your agency. Draft a reply giving suitable explanation and satisfactory assurance.
 11. Your agent in Karnataka has not been able to push the sales of the Ritewel pens manufacture by you. Write a letter to him terminating his agency.
 12. The Indian Industries Syndicate, Limited, Bombay, write to an England firm, manufacturing transistors, offering themselves as the sole agents of the firm in India. Draft the letter.
 13. You have been offered the sole agency for the whole of Maharashtra for a popular brand of instant coffee. You are willing to act as agents but are not satisfied with the terms and conditions offered. Draft a suitable letter.

9.6 SUGGESTED READINGS

1. Business Communication *by* K. K. Sinha. Galgotia Publishing Company., New Delhi.
2. Business Communication *by* C. C. Pattensheti. R. Chand and Company Publishers., New Delhi.
3. Essentials of Business Communication *by* Rajindra Pal and J. S. Korlahalli. Sultan Chand and Sons., New Delhi.
4. Effective Business Communication *by* Herta A. Murphy and Charrles E. Peck. Tata McGraw Hill Publishing Company Limited., New Delhi.
5. Essentials of Business Communication *by* Pettett and Lesikar. Tata McGraw Hill Publishing Company Limited., New Delhi.
6. Business Communication *by* Pettett and Lesikar. Tata McGraw Hill Publishing Company Limited., New Delhi.