

## UNDERSTANDING MANAGERIAL COMMUNICATION

### INTRODUCTION

Communication between managers and employees provides the information necessary to get work done effectively and efficiently in organizations. In this and following lecture, basic concepts in managerial communications will be presented including: the interpersonal communication process, methods of communicating, barriers to effective communications and ways to overcome these barriers, communication flow and communication networks, and contemporary issues and challenges associated with electronic communications and information technology.

#### The Nature of managerial communication

- A. **Communication** is the transfer and understanding of meaning.
  - 1. If no information or ideas have been conveyed or transferred, communication hasn't taken place.
  - 2. For communication to be successful, the meaning must be imparted and understood.
- B. Good communication does not require agreement with the message, just clear understanding of the message.
- C. Managerial communication encompasses both **interpersonal communication** (between two or more people) and **organizational communication** (all the patterns, networks, and system of communication within an organization).
- D. **Communication** and associated **interpersonal processes** are important ingredients of organizational effectiveness.
- E. **Communication** is the exchange of messages between people for the purpose of achieving common meanings.
- F. Managers use two types of communication in their work.
  - 1. **Verbal communication** is the use of words to communicate.
    - a. Written communication includes letters, memoranda, reports, newsletters, policy manuals, etc.
    - b. Disadvantage includes the fact that the conversations may be time-consuming and difficult to terminate, and that additional time may have to be spent to document what was said.
  - 2. **Nonverbal communication** is communication by means of elements and behaviors that are not coded into words.
- 3. **Nonverbal Communication** is communication transmitted without words. The best-known types of nonverbal communication are body language and verbal intonation.
  - a. **Body language** refers to gestures, facial expressions, and other body movements that convey meaning.
  - b. **Verbal intonation** refers to the emphasis someone gives to words or phrases that convey meaning.

#### The communication process can be analyzed into its basic components

- 1. The **sender** is the initiator of the message.
- 2. **Encoding** is the process of translating the intended meaning into symbols.
  - a. Symbols include words and gestures.
  - b. The sender's choice of symbols depends upon

- 1) Sender encoding skills.
  - 2) Assessments of the ability of the intended receiver to understand various symbols
  - 3) Judgments regarding the appropriateness of the use of certain symbol
  - 4) Past experience in similar situations
  - 5) Job status and education
  - 6) Emotional state at the time of the communication attempt
3. The **message** is the encoding-process outcome, which consists of verbal and nonverbal symbols that have been developed to convey meaning to the receiver.
- a. The **medium** is the method used to convey the message to the intended receiver, e.g., telephone, meeting, formal report.
  - b. Factors to consider when selecting a medium include relative speed, cost, intelligibility, convenience, timing, flow of communication, feedback options, interpersonal dynamics, and documentation.
4. The **receiver** is the person with whom the message is exchanged.
- a. **Decoding** is the process of translating the symbols into the interpreted message.
    - 1) Effective communication results in the senders and receivers achieving a common meaning.
    - 2) The receiver needs to consider the medium and the context of the message.
  - b. **Noise** is any factor in the communication process that interferes with exchanging messages and achieving common meaning.
  - c. **Feedback** is the basic response of the receiver to the interpreted message.
    - 1) The receiver becomes the sender during feedback.
    - 2) Feedback provides preliminary information to the sender about the success of the communication.
  - 3) **One-way communication** is the communication that results when the communication process does not allow for feedback.
  - 4) **Two-way communication** is the communication that results when the communication process explicitly includes feedback.

### Barriers to Effective Interpersonal Communication

1. **Filtering** is the deliberate manipulation of information to make it appear more favorable to the receiver.
  - a. As information is communicated up through the organizational levels, it's condensed and synthesized, and those doing the condensing filter communication through their personal interests and perceptions of what is important.
  - b. The more that organizational cultural reward emphasizes style and appearance, the more that managers will be motivated to filter communications in their favor.
2. **Selective perception** is when people selectively interpret what they see or hear on the basis of their interests, background, experience, and attitudes.
3. **Emotions** influence how a receiver interprets a message when it is received. It's best to avoid reacting to a message when the receiver is upset because he/she is not likely to be thinking clearly.
4. **Information overload** happens when the information we have to work with exceeds our processing—such as 600 waiting e-mail messages in the inbox.
  - a. Receivers tend to select out, ignore, pass over, or forget information when they have too much information.
  - b. Or, receivers may put off further processing until the overload situation is over—still ineffective communication.
5. **Defensiveness**—engaging in behaviors such as verbally attacking others, making sarcastic remarks, being overly judgmental, and questioning others' motives—happens when people feel that they're being threatened.

6. **Language**—words mean different things to different people.
  - a. Age, education, and cultural background can influence language use and definition given to words
  - b. **Jargon** is specialized terminology or technical language that members of a group use to communicate among themselves.
7. **National culture** can affect the way a manager chooses to communicate.

### Overcoming the Barriers to Effective Interpersonal Communication

1. Use feedback. This feedback can be verbal or nonverbal.
2. Simplify language.
3. Listen actively.
  - a. Listening is an active search for meaning, whereas hearing is passive.
  - b. **Active listening** is listening for full meaning without making premature judgments or interpretations, and demands total concentration.
  - c. Active listening is enhanced by developing empathy with the sender—placing yourself in the sender's position.
  - d. Emotions: The simplest answer is for a manager to refrain from communicating until he/she has regained composure.
4. Watch nonverbal cues—actions speak louder than words.

### ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

- A. Formal versus Informal Communication.
  1. **Formal communication** refers to communication that follows the official chain of command or is part of the communication required to do one's job.
  2. **Informal communication** is organizational communication that is not defined by the organization's structural hierarchy.
    - a. Informal communication systems permit employees to satisfy their needs for social interaction.
    - b. Informal communication systems can improve an organization's performance by creating alternative, and frequently faster and more efficient, channels of communication.

### Direction of Communication Flow

1. **Downward communication**—flows from a manager to employees and is used to inform, direct, coordinate, and evaluate employees.
2. **Upward communication** flows from employees to managers
  - a. Upward communication can be used in order to keep managers aware of how employees feel about their jobs, their coworkers, and the organization in general.
  - b. The organizational culture influences the extent of upward communication. A climate of trust, respect, and participative decision making will encourage considerable upward communication. A highly mechanistic and authoritarian environment will severely limit upward communication in both style and content.
3. **Lateral communication** takes place among employees on the same organizational level.
4. **Diagonal communication** is communication that cuts across both work areas and organizational levels.
  - a. The increased use of e-mail facilitates diagonal communications.
  - b. Diagonal communication has the potential to create problems if employees don't keep their managers informed.