COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY

CHAPTER OUTCOMES

- Define *communication* and the communication process.
- Contrast formal and informal communication.
- Explain how electronic communication affects the supervisor’s job.
- List barriers to effective communication.
- Describe techniques for overcoming communication barriers.
- List the essential requirements for active listening.
- Explain the behaviors necessary for providing effective feedback.
“EVERYTHING A SUPERVISOR DOES INVOLVES COMMUNICATING.”

- Management functions include planning, organizing, leading, and controlling.
- None of them would be possible without effective communications.
- Supervisors interact with people at all times, either their own work groups or peripheral groups. Little, if any, interaction between people does not involve some kind of communication, either verbal or nonverbal or both.
- It is virtually impossible for a person to succeed in management without communication skills.

COMMUNICATION FACTS

- Words mean different things to different people.
- The initiation of a message is no assurance that it is received or understood as intended.
- Communications often become distorted as they are transmitted from person to person.
WHAT IS COMMUNICATION

- The transference and understanding of meaning.
- Does not necessarily imply agreement.
- Does imply “clarity of understanding.”

SEVEN PARTS OF COMMUNICATION PROCESS

- **Sender** — the message source.
- **Encoding** — message converted to symbolic form.
- **Message**.
- **Channel** — media option used.
- **Decoding** — the message translation.
- **Receiver**.
- **Feedback**.
WHY ISN’T AGREEMENT NECESSARILY A PART OF GOOD COMMUNICATION?

- Communication involves the transference of meaning from the sender to the receiver.
- It is not necessary for the process to include agreement.
- In fact, two people can be communicating perfectly and still not agree with each other.

THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS.
METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

- Formal
- Informal
- Oral
- Written
- Electronic
- Nonverbal
- Grapevine

METHODS OF COMMUNICATION -- FORMAL

- Addresses task-related issues and tends to follow the organization’s authority chain.
- To give directions, provide advice, listen to suggestions, interact with employees, etc.
- Uses speech, written documents, electronic media, and nonverbal language.
METHODS OF COMMUNICATION
INFORMAL

• Moves in any direction.
• Skips authority levels.
• Is as likely to satisfy social needs as it is to facilitate task accomplishments.

HOW DO YOU COMMUNICATE ORALLY?

• Oral communication
  • One-on-one with an employee.
  • Problem-solving session with a group of employees.
  • Phone conversations.

• Advantages
  • Speed and nonverbal cues.
  • Positive symbolic value.
  • More personal, intimate, and caring, which tends to build trust.
  • Creates a climate of openness and support.
WHY DO YOU USE WRITTEN COMMUNICATION?

- When documentation is needed
  - Message is intended to be official.
  - Message has long-term implications.
  - Message is highly complex.
  - Written summary of performance reviews.
  - Detailed departmental reports.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

- Advantages
  - Provides a reliable paper trail for decisions or actions that are later called into question.
  - Reduces ambiguity for recipients.

- Disadvantages
  - Obsessive documentation leads to risk avoidance, decision paralysis, and creation of a highly politicized work environment.
  - Task accomplishment becomes subordinated to “CYA” mentality so no one person is held responsible for a questionable decision.
WHEN IS A WRITTEN COMMUNICATION PREFERABLE TO AN ORAL ONE? WHEN IS IT NOT PREFERRED?

Â Written communication is preferable to oral communication when the message is intended to be official, has long-term implications, or is highly complex.

Â The key is whether or not the communicator wants documentation; i.e., a reliable “paper trail” for future reference.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA

Â E-mail.
Â Voice mail.
Â Electronic paging.
Â Cell phones.
Â Modem-based transmissions, both Inter- and intranet.
INSTANT MESSAGING BENEFITS BUSINESS
BY ENHANCING COLLABORATION

- Time and Cost savings.
- There are risks and downsides.

OMG! IM DO’S AND DON’TS

1. DO adopt a user policy containing general guidelines
2. DON’T use instant messaging to communicate confidential or sensitive information.
3. DO organize your contact lists to separate business contacts from family/friends
4. DON’T allow excessive personal messaging at work
5. DO be aware that instant messages can be saved
6. DON’T compromise the company’s liability or individual reputation
7. DO be aware of virus infections and related security risks.
8. DON’T share personal data or information
9. DO keep instant messages simple
10. DON’T confuse contacts with a misleading user name or status
NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

- Gestures
- Facial configurations
- Other body movements
- Communicating emotions or temperament
  - Aggression
  - Fear
  - Shyness
  - Arrogance
  - Joy
  - Anger
- Verbal intonation
  - The emphasis given to words or phrases.
  - Every oral communication has a nonverbal message.

SUPERVISORS CAN USE NONVERBAL MESSAGES TO THEIR ADVANTAGE?

- It has been suggested that only 7% of the meaning of a message is due to its words, with the other 93% of the interpretation coming from nonverbal cues and voice inflection.
- Supervisors must recognize and use the power of nonverbal language to complement and reinforce the verbal elements of the message.
THE GRAPEVINE

Means of communication by which most operative employees first hear about important changes introduced by organizational leaders; the rumor mill.

Four purposes:
1. To structure and reduce anxiety
2. To make sense of limited and fragmented information
3. To serve as a vehicle to organize group members
4. To signal a sender’s status

Grapevine patterns.
WHAT USE, IF ANY, CAN THE GRAPEVINE SERVE?

- It acts as a sort of group therapy, satisfying the social needs of employees.
- Unfortunately, the grapevine is where most employees get their information on what’s going on in the organization.
- The grapevine is too powerful to stop and too important to ignore.
- It can be used to spread the truth just as quickly as to spread a rumor and, in this context, it can be used by management to “get the word out” to a target audience.
- Also, if management taps into the grapevine, it can learn what concerns and anxieties employees have and address those issues.

CAN MANAGEMENT CONTROL THE GRAPEVINE?

- Probably not. As stated above, it’s too powerful to stop and too important to ignore.
- Trying to control it might even make it spin further out of control.
- But you can use the grapevine. It is a method of communication.
HOW DOES LANGUAGE AFFECT COMMUNICATION?

**Language**
- Influenced by age, education, and cultural background.
- Diverse backgrounds produce language barriers.
- Departmentalized jargon or technical language.
- Vertical differences; i.e., “quotas” or “incentives” used by manager might mean “manipulation” to workers.
WHAT DID YOU SAY?

- **Listening habits**
  - Listening is paying attention and making sense out of what we hear.
  - If you do not have good listening skills, you will not get the full message as the sender meant to convey it.
  - Distractions affect our listening.

DID YOU GET MY MESSAGE?

**Feedback**

- The only way you can know if someone who received your message has comprehended it in the way that you meant.
DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE?

- Perception
  - Attitudes, interests, experiences, and expectations determine how you organize and interpret your surroundings.
  - We all have perceptual biases that often distort our communications with others.

What do you see—an old woman or a young lady?
WHAT DO ROLES HAVE TO DO WITH COMMUNICATIONS?

Roles
- Behavior patterns that go with the position people in organizations occupy.
- Each creates its own jargon.
- Requires role-player to interpret events selectively.
- For instance, the organization wants to “increase sales.” The marketer interprets it as “sell everything to anybody.” The credit manager interprets it to mean “sell only to those who are creditworthy.”

IS THERE A PREFERRED INFORMATION MEDIUM?

Information richness (in descending order of richness)
- Face-to-face talk, because of the nonverbal language that accompanies it.
- Telephone.
- Electronic mail.
- Memos and letters.
- Fliers, bulletins, and general reports.

Which to use?
- The more ambiguous and complicated the message, the more the sender should rely on a rich communication medium.
- When people do not match the medium to the message, communication problems arise.
IMPROVE COMMUNICATION

- Think first
- Constrain emotions
- Learn to listen
- Tailor language to receiver
- Match words and actions
- Use feedback
- Participate in assertiveness training
- Help immigrant workers assimilate into the culture

HOW DOES HONESTY AFFECT COMMUNICATION?

- Honesty or the lack of honesty
  - A good deal of what passes as poor communication is nothing other than individuals purposely avoiding honesty and openness to avoid confrontations or hurting others’ feelings.
  - Saying what you think others want to hear only increases tension and further hinders effective communication.
“DO AS I SAY, NOT AS I DO.” A SUPERVISOR’S COMMUNICATION EFFECTS HIS OR HER CREDIBILITY AND TRUST AMONG THE EMPLOYEES.

- Actions speak louder than words.
- If a supervisor says one thing and then does another his or her credibility and trustworthiness will drop dramatically.
- Conversely, if what they say is backed up by what they do, credibility and trust will grow.
- Employees will model their behavior more by actions than by words, especially when there is a discrepancy between the two.

ACTIVE LISTENING

- Active listening - a technique for understanding communication from speaker’s point of view
- Four requirements for Active Listening:
  1. Intensity
  2. Empathy
  3. Acceptance
  4. Willingness to take responsibility for completeness
WHY ARE FEEDBACK SKILLS SO IMPORTANT TO A SUPERVISOR’S SUCCESS?

- Supervisors must learn how to use feedback to help eliminate the misunderstandings and inaccuracies that often result in many of the communications problems they must confront.
- Both positive feedback and feedback for improvement, and both verbal and nonverbal feedback, are all involved in effective feedback.
- Supervisors must focus on specific behavior, remain impersonal, and make sure their feedback is both goal-oriented and well timed, ensures understanding, and directs negative feedback toward behavior the employee can do something about.
- The supervisor, who has mastered this part of the communication process, will build credibility and trust among his/her workers, and they, in turn, will boost the supervisor’s career.

POSITIVE FEEDBACK VS. FEEDBACK FOR IMPROVEMENT?

- Positive feedback
  - Likely to be given promptly and enthusiastically.
  - More readily and accurately perceived.
  - Fits what most people wish to hear and already believe about themselves.

- Feedback for improvement
  - Be aware of potential resistance and use it in situations in which it’s most likely to be accepted.
  - Should be used when it is supported by hard data.
SUGGESTIONS FOR EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

- Focus on specific behaviors.
- Keep feedback impersonal.
- Keep feedback goal oriented.
- Make feedback well timed.
- Ensure understanding.
- Direct feedback for improvement toward behavior that the receiver can control.