CHAPTER 3:
INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to assist readers in further developing the interpersonal communication skills they already possess. Communicating lies at the heart of interpersonal relations.

CHAPTER OUTLINE AND LECTURE NOTES

Communicating is the sending, receiving, and understanding of messages. It is also the basic process by which managers, customer-contact workers, and professionals accomplish their work.

I. STEPS IN THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS
The process model of communication presented in text Figure 3-1 follows these steps: Sender (or source) message channel (medium) receiver feedback.

II. NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION IN ORGANIZATIONS
Nonverbal communication refers to the transmission of messages through means other than words. These messages accompany verbal communication and sometimes stand-alone. According to the classic study by Mehrabian, words account for only 7 percent of the emotional impact of a message. Voice tone accounts for 38 percent of the impact, and facial expressions for 55 percent.

A. Modes of Transmission of Nonverbal Communication
Seven categories of nonverbal messages are (1) environment, (2) interpersonal distance, (3) posture, (4) gestures, (5) facial expressions, (6) voice quality, and (7) personal appearance.

B. Guidelines for Improving Nonverbal Communication
Nonverbal communication can be improved by such methods as obtaining feedback on your body language, and learning to relax while communicating with others. Also, use role-playing to practice nonverbal communication, and use mirroring to establish rapport.

III. GUIDELINES FOR OVERCOMING COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS AND BARRIERS
Messages are the most likely to be distorted when they are complex, emotionally arousing, or clash with a receiver’s mental set. The tactics described next help reduce distortion.
A. Understand the Receiver
Understanding the receiver involves developing empathy, or placing yourself in the other person’s shoes. It also involves recognizing the receiver’s motivational state, which includes any active needs and interests operating at the time. Furthermore, it is important to understand the person’s frame of reference, the fact that people perceive words and concepts differently because their vantage points and perspectives differ.

B. Discuss Differences in Paradigms
A paradigm is a model, framework, viewpoint, or perspective. When two people look at a situation with different paradigms, a communication problem may occur. Discussion of the difference may help.

C. Minimize Defensive Communication
Defensive communication is the tendency to receive messages in such a way that our self-esteem is protected. Such communication is also responsible for people sending messages to make them look good. Overcoming these barriers is difficult because of denial, the suppression of information we find to be uncomfortable.

D. Use Multiple Channels
Repetition enhances communication, particularly when more than one channel is used to get the message across.

E. Use Verbal and Nonverbal Feedback
Feedback tells us if the message has been received as intended. Action, of course, is even more conclusive.

F. Display a Positive Attitude
Being perceived as having a positive attitude helps melt communication barriers because most people prefer to communicate with a positive person. Being positive helps make you appear more credible and trustworthy.

G. Use Persuasive Communication
An elegant tactic for overcoming communication barriers is to communicate so persuasively that obstacles disappear. Suggestions for persuasiveness include:

1. Know exactly what you want.
2. Never suggest an action without telling its end benefit.
3. Phrase your proposition in terms of the receiver’s interests.
4. Explore the reasons for people’s objections.
5. Get a yes response early on.
6. Use power words (e.g., decimating and surpassing).
7. Minimize raising your pitch at the end of sentences.
8. Talk to the audience, not the screen (when using information technology)
9. Avoid or minimize common language errors.

H. Engage in Active Listening
The active listener listens intently with the goal of empathizing with the speaker. As a result of listening actively, the listener can feed back to the speaker what he or she thinks the speaker meant.

I. Prepare for Stressful Conversations
Communication barriers will frequently surface when two or more people are engaged in conversation fraught with emotion, such as giving highly negative performance feedback, or even giving praise. One technique for reducing stress here is to prepare in advance for the conversation. Be aware of how you might react in the situation. Also, practice temperate phrasing, or being tactful while delivering negative feedback.

J. Engage in Metacommunications
In addition to using the barrier busters already described, another possibility is to metacommunicate, or communicate about your communication to help overcome barriers to resolve a problem. You talk about your communication pattern.

K. Recognize Gender Differences in Communication Style
People who are aware of gender differences in communication style would face fewer communication barriers between themselves and members of the opposite sex. Major findings about gender differences in communication style include:

1. Women prefer to use conversation for rapport building.
2. Men prefer to use talk primarily as a means to preserve independence and status by displaying knowledge and skill.
3. Women want empathy, not solutions.
4. Men prefer to work out their problems by themselves, whereas women prefer to talk out solutions with another person.
5. Women are more likely to compliment the work of a coworker, whereas men are more likely to be critical.
6. Men tend to be more directive in conversation, whereas women emphasize politeness.
7. Women tend to be more conciliatory when facing differences, whereas men become more intimidating.
8. Men are more interested than women in calling attention to their accomplishments or hogging recognition.
9. Men tend to dominate discussions during meetings.
ANSWERS TO DISCUSSION AND REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What are the reasons so many workers need improvement in communication skills?

A major factor could be that many workers do not place a high priority on improving their communication skills. Many young people spend far more time watching television than engaging in activities that are more likely to enhance communication skills. The computerization of the workplace and home helps develop written communication skills but it does not provide much practice in developing speaking skills or nonverbal communication skills.

2. How can knowing the steps in the communication process help a person become a more effective communicator?

Knowing the steps in the communication process helps a person understand the hurdles that must be overcome to get a message across. For example, if the communicator knows that noise can occur at any time, he or she will be on guard against communication barriers.

3. How can people use their automobiles to send nonverbal messages?

An automobile can send several messages. An obvious answer is that owning a luxury car sends the message, "I have arrived," or "I am powerful." Keeping a car impeccably neat sends a message that the person is tidy and orderly, whereas a messed-up car sends the opposite message. Keeping a well-maintained older auto might project, a conservative, thrifty, attitude.

4. What type of voice quality do you think would be effective in most situations?

A forceful, yet reassuring and comforting voice that includes a consistent tone without vocalized pauses would connote power and control. It would also be effective in many situations.

5. Suppose your manager does not listen to your suggestions for job improvements. Explain this problem as a paradigm clash.

The person suggesting the job improvements is operating from the paradigm that part of an employee’s job is to be proactive about solving problems. In contrast, the manager might be operating from the paradigm that an employee’s primary job is to perform the assigned work.
6. Should a person use power words when he or she is not in a powerful job? Explain.

Using power words when one is not in a powerful job is a good idea because it might help one get promoted to a powerful job. Projecting a favorable image usually enhances a person’s chance for promotion.

7. Why is summarization such a powerful communication technique?

Summarization is a powerful communication technique because the process helps a person feel understood and recognized. Summarization is also powerful because it is part of supportive communication; the person’s feeling well being is enhanced.

8. Identify three scenarios in the workplace that are likely to result in stressful conversations.

The workplace is the setting for many potentially stressful conversations. Among them are conversations about being placed on a downsizing list, being caught cheating on an expense account, being accused of sexual harassment, quitting, and receiving a very negative performance evaluation.

9. Describe an example from your work experience or personal life in which it would have been a good idea to metacommunicate.

Metacommunication can be effective in most situations in which one, or both, parties are concerned about the quality of communications. A team member who feels that her suggestions are virtually ignored by the team leader might say to the team leader, "I’m concerned that when I make a suggestion for improvement, my ideas just get shrugged off. What is your opinion about my concerns?" Another example of metacommunications would be to mention to another individual that there appears to be communication barriers between the two of you. The two of you would then discuss what these perceived barriers might be.

10. What are the implications of gender differences for conducting a meeting?

Given that meetings are a natural setting for communication to take place, understanding gender differences may help facilitate communication. An obvious example is that men have a tendency to hog too much of the meeting. It would therefore be important for the meeting leader to solicit the opinion of women. A more subtle difference is that during a meeting women may want to invest more time in talking about problems without necessarily pushing toward making a decision immediately.
ANSWERS TO CASE QUESTIONS

The Scrutinized Team Member Candidate

This case illustrates that many people in business place considerable emphasis on body language in judging another person’s capabilities.

1. To what extent are new venture team members making appropriate use of nonverbal communication to size up Gina Cleveland?

The team members vary in their realistic use of nonverbal behavior for assessments. An example of a realistic interpretation might be Brenda’s comments about Gina being well organized and good at details. A possible over-interpretation of nonverbal behavior might be Lauren’s comment: "Yet nibbling her lips like that suggests she’s not filled with fire power."

2. Which team member do you think made the most realistic interpretation of nonverbal behavior? Why?

Brenda might be making the most realistic interpretation. The comments about grooming and dressing to fit the culture appear to be realistic interpretations.

3. Should Lauren, the team leader, have told Gina in advance that the team would be scrutinizing her nonverbal behavior? Justify your answer.

From the standpoint of validity, it is better not to inform a job candidate about the factors that will be measured. If Gina knew that her nonverbal behavior were to be scrutinized, she might have rehearsed her body language. By so doing, she might have displayed behaviors that are not truly representative of her personality. From the standpoint of being as ethical as possible, Gina should have been forewarned so she could have put her best foot forward. Forewarning may not have influenced her behavior much because it is difficult to modify nonverbal behavior under pressure.

COMMENTS ABOUT QUIZZES AND EXERCISES

Voice Quality Check Up

Taken seriously, this exercise can point the way toward self-improvement that can benefit the student both personally and professionally. Voice quality is an often overlooked part of impression management.
**The Mirroring Technique**

Attempting the mirroring technique is an effective way of learning how much skill is required. After students have conducted the field experiments, they might be encouraged to give a classroom demonstration through role-playing.

**Listening Traps**

The listening traps presented in this exercise get at typical listening problems in an informative, interesting manner. Notice, however, that being a *mind reader* (at least to some extent) is recommended for active listening.

**Listening to a Coworker**

This role-play is valuable because it demonstrates that listening is not a natural behavior pattern. The listener in this role-play will often talk more than the target person. The student playing the role of listening to the discouraged coworker has to guard against giving too much advice and listening too little.

**Enhancing Your Nonverbal Communication E-mail Skills**

Plentiful results will stem from this exercise, and the results will emphasize the point that nonverbal communication can be found even in activities that appear strictly verbal.
EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

Multiple Choice

(a) 1. The three major components of communication are
   a. sending, receiving, and understanding.
   b. listening, hearing, and understanding.
   c. sending, creating interference, and receiving.
   d. speaking, writing, and questioning.

(b) 2. A survey of companies revealed that the employee skills companies would like the most to advance are
   a. basic computer and interpersonal.
   b. written and interpersonal communication.
   c. customer service and basic computer.
   d. organizational and cross-cultural.

(d) 3. The heart of the communication event is the
   a. environment.
   b. receiver
   c. sender.
   d. message.

(a) 4. A major purpose of feedback in interpersonal communication is to
   a. know whether a message has been received and understood.
   b. prevent noise from taking place.
   c. make the sender appear more impressive.
   d. size up the climate for communication.

(a) 5. The purpose of nonverbal communication is to
   a. convey the feeling behind the message.
   b. clarify the spoken word.
   c. repeat the spoken word.
   d. prevent the spoken word from being interpreted too literally.

(b) 6. When you neatly organize your work area to appear efficient, you are using the form of nonverbal communication called
   a. personal space.
   b. public distance.
   c. environment or setting.
   d. work signals.

(a) 7. Getting physically close to another person is usually interpreted as conveying
a. a positive attitude.
b. a negative attitude.
c. apprehension or fear.
d. readiness to enter into conflict.

(a) 8. The aspect of nonverbal communication offering the clearest indication of interpersonal attitudes is
a. facial expressions.
b. gestures.
c. interpersonal distance.
d. posture.

(c) 9. According to research by computer scientists, the smile of a person lying is characterized by
a. crinkly eyes and a generally relaxed expression.
b. the display of both upper and lower teeth.
c. eye wrinkles that resemble crow’s feet more than laugh lines.
d. saliva collecting at the edges of the mouth.

(d) 10. A *New York Times* analysis of business attire concluded that
a. informal attire creates a better impression on managers and customers.
b. informal attire impresses customers but not managers.
c. formal attire makes a person look stiff and old-fashioned.
d. formal attire tends to create a better impression on managers and customers.

(a) 11. Which one of the following characteristics of a message is the least likely to encounter barriers?
a. factual
b. complex
c. emotionally arousing
d. clashes with the receiver’s mental set.

(b) 12. A key component of understanding the receiver is to
a. engage in one-way communication.
b. recognize his or her emotional state.
c. offer him an incentive for listening.
d. summarize your key points.

(c) 13. A communication problem is likely to develop between two people when they are looking at the same situation with
a. old-fashioned paradigms.
b. very modern paradigms.
c. different paradigms.
d. the same paradigm.

(d) 14. Defensive communication often occurs because the receiver is attempting to
a. create communication barriers.
b. confuse the sender.
c. impress the sender.
d. protect his or her self-esteem.

(a) 15. Your manager discusses your job performance with you. She says, "Could you summarize for me what I’ve told you?" Your manager is attempting to overcome communication barriers by the method of
a. asking for feedback.
b. appealing to human motivation.
c. being a positive person.
d. using multiple channels.

(b) 16. In regard to communications, it has been observed that a positive attitude
a. decreases a person’s credibility.
b. helps reduce communication barriers.
c. is often interpreted by the receiver as manipulation.
d. creates subtle barriers to communication.

(d) 17. To become a persuasive communicator,
a. be adamant about selling your proposal.
b. speak in the second person.
c. do not listen to people’s objections.
d. establish a yes pattern at the outset.

(a) 18. The least useful of the following for communicating persuasively is to
a. establish goals as you go along in your presentation.
b. explore the reasons for a person’s objections.
c. use power words.
d. develop fallback positions.

(b) 19. A recommendation for improving listening skills is
a. judge delivery, not content.
b. restate what you hear.
c. let listening come more naturally.
d. listen for facts.

(b) 20. Repeating in your own words what a person said is an example of
a. an open-ended question.
b. paraphrasing.
c. verbal following.
d. communication overload.

(a) 21. A recommended technique for dealing with a stressful conversation is to
a. rehearse in advance what you intend to say.
b. use intimidation tactics during the conversation.
c. hold the conversation on Monday.
d. hold the conversation on Friday.

(b) 22. Temperate phrasing during a stressful conversation deals with
a. avoiding the real issues.
b. being tactful while delivering negative feedback.
c. warming up by talking about the weather.
d. expressing your temper openly.

(d) 23. When two people metacommunicate, they
a. misinterpret what each other is saying.
b. agree to disagree.
c. agree to agree.
d. communicate about how they are communicating.

(c) 24. A communication style difference noted between men and women is that
men are more likely to
a. use conversation for rapport building.
b. want empathy more than solutions.
c. use talk to display knowledge and skill.
d. compliment the work of a coworker.

(a) 25. A communication style difference noted between men and women is that
women are more likely to
a. talk out solutions to problems with another person.
b. want solutions rather than empathy when talking about problems.
c. be directive in conversation.
d. be critical of the work of coworkers.

True/False

(T) 1. Communication includes the sending, receiving, and understanding of messages.
2. A survey of employers showed that the respondents saw relatively little need for improvement in written and interpersonal skills.

3. In most organizations, one official channel exists for sending messages.

4. The general purpose of nonverbal communication is to communicate the facts behind a message.

5. According to a famous study, less than 10 percent of the emotional impact of a message is communicated by words.

6. Dominant people tend to direct their gestures outward.

7. Public distance in communication is approximately 12 feet to 25 feet and beyond.

8. A research study came up with the surprising finding that a whining, complaining, or nagging tone was well liked because it caught the attention of people.

9. Wearing formal attire to the office now communicates the message that you are obsolete and somewhat phony.

10. A recommendation for improving nonverbal communication is to increase one’s tension level just before communicating nonverbally.

11. Subtly imitating another person usually communicates the message that you are mocking him or her.

12. Communication barriers are likely to be erected when a message has a high emotional content.

13. Empathy involves imagining yourself in the other person’s role and assuming the viewpoints and emotions of that person.

14. The purpose of discussing differences in paradigms is to persuade the other individual that his or her paradigm can only lead to communication barriers.

15. A major purpose of defensive communication is to protect one’s self-esteem.

16. Having a positive attitude typically creates a communication barrier because most people will think you are hiding the truth.
17. Establishing a *yes pattern* early in a sales session helps set up a climate to persuade the other person.

18. Raising your voice at the end of most sentences adds to your persuasiveness.

19. After listening actively to another person, you would be able to feed back accurately what the person said.

20. A key component of active listening is to ask closed-ended questions like, Do you agree with me?

21. A recommended way of preparing for a stressful conversation is to be aware how you are likely to react during certain uncomfortable exchanges.

22. To help prepare for a stressful conversation, it is recommended that you practice delivering negative feedback in a forceful, no-nonsense manner.

23. You engage in metacommunications when you communicate with another person your perception of how well you two are communicating.

24. A gender difference in communication styles is that men prefer to use communication for rapport building.

25. A gender difference in communication styles is that women want empathy more than solutions when talking about problems.