

# *Barriers of communication*

## *Introduction:-*

- ♣ A barrier is defined as something that prevents or controls progress or movement. All of us have come across such situations while communicating with parents, friends, or colleagues. There are various methods to avoid communication failures and make our interactions more effective.
- ♣ We all know that effective communication is the nerve of all the business activities in an organization.
- ♣ Even a slight break in the communication flow can lead to misunderstandings.
- ♣ Communication is effective only if it creates the desired impact on the receiver.
- ♣ E.G., Often, managers get frustrated in their efforts, and end up saying that nobody in the organization understands them.
- ♣ Many employees fail to listen attentively during meetings, or send incomprehensible business letters.
- ♣ **Such situations arise due to the presence of barriers in communication, which can take many forms such as inadequate communication skills.**

- ♣ There are numerous such barriers associated with communication. These need to be addressed in order to ensure that no gap occurs in the communication cycle.
- ♣ **A common barrier is the wrong assumptions made about the person to whom the message is being sent and sometimes about the message itself.**
- ♣ **For example, if the sender of the message is talking about a technical proposal, he/she would be wrong if he/she makes assumptions about the receiver's level of technical knowledge.**
- ♣ The problem can be resolved to a great extent if the sender of the message analyses his/her message thoroughly and anticipates the likely response before sending it.
- ♣ If a particular communication fails to evoke the desired response, the following five steps can help solve the problem:
  1. Identify the problem
  2. opt for the best solution
  3. Find the cause/barrier
  4. Follow up rigorously
  5. Work on alternative solution

- ♥ **The first step identifying the problem is the most difficult.** We first realize that there is a problem when we do not receive the desired feedback.
- ♥ **To identify the problem correctly,** it is mandatory that the feedback be analyzed carefully.
- ♥ **For example,** you have asked your subordinate to write a bimonthly report, and until the next month, he has not done so. When you ask him about the delay, he replies that he was asked to produce the report bimonthly.
- ♥ **The problem here is that to you the term bimonthly meant twice in a month, whereas to your subordinate it meant one in two months.**
- ♥ Later, you look up the dictionary and find that bimonthly means twice a month as well as once in two months.
- ♥ Having identified the problem, the next step is to find out what caused it.
- ♥ **In this situation, we could say that it was the choice of words.**  
**The third step is to explore possible solutions.**

- ♥ In this case, a way out would be to choose words that are more specific in their meaning, i.e., words that could mean only one thing the intended meaning.
- ♥ After successfully completing all the four steps, the last step requires that we implement the best solution properly.
- ♥ Having once come across a particular communication barrier, there should be a conscious effort to never let it crop up again.

### **Following are the factors that cause barrier in communication:-**

#### **1. Noise**

- ♥ Any interference in the message sent and the message received leads to the production of 'noise'.
- ♥ The term communication barrier, or that which inhibits or distorts the message, is an expansion of the concept of noise.
- ♥ **If noise occurs because of technological factors, it is not too much of a problem as it can be removed by correcting the technological faults.**
- ♥ However, if the noise is due to human error, the parties involved in the communication process needs to take corrective measures.
- ♥ Noise is defined as any unplanned interference in the communication environment, which effects the transmission of the message.

- ♥ **Noise can be classified as channel and semantic. Channel noise is any interference in the mechanics of the medium used to send a message.**
- ♥ Familiar examples of channel noise are distortion due to faulty background, noise in telephone lines, or too high a volume or pitch from loudspeakers.
- ♥ In written communication, illegible handwriting can be termed as channel noise.
- ♥ Whereas channel noise develops externally, semantic noise is generated internally, resulting from errors in the message itself.
- ♥ Other examples of semantic noise are ambiguous sentence structure, faulty grammar, misspellings, and incorrect punctuation.

## **2. CLASSIFICATION OF BARRIERS**

- ★ A barrier acts like a sieve, allowing only a part of the message to filter through; as a result, the desired response is not achieved.
- ★ To communicate smoothly and effectively in an organization, irrespective of your position, you need to know how barriers operate, why they cause misunderstandings, and how to minimize their negative impact.
- ★ How often have you said, 'I meant to say this and not that? Even with the best intentions, communication barriers crop up and our written and spoken messages are misunderstood.
- ★ Barriers can be identified as the following:

## 1. INTRAPERSONAL BARRIERS

- ✓ Individuals are unique because of differences in perceptions, experiences, education, culture, personality, etc.
- ✓ Each of us interprets the same information in different ways, as our thinking varies. These differences lead to certain inbuilt or intrapersonal barriers.
- ✓ Let us explore all the common causes that lead to these intrapersonal barriers:

**Wrong assumptions**

**Wrong inferences**

**Varied perceptions**

**Blocked categories**

**Differing background**

**Categorical thinking**

## **2. WRONG ASSUMPTIONS**

- ✓ Many barriers stem from wrong assumptions. For example, when a doctor tells her patient that he has to take some medicine only 'SOS' (i.e., during emergency), without knowing whether the patient understands the term 'SOS', she is creating a barrier in their communication.
- ✓ Here the doctor has made a wrong assumption about her patient's level of knowledge.
- ✓ Wrong assumptions are generally made because the sender or the receiver does not have adequate knowledge about the other's background or entertains certain false concepts, which are fixed in his/her mind.
- ✓ To strengthen your skills as a communicator, try to put yourself in the shoes of the listener. This exercise will prevent making wrong assumption about the receiver.



### **3. VARIED PERCEPTIONS**

- ✓ We all know the story of the six blind men and their description of an elephant.
- ✓ The elephant was perceived by each man as a fan, a rope, a wall, a sword, a snake, and a tree.
- ✓ None of the blind men were wrong, as the part of the elephant body touched by each man compared well with the various objects they named.
- ✓ This is how different individuals hold different viewpoints about the same situation.
- ✓ Similarly, individuals in an organization also perceive the same situation in different ways.
- ✓ Let us take the case of disagreement between two individuals. If you are close to one of them, you are likely to be biased.
- ✓ You may perceive your friend's arguments as correct, and hence, may not be able to appreciate his/her opponent's point of view.
- ✓ It is all a matter of perception. The best way to overcome this barrier is to step back and take a wider, unbiased perspective of the issue.

## **4. DIFFERING BACKGROUNDS**

- ❖ No two persons have the same background. Backgrounds can be different due to different education, culture, language, environment, financial status, etc.
- ❖ Our background plays a significant role in how we interpret a message. At times, something not experienced earlier is difficult to interpret or appreciate.
- ❖ Think of a class where the professor talks about his rock-climbing adventure.
- ❖ Students who have experienced rock climbing may be able to appreciate the professor's talk, while others who have never been into adventure spots may not find it interesting at all.
- ❖ The representative of a computer company would not make much sense to a group of doctors if in his/her presentation he/she goes into details about the hardware aspects of the computer that he/she plans to install in a hospital.
- ❖ To enhance communication skills, it is necessary to know the background of the audience.
- ❖ This information can accordingly be used to construct the message. Empathy or identification with another person is the solution to this barrier.

- ❖ We must make an effort to understand what the listener can find difficult to comprehend in our message because of the difference between our background and that of the listener.
- ❖ The language understood by the receiver should be used to avoid ambiguity and reduce multiple meanings.
- ❖ The exact meaning of a word resides in the mind of the speaker; therefore, one ought to be cautious while using words.
- ❖ The multiple meanings of a word can astronomically increase the problem of communication barriers.
- ❖ A word can have several connotations (implied meanings) and definitions. The more a word is prone to multiple meanings, the greater are the chances of it being misunderstood.
- ❖ A conscientious speaker is careful to explain her message in context by rephrasing and repeating words that can be confusing.

## **5. CONFUSABLES**

♣ Common groups of words are sometimes confused or ignored by users.

♣ Ability is a skill that you have mastered through study or practice. Capacity refers to innate talent if something affects you, it has an effect on you.

♣ To effect something, however, means to make

♣ Something happen: the new management wanted to effect drastic changes, but the unions felt these would adversely affect worker's. refer to chapter 16 for more on this.

## **6. WRONG INFERENCES**

- ✓ Suppose you have returned from a business trip and you find that two of your colleagues are absent.
- ✓ They do not turn up for several days. Since there is a recession on, you draw an inference that they have been laid off.
- ✓ The fact is that they have been promoted and sent to another department. This is an example of fact-inference confusion.

- ✓ It has happened because you failed to distinguish between what actually exists and what you had assumed to exist.
- ✓ Inferences are more dramatic than facts, and for this reason they can provide more scope for gossip and rumour to spread.
- ✓ When professionals analyze material, solve problems, and plan procedures, it is essential that inferences be supported by facts.
- ✓ Systems analysts, marketing specialists, advertisers, architects, engineers, designers, and others must work on various premises and draw inferences after collecting factual data.
- ✓ When presenting any inference in the course of your work, you could use qualifiers such as ‘evidence suggests’ or ‘in my opinion’ to remind yourself and the receiver that this is not yet an established fact.

## **7. Blocked categories**

In general, we react positively to information only if it is in consonance with our own views and attitudes. Conversely, when we receive information that does not conform to our personal views, habits, and attitudes, or appears unfavorable to us, we tend to react negatively or even disbelieve it. Rejection, distortion, and avoidance are three common, undesirable, and negative reactions to unfavorable information.

