

The Barriers to Effective Communication

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D.E. McFarland has defined Communication as the process of meaningful interaction among human beings. More specifically, it is the process by which meanings are perceived and understandings are reached among human being. But there may be some faults /barriers in the communication system that prevents the message from reaching the receiver, these barriers are as follows:-

1. Language Barrier; - Different languages, vocabulary, accent, dialect represents a national/ regional barriers. Semantic gaps are words having similar pronunciation but multiple meanings like- round; badly expressed message, wrong interpretation and unqualified assumptions. The use of difficult or inappropriate words/ poorly explained or misunderstood messages can result in confusion.

2. Cultural Barriers: - Age, education, gender, social status, economic position, cultural background, temperament, health, beauty, popularity, religion, political belief, ethics, values, motives, assumptions, aspirations, rules/regulations, standards, priorities can separate one person from another and create a barrier.

3. Individual Barrier: - It may be a result of an individual's perceptual and personal discomfort. Even when two persons have experienced the same event their mental perception may/may not be identical which acts as a barrier. Style, selective perception, halo effect, poor attention and retention, defensiveness, close mindedness, insufficient filtration are the Individual or Psychological barrier.

4. Organizational Barrier: - It includes Poor Organization's culture, climate, stringent rules, regulations, status, relationship, complexity, inadequate facilities/ opportunities of growth and improvement; whereas; the nature of the internal and external environment like large working areas physically separated from others, poor lightening, staff shortage, outdated equipments and background noise are Physical Organizational Barrier.

5. Interpersonal Barrier: - Barriers from Employers are :- Lack of Trust in employees; Lack of Knowledge of non-verbal clues like facial expression, body language, gestures, postures, eye contact; different experiences; shortage of time for employees; no consideration for employee needs; wish to capture authority; fear of losing power of control; bypassing and informational overloading, while Barriers from Employees includes Lack of Motivation, lack of co-operation, trust, fear of penalty and poor relationship with the employer.

6. Attitudinal Barrier: - It comes about as a result of problems with staff in the organisation. Limitation in physical and mental ability, intelligence, understanding, pre-conceived notions, and distrusted source divides the attention and create a mechanical barrier which affects the attitude and opinion.

7. Channel Barrier: - If the length of the communication is long, or the medium selected is inappropriate, the communication might break up; it can also be a result of the inter-personal conflicts between the sender and receiver; lack of interest to communicate; information sharing or access problems which can hamper the channel and affect the clarity, accuracy and effectiveness.

To communicate effectively one need to overcome these barriers. Working on breaking the barrier is a broad-brush activity and here are certain measures.

DO'S FOR BREAKING THE BARRIER:

- Allow employees access to resources, self expression and idea generation.
- Express your expectations to others.
- Use less of absolute words such as "never", "always", "forever", etc.
- Be a good, attentive and active listener.
- Filter the information correctly before passing on to someone else.
- Try to establish one communication channel and eliminate the intermediaries.
- Use specific and accurate words which audiences can easily understand.
- Try and view the situations through the eyes of the speaker.
- The "you" attitude must be used on all occasions.
- Maintain eye contact with the speaker and make him comfortable.
- Write the instructions if the information is very detailed or complicated.
- Oral communication must be clear and not heavily accented.
- Avoid miscommunication of words and semantic noise.
- Ask for clarifications, repetition where necessary.
- Make the organisational structure more flexible, dynamic and transparent.
- Foster congenial relationship which strengths coordination between superior and subordinate.
- Focus on purposeful and well focused communication.
- The message of communication should be clear and practical.
- Get Proper Feedback.

DONT'S FOR BREAKING THE BARRIER:

- Be a Selective Listener, this is when a person hears another but selects not to hear what is being said by choice or desire to hear some other message.
- Be a "Fixer", a fixer is a person that tries to find other person's fault.
- Be a daydreamer.
- Use long chain of command for communication.
- Use too many technical jargons.
- Jump to conclusions immediately.
- Interrupt the speakers and distract him by asking too many irrelevant questions.

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