Communication may be referred to as the process of human beings responding to the symbolic behavior of other persons.

To understand the process we first need to talk about the following components of communication.

- Sender and Receiver
- Message Encoding and Message Decoding
- Filters and Barriers
- Psychological Noise and Physiological Noise
- Communication Channels
- Feedback
- Communication Environment or Context

Sender:
The person or persons responsible for creating a message to be sent is typically understood as a sender in a communication process.

Example:
- A politician giving a speech
- A parent lecturing a child

  All of them are people *sending* messages.

Receiver:
The person or persons who are receiving the created messages are referred to as receivers in a communication process.

Example:
- An audience receives the politician's speech
- The child is the recipient of the parents lecture

Communication Channel:

The medium through which a sender or a receiver uses to send his or her message is termed as a communication channel.

Channels may be verbal or nonverbal or of any other form of language.

Example:
- Speech is a channel.
- Writing is a channel
- Non-verbal gestures are channels
- Voice Tones are channels.

Encoding:

When a sender attempts to replicate his or her internal thoughts or feelings into some kind of external message or medium to transmit those thoughts or feelings to another person or persons then the whole process can be called as encoding.

It's easy to tell if a sender encodes message poorly if he or she says things like:

- "That's not what I meant to say…."
- "That's not what I mean…."
- "What I really wanted to say was…"

If someone is a skilled "encoder," we call him or her "expressive," "well spoken," or even "eloquent (or fluent)."

And research has shown that good speakers are considered more trustworthy (reliable, honest), intelligent, competent and personable.

Obviously, there is always a relationship between speaking well and intelligence or competency.

Some newscasters, actors or politicians are bright. But many times they aren't…but we think they are simply because they speak well.

This phenomenon, known as Halo Effect, refers to the fact that if people identify you as skilled in one area they often will assume you are skilled in other areas as well.

We see this happen all the time with celebrities (famous or well-known persons) who not necessarily intelligent people.

One good thing about courses in Human Communication Studies often contain public speaking component, in addition to writing component.

English, History, Sociology, Psychology…only writing, no speaking.

But remember what text said about what employers are looking for:

Over 90 percent of the personnel officials at five hundred U.S. Businesses stated that oral communication skills play a bigger role in career achievement than technical competence, experience, or academic background.

Of course, technical skill, experience and education are important, but if you can't communicate your knowledge, ideas, arguments to others it will be so hard to achieve good jobs.

Message Decoding:
Message decoding occurs when the receiver attempts to ascertain the meaning of the sender's message.

All of us had times when we have had others become frustrated because we didn't understand what *they* meant…

We become frustrated when other people didn't understand what *we* meant.

Noise:
Any force that interferes with effective communication is called as noise.
Three types: External noise, physiological noise, psychological noise.

External Noise:

External noise refers to any physical phenomenon that might impair a receiver's ability to decode a message.

Physiological Noise- Involves biological factors in the receiver or sender that interfere with accurate reception.

Ex. Emotional surprising message (I love You!!)

Psychological Noise- Involves mental forces within a receiver or sender that might inhibit his or her ability to either encode or decode a message correctly.

Ex. If a receiver suffers from low-self esteem, might interpret a sincere compliment as sarcastic (mocking) or condescending even though it wasn't.

Environment- Fields of experience or cultural backgrounds that influence the way communicators encode and decode messages.

We'll be talking quite bit about how *culture* affects human interaction…

But our *past experiences* also affect how we interact with other people.

Ex. Racist beliefs often caused by one bad past experience…

…Child…negative situation…someone different ethnic background…

…Flawed perceptions…contrastive information…false categorization…

Now we have defined components of communication…Let's get back to our definition of communication as a "process"

Essentially, defining communication as process means communication does not work linearly but circularly instead.

Communication in Interpersonal situations involves sending and receiving messages at the same time.

Ex. While I'm lecturing, you're giving me nonverbal feedback about your opinion of the lecture:
Yawning, stretching, sleeping, nodding off, doodling in your notebook, etc.

We are both sending and receiving messages at the same time!

Sometimes we consciously plan our communication…sometimes we don't.

Misunderstandings occur when we assume all communication is planned.

Ex. If one of you yawns or nods off, you might be intentionally acting rudely (impolitely)…Or maybe you're trying to be good listener, but are tired because you were up all night studying for another test.

Filters and barriers in Communication:

Filtering is the deliberate manipulation of information to make it appear more favourable to the receiver.

Most of us filter our communication with others simply in presenting the message in ways we believe the receiver will best understand.

There are many barriers in communication. Language can be a barrier. If the receiver does not understand the language of the sender, it is a barrier. In electronic communications, such as radio or television, static or a weak signal can be a barrier. A bad receiver antenna can be a barrier as well. Emotions can cause people to not be receptive to the words of another person, even if the words are understood. That is a barrier. In short, anything that interferes with a signal sent to a receiver is a barrier to communication.

Feedback:

To communicate is to pass on a message, be it verbally or otherwise, in order to obtain a certain desired response or reaction (the desired respond can be happiness, anger, cooperation, understanding or whatever you tried to get). Your feed-back can be verbally or any other kinds of reaction. Without it you would not know whether you have accomplished what you wanted to achieve with the signal you sent out.

The Importance of Feedback in Communication
Communication plays a very crucial role in an organization. In fact, communication is the reason for human existence. There are different forms of communication through which the intentions of people and animals and even plants alike can be passed across to another. Without communication, life will be very difficult and in fact, it will be full of chaos.

Feedback makes communication meaningful. It is the end-result of an idea and makes communication continuous. In the process of communication, the originator first gets the idea to be passed across and then think of how to get it across via appropriate channel or medium. After the coding and dissemination, one expects the decoder after receiving the information or idea to give response. The response thus given is called the response which may be verbal or non-verbal, that is, in words or mere smile, glance, clap, etc.

While feedback could be instantaneous as in the case of verbal conversation between two people standing or on telephone conversation or internet instant message, it could be delayed for sometime before the response is given to allow the receiver to think and take his time to consider what he is given. While the former is common to an informal communication, the latter goes with formal communication via letters, memo, etc. Feedback could also be in written form or in oral form or even both. It could be also in form of demonstration e.g. body movement, paralanguage, gesture, posture, etc.

At one time or another, people are seen been frustrated as a result of the refusal of another person to give response to their message or letter. Some got so mad that delay in such could result to disciplinary measures or insubordination especially in a formal setting. To lovers, it means life itself. Refusal to communicate one's intentions may mal the whole relationship of a thing. All these explain the importance of feedback in communication.

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The following are some of the importance of feedback in communication either in a formal or informal setting:

1. It completes the whole process of communication and makes it continuous.
2. It sustains communication process
3. It makes one know if one is really communicating or making sense
4. It is a basis for measuring the effectiveness of communication
5. It is a good basis for planning on what next to be done
6. Communication will be useless without feedback
7. Feedback paves way for new idea generation

These points are few in number. The basis being established here is that feedback is the livewire of communication as communication is the livewire of human existence and interaction. Thus, feedback should be carefully considered before being put forward due to its significance.

Communication Process

Communication can best be summarized as the transmission of a message from a sender to a receiver in an understandable manner. The importance of effective communication is immeasurable in the world of business and in personal life. From a business perspective, effective communication is an absolute must, because it commonly accounts for the difference between success and failure or profit and loss. It has become clear that effective business communication is critical to the successful operation of modern enterprise. Every business person needs to understand the fundamentals of effective communication.

Currently, companies all over the world are working toward the realization of total quality management. Effective communication is the most critical component of total quality management. The manner in which individuals perceive and talk to each other at work about different issues is a major determinant of the business success. It has been proven that poor communication reduces quality, weakens productivity, and eventually leads to anger and a lack of trust among individuals within the organization.

The communication process is the guide toward realizing effective communication. It is through the communication process that the sharing of a common meaning between the sender and the receiver takes place. Individuals

that follow the communication process will have the opportunity to become more productive in every aspect of their profession. Effective communication leads to understanding.

The communication process is made up of four key components. Those components include encoding, medium of transmission, decoding, and feedback. There are also two other factors in the process, and those two factors are present in the form of the sender and the receiver. The communication process begins with the sender and ends with the receiver.

The sender is an individual, group, or organization who initiates the communication. This source is initially responsible for the success of the message. The sender's experiences, attitudes, knowledge, skill, perceptions, and culture influence the message. "The written words, spoken words, and nonverbal language selected are paramount in ensuring the receiver interprets the message as intended by the sender" (Burnett & Dollar, 1989). All communication begins with the sender.

The first step the sender is faced with involves the encoding process. In order to convey meaning, the sender must begin encoding, which means translating information into a message in the form of symbols that represent ideas or concepts. This process translates the ideas or concepts into the coded message that will be communicated. The symbols can take on numerous forms such as, languages, words, or gestures. These symbols are used to encode ideas into messages that others can understand.

When encoding a message, the sender has to begin by deciding what he/she wants to transmit. This decision by the sender is based on what he/she believes about the receiver's knowledge and assumptions, along with what additional information he/she wants the receiver to have. It is important for the sender to use symbols that are familiar to the intended receiver. A good way for the sender to improve encoding their message, is to mentally visualize the communication from the receiver's point of view.

To begin transmitting the message, the sender uses some kind of channel (also called a medium). The channel is the means used to convey the message. Most channels are either oral or written, but currently visual channels are becoming more common as technology expands. Common channels include the telephone

and a variety of written forms such as memos, letters, and reports. The effectiveness of the various channels fluctuates depending on the characteristics of the communication. For example, when immediate feedback is necessary, oral communication channels are more effective because any uncertainties can be cleared up on the spot. In a situation where the message must be delivered to more than a small group of people, written channels are often more effective. Although in many cases, both oral and written channels should be used because one supplements the other.

If a sender relays a message through an inappropriate channel, its message may not reach the right receivers. That is why senders need to keep in mind that selecting the appropriate channel will greatly assist in the effectiveness of the receiver's understanding. The sender's decision to utilize either an oral or a written channel for communicating a message is influenced by several factors. The sender should ask him or herself different questions, so that they can select the appropriate channel. Is the message urgent? Is immediate feedback needed? Is documentation or a permanent record required? Is the content complicated, controversial, or private? Is the message going to someone inside or outside the organization? What oral and written communication skills does the receiver possess? Once the sender has answered all of these questions, they will be able to choose an effective channel.

After the appropriate channel or channels are selected, the message enters the decoding stage of the communication process. Decoding is conducted by the receiver. Once the message is received and examined, the stimulus is sent to the brain for interpreting, in order to assign some type of meaning to it. It is this processing stage that constitutes decoding. The receiver begins to interpret the symbols sent by the sender, translating the message to their own set of experiences in order to make the symbols meaningful. Successful communication takes place when the receiver correctly interprets the sender's message.

The receiver is the individual or individuals to whom the message is directed. The extent to which this person comprehends the message will depend on a number of factors, which include the following: how much the individual or individuals know about the topic, their receptivity to the message, and the relationship and trust that exists between sender and receiver. All interpretations by the receiver are influenced by their experiences, attitudes, knowledge, skills, perceptions, and culture. It is similar to the sender's relationship with encoding.

Feedback is the final link in the chain of the communication process. After receiving a message, the receiver responds in some way and signals that response to the sender. The signal may take the form of a spoken comment, a long sigh, a written message, a smile, or some other action. "Even a lack of response, is in a sense, a form of response" (Bovee & Thill, 1992). Without feedback, the sender cannot confirm that the receiver has interpreted the message correctly.

Feedback is a key component in the communication process because it allows the sender to evaluate the effectiveness of the message. Feedback ultimately provides an opportunity for the sender to take corrective action to clarify a misunderstood message. "Feedback plays an important role by indicating significant communication barriers: differences in background, different interpretations of words, and differing emotional reactions" (Bovee & Thill, 1992).

The communication process is the perfect guide toward achieving effective communication. When followed properly, the process can usually assure that the sender's message will be understood by the receiver. Although the communication process seems simple, it in essence is not. Certain barriers present themselves throughout the process. Those barriers are factors that have a negative impact on the communication process. Some common barriers include the use of an inappropriate medium (channel), incorrect grammar, inflammatory words, words that conflict with body language, and technical jargon. Noise is also another common barrier. Noise can occur during any stage of the process. Noise essentially is anything that distorts a message by interfering with the communication process. Noise can take many forms, including a radio playing in the background, another person trying to enter your conversation, and any other distractions that prevent the receiver from paying attention.

Successful and effective communication within an organization stems from the implementation of the communication process. All members within an organization will improve their communication skills if they follow the communication process, and stay away from the different barriers. It has been proven that individuals that understand the communication process will blossom into more effective communicators, and effective communicators have a greater opportunity for becoming a success.