

# Communication

The National Productivity Council is an autonomous organization established as a Society. It is formed in its constitution and objectives to promote productivity in the country and to assist the Government in its efforts to improve the productivity of the country.

18 ✓

A MANAGEMENT GUIDE

15



NATIONAL PRODUCTIVITY COUNCIL

# ABOUT NPC

The National Productivity Council is an autonomous organisation registered as a Society. It is tripartite in its constitution and representatives of Government, employers, workers and various other interests participate in its working. Established in 1958, the Council conducts its activities in collaboration with institutions and organisations interested in the Productivity Drive. Besides its headquarters at New Delhi, NPC operates through eight Regional Directorates. Its activities are further extended by a nation-wide network of forty-seven Local Productivity Councils.

The purpose of NPC is to stimulate productivity consciousness in the country and to provide service with a view to maximising the utilisation of available resources of men, machines, materials, and power; to wage war against waste; and to help secure for the people of the country a better and higher standard of living. To this end, NPC collects and disseminates information about techniques and procedures of productivity. In collaboration with Local Productivity Councils and various institutions and organisations, it organises and conducts training programmes for various levels of Management in the subjects of productivity. It has also organised an advisory service for industries to facilitate the introduction of productivity techniques.

Recognising that for a more intensive productivity effort, the training and other activities of NPC, designed to acquaint management with productivity techniques, should be supported by demonstration of their validity and value in application, NPC offers a Productivity Survey and Implementation Service (PSIS) to industry. The demand for this service has been rapidly growing. This Service is intended to assist industry adopt techniques of higher management and operational efficiency consistent with the economic and social aspirations of the community. PSIS is a highly competent consultancy service concerned with the investigation of management and operational practices and problems, and recommendation of measures of improvement and their implementation. NPC has established a special Fuel Efficiency Service. It has set up cells for servicing small scale industries. It has introduced a National Scheme of Supervisory Development under which an examination is held and certificates awarded to successful candidates. NPC also conducts a two-year practice-oriented programme for training in Industrial Engineering for first class graduates in Engineering disciplines.

NPC publications include pamphlets, manuals and Reports of Productivity Teams. NPC utilises audio-visual media of films, radio, and exhibitions for propagating the concept and techniques of productivity. Through these media NPC seeks to carry the message of productivity and create the appropriate climate for increasing national productivity.

# COMMUNICATION

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**NOTE**

*The material published in this booklet was originally issued in NPC's series of **Supervisory Guides**. As the material has been designed not only to be of help to supervisors, but also to managerial personnel and students of management, it has now been issued as a **Management Guide**.*

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# PREFACE

Practically the world over, there has been increasing recognition that the development of supervisory skills can significantly contribute to the improvement of productivity in an enterprise. From its inception in 1958, the National Productivity Council has laid stress on supervisory development in its programmes, but since it needed a more concerted drive, it introduced during the Asian Productivity Year—1970 a nation-wide scheme to prepare candidates through self-study and classroom or enterprise-level guidance for a professional qualifying examination leading to the award of the National Certificate in Supervision.

We are happy that the response to the NPC scheme has been quite good. Managements of all forward-looking enterprises have evinced considerable interest, and over four thousand candidates in all have appeared for the Examination during the last three years. In implementing the NPC's Supervisory Development Scheme, some of the Local Productivity Councils have extended their cooperation and support. The success of any self-study scheme ultimately depends on making available adequate study material prepared by competent experts, and written in a lucid and simple style. NPC has brought out as many as 27 *Management Guides* so far which attempt to give a basic understanding of the various topics included in the syllabus.

This Guide on *Communication* has been prepared by Miss Ena Chaudhuri, Regional Director, NPC, Bangalore. It has to be stressed that the NPC *Management Guides* are not intended as a substitute for enterprise-level assistance for supervisory development by way of training, demonstration, seminars, etc., but mainly as complementary to these activities.

These Guides are also designed to be of help to managerial personnel as well as students of management who wish to have some basic understanding of the science and practice of management.

# CONTENTS

<i>CHAPTER</i>		<i>Page</i>
1.	INTRODUCTION	1
2.	PURPOSE OF COMMUNICATION	3
3.	BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION	4
4.	CONTENTS OF COMMUNICATION	7
5.	STAGES IN COMMUNICATION	8
	Preparing	
	Informing	
	Participating	
6.	CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION	11
7.	COMMUNICATION SITUATIONS	12
8.	GIVING ORDERS	13
9.	TRAINING	15
10.	PARTICIPATING IN MEETINGS	17
11.	JOINT CONSULTATION	20
12.	INTERVIEWING	22
	Engagement Interview	
	Follow-up Interview	
	Disciplinary Interview	
	Problem Interview	
13.	DEALING WITH GRIEVANCES	26
14.	WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS	27
	Accurate Statement of Facts	
	Definitions	
	Logical Sequence	
	Avoidance of Irrelevant Details	
	Avoidance of Opinions	

15.	TYPES OF WRITTEN COMMUNICATION	30
	House Magazines	
	Notice Boards	
	Employee Handbooks	
	Forms	
	Suggestion Schemes	
	Minutes	
	Instructions	
16.	AUDIO-VISUAL COMMUNICATION	34
17.	CONCLUSION	35
	<i>Model Questions</i>	36
	<i>Suggested Reading</i>	37

## I. INTRODUCTION

During any working day, individuals—whether Managers, Supervisors or Workers—continually receive information and data which may or may not be of any particular relevance to their work and lives. The problem one is faced with is to sift this information, interpret it and to act on it where necessary. Again, a Manager, Supervisor or Worker often finds himself at the other end of this flow—that is, he has to communicate. If he happens to belong to the managerial or supervisory cadre, his communications may have long-term and far reaching effect. In his day-to-day working, he issues instructions, trains his people, deals with grievances, attends meetings, negotiates, persuades, praises or reprimands, writes letters and reports, and issues notices. These and a host of other activities are constantly testing his ability as a communicator.

The above indicates that various factors enter into the process of communication. These are, the communicator or “source”, the receiver of the communication or “receptor”, the content of the communication and the manner of communication. The word “communication” in its broad sense means both the act of communicating and what is communicated, such as a letter, a notice, circular or other piece of information. The act of communicating or informing does not necessarily require any reaction on the part of the receiver. In this booklet, however, we are going to deal with communications which result in specific action from people. Such communications are within the context of the objectives of an enterprise and arise out of the efforts towards the achievement of these objectives. If it is assumed that the supervisor’s role in the achievement of these objectives involves instructing, counselling, praising, reprimanding, obtaining the reactions of people, writing, etc., then he spends a significant part of his working time in communicating.

Whenever two or more persons are involved in achieving a common goal, they can only succeed if there is whole-hearted cooperation based on free and full exchange of information. As industry becomes more complex, with far flung branch units and even with various departments and levels of management and supervision within the same unit, the problem of communication becomes increasingly acute. In the old, small, paternalistic industrial unit, the personal element, combined with pride in craftsmanship, contributed a great deal towards harmony and cooperation within an organisation. Today, we have moved away from this situation, and industrial work, with its division of labour into simple elements at one end and complex nature in its entirety at the other, has ceased to be meaningful to the average individual.



Added to this are other developments connected with relationship at work, such as labour legislation, discipline, standing orders of companies, wage administration, changes in technology, etc., which help in putting up barriers of formed relationships between management and workers.

Further, the worker of today is more educated than his predecessor. He is gradually moving away from the village community with its social groups and values which had an important role in providing some degree of fulfilment. An individual needs to feel part of something—whether it is a social or religious group or as a member of a working group. Since the importance of the former is gradually receding, his satisfaction and fulfilment will naturally have to come from the work situation. One of the means to approaching such a sense of satisfaction and fulfilment is by establishing an effective communication system.

## **2. PURPOSE OF COMMUNICATION**

The purpose of establishing a communication system is to give and receive facts. This is, of course, the objective in a nutshell. However, in an industrial situation the communication system is conceived to lead ultimately to better industrial relations through the existence of well-informed workers, greater degree of consultation at every level and an atmosphere of mutual confidence. It must be remembered, of course, that a good communication system is not a panacea for the ills of an organisation, nor is it a substitute for other techniques of management. However, if thoughtfully planned and systematically applied, a good communication system goes a long way towards achieving greater acceptance of new ideas and reduces reaction to change. This is particularly so when the system is evolved out of a spontaneous desire on the part of individuals and groups with apparently different interests to work together as a team rather than as different entities. If a communication system is established without such a spontaneous response, it is not likely to achieve its objectives however good the system may be.

The prime objective of setting up a communication system, therefore, is to exchange facts and information in a manner which is acceptable to all concerned and which will lead to willing and cooperative action.

### **3. BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION**

The best form of communication is face to face communication. In this process, one can communicate and get back the reaction of the receptor, so that one knows where one stands regarding the interpretation of the communication. But, however, much we may desire direct person to person communication, in actual fact we have to manage with indirect methods, through channels which follow the formal organisation structure of the unit, through written media, through posters, through indirect methods of mass communication such as radio, etc. In all these methods, face to face communication has to be sacrificed in order to reach a wider group of persons. This also means that by their very nature these forms of communication would lend themselves to misinterpretation.

We now come to various factors impeding the free flow of communication. A number of them could be enumerated, but only a few are listed below:

- i) Managers and supervisors are not always convinced that a good communications programme is a means to having better informed and cooperative workers.
- ii) Not enough attention is paid to the attitudes and problems of employees.
- iii) Words do not always convey the intended meaning to the receptor.
- iv) The organisational structure does not always provide for channels for effective communication.

One of the most important barriers to effective communication is the fact that managements are not convinced of the importance of exchange of information. Lack of conviction leads to half-hearted support to the communication programme, resulting in disbelief or doubt in the minds of employees. It has often been observed that workers are not fully informed about the performance of the company. Even when they are informed, the information is not always complete. Only such information as the management feels they ought to be given is passed on to them. The result is that workers do not always believe the information given to them by the management. Supervisors, in their day to day work, may also come across such situations. They

would get better response and cooperation from workers, if they could openly discuss problems and possible solutions with them.

The second barrier is the inadequate appreciation of the problems of workers. Some problems may very well be imaginary. But if the employee is apprehensive about something, it may be due to a deep seated fear. For example, in one company the workload of wagon loaders was being increased, which the workers resented. They looked upon the problem as an excuse for getting more work out of them which would later result in redundancy. The management tried to assure them that no one would become redundant and suggested that they would get an impartial study made of the workload. In this case, each party was looking at the problem from its own point of view. There was no appreciation of the attitudes and beliefs of the other side. It is natural for most human beings to resent change, and the workers acted naturally. Instead of going into the root cause of their fears, the management brought in another element in the dialogue, namely, an impartial study of the workload. This made the workers even more resentful and suspicious of the intentions of management. In such a situation, Supervisors could play a vital role by inquiring into the causes of anxiety. They, being nearest to the workers, are in a position to do so.

The value given to a word or sentence is limited by the interpretation given to it. It may not convey the same meaning or association to the source and the receptor. This is the third barrier to effective communication. As indicated in the case cited above, the proposed action of the management was intended to get more wagons loaded by fewer people without reducing the total manpower of the concern. The interpretation given to this proposal by the workers was quite different. In this case, the words probably did not convey the intended meaning to the workers.

In another case of a house magazine, which was being brought out at considerable cost and effort, the workers felt that it was a propaganda machine of the management. The management tried to convince them that a major part of the magazine was devoted to news about workers, but the latter were not convinced. The magazine had to be discontinued. In this case, perhaps, the language used in the magazine was not interpreted in the way intended by the management. Enough research has not been undertaken into the type of language and presentation which appeal most to different groups of people. The level of education of the persons conveying a message is not necessarily the same as those of the receptors. Even people with similar educational backgrounds may interpret words differently. People are guided by certain attitudes and prejudices while giving interpretations to words.

The fourth barrier is the problem of size. As organisations grow, each executive

has to deal with more and more people, or the number of levels in the organisation increase. This makes direct communication difficult, and the length of channels means greater delay. Decisions take a long time to percolate through the formal channels. Too many levels in the organisation separate the chief executive and other senior management personnel from the workers, and communications become impersonal. The Supervisor very often is a victim in such a scheme of things, but he could play a positive role by having frank discussions on whatever information or instructions are received by him.

Man is a social animal, but it is not possible for him to deal with a large number of people. He likes to be in a small group, where he can fully participate, rather than be at the receiving end of communications with little or no opportunity of making his feelings known.

## **4. CONTENTS OF COMMUNICATION**

The contents of communication may deal with the following aspects of the activities of an enterprise:

- i) technical information—to ensure maximum efficiency
- ii) financial and economic aspects—to ensure maximum profitability
- iii) behavioural aspect—including discipline, cooperation, social climate, etc.

This is a broad classification of the subject of communication. These aspects include such matters as the policy and plans of the enterprise, conditions of service, ways and means of improving productivity and efficiency, problems of health, safety and welfare, education and training, etc., and the roles of different individuals in each of these activities.

Ultimately an effective communication system aims at ensuring cooperative effort on the part of the employee. For this reason, it is important that information be conveyed to him in a manner which is not only comprehensible but which appears logical in the context of his own work and role in the organisation. It is, therefore, necessary to check all types of communication not only from the point of view of the communicator, but also from the point of view of the receiver. For example, it is necessary that workers should be aware of the financial position of the company, particularly in the light of claims for higher wages and bonus. The presentation of such facts and figures should, therefore, not only include the preparation of the report in simple form but means would also have to be adopted to see that the figures are understood and accepted. This involves training of workers' representatives in reading and understanding such reports and developing a receptive frame of mind so that workers do not suspect them as non-representative of the real facts.

## 5. STAGES IN COMMUNICATION

This leads us then to the various stages in a communication process. These stages are not mutually exclusive, they overlap. They may be broadly classified as under:

- i) Preparing
- ii) Informing
- iii) Participating

“Preparing” would cover all aspects of collection and processing of data for distribution with the intention of achieving a specific objective. “Informing” would mean the systematic intimation and dissemination of the information. “Participating” would cover a wide range of activities indicating that the information is being put to use.

### **Preparing**

While preparing data for distribution, one has to be clear about the objective of conveying the particular information. This would cover the following questions:

**WHY** should we communicate, and set up means to measure performances and reaction against expected results.

**WHAT** is intended to be communicated—the communicator must be familiar with the subject matter of the communication, be it an order for a particular job to be done, a training situation, a reprimand, or a session with a group who might have various problems to be sorted out.

**WHO** is to receive the communication—what might be his reaction to the communication, what are his likely prejudices which may have to be cleared. The language and manner of communication will have to be adjusted accordingly.

**WHEN** should we communicate—this is an important factor in the communication process. If the time lag between the time of communication and the time of action is too long, it may not have the desired effect as forgetfulness creeps in, and result in the crowding out of this particular piece of work or instruction by other communications. Similarly, a communication too close to the time of expected action would rush it.

## **Informing**

The process of informing includes the HOW aspect of a communication system, and with it has to be considered in detail a study of the nature of receptivity of the receptor. A communication will hold the receptor's attention only if it is presented in a manner he understands and appreciates. For example, for those without a high degree of literacy a long typed or printed notice about safety measures may not be effective. Perhaps pictorial presentation along with demonstration, training and practice repeated over a spell of time would have greater impact. The posters would remind people of the hazards inherent in a wrong method, and the repeated demonstrations, training and practice over a period of time would reveal not only whether the problem has been understood and appreciated by those concerned, but also whether they are following the suggested method.

Apart from making a communication comprehensible, there is the problem of making it acceptable to workers. Any message would be received and attended to better if it affects the receiver direct. An individual's judgement about any information tends to be subjective, and its presentation should, therefore, aim at capturing the attention of the receiver, giving him an idea of what it is through a brief, attractive introduction to the subject matter, so as to create a receptive attitude.

The reaction to a communication is limited by the interpretation given to it by the receptor. Most communications appear to have different meanings to different groups of people. Even to the same person the same thing might have a different meaning later in life or if his position in the organisation changes. One of the most critical areas in a communication process is probably assisting the receptor to see things in the same way as the communicator. An important aspect to be studied, therefore, is the way different people look at life—ideas which are, in turn, shaped by their heredity, their environment, education, experience and the various ups and downs in their lives. Thus, when a manager wishes to introduce new methods to improve productivity and tries to explain this to workers' representatives, it is likely to be interpreted as another way of making them work harder or declaring them redundant. It is, therefore, important to know as much as possible about the receptor so that the communicator and the receiver can have similar ways of looking at a thing.

## **Participating**

Participating includes learning and action. The process of communication has often been described as a learning process, which involves retaining and recalling. Action involves complete understanding of an instruction and putting it into use in the desired manner, which is the real test for measuring the success of the communicator's ability to communicate.



Learning takes place through the phases of storing information or retention, recalling it when necessary, to using the information in the required manner. The impact of the processes of retention, recall and use are, therefore, dependent on the effectiveness of learning. The purpose of learning in an industrial situation is, ultimately, to get results in the form of better performance, changed attitudes, etc.

Similarly, action resulting from the systematic interpretation of an instruction and translating it into reality in the job situation ultimately contributes to higher productivity through less waste, better quality, fewer accidents, and greater knowledge of a job. This, in the long run, helps in developing workers with a greater degree of confidence and ability to take wider responsibilities.

Effective participation, including learning and action, would, therefore, be a yardstick for measuring the result of a sound communications system.

## **6. CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION**

Communication flows in three directions:

- i) Downward
- ii) Upward
- iii) Horizontal

These channels have different purposes. Downward channels are used for giving orders and instructions, informing, or for influencing attitudes and behaviour. Upward channels are used for reporting, informing, requesting and suggesting. Upward communications are also used to influence decisions and to protest against certain action or decisions of higher echelons. Horizontal communications are used for informing and coordinating.

All these channels are equally important in the running of an enterprise. The communications may be verbal or in writing, direct or indirect. Verbal communications are face to face and more direct. Personal notes, memos or letters are also comparatively direct. Circulars and notices, while being addressed to a limited number of people, do not always have the same personal flavour, and lack direct appeal. Indirect communications also include broadcasts through company radio, house magazines, posters, etc.

In a well organised and effective communication system, upward communication is given as much importance as downward communication. This is because one of the most crucial factors in the process of communication is information about how people feel about things in the organisation. Unless upward communication is encouraged and taken note of, downward communication is futile. Further, organised upward communication gives an opportunity to workers to inform management of their feelings, to suggest improvements in methods of work, and also enables management to locate problem areas in their own downward communications.

## **7. COMMUNICATION SITUATIONS**

Communication situations cover a wide and varied range of activities, but Supervisors are generally involved in the following:

- i) Giving orders or instructing
- ii) Training
- iii) Participating in meetings
- iv) Negotiating with union representatives
- v) Interviewing people for employment, promotion etc.
- vi) Dealing with grievances
- vii) Appraisal and merit rating
- viii) Leading conferences
- ix) Writing letters, reports and instructions.

Each of these situations provides an opportunity, through the interchange of attitudes, for change in behaviour and action. The need for effective communication is directly related to the complexity of a business—the number of levels in a hierarchical system, the complex nature of the technology concerned, the increasing degree of specialisation and departmentalisation—all these leading to an ever-increasing gap between the levels where decisions are taken and the levels where they are put into effect. An effective communication system would, therefore, have to devise a mechanism by which communications reach the concerned individuals expeditiously and in a manner which is meaningful to them.

## **8. GIVING ORDERS**

A Supervisor has to get work done by others, and is responsible for the results, which may be higher productivity, more production, achieving a target, etc. These results are the end, and the orders and instructions given to workers are the means to achieving them. In giving orders, therefore, one has to ensure that the Supervisor himself has a clear understanding of the job to be done, the method of doing it, the materials required and the type of skill necessary. Only then is he competent to get the job done by someone else. This, however, is one part of the order giving process,—it qualifies the “communicator”. The other part is the carrying out of the order, which requires three preconditions:

- i) the worker concerned should have the requisite training and skill to carry out the job.
- ii) he should do the job willingly.
- iii) he should feel it is important and that in some way he is himself involved with the results achieved.

It is often assumed that a worker knows the job or can adjust himself to any change in the routine. Both workers and supervisors tend to fall a prey to such assumptions with resultant poor quality work, accidents, unnecessary waste, etc. If the job has to be done by a particular individual, it is essential to ascertain whether he knows every detail of the job, and if not, in which areas he requires further training. The method of imparting such training so as to approach the desired result with minimum difficulty is discussed later, in the chapter dealing with Training. It is sufficient here to make sure that the instruction given to a worker is understood by him, so that he is in a position to translate it into action with as little supervision as possible.

The manner of giving an order should be precise and in logical sequence. In every case, it is necessary to ascertain whether the worker has understood the order, perhaps by observing him at work for some time or at frequent intervals. If it is obvious that he has not understood the order, it will be necessary to demonstrate. If it is observed, however, that the worker has understood the order and is capable of doing the job on his own, he should be left alone for a reasonable time, and not be

under a constant barrage of instructions. Once a worker has understood an order and is carrying it out satisfactorily, it would be necessary to follow up occasionally.

Finally, orders should be conveyed through proper channel. The immediate Supervisor should never be bypassed. The person who is involved with day-to-day dealings with the worker and is responsible for the job done should be the one who gives the order. Short-circuiting an order without keeping the intermediate Supervisor in the picture would only undermine and erode his authority, thereby reducing his effectiveness

## 9. TRAINING

Training is a never-ending activity in industry. It may involve a new entrant, someone who has been or is likely to be promoted or transferred, or the introduction of new methods and tools. Even on the same job it may be necessary to correct weaknesses from time to time.

Training may be on the job or away from it. It may be job-oriented, that is, of direct application to a particular job; it may be aimed at attitudinal development; or it may be a combination of both. A Supervisor is mainly concerned with job-oriented training. The effectiveness of training would depend to a considerable extent on the Supervisor's communicating ability based on an understanding of the trainee's capacity to assimilate the training and the complexity of the job. A Supervisor, while imparting training, would do well to adopt the following steps:

- (i) The job should be broken down to its elements, stressing key points. This would help the supervisor to remember important details which are routine to him, but may be quite strange and difficult to the newcomer.
- (ii) The different elements would then need to be developed as steps in the training process. Each step should be taught only after it has been ascertained that the previous step has been fully assimilated and can be translated into action. Further, the order in which the different elements are taught would need to be geared to the capacity of the worker rather than the needs of the job.
- (iii) With the breakdown of the job, there should also be a list of equipment and materials which are necessary for it. The worker should be trained to have these ready before he proceeds with the jobs.
- (iv) An interest for the job has to be created—one cannot proceed with the assumption that the worker already has the interest. The enthusiasm of the supervisor and the management has to be transmitted somehow to the worker, in order to get his whole-hearted cooperation. This is where the Supervisor has to take recourse to attitudinal development. This would include familiarity with the final product, its various uses to consumers, participation in sales programmes, displays, exhibitions, etc., and being involved in the company's plans, its development, and its ups and downs.

In any work, there is a part over which the worker has a reasonable degree of control—this is the repetitive or routine part—and he can be left alone to perform it. With more and more practice, he may become an adept at it and develop greater confidence. But every piece of work has also a part which is not routine, for which the worker may be required to seek guidance. It takes him some time to acquire adequate knowledge of this aspect and be able to cope with the different variations. A Supervisor's role in such a situation would be to be vigilant about a worker's training needs—in respect of both aspects of work. Performance on the repetitive aspect would still have to be watched for quality, as also the other aspect, the discretionary aspect, to ascertain how much of it has been understood by the worker and whether he is in a position to do a progressively greater amount on his own. The breaking down of the job into its elements and teaching these elements in steps would be of great assistance in this regard. A chart could also be made up detailing the different elements, and the worker's progress in each. A measure of the worker's progress could be quality, speed and the quantum of supervision required, expressed in terms of the time spent by the Supervisor with a particular worker in connection with training in a specific job.

## **10. PARTICIPATING IN MEETINGS**

A Supervisor may, from time to time, be required to participate in meetings, both as a member of a group and as a chairman. He may also be required to organise meetings. In all these tasks, the aim is to provide for a free flow of ideas and views in order to assist each other in enriching their experience. On the practical plane, it is an opportunity to discuss, evaluate and revise, if necessary, policies, plans and their implementation.

A conference where such vital aspects of work are to be discussed cannot be effective, and is, in fact, futile, if communication is restricted to one-way flow only. In order to derive maximum possible effectiveness out of a conference, it would be worthwhile to keep in view the following points :

- i) The size and composition of the group
- ii) The relevance of the subject matter for discussion to the work of the group members.
- iii) The duration and timing of the meeting(s)
- iv) Preparation before the meeting, bringing out relevant issues
- v) Follow-up after the meeting
- vi) Guiding the discussions.

The size of the group is extremely important, as the conference organiser has to strike a balance between maximum participation and quality of discussions. He has to ensure that each member is able to contribute to the discussions and also gain something from others. The size of the group would also be determined by such factors as the hierarchies in the organisation, the relations among members of the different levels (whether formal or informal), the feasibility of getting them together in the same meeting, etc. In a large group the shy, reserved person does not express himself, and the few talkative ones dominate the discussions. On the other hand, a very small group would be representative of a limited range of ideas and experience, and would lack interest. Conference leaders have different ideas about the most appropriate size for group discussions. Their recommendations, based on their experience of conference leading, range from a strength of ten to twenty.



The composition of the group is as important as its size. It is important not only to provide a wide range of experience and ideas, but also necessary to see that there is adequate horizontal communication among the participants. In forming a discussion group, therefore, it would be worthwhile not to include too many levels of personnel. The presence of very senior persons in a meeting is not always conducive to free discussions. On the other hand, a conference only among people who come in contact with each other in connection with their day-to-day work may not bring forth fresh ideas and will end up without achieving very much. Again, it has been observed that groups composed of personnel at several management levels have been quite successful. This has been mainly due to the attitude of those in top management, who value free and frank discussions and often themselves participate in such discussions.

As with the size and composition of the group, so with timing and duration it is necessary to weigh among various factors contributing to the success of meetings. When a discussion is to be held on matters pertinent to a particular task or work activity, it is not only necessary to hold the meeting at the place of work, but also, during working hours.

It is customary for enterprises to give higher priority to production only during working hours and relegate other activities to some other time. Conference participants are very often asked to discuss a subject after working hours, when they are tired and not in a mood to deal with it. They are not likely to take a lively interest in the proceedings when they participate in a half-hearted manner, feeling that this time could be spent more fruitfully elsewhere.

The duration of a conference should be related to the interest of the members. The curve of interest tends to flatten out after some time. It has been observed that in discussion groups this flattening takes place after one and a half to two hours. Where a subject matter is likely to take a longer period for discussing and coming to a decision, it would not serve any purpose to schedule a long meeting. For fruitful discussions, it would be better to arrange the meeting with appropriate breaks.

One way of getting over the problem of shortage of time is to circulate the documents in advance to enable the participants to be fully prepared when they come for the conference. The papers should be prepared with an emphasis on issues to be discussed. All members should be in possession of the data which form the basis for the discussion.

No meeting will be taken seriously unless it is followed by appropriate action on the points discussed. It is, therefore, necessary to incorporate in the proceedings the nature of follow-up action to be taken and the name of the person who will take it.

The success of a conference depends on the manner in which the discussions are guided. A conference should not only be led by a competent chairman, but it is most important that those participating are able to contribute effectively to the discussions. The chairman's role would, therefore, be to draw out the reticent participants, slow down the talkative ones, control the argumentative ones, etc. This would require considerable experience of participating in conferences, combined with an understanding of human behaviour.

## **II. JOINT CONSULTATION**

The role of the Supervisor is not usually considered a crucial one in negotiations with union representatives or in joint consultation. However, Supervisors do have to participate in discussions with workers on the one hand and higher management on the other. It should, therefore, be a continuing activity. It is very often felt by Supervisors that joint consultation is not within their scope, and that it is a specialised function, to be carried out by the personnel or some other department. Perhaps it is, at least in its formal aspects. But the success of joint consultation depends a great deal on the way the supervisors accept the system of communication.

The first thing to be remembered is that joint consultation involves consultations between two almost equal parties. Neither party is entirely dependent on the other, rather both are dependent on each other to achieve success. It is, therefore, a relationship of inter-dependence. It assumes that the problems of industry involve both management and labour, and not merely one group. All communications, therefore, should not only be simple, easily understood, and contain all the relevant information, but also have an atmosphere of openness about them. The workers should have no doubt about the purpose behind the communication.

Secondly, in order to get the full support and backing of labour, there should be a readiness to include within the scope of joint consultation all aspects of business. In running an industrial or business enterprise, the subjects which are dealt with may be divided into three broad groups, namely:

- i) formulation of policies
- ii) execution of policies
- iii) interpretation of policies and dissemination of information about the results

The elements of a business are of necessity inter-related and no one part alone can be isolated for discussion with workers. Complete acceptance of the idea of consultation would, therefore, mean that no particular aspect of business should be let outside the purview of such consultation.

Thirdly, the purpose of joint consultation is not merely to inform, but also to get back reactions. Upward communication is as important as downward com-

munication. The best results would, therefore, be achieved through verbal communication between individuals or in formal or informal groups. This would, however, need to be strongly supported by written information. The written information is necessary to reduce or eliminate the possibility of the verbal information being misinterpreted and/or distorted. Once a reaction to a piece of information is obtained, effort should be made to ensure that the various views and opinions regarding the feasibility, practicability, methods of implementing the policies, etc. are given full consideration. If necessary, the methods and procedures may be amended taking into consideration the various suggestions received. This gives a sense of participation to junior level personnel. It also encourages them to take a positive, active role in the affairs of the organisation, and not merely a passive, ineffective one.

## 12. INTERVIEWING

Interviewing takes place in industry in various situations, a few of which are given below:

- i) Engagement
- ii) Follow-up
- iii) Promotions and Transfers
- iv) Appraisal
- v) Disciplinary Interviews
- vi) Problem Interviews or Counselling

It may be observed that these situations arise outside the day-to-day work of the employee. Some of them, such as engagement interviews, take place before a person becomes a regular employee. Others, like interviews for promotions, transfers, counselling, etc., take place occasionally. They may be formal or informal. While a Supervisor is not always involved in the formal interviews listed above, he frequently has to engage himself in informal interviews on the shopfloor. Further, he may sometimes be required to participate in follow-up, appraisal and disciplinary interviews. These provide him with an opportunity to get to know his people, assess their potential and help them in improving their contribution to the organisation through improved attitudes and performance.

In any of these interview situations, it is important that the interviewer:

- i) establishes rapport
- ii) encourages the interviewee to talk
- iii) gives him relevant information
- iv) guides the discussions to draw him out to obtain the required information
- v) judges the interviewee, and
- vi) records his impressions as soon as possible, and certainly before he conducts another interview.

Every interview is also an exercise in patience for the interviewer. He has to be prepared not only to listen to the interviewee, but to do so with interest. He

should, moreover, be completely impartial, which, again, is a formidable task. In an interview situation he should be above personal likes and dislikes, social or religious prejudices, etc. The interviewer should also be able to adjust himself to the situation. The same procedure cannot be applied rigidly in all cases, but should vary according to the interviewees and their reactions to the situation.

### **Engagement Interview**

Engagement interviews are the most common and important type of interview in industry. The quality of employees entering an organisation would depend on the manner in which the engagement interview has been carried out. At the engagement interview, the interviewer has to determine the suitability or otherwise of the interviewee. The main purpose of the interview, therefore, is to correlate the job description with the attributes and qualifications required to perform the job satisfactorily.

Any engagement interview, to be successful, needs to have the following steps taken care of:

- i) Preparation of a job description, giving complete details of the work to be carried out, assessed on the basis of direct observation.
- ii) Preparation of a job specification, containing details of qualities and qualifications necessary to perform the job satisfactorily.
- iii) Preparation of an application form for eliciting relevant information about the candidate.
- iv) On receiving the completed form, familiarising oneself with the candidate's career to make the interview process smooth.
- v) Making the candidate's wait for the interview as short and free from anxiety as possible.
- vi) Conducting the interview following the general rules indicated earlier, at the same time assessing the candidate's potential for fitting in the job.
- vii) Informing the candidate about the result as soon possible.

Although a Supervisor may not be a member of the interview board, he has to make a significant contribution in drawing up the job description and in assisting in determining the job specifications. In cases where a trade test or trial on the shop-floor is necessary before a candidate is appointed, the Supervisor has a direct role in assessing his present capability and future potential for the job. The Supervisor's manner of dealing with the situation helps the candidate to respond willingly or otherwise to the test.

## **Follow-up Interview**

Follow-up interviews are useful in discussing an employee's performance and development in an organisation, and his potential for further development. It calls for frankness, and an eagerness to assist the employee in improving his performance. Fault-finding and condemnation should be avoided. The employee should know the purpose of the interview, and be allowed to speak freely about difficulties if any, which might impede his productivity or further progress. These may either be within the individual, such as lack of skill, ill health, personal problems, etc., or in the organisation, such as poor coordination, absence of prospects for vertical and horizontal mobility, etc. A free and frank discussion of these aspects would enable the supervisor to arrive at certain ideas regarding modification. This information can then be communicated upward and discussed with higher authorities.

Any follow-up interview would end on an encouraging note and with some positive suggestions.

Similar interviews would also be useful in case of appraisals, promotions and transfers. The important facts to be remembered are that the employee does not feel that the interview has been arranged to discuss his shortcomings only. Both his strong points and weak points should be discussed with interest, with a view to reducing difficulties and improving his efficiency. Finally, the employee should not carry the impression that this is only a facade, and that the Supervisor will follow his own whims irrespective of the outcome of the interview.

## **Disciplinary Interview**

In the course of his day-to-day work, it sometimes becomes necessary for the Supervisor to take disciplinary action. This is not always in the sense of meting out punishment, but it is aimed at improving the employee. The most important aspects to be remembered in connection with a disciplinary interview are:

- i) *Impartiality*: the employee should never have an impression that the Supervisor treats different people differently for the same offence.
- ii) *Judgement*: the reprimand or disciplinary action should be related to the magnitude of the offence.
- iii) *Privacy*: the disciplinary interview should be held in private, away from the employee's colleagues.
- iv) *Getting agreement*: the Supervisor should be able to persuade the employee to realise what type of performance and attitude are expected of him, and the consequences of any violation of the standards expected. What is more, the employee should be in agreement with these principles and procedures.

## **Problem Interview**

Problem interviews or counselling helps the interviewer to get to the cause of a man's difficulties which in turn might affect his work. While a Supervisor is ideally suited to undertake this work by virtue of his proximity to and knowledge about an individual, he does not have the time to do so, very often he does not possess the necessary skills for analysing such problems and their effect on an individual's contribution to his work. Such problems generally involve domestic or personal situations, or interpersonal problems at one's place of work. In India not much serious effort has been made towards correlating such problems with performance at work.



## 13. DEALING WITH GRIEVANCES

Coping with grievances forms an important part of any Supervisor's work. The manner in which he deals with grievances contributes to the efficiency of his section. His attempts at working according to plan can succeed only if he has a group of satisfied workers, and this latter condition can be achieved by reducing complaints to a minimum. In dealing with grievances it is necessary to keep in mind the following:

- i) A grievance may or may not be real
- ii) Not everybody gives expression to his grievance through verbal complaints
- iii) Grievances may arise out of not one but multifarious causes
- iv) A grievance may be caused by conditions in the individual, particularly if he is in a brooding or disturbed frame of mind.

The above would mean, therefore, that while analysing grievances, the Supervisor has to study both the nature of the complaint and the person concerned. In cases where an employee does not give expression to his grievance, a watchful Supervisor should be able to detect the existence of a grievance through other symptoms, such as poor quality work, low level of efficiency, etc.

While dealing with grievances, therefore, no rough and ready solution is available and every case has to be dealt with on merit. Above all, it is important to remember that as in other situations, so in dealing with grievances, the principles of communication apply:

- i) the complainant should be given a patient hearing
- ii) attempts should be made to get at the root of the problem
- iii) if the grievance is unfounded, the employee should be convinced about it
- iv) if the grievance is real, and its cause located, attempts should be made to rectify it
- v) the employee should have an impression that the Supervisor is interested in his adjustment to his work situation.

## **14. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS**

However elaborate a communication system may be, it cannot be composed of verbal communication only. We are constantly conveying our ideas through words and figures, and these have to be done both by word of mouth and in writing. Written communication covers a wide range of activities and its main advantage is also the cause of its main disadvantage. While it enables a piece of information to be conveyed far and wide within a short time, it is impersonal, and there is no certainty about it being read by everyone. This is more so in India with different languages spoken by workers and varying levels of literacy among them.

Written communications have another disadvantage, and that is, of one-way communication. There is no way of ascertaining the response of the reader or of varying your approach with different receivers of the communications.

The objectives of written communications may be classified as under :

- i) to give information: house magazines, notices/circulars, reports, labour legislation, standing orders, employee handbooks, etc.
- ii) to receive information: forms of various types, suggestion schemes, reports, etc.
- iii) to record recommendations or minutes of meetings, interviews, etc.
- iv) to instruct: details of work, use of tools, safety devices, emergency equipment, etc.

The main principles of written communications are :

- i) Accurate statement of facts
- ii) Definition of purpose, terms and ideas
- iii) Logical sequence
- iv) Avoidance of unnecessary or unconnected details
- v) Avoidance of impressions and opinions

These principles should be used in all written communications, whether writing letters, reports, minutes of meetings or any other document.

## **Accurate statement of facts**

Reports, letters and minutes are often not fully understood, because of their vagueness. This leads to the possibility of misinterpretation and delay due to seeking of clarification from the originators. It is likely that the writer does not wish to commit himself, particularly when he is not fully informed about the facts, or he may be acting on the basis of partially known facts from which he might have developed certain prejudices. For example, a document regarding a pension scheme may be circulated among employees to get their views on whether they would like to forego certain existing facilities in return for a higher pension. One way of informing them of the results of the survey would be to say that a majority of the employees would like to have an enhanced rate of pension and contribute towards it out of their salaries and, therefore, a particular scheme would be launched. Another way of presenting the facts would be to indicate how many copies of the circular were distributed, how many replies were received, an analysis of the replies in numerical terms and the justification for taking a particular step. In a matter of this sort generalisations and qualitative statements should be avoided.

## **Definitions**

A word or phrase does not mean the same thing to different people. In many cases, the originator of a document may be familiar with a particular term, while those for whom it is intended may not be equally familiar. It would, therefore, be useful to define the objectives of writing/circulating a particular document and, then, to define the relevant terms used, in the context of the application of the document. In other words, both the writer and the reader should start from a common understanding of the words and phrases used.

## **Logical sequence**

While preparing a document, it is not only important to determine the sequence of ideas as they appear to the writer, but also to consider the way in which they are likely to affect the reader. The latter may not be as closely involved in the current of thought as the originator of the document. Nevertheless, he may at some stage be concerned with the subject, and it is necessary to keep him in the picture. This can be achieved by presenting the problem and possible solution in a manner and sequence which will be easily understood and appreciated by the reader. A suggested sequence could be:

- i) Statement of the problem
- ii) Analysing the possible causes
- iii) Examination of the causes

- iv) **Impact of various causes**
- v) **Decision or Recommendation**

In preparing a document it would be observed that the above order is not necessarily the same as that which occurs in the mind of the writer. He will have a large storehouse of information on this subject, but when presenting it for others, he would have to rearrange his thoughts.

#### **Avoidance of irrelevant details**

Inclusion of irrelevant material in a document adds to reading time and confusion, and detracts from the main purpose of the communication. It would be a good test, before including an item, to ask whether it is absolutely essential for the purpose of the text to have this additional information. It should be included only if the answer is a definite YES.

#### **Avoidance of opinions**

If we examine our own writing in order to test just one quality—Have we tried to give words more than a factual meaning?—we would find that more than in half our writing the answer is “yes”. Words are sometimes intended to convey emotional meanings, thereby camouflaging the factual meaning and reducing the objectivity of the document. This may be partly due to the fact that terms might not have been defined, and partly because the writer is guided by emotions rather than facts. Words such as “system”, “organisation”, etc. are sometimes used without specifying what exactly these words refer to. It would, therefore, be advisable to avoid the possibility of being guided by emotions rather than facts.

## 15. TYPES OF WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

We shall now discuss the types of written communication. One important principle to be remembered in connection with written communications is that no rule or format can be prescribed for any type of document. Styles of writing vary, and as much freedom as possible should be given for different ways of presenting information.

### House Magazines

House journals or magazines provide a useful means for management and workers to come together. Through this medium the management can give information direct to a large number of workers, on a variety of subjects including technological changes, business position, new appointments, retirements, promotions, welfare measures, etc.

One of the hurdles in the production of house magazines in India is illiteracy among workers. But this could be overcome by bringing them out in the language spoken by the majority of workers, and use of illustrations. In any case, it would provide a contact with literate workers, who could explain relevant matter to their less educated colleagues.

The main considerations in bringing out a house magazine are:

- i) *Frequency*: Every month or alternate month would perhaps be acceptable. More frequent publication would involve more staff and expense, and longer intervals than one or two months would make much of the material lose its topical value. Whatever frequency is decided on, it should be adhered to, so that the magazine appears when everybody expects it.
- ii) *Size*: Both number of pages and dimension are important. The magazine should preferably start as a slim volume, so that there is always enough material to fill the pages. About eight pages of quarto or an economical size of similar dimension could be brought out to start with.
- iii) *Cover*: The cover should be attractive, so that the employees are proud to

take the magazine home and show it to their families and friends. It would also draw attention and induce a desire to look inside it.

- iv) *Subjects*: One of the most vital topics affecting the working lives of industrial personnel is the state of industrial relations. Any strikes, negotiations, arbitration, etc. are naturally uppermost in everybody's mind, but do not find place in most house magazines. The topics which appear in such magazines generally include changes in technology or methods of production, suggestions for improvement, appointments, transfers, promotions, retirements, new policies, personal news about workers and their children, etc. Some magazines include articles, poems, cartoons, photographs, etc. contributed by workers.
- v) *Editor*: On the choice of editor and his manner of handling the magazine depends the acceptability and popularity of the publications. He should have an insight into what type of material is expected by the readers, and not merely concentrate on finish and editorial perfection of the magazine.

### **Notice Boards**

Every factory displays the company's standing orders, extracts from certain Acts and Rules, lists of holidays, internal circulars issued by the management from time to time, notices about social and cultural events, etc. Some of these are required under various Acts, such as Factories Act, Payment of Wages Act, etc., some are put up for the company's own administrative purpose, and others are optional.

In most companies, however, notice boards do not achieve their purpose. Often they are placed higher than the average eye-level, the documents are old and/or torn, and the type of documents are not very legible. The wall space is not always adequate for the large number of notices, and lighting is poor. One way to get over the problem of shortage of space would be to have swinging notice boards attached to a vertical pillar. This should be placed in an illuminated part of the premises, with enough space for people to stand around it. The height of the notices should be in keeping with the average eye-level. Notices should be changed from time to time so that they do not become discoloured and unreadable.

### **Employee Handbooks**

Employee Handbooks are used in many firms to keep employees informed of the rules and regulations of the company particularly in respect of employment policies and procedures, welfare schemes, etc. Each book should also contain the employee's name, token number, department and address. Any changes should be incorporated immediately after the change takes place, e.g. transfer, promotion, change of address.

## **Forms**

Forms are devised to elicit information. While those who design the forms do so for the sake of getting information in an orderly manner, they very often do not consider the difficulties of those who have to complete them. In devising a form, therefore, the following may be kept in mind:

- i) A form is necessary only when information of similar nature is sought, and there is likely to be a large response.
- ii) Each item in a form should be checked to see whether it is likely to be completed or is not applicable in most cases. In the event of the latter, it should be eliminated.
- iii) Adequate space should be provided for writing long answers wherever necessary.
- iv) Forms should be revised from time to time on the basis of experience.

## **Suggestion Schemes**

Suggestion schemes provide a means for mobilising the talents and ideas of employees. At its best a suggestion scheme can promote enthusiasm among employees and assist the company to raise productivity and reduce cost. If not properly administered and publicised, the scheme can only lead to disappointment and feeling that it is a waste of time. The success of a suggestion scheme would depend on:

- i) Enthusiasm and support of management
- ii) Carefully planned publicity
- iii) Liberal awards
- iv) Impartial committee to administer the scheme
- v) Interest of the employees
- vi) Dissemination of complete information about the suggestions received
- vii) Assistance to employees in translating their ideas into workable schemes, for example, with drawings, calculations, etc., if necessary.

## **Minutes**

Minutes or proceedings of meetings should be self-contained documents, obviating the need for reference to any other material. In case it is necessary to refer to some other papers, they should be attached as appendices. The minutes should contain the title of the report or proceedings, its number, date, place and time of meeting, names of chairman and participants and a brief statement of the subject. This should be followed by a brief note on the discussions drawing reference to

appendices wherever necessary. The last part should contain the decisions or recommendations as resolved at the meeting.

### **Instructions**

Instructions are necessary for details of work, use of tools and safety devices, and in cases of emergency like fire. Written instructions in such cases should be brief, with illustrations of equipment and methods to be employed. The instructions should generally consist of the following parts:

- i) A description of the situation with which the instruction deals
- ii) Explanation of why and when the instruction has to be carried out, e.g., in case of operating a particular safety device
- iii) Details of the instruction—preferably with illustrations



## **16. AUDIO-VISUAL COMMUNICATION**

Of late, there has been an increasing interest in visual and audio-visual methods of communication. These include graphs, charts, posters, film strips, films, etc. These methods can be more effective, because the picture and sound images create a more lasting impression than the written word. Further, when dealing with people of low educational level, it has a definite advantage over written material. Visual aids are becoming increasingly popular in training programmes and also in the annual reports of companies.

In spite of their advantage of creating an immediate impact, visual and audio-visual media, particularly films, have several disadvantages:

- i) they are too costly in relation to the use to which they will be put
- ii) they quickly become out of date
- iii) they do not provide an opportunity for immediate feed back

## 17. CONCLUSION

The system of communications in an enterprise is a reflection of the attitude of top management to this vital subject. Where top management is interested, there is frank discussion, exchange of views and use of different communication media to disseminate information. In the absence of such interest from top management, there appears to be a general feeling of suspicion, secretiveness and spread of grapevine. The necessary conditions for the development of a sound communication system may be summarised as follows :

- i) Communication channels must follow the official channels of the organisation structure. There should be no bypassing of such official channels except in cases of communications of general nature.
- ii) No communication system is complete unless it encourages both upward and downward flow. One-way traffic, namely, downward flow only, reflects authority and not an acceptance of the idea of communication.
- iii) The language or media of communication should be adapted to the ability of those receiving the communication rather than those originating it.
- iv) Management and Supervisors would have to acquire the necessary skills in communication through training, practice and experience.

## **MODEL QUESTIONS**

1. What are the objectives of an effective communication system, and what are the pre-requisites for achieving the best results?
2. Describe three main barriers to effective communication and give your suggestions for getting over them.
3. Describe the stages in a communication process.
4. Describe the purpose and procedure of three directions of the communication channel.
5. What types of communication is a Supervisor engaged in, in his day-to-day work? Describe any three of these situations and how you would tackle them.
6. Describe three interview situations and how you would deal with them, if you were the interviewer.
7. Describe the various stages in a communication process, and the role of the Supervisor in getting the best result out of training his subordinate.
8. What are the necessary conditions for making a conference effective? Imagine yourself to be the chairman of a meeting and describe how you would conduct it.
9. What are the objectives of written communication? Describe the principles of written communication.
10. Describe three forms of written communication indicating their purpose in industry.

## SUGGESTED READING

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  2. Dale Yoder, H.G. Heneman, John G. Turnbull and C. Harold Stone: *Handbook of Personnel Management and Labour Relations*, Section 13, Communications in Employment, McGraw Hill Book Company, New York.
  3. *Attitudes and Methods of Communication and Consultation between Employer and Workers at Individual Level*: Report on International Joint Seminar, OECD, Paris.
  4. Cecil Chisholm, Ed.: *Communication in Industry*: Business Publication Ltd., & B. T. Batsford Ltd., London.
  5. *Effective Communication on the Job*, AMA, New York.
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