

chapter 18

COMMUNICATING

Frame 1¹⁸

A major skill required of a manager is the ability to communicate effectively. Gaining acceptance of policies, seeing that instructions are clearly understood, and bringing about improvements in performance depend on effectively communicating. The manager who is unable to get his associates to understand what he wants them to do will not succeed in getting them to do it. If they are unable to communicate freely with him, he will not receive some of the information he needs in order to manage successfully.

Communication is a means by which management is facilitated; it is not an independent activity but an essential adjunct to almost everything a manager does. Keeping associates fully informed and gaining mutual understanding is so important, that some reach the erroneous conclusion that management is primarily communicating. But communicating is only a part of management.

The *illusion of communication* is believing that mutual understanding has taken place because one person has spoken to another or be-

Answer frame 3¹⁷

1. False. Orders are commonly expressed in an informal manner, such as "Let's go ahead with the alternative plan as soon as possible."
2. False. Both oral and written orders carry the same degree of force and authority; the choice of one type over the other depends on such things as the relationship between the parties and the need for future reference.
3. False. Orders should be used only when needed; an excess of orders can cause confusion and waste.
4. True. Instructions supply the how-to-do-it aspect for performing a particular task. Go to Frame 4¹⁷, page 92.

Answer frame 4¹⁷

1. True. The study of group dynamics tells us that groups can either resist or accept change. A prime determinant is the manner in which the change is introduced.
 2. True. One does not wish to risk expulsion from a group to which he is highly attracted.
 3. False. The norms of the group are strong benchmarks; a group is highly resistive to changes that will make behavior deviate from the group's norms.
 4. False. The best method of directing, in a particular instance, is the one that *accomplishes the task, while generating as little unfavorable group reaction as possible.*
- You have completed Chapter 17. Continue by beginning Chapter 18, page 93.

Frame 1¹⁸ continued

cause what has been written by one has been read by the other. What is expressed is not always what is understood. From the management point of view, some of the reasons for failure of communication are: (a) the communication contains indirections—it does not reveal and stay with the real problem, (b) the receiver interprets communication in light of his background and experience, and (c) the receiver has a disposition to read into the communication what he anticipates or expects. In other words, communication is conditioned by the receiver's interpretation of the message and the prevailing attitudes of the communicator and the receiver not only toward each other, but also toward the subject at hand.

These difficulties of communication may result in what is commonly termed *the communication gap*. To minimize the communication gap, the manager should strive for a climate of confidence in which communication can take place. To prejudge that which will be said or written weakens the communication. Communications

should be specific and simple. A good rule to follow is "one message, one subject." Timing is also vital. Communication is especially dynamic, and saying the right thing at the right time has paramount value. It is advantageous for the recipient to take time to reflect on his answer, not to give forth with the first reaction that comes to mind. If he so reflects, the receiver will comprehend better what is really being communicated, and he is likely to give better answers.

All communication is two-way. When one speaks, another listens. When one writes, another reads. The speaking and the listening, or the writing and the reading, must take place for communication to exist. More significant, however, is that the speaker or writer be sensitive to the listener's or reader's response. If he is not, the speaking or writing can lead to misunderstanding and antagonism. Free movement in both directions, statement and response, and the exchange of ideas open the way for effectively transmitting information and gaining under-

standing. For it is only in this free exchange, this give-and-take, that we find out how others react to the message communicated and what ideas they have to contribute.

Observe that listening and reading are essential parts of communication; they are the great media of learning, directing, and motivating. Managers spend much of their time in these activities but, unfortunately, they retain only a small amount of what they hear and read, and

that not for very long. Listening and reading take energy; they are work. They should not be considered something to do when you have nothing else to do. To improve, the manager should listen and read with a purpose in mind, try to remove attributes and beliefs that interfere with effective listening and reading, and recognize the deep importance of these activities in managerial work.

Indicate whether each of the following statements is true or false by writing "T" or "F" in the space provided.

- _____ 1. A manager's main role in communicating consists in getting others to do what he wants them to do.
- _____ 2. The *illusion of communication* arises because of the assumption that the meaning of what has been transmitted is common to the sender and the recipient.
- _____ 3. One cause of the *communication gap* is that most communications are not specific and simple.
- _____ 4. Not allowing the recipient of a communication to respond can lead to misunderstanding and antagonism.

See Answer Frame 1¹⁸, page 96.

Frame 2¹⁸

Good communicating motivates. It encourages a feeling of participation; it excites greater interest in the work. Sharing information of mutual interest and benefit gives vital support to an employee's sense of belonging. Many advocate daily contacts between managers and non-managers. Explaining plans and policies, telling of changes to take place in the future, encouraging suggestions, and asking opinions are but a few of the many ways in which motivation can be enhanced.

For academic purposes, communication has been classified into various types, as, for example: (a) *downward and upward communication*, (b) *formal and nonformal communication*, and (c) *oral and written communication*. In the first type, communication flows from the top to the bottom managerial levels of an enterprise and from the lower to the higher managerial levels. Downward communication may consist, for example, of orders, instructions, and memos;

upward communication may be through reports, suggestions, and grievances.

Formal communication is that using established organization channels and standard media, such as departmental meetings, telephone calls, company magazines, posters, and direct-mail letters. Nonformal communication is that which exists because of personal and group interests of people. Commonly dubbed the grapevine, it is direct, fast, and flexible; yet it does not have access to official information sources. The believability of the grapevine is high, but sometimes it carries rumor or distorted information. Therein lies its danger.

The terms *oral communication* and *written communication*, are self-explanatory. The ability to speak effectively is a requisite for most managers. Many find it helpful to jot down the major points to be included, so that the overall oral presentation can be well organized. Some repetition for emphasis is normal. Oral communication

Answer frame 1¹⁸

1. False. A manager's main role in communicating consists of getting others to *understand* what he wants them to do.
2. True. The *illusion of communication* is believing mutual understanding has taken place, because a person has spoken to another or because what has been written by one has been read by the other.
3. True. One way to reduce the *communication gap* is to keep messages specific and simple.
4. True. If the recipient of a communication is not allowed to respond, the communication can lead to misunderstanding and antagonism.

Now go to Frame 2¹⁸, page 95.

Frame 2¹⁸ continued

permits a face-to-face exchange, fosters a friendly spirit, and encourages questions and answers.

Formal meetings, within an enterprise, have become commonplace. This is in keeping with the high value currently placed on group decision making, encouraging group participation, and keeping employees informed. To be of greatest value, a meeting should be: (a) *planned*, with each member given the purpose, program, and time; (b) *specific*, with presentation and discussion kept directly applicable to the particular issue at hand; (c) *illustrated visually*, especially if complicated concepts are involved or statistics are used; and (d) *written*

up, to supply a record of what was covered and decided and what responsibility for what participant was established.

Written reports exemplify written communication. By having them in written form, they become available for future reference, and details, if warranted, can be included. The keys to effective written communication are the familiar four C's—completeness, clarity, conciseness, and correctness. Common words, simple sentence structure, a writing style that flows naturally, and a presentation of material that is easy to follow should be used.

Indicate whether each of the following statements is true or false by writing "T" or "F" in the space provided.

- _____ 1. Communication between organization levels generally can be made more highly motivating if it is a daily occurrence.
- _____ 2. Nonformal communications arise when formal communications break down.
- _____ 3. Formal meetings generally are most beneficial when any discussion is conducted in an "open-ended" manner.
- _____ 4. The intended audience must be considered in evaluating the effectiveness of a written communication.

See Answer Frame 2¹⁸, page 98.

Frame 3¹⁸

The following suggestions are helpful in attaining effective communication:

1. *Know fully what you are trying to communicate.* Clearly visualize what information you want the recipient to have or what issues you

want to resolve with him. This implies that the communicator must have a greater fund of information than he actually uses for the communication. He needs a reserve to answer unexpected questions and to expand on any relevant topic.

2. *Communicate adequately—no more, no less.* A constant challenge in communicating is to avoid talking or writing too much or too little. Excess is all too common. Overcommunication may result from too great an eagerness to utilize fully available communication channels and media. Some management members are literally buried under communication. They can't digest all of it, and much is nonessential to their work. Likewise, inadequate communication is undesirable. Failure to give enough information to perform the work or to develop on the jobs can be devastating. Both extremes must be avoided. Whether communication is adequate can be determined by being alert to the receiver's reactions and using past communication experience as a guide.

3. *Realize that communication may be altered in its distribution.* Change in a communication is likely to take place as it is interpreted by each in a line of receivers. The change may be either favorable or unfavorable, depending on the recipient's influence. Usually, people dislike passing on facts about unfavorable results, so the communication is sweetened. This happens more frequently in upward than in downward communication. The manager should be aware of this possible change, and practice the necessary control to minimize it.

4. *Use proper symbols and visuals.* All com-

munication employs symbols to represent persons or things that can be distinguished. Symbols include signs, words, colors, and characters. They were developed to meet the needs of transmitting information; they stand for something meaningful. For example, the algebraic sign = stands for equals. Words are meaningful, but some words are far more definite or exact in meaning than are others. The word *iron* conveys a fairly precise meaning, whereas the word *excellent* is subject to different meanings by different persons and by the same person at different times. To the extent that symbols used in communication do not have universal meanings, we have communication difficulty. Visuals help the human mind to comprehend information. A simple chart or diagram often conveys the message better than many words.

5. *Carefully select information communicated.* Ideally, the information communicated consists of what the receiver wants to know and what the giver believes the receiver should know. Employees like to be informed about working conditions, promotion possibilities, company policies, work methods, employee benefits, and the general welfare of the enterprise. However, because employees want to be informed, doesn't mean that every last bit of information must be communicated. The company, too, has rights and interests that sometimes must be protected.

Indicate whether each of the following statements is true or false by writing "T" or "F" in the space provided.

- _____ 1. The individual sending a communication typically has more information available than he wishes to pass on to the recipient.
- _____ 2. A communication which passes from one individual to another is subject to distortion by each individual who receives it and passes it on.
- _____ 3. A verbal explanation is usually superior to a simple chart or diagram.
- _____ 4. The individual sending the communication should limit the degree of detail of the message.

Refer to Answer Frame 3¹⁸, page 98.

