

Top 10 Barriers to Effective Communication

When you work in a large organization, you see that you're working with a large number of people. These people can be in different departments, different sectors of the organization and maybe even different organizations. Sometimes, you have to get a message to another person through multiple mediums, like if you want to send a message to the CEO, you have to ask your manager, who then asks the Director, who then schedules an appointment with the CEO's secretary and then, finally you get to meet the Big Boss. Until the message is delivered, your message might get changed, distorted or even underestimated (speaking in terms of importance). The reason is because the longer the channel of communication, the longer it takes to deliver the message and the more distorted the message can be. Imagine getting a feedback from the CEO on something you probably weren't even asking for. Furthermore, there is no privacy. Thus, these distortions are barriers to effective communication.

Communication is a complex struggle. It requires people to really understand each other and all organization rely on effective communication for efficiency. Hence we must be aware of all barriers that prove to be obstacles in our struggle for effective communication.

Physical Barriers

In the last few years, various research and scientific observations have proven physical barriers to be the biggest hindrance to effective communication in the workplace. This is the reason why hundreds of organizations have completely re-structured the way they operate. Large multinational firms, like Unilever and Procter & Gamble, no longer have managers and executives behind closed doors or in giant secluded offices. They have a more of an open floor way of operating where all the managers, employees and directors of the company operate in an open space with tables sticking side by side and people working face to face in a large wall-less room.

Cultural Diversity

Now that the world has openly embraced globalization, you find yourself working in different countries, with different races of people and sometimes very different cultural and moral backgrounds. In some countries, religion is considered the ultimate guiding force in the workplace while in others it's personal goals. Hence, diversified culture makes it very hard to

maintain a proper working environment. This is why companies tend to promote “organization culture”, a unique company environment, morals and rules that all members of the organization must follow and happily accept. Any employee who doesn’t fit into the culture eventually is out of the company either by choice or force.

Language Barriers

Just like diversified culture, you end up working with people speaking different languages. An Arab (speaking Arabic) might visit India (language: Hindi) for his company’s Raw Materials supply. Here, there will be a lot of distortion and misinterpretation even in direct contact between the two people.

Limited Or No Feedback

Sometimes people send messages and information that do not require feedback or do not allow it. Here if the information is misrepresented or misinterpreted, then there is no way to clear the doubt the receiver has about the message and hence, unable to properly comply.

Emotional Distractions

Emotions play a big role in effective communication. People can be shy, confident or just plain blunt and may not allow full or honest feedback to the receiver. Sometimes people are good listeners but because of the emotion in the tone the manager or a higher authority exerted, the employee feels he does not have the authority or confidence to reply back.

Distractions

Imagine yourself in a meeting, you are discussing important strategies for the company and there are people arguing outside the room, or maybe there is a game on and people are all gathered together. Such noise and distractions create distortions in effectively conveying messages to the receiver while the sender gets distracted.

Personal Behavior

People have their own attitudes, quirks and perceptions of things. Some people just don’t bother spending too much time in conveying messages and expect people to just understand. Such behavior can be a serious barrier in communication.

Too much information

Sometimes going into too much detail can also be a distortion. You should try to keep the messages simple, plain and to the point with hard facts. That is the best form of effective communication.

Presentation

The way a message is represented is crucial. If a "Stop" sign on the middle of a road were not on laminated material or was too small or didn't have the word STOP, people would have to spend too much time figuring out what the sign meant and that time is simply wasted. It could also mislead.

The Medium

Finally, the medium of communication must be as short as possible. Like in the previous example of the CEO, if the medium of communication is too long and takes too much time, then the message is likely to be late and lose significance. Use direct e-mails, memos or direct contact instead.

Effective communication can lead to better understanding and higher work efficiency which only results in higher profits. This is the perception that organizations must work with and must develop communication channels with minimum barriers, because the fact remains that barriers cannot be completely removed but they can be minimized.