A nighttime photograph of a city skyline, likely New York City, with numerous skyscrapers illuminated against a dark sky. The lights reflect on the water in the foreground.

# Light of Management

EDITORS

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## Communication

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### Introduction

In order for businesses to thrive and achieve their goals and objectives, they need persons with good communication skills. Ray, Stallard and Hunt (1994) conducted a nation-wide survey of corporate recruiters and discovered the importance they attach to communication skills as prerequisites for employment. The recruiters ranked communication skills (writing, speaking, listening and interpersonal communicating) in the top five criteria for selecting employees. Another similar study by Dowd and Liedtka (1994) on MBA applicants concluded that 85 percent of the recruiters hold communication skills to be the most important of the skills sought. A third study conducted by Swanson, Meinert and Swanson (1994) investigated the courses taken by 500 undergraduate and graduate business students, and it was discovered that business communication was ranked first among all core business courses.

So many businesses have collapsed on account of poor communication skills. This explains why there should be concerted efforts towards employee training in the area of communication skills. The success of a business, no matter how highly placed, depends largely on the ability of its employees to communicate. Lesikar, Pettit and Flatley (2002) stress the likelihood of advancement in one's job as a way of rewarding employees who have demonstrated good communication skills. The higher one advances on the organizational hierarchy, the more the communication ability that will be required. In view of the foregoing, it is evident that, the authors concluded, "improving one's communication skills improves one's chances for success in one's chosen career".

Communication is vital to every part of the business. A subordinate's ability to carry out instruction is largely dependent on his/her understanding of the instructions given, and this cannot be achieved without good communication. Workers send and receive information manually and electronically, process information with computers, write messages, fill out forms, give and receive orders, and talk over the phone. Sales people receive instructions and information from the headquarters. They send back orders and weekly summary of their activities. Executives use letters and telephone calls to initiate business with customers and other companies and respond to incoming letters and calls. Many business deals have been won on account of good communication skills. This skill is the lifeline of every broadcast media, and that is the tool for survival in every aspect of human endeavour.

Communication is a centre of human activity and an integral part of any system being put in place; without it, an organization cannot function effectively. This chapter focuses on communication as a tool of interaction within an organization using the following sub-modules:

- Conceptual clarifications.
- Theoretical framework.
- Steps in developing effective communication.
- Communication channels.
- Communication skills.
- Communication networks.
- Communication methods.
- Barriers to effective communication.

- Principles of effective communication.
- Approaches to communication.
- Influences on the communication process.
- The e-communication craze in Nigeria.
- Conclusion.

### Conceptual Clarifications

Communication is defined as a two-way process in which there is an exchange and progression of thoughts, feelings or ideas towards a mutually accepted goal or direction. Communication, as an academic discipline, relates to all the ways we exchange ideas, so it embraces a large body of study and knowledge. Miner and Miner (1995), in *The Encyclopedia of Professional Management*, define communication as the transmission of a message from one person (referred to as the source) to one or more other persons (receivers). In the organizational context, the message may involve a directive or an order to do something; it may be a suggestion for changing a procedure; it may be an expression of approval or disapproval for the way a job has been performed; and so forth. The deluxe encyclopedic edition of Webster's Dictionary of the English Language (1992) defines communication as: "sending, giving or exchanging (of information, ideas)." The vehicle for transmitting the message (that is, information or ideas or both), is called "the channel." According to Robbins (1998), communication is the transference and understanding of meaning. This definition places emphasis on mutuality and understanding of the message transmitted by both the sender and the receiver of the message.

### The Communication Process

The two major parties in a communication process are: the sender (encoder) and the receiver (decoder), while the two major tools involved in communication are: the message and the media. The major communication functions are: encoding, decoding response and feedback. The last element in communication is 'Noise', as shown in Figure 1:

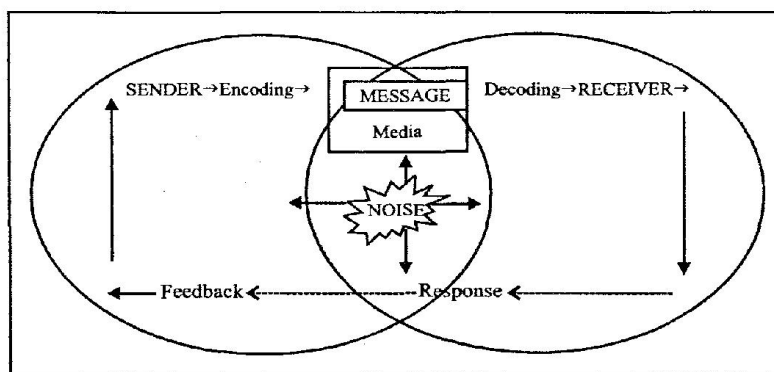


Fig. 1: Elements of Communication Process

Source: Kotler, P. and Armstrong, G. (2008). *Principles of Marketing* (12th ed.) NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall

**Sender:** The party sending the message to another part. The sender can be a person.

**Encoding:** The process of putting thoughts into symbolic form. They refer to word or symbolic illustrations that make the message understandable to whoever it is intended for.



Message:	The set of symbols that the sender transmits.
Media:	The communication channels through which the message moves from sender to receiver. It could be a direct face-to-face medium or through electronic or a non-electronic media.
Decoding:	This is the process by which the receiver assigns meaning to the symbols encoded by the sender. A Ghanaian encoder that displays number 7 to an Indian may receive a wrong feedback because number 7 means different things to both nationals. The message sender must ensure that the receiver of the message understands the language of communication, so that the right feedback can be received by the sender.
Receiver:	The party receiving the message sent by another party. An individual who reads a paper publication, listens to the radio or watches the television is receiving a message.
Response:	The reaction of the receiver after being exposed to the message.
Feedback:	The response communicated back to the sender, in a clear language that the sender can comprehend.
Noise:	This refers to unplanned static or distortion during the communication process, which results in the receiver getting a different message than the one the sender sent. A newspaper reader may be distracted by a television message, which distorts the newspaper message being read.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Markus (1990) suggests that new communication technologies will not be widely embraced until there is a “critical mass” of individuals who use the technology. The idea of critical mass is particularly important for communication technologies that require connectivity. The three (3) major models identified by Miller (2006) are:

- The Media Richness Model.
- Social Information Processing Model.
- Dual-capacity Model.

#### **The Media Richness Model**

This model was proposed by Daft and Lengel (1984 and 1986) as a framework for understanding the choices that organizations make about communication media use. The major interest was on the process through which managers choose one communication medium over another, for a wide variety of organizational tasks. This model argues that communication channels available to the organizational manager differ markedly in their capability to convey information. Daft and Lengel use four criteria to differentiate the information capacity of media: (1) the availability of instant feedbacks (2) the use of multiple cues, (3) the use of natural language, and (4) the personal focus of

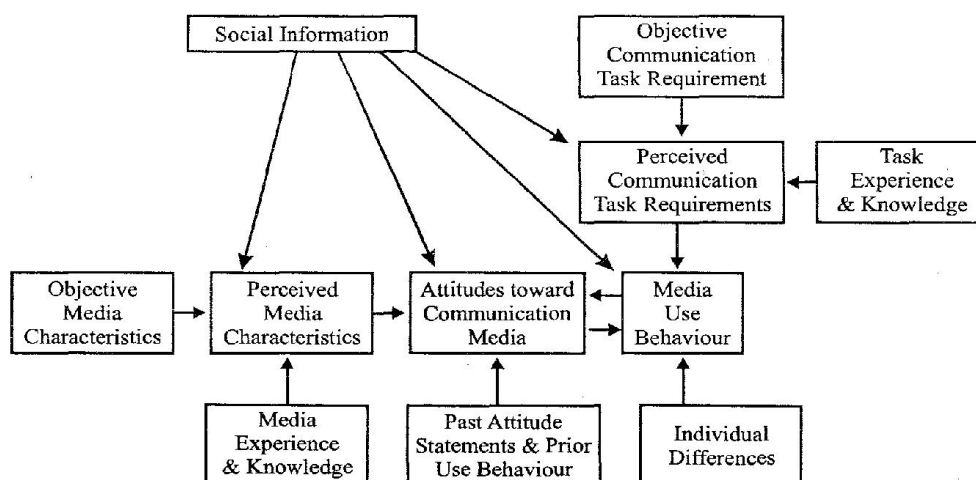
the medium. Communication channels that have all or many of these characteristics (for example, face-to-face communication) are called 'rich' media, whereas channels that have none or few of those characteristics (for example, mailbox flyer) are called 'lean' media (see Table 1). Between these two end points would fall media that include telephone, electronic mail, voice mail, written letters and memos, among others. Recent research has supported the basic ideas of media richness theory in the operation of rganizational teams that relied heavily on communication technology. Maznevski and Chudoba (2000) find that the effectiveness of the team depended on fitting complex tasks to face-to-face meetings or conference ca and relying on e-mails for simpler messages.

**Table 1:** Effective Media Selec.on Predictions.

	<b>Unambiguous Task</b>	<b>Ambiguous Task</b>
<b>Rich Media</b>	<i>Communication failure:</i> Data glut. Rich media used for routine tasks. Excess cues cause confusion and surplus meaning.	<i>Effective communication</i> Communication success because rich media match ambiguous tasks.
<b>Lean Media</b>	<i>Effective communication</i> Communication success because media is low in richness match routine messages.	<i>Communication failure:</i> Data starvation. Lean media used for ambiguous messages. Too few cues to capture message complexity

Source: Lengel, R. H. & Dait, R. L. (1988): 225-232 (See also Miller, 2006).

### The Social Information Processing Model



Source: Fulk, J., Stein field. C. W., Schmitz, J., & Power, J. G. (1987) :529-552. (See also Miller, 2006).

**Fig. 2:** A Social Information Processing Model of Media Use

This model proposed that the adoption of organizational technologies (that is, the use of all organizational communication media) can be fully explained by looking at the social environment of the organization (Fulk, Schmitz and Power, 1987). The social information Process Model theorists argued that communication with co-workers, supervisors, customers and others, has an influence on media usage.

Figure 2 depicts the social information processing model as an approach that sees the use of a communication technology as a complex function of: (1) the objective characteristics of the task and

media, (2) past experience and knowledge (3) individual differences and (4) social information. Because this model shows the objective characteristics of task and media (that is, task ambiguity and media richness) as influencing media use, it can be seen as an extension of the media richness theory. In support of the social information process model, scholars suggest that communication patterns do have an influence on technology adoption (Fulk, 1993; Rice and Aydin, 1991), but Rice (1993) has contrary evidence.

### The Dual-Capacity Model

The dual-capacity model is a second alternative to the media richness theory, in addition to the social processing model. The dual-capacity model of media choice in organization posits that communication media are not simply 'rich' or 'lean', as proposed by the media richness theorists, but that every organization has the ability to carry two kinds of messages (Sitkin, Sutchliffe and Barrios-Chaplin, 1992). The first is the medium's data-carrying capacity, defined by Sitkin et al (1992) as "the degree to which a medium is able to effectively and efficiently convey task-relevant data." Second is the symbol-carrying capacity, which is a medium's ability to convey the core values and assumptions that constitute the organization's culture. The dual capacity model assumes that the choice of communication channel will depend on both the data-carrying capacity and the symbol-carrying capacity of the medium.

**Table 2: Approaches to Communication Technology Processes**

<b>Approach</b>	<b>How Communication Technology Would Be Considered</b>
Classical	Organizational communication technology is seen as a tool that can be used to enhance the efficiency of organizations by supplementing or replacing efforts of human workers. Little concern is paid to other effects of technology.
Human Relations	Organizational communication technology is seen as a tool that can free workers from mundane tasks and allow them to engage in activities that satisfy higher-order needs. Emphasis is placed on technological impact on worker attitudes.
Human Relations Resources	Organizational communication technology is seen as a tool that could enhance organizational effectiveness when used in combination with human workers. Decision-making technologies are particularly relevant to the extent that they maximize the knowledge potential of employees.
Systems	Organizational communication technology is seen as a way to link organizational subsystems and to link the organization with the environment. Special attention is paid to the impact of technologies on communication network and on the unintended effects of technology.
Cultural	Organizational communication technology is seen as a symbolic manifestation of organizational culture and as a medium through which cultural values are developed and communicated.
Critical	Organization communication technology is seen as a means for repressing workers through control of information. Alternatively, technologies could serve as channels for democratization by allowing more open communication.

**Source:** Miller, K. (2006), *Organizational Communication: Approaches and Processes*. (4th ed ) USA: Thomson Learning.

In light of the above, the advent of communication technology has no doubt impacted positively on communication content, communication patterns and the structure of the organization. Table 2 reflects the various schools of thought in the communication technology processes. These are the classical, human relations, human resources, systems, cultural and critical approaches.

### **Steps in Developing Effective Communication**

Kotler and Armstrong (2008) develop six major stages in developing effective communication:

- (1) **Identifying the Target Audience:** The audience may be individuals, groups, special publics or the general public. The target audience will heavily affect the communicator's decisions on what will be said, how it will be said, where it will be said, and who will say it.
- (2) **Determining Communication Objectives:** The message sender must be able to decide what response they seek. There must be a reason behind the message being sent. Is the message with the intention of attracting patronage towards the purchase of a product, or to discourage an intending buyer from buying a particular product? There must be an underlying intention.
- (3) **Designing a Message:** At this stage, the communicator develops a clear message, having in mind the 'basic purpose behind it'. A framework known as AIDA model is used in explaining the desirable qualities of a good message. The AIDA acronym simply states that the message should get A = Attention, hold I = Interest, arouse D = Desire, and Obtain A = Action. When putting a message together, the communicator must decide what to say (the message content) and how to say it (message structure or format). The message sender must ensure that he is able to attract the attention of the receiver before he can effectively communicate. A television advertisement must attract the attention of the desired audience, present the interest of the potential audience, arouse their desire towards the message and get a desired favourable response from the audience. A favourable response to a message is often reflected in form of an increase in the revenue of the product or service being advertised.
- (4) **Choosing the Media:** The communicator will select what channel of communication to use at this stage. There are two broad types of communication channels: Personal and non-personal, verbal and non-verbal (Kotler and Armstrong, 2008).
- (5) **Selecting the Message Source:** The impact of a message on the target audience is often affected by how the audience views the communicator. Messages delivered by highly credible sources are more persuasive. A product or service advertised on Africa Magic (a global satellite network) can be more convincing than a product or service advertised only on a local TV channel. Highly rated corporate organizations are able to attract the patronage of the high and in the society because a credible link has been established in reaching such people. Top companies often use well accepted celebrities in representing their brands, but there must be caution in doing this. It is safer to use an unknown model, than picking a celebrity that can result in embarrassment and tarnish the image of a product or service. Organizations and individuals that use diverse sources of communication stand a better chance of communicating to a wider audience than those who employ a 'single source'. Marketers of a product embark on a rich mix of media and communication approaches (integrated marketing communications), which is dependent on affordability on the part of the marketer. Today, more companies are adopting the concept of integrated marketing communications (IMC), where the company carefully integrates its many communication channels to deliver a clear, consistent and compelling message about the organization and its brands (Schultz and Kitchen, 2000; Schultz and Schultz, 2004).

- (6) **Collecting Feedback:** After sending the message, the communicator must research its effect on the target audience. This involves asking the target audience members whether they remember the message, how many times they saw it, what points they recall, how they felt about the message and their past and present attitudes towards the product and the company. Feedback in communications may suggest changes in the communication campaign approach or in the product or service being advertised. The feedback coming from the message receiver has the power of moving the message sender towards the re-engineering of its symbols or an outright remedial action on the part of the message sender. It is as simple as “tell me how I look or how I have performed, and be rest assured that I will make amends in the expected direction”. This reflects how corrective a feedback message can be. Corporate organizations have reacted to consumer feedbacks in the past, and this has resulted in improved product and service performance.

### **Communication Channels**

Communication channels can be viewed from the perspectives of verbal and non verbal communication (Mullins, 2005). In personal communication channels, two (2) or more people communicate directly with each other. They might communicate face-to-face, on the phone, through mail or e-mail, or even through an internet ‘chat’. Personal communication channels are effective because they allow for personal addressing and feedback. Personal communication can be done through ‘word-of-mouth’ influence, which involves a person communicating about a product, service or issue between or among persons, between a seller and a target audience, between a group of sellers and a buyer, or it could be an outright communication about a product or service between target buyers and neighbours, friends, family members and associates. It can be “buzz marketing” whereby opinion leaders are cultivated for the purpose of getting them to spread information about a product or service to others in their communities.

Non-personal communication channels are media that carry messages without personal contact or feedback. They include major media, atmospheres and events. Major media include print media (newspapers, magazines, and direct mails), broadcast media (radio and television), display media (billboards, signs and posters) and on-line media (e-mail and websites). Atmospheres refer to ‘designed’ environments that create or reinforce communication with a particular audience. A trade-fair arrangement can be an atmosphere to reach the potential audience of a product or service. ‘Events’ are stage occurrences that communicate messages to target audiences. For example, the public relations department of a company may arrange press conferences, grand openings, product launches, public tours, public shows and other events, as part of their pre-planned agenda to communicate with a desired audience.

Verbal and non-verbal signals are co-ordinated into regular sequences often without the awareness of the parties involved. Non-verbal communication signals include: bodily contact; proximity; orientation head nods; facial expressions; gestures; posture; direction of gaze; dress and appearance and other non-verbal aspects of speech (Mullins, 2005). The importance of body language in communication should be emphasized because actions, in a good number of times, are often more cogent than speech, and a significant number of human beings rely heavily on body language to convey their true feelings and meanings. Emotions, for example, can be woven creatively into e-mail or text messages, in such a way that the recipient of such messages will respond in the desired directions as assumed by the sender. Verbal communication could be personal or non-personal, but such communication must be well decoded through the hearing aid of the decoder, which in this case, could be the receiver’s ears or hearing device.



**Communication Skills**

The major communication skills identified in this literature are reading, writing, listening and speaking skills.

**Reading**

Reading is an active process that requires all of the reader's attention if he/she is to profit from the experience. The degree of success in learning is closely associated with the effectiveness of reading skills possessed (Lester and Crow, 1963). Reading happens in order to satisfy two general purposes. These purposes include reading for enjoyment and more serious reading aimed at meeting an immediate or more remote study goal. Most readings probably would fall into these two large categories. Regardless of the kind of reading one is engaged in, reading is undertaken for a specific purpose.

Qualities of a Good Reader

- (1) Satisfactory vision or possession of corrective eye glasses.
- (2) Reading with a purpose.
- (3) Use of different reading speeds for different kinds of reading materials if one is generally a fast reader.
- (4) Avoidance of inner speech or subvocalization.
- (5) Devotion of much time to purposive reading in spite of other interests.
- (6) Concentration while reading and not allowing thoughts to wander or be
- (7) distracted from reading because of elements in the environment,
- (8) Striving to develop a rich and meaningful vocabulary.

However, ineffectual reading may occur if the individual involved has defective sight, blurry vision, poor reading speed, distractions, thought intrusions and unclear language.

**Writing**

This involves putting thoughts in black and white either with the use of writing materials or by electronic means. Swallow (1999) states three reasons for writing: to catch what is bubbling and bursting from one's inside and putting it down on paper, to learn more about oneself and to become a better observer.

However, some writers write because they like to explore and investigate. Each writer is unique in his or her own way. Many use more than one tool. Some writers use pencil and pad. They like the feel of the pencil in their hand and its movement across the paper. Others like ballpoint or fountain pens. There are writers who love the clickety sound of the typewriter and others who are devoted to their computers. But because one thing is important to all writers — seizing the moment — most make it a habit to carry a small notebook, a few index cards, or even a miniature tape recorder to capture observations and ideas right away.

**Listening**

Listening is an art that needs to be learned. To achieve success in developing this art requires intelligent and well-planned practice. Too often, it has been taken for granted that, if one can hear then one can listen. Various factors may adversely affect one's listening skills, and these include listener's attitude toward the subject, listener's hearing ability, distractions on the part of the listener; speaker's quality of speech, that is, the speaker's speech rate and articulation can affect the

ease with which the listener is able to benefit from what is to be heard. The speaker, for example, may speak so quickly that the listener is unable to follow him, thereby missing some important points. If the speaker speaks too slowly, the listener may find that his or her mind is wandering to other matters and attention may be divided. It is important for the speaker to be certain that all expressed thoughts are heard so that listeners are not at a disadvantage.

### Speaking

Winterowd and Murray (1983) find that, on an average day, 70 per cent of one's waking time is spent communicating through reading, writing, speaking or listening. The effectiveness of communication depends on speaking and listening habits. One way to learn good speaking and listening habits is to practice speaking in front of a group of people. The abilities to organize one's thoughts and speak them out effectively are important benefits of public speaking. Speech comes to life for the following three purposes: to inform, to persuade and to entertain. An effective speaker will ask the following questions, among others: Do you project your ideas loudly enough? Do you articulate clearly?

Is your voice energetic? Do you use too many unclear words? Do you speak too quickly? Will your listeners follow whatever movements you make when speaking — for example, pacing back and forth with many gestures? Does your facial expression reflect what you are saying? Do you develop eye contact with your listeners?

### Communication Networks

Miner and Miner (1995) describe the various forms a network can take (see Figure 3). There is the wheel network, having a central person through which messages can be sent to other persons. Let us assume the central person to be Mr. 'A'. The chain network is such that this central person has two separate intermediaries through which messages can be transmitted to the others. The 'Y' network puts person C in a central position with respect to A, B and D, but messages to E must go through Mr. 'D'. The 'circle network' requires communication with persons on either side, while the 'All channel' network allows for messages to be transmitted by each person from and to all the others.

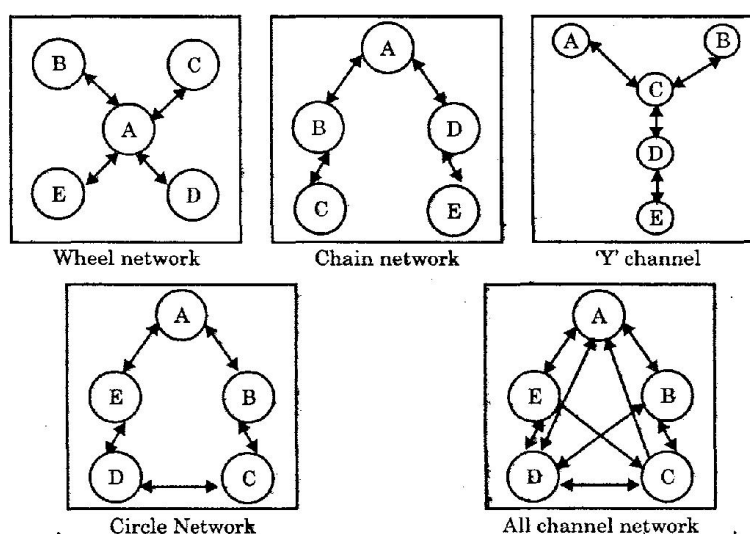


Fig. 3: Communication Network Types

Source: Miner and Miner (1995)

In most formal organizations, the communication system is based on a chain of command from the top of the organization down (verbal communication). Figure 4 shows the kind of communication network pattern common in a formal business organization.

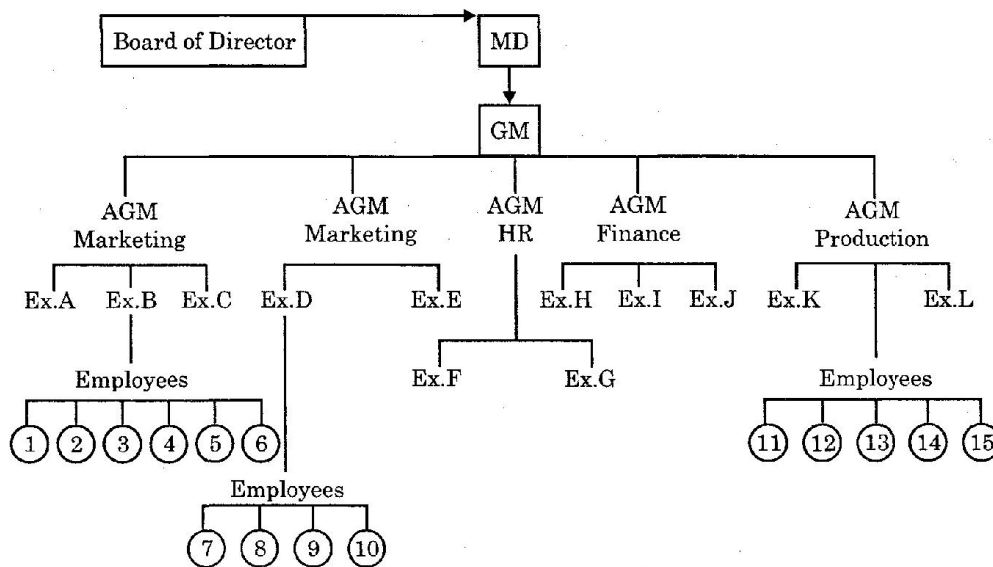


Fig 4: Formal Organization Communication System

Source: Developed by authors. NB: 'Ex' means Executive

Within the formal system, messages are transmitted through the channels specified, and there are gatekeepers at each level of the organization for the persons at the next lower level. These gatekeepers are often called 'linking PINS'. For example Executive 'D' is the linking pin to employees 7 through 10.

The formal communication system is used for official messages, including directives, procedures, policies, explanatory memoranda, job instructions, and so forth. It is predominantly a downward system, although there are provisions for upward communications (feedbacks) through the formal system in the form of production and sales reports, performance appraisals and the likes. In the case of upward communication, the person at the lower level is the gatekeeper for messages being transmitted upward. For example, the gatekeeper for upward communication of employees 1-6 is Executive 'B', while Executive 'D' remains the gatekeeper for upward communication of employees 7-10.

For purposes of efficiency, there are frequent instances where horizontal communication is desirable. For example, employee 5 may require a bit of information from employee 13 in order to be functional. Assistant General Manager (Marketing) may interact with the Assistant General Manager (Production), to enhance efficiency. This process is often referred to as "Fayol Bridge", after management theorist Henri Fayol, who first discussed this principle of management. Horizontal communication can be encouraged as long as it is authorized by immediate superiors.

### Communication Methods

Communication can be in written or oral form or both, which can be directed up or down the organizational hierarchy. It can be a downward communication with members of the managerial level, downward communication to all employees, or 'upward', which usually are feedbacks in forms of oral and written messages within the organizational hierarchy. While most organizations adopt the downward communication policy (that is, from the top of the hierarchy to the lower levels), upward communication is essential as well. The two most important aspects of upward communications are that: (i) It provides management with some feedback indicating whether messages communicated downwards have been received, and it transmits upward the information needed for higher level decisions. It is also important because it gives lower-level managers and employees an opportunity to ask questions, make complaints, express satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the way things are being managed, and make suggestions for improvements in methods or changes in policies. Table 3 shows the communication methods applicable to most business organizations.

**Table 3: Methods of Communication**

Direction	Oral	Written
(1) Downward: Among managerial levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Direction over the telephone</li> <li>* One-to-one conferences or Interviews</li> <li>* Staff meetings</li> <li>* Committee meetings</li> <li>* Lunch or dinner meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Policy &amp; procedure manual</li> <li>* Job descriptions</li> <li>* organization charts</li> <li>* Memoranda</li> <li>* Reports of committee meetings and decisions reached</li> <li>* Management newsletters.</li> </ul>
(2) Downward: To all employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Job instructions from supervisor or trainer</li> <li>* Appraisal and training meetings</li> <li>* Departmental or work unit Meetings</li> <li>* Mass meetings and annual meetings of all employees.</li> <li>* Closed-circuit TV addresses</li> <li>* Public Address System</li> <li>* Videotapes or cassette</li> <li>* Open House and Plant tours.</li> <li>* Recorded messages.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Assignment sheets or lists of job duties</li> <li>* Bulletin board noticed</li> <li>* Posters</li> <li>* Memos or announcements</li> <li>* Employee publications</li> <li>* Pay insert</li> <li>* Letters to employees' homes.</li> <li>* Handbooks, pamphlets or brochures or company policies, benefits &amp; others.</li> <li>* Annual reports</li> <li>* News stories and/or advertisements in the local press or TV.</li> </ul>
(3) Upward:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Informal discussion with employees, first level supervisors, union representatives.</li> <li>* Employees or staff meetings</li> <li>* Counseling sessions</li> <li>* Exit interviews</li> <li>* Telephones hot lines for employee questions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Formal attitude surveys</li> <li>* Written grievances or complaints filed</li> <li>* Company performance reports on production, sales, finance, personnel etc.</li> <li>* Suggestion systems</li> <li>* Question-and-Answer column in employee publications.</li> <li>* Gripe boxes</li> </ul>

**Source:** Miner, M. G. and Miner, J. B (1995:102).

The choice of any of the communication methods will depend on many reasons, such as:



- (1) Speed and urgency: The time frame within which a message is required to get to its destination is very important, because this determines the choice of method(s) to use.
- (2) Accuracy and precision: Verbal and written methods are prone to inaccuracy. In some cases it is necessary to back up oral communication with written communication in order to avoid misrepresentation or misunderstanding of ideas.
- (9) Safety and confidence: When any information is considered confidential, it must not only be tagged 'restricted', but a special courier or messenger should be used to convey it to the right destination.
- (3) Impression: Product advertisement demands the use of posters, television commercials and radio jingles. The choice of words, typing or printing (bold lettering) and persuasive brief messages are very effective in posters.
- (4) Circumstances around the package: The sender should bear in mind the nature, type and social phenomena of messages when choosing methods of transfer. Information relating to notice and minutes of annual general meetings, auditor's reports and others must take written form.
- (5) Referencing: Since reserved copies of documents serve as authentic source of data at a later date and can be tendered as evidence, written form of communication is preferable. Even though oral speech can be memorized, it is hardly used as evidence (for example, court and official cases) due to lack of authenticity in form of signature and evidence of authorisation.
- (6) Cost consideration: A method of communication can be preferred to another due to cost consideration in terms of time wastage and monetary value. For example, television messages are more expensive than radio message.
- (7) Size and location of the target audience: Even though a public address system (PAS) is good for a large group, this may be noisy and ineffective for a relatively small team like committee members. As the group size increases, communication becomes more complex and difficult; as such, the methods get increasingly formal.

### **Barriers to Effective Communication**

A barrier is an obstacle, a hindrance or anything that causes delay or impedes the process of successful interaction with a person or a group of people. The delay in getting information across can create a lot of problem for the organization, staff and its clients. This may apply to both oral and written forms of communication. Barriers to communication include the following:

- (1) Structural Barrier: Structural constraints relate to the general set-up of the organization including the building, physical facilities and geographical locations of the composite sections of the organization. If the distance between the office buildings is far or not well coordinated, relaying of official information can be distorted or lost due to delays or misplacements.
- (2) Human Barrier: People in the work environment may be faced with the problem of clarity, where some intermediaries manipulate the original message being sent (information filtering); where some persons may not be able to cope with considerable information (forgetfulness); where emotions and personal feelings interfere (psychological dispositions); as well as adding or subtracting from the substance of the message in such a way as to arouse negative attitudes (rumour), among several others.
- (3) Language Barrier: Words mean different things to different people. "The meanings of words are not in the words, they are in us." Age, education and cultural background are the three

major obvious variables that influence the language a person uses and the definitions he or she gives to words.

- (4) Technological Constraint: This comes into communication with the introduction of new gadgets. Such as computers, fax machines, e-mails and other modern facilities which require training and re-training the staff so that the information process may not be distorted.

Barriers to communication can be removed or minimized if the principles of good communication stated earlier are adhered to. If a common language exists between the sender and receiver of the message, there is likelihood that communication will take place. Principles of Effective Communication

The basic principles of effective communication are as follows:

- (i) Use of suitable language: In making communication, the language used must be related to the knowledge and the intellectual ability of the recipients.
- (ii) The message must be thoroughly thought about.
- (iii) The audience should be analyzed so as to ascertain what message is appropriate to them.
- (iv) Proper words, codes and symbols must be chosen to express our thoughts and to match the experience of the receiver.
- (v) Adequate briefing of the recipients: The communicator must appreciate that facts which are known to him may not be available to the other party.
- (vi) Repeating communication is essential especially if the communicator is not sure of the receiver's ability to understand the message.

In order to achieve these principles, business communication must possess the following essential qualities generally referred to as '7Cs':

- (i) Clarity: Communication should not be ambiguous. It should express just what it has to. Vague and confusing expressions should be avoided. The value of communication is reduced if there exists complicated phrasing and lack of objectivity, among others.
- (ii) Courteousness: The receiver or audience should be accorded some respect and their feelings taken into consideration. The sender should not be rude or use provocative words with the receiver.
- (iii) Conciseness: This is the ability to go straight to the point. There is usually no room for personalized details. All aspects of business communication should be taken as formal and official.
- (iv) Completeness: It is necessary to mention all relevant details in a process of communication. No essential part should be left out in order to receive a full response from the receiver.
- (v) Correctness: There should not be a deliberate programme of error in any transaction. This then rules out falsehood and deliberate distortion. The facts and figures presented must be correct in form and language. Also, grammar, punctuation and spelling must be checked when communicating in order to avoid mis-representation of ideas or words.
- (vi) Candidness: Communication should sound credible to ensure that the receiver believes in the content and takes it seriously.
- (vii) Concreteness: This involves being specific and definite when passing across information to the receiver.

### Approaches to Communication

Communication is a means through which people conduct their lives. It is the vehicle by which people initiate, maintain and terminate their relationships with others. Again, through communication, local regional, national and international conflicts are managed and resolved (Schlesinger, 2006). Communication can be viewed from the following perspectives:

- (1) **Process:** It is anything that is ongoing, ever-changing and continuous. A process does not have a specific beginning or ending point (Berlo, 1960).
- (2) **Dynamic:** Communication is a transaction among symbol users in which meanings are dynamic, changing as a function of earlier usages and of changes in perceptions and meta-perceptions. Common to both meanings is that communication is time-bound and irreversible (Bowers and Bradac, 1982; Hawkins, Mothersbaugh and Best, 2007).
- (3) **Interactive-transactive:** Goss (1983), cited in Scillesinger (2006), stresses that communication occurs when two or more people interact through the exchange of messages. Through this, formal and informal communication can be established (McEwan, 1992), and mutual understanding and increased level of trust can be developed by the participants (Cornelissen, 2007; Sengupta, 2006; Guffey, 2000 Rogers and Kincaid, 1981). The interactive approach is similar to the systems theory because there are 'criss -crossing' flows of information between reciprocating units, which allows individuals and groups to modify the actions of the others in the 'net', thereby permitting the establishment of a pattern of communication.
- (4) **Symbolic/Cultural:** Communication includes all the symbols of the mind, together with the means of conveying them through space and preserving them in time (Thill and Bovee, 2004; Madden, Hewett and Roth, 2000). Symbols like numbers, colours and other items are means of communication in different parts of the world. 7 is an unlucky number in Ghana, Kenya and Singapore, while it is a lucky number in Morocco, India, Czechoslovakia, Nigeria and the United States. To the Christian race, 7 is a symbol of perfection. Red is a negative colour in Nigeria, Chad and Germany but Positive in Denmark, Romania and Argentina. Brides wear red in China, but it is a masculine colour in the United Kingdom and France. Owl stands for wisdom in the United States and bad luck in India. The triangle shape is negative in Hong Kong, Korea, Taiwan but positive in Colombia. The foregoing tells us that varying meanings are assigned to symbols and things across cultures.
- (5) **Contextual:** Fisher (1994) opines that communication always and inevitably occurs within some context. The effects and outcomes, styles and outcomes, styles
  1. and fashions, and the resulting meaning are all dependent on the context in which the communication occurs. The contextual or 'relational' approach to communication views participants in the process as people engaged in communication based upon their perception of the environment in which the communication occurs and the way in which each participant relates with the other.
- (6) **Intentional:** This exists whenever two or more people consciously engage in interaction with some purpose (Motley, 1990).
- (7) **Network Approach:** Weick (1987) suggests that the regular use of patterned flows leads to the development of communication networks, which have been categorized as prescribed and emergent. Prescribed networks are formalized patterns of communication very often established by senior management within an organization or by organizational representatives when inter-organizational communications are considered. It then follows

that emergent networks are informal, and emerge as a response to the social and task-oriented needs of participants (Fill, 2006).

By and large, some of these recent approaches to communication have contributed to the knowledge of communication itself, but efforts can still be made to explore these approaches more comprehensively, with adequate reference to the ongoing craze of e-communications among individuals and corporate organizations.

#### Influences on the Communication Process

There are two particular influences on the communication process that need to be considered: the media and the people (Fill, 2006).

**The Media:** Technological advances now allow participants to conduct marketing communication-based 'conversations' at electronic speed. New technology and the internet in particular provide an opportunity for real dialogue with customers and clients of the organization. Figure 5 indicates the influence of the media on communication.

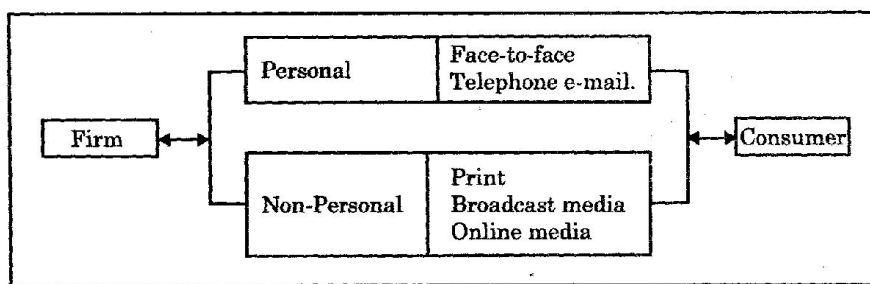


Fig. 5: Media Influence on the Communication Process

Source: Developed by authors, based on the works of Hoffman and Novak (1996).

The model above reveals the two-way communication between the company (firm), which is the sender (encoder) and the customer, who is the receiver (decoder). Outright communication from the company will pass through either a personal or non-personal media source, with feedback generated from the customer via the same media source.

**The People:** This perspective suggests that opinion leaders (OL) and members of the target audience all influence each other. Indeed, successful communication is characterized by interaction and 'word-of-mouth' (WOM) communications which can assist and enrich communication process. Personal influence upon the communication process is important if communication is to be successful. An unsuccessful text-message communication through a mobile phone can further be strengthened by voice discussion on the phone, in order to achieve the intended purpose of the communication.

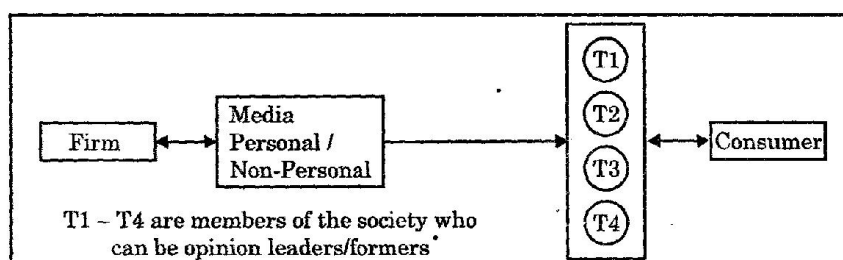




Fig. 6: People-influenced Communication Process.

Source: Developed by authors, based on the works of Fill (2006).

The model in Figure 6 shows that the message being communicated by the company may be distorted or facilitated by members of the society who are called 'opinion leaders,' or 'opinion formers', to whom other members of the audience (that is, consumers) refer for information and guidance. Through inter-personal networks, opinion leaders/formers would not only reach members of the target audience who may not have been exposed to the message, but may reinforce the impact of the message on those members who receive it.

The implication of the model is that the mass media do not have a direct and all-powerful effect over the audience. If the primary function of the mass media is to provide information, then personal influences are most likely to be persuasive and exert direct influence on members of the target audience. On the other end, the so-called opinion leaders/formers may not present the feedback of the target audience correctly to the company, in which case the feedback becomes distorted or influenced, which will not be in the interests of the company and the target audience. Opinion leaders/formers are usually identified by their predisposition to receiving information and then re processing it to influence others (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955). These opinion leaders/formers tend to be of the same 'social class' as the target audience, but may enjoy a higher social status within the group. Williams (1990) cites the work of Reynolds and Darden (1971) in suggesting that opinion leaders/formers are gregarious and more self-confident than the ordinary audience. In addition, they have greater exposure to relevant mass media (and electronic) and appear less dogmatic than the ordinary audience (Chan and Misra, 1990).

### Future Trends

Drastic changes have taken place at the present-day workplace in the area of communication. To create a simple document, there is a shift from hand-writing to typing, to word processing. To produce multiple copies of a document, there is a move from copying the document by hand, to carbon paper, to high-speed copying machines. To store documents, there is a shift from boxes to file cabinets, to floppy discs, to hard drives, servers, CDs and memory sticks. To send those documents over long distances, a shift has been made from stage-coaches, to air mail, to express mail, to facsimile to PDG files. Long distance messages can now pass through telephone voice mail and electronic mail as opposed to telegraphic transfer. Meetings do not necessarily have to happen in boardrooms/conference halls; there could be video conferencing, computer conferencing and online chat rooms. To make decisions, there is a move from meetings run by parliamentary procedure to the use of computerized group decision supports. To prepare presentations, there is a move from charts, to overheads, to Power Point. These foregoing workplace movements have taken place because of technological innovations (Mullins, 2007; Miller, 2006; Lehman and DuFrene, 2005; Stallings, 2005; Fernandez, 2004; Forouzan, 2003 and Ober, 2003).

The facets of the new technologies include electronic mail, the World Wide Web (www) and group decision support systems. Electronic mail has clearly changed both personal and organizational life in the last decade. Indeed, it is likely that most people reading this chapter would have "checked their e-mail" at least once already today. In developed nations of the world, like the United States of America (USA), the United Kingdom (UK) and Canada the last fifteen (15) years have been highly dependent on electronic communication. Jones (2002) reports that there were approximately 400

million e-mail messages sent in 1995 and almost 16 billion sent daily in 2001, an increase of 4000 percent. By 2005, this total had again doubled. Examples of organizational communication technology and their descriptions are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: Examples of organizational Communication Technology**

Technology	Description
Electronic mail	User creates a written document on a computer and sends the document via computer to other user(s). Messages may be answered, filed, and/or discarded.
Instant messaging (IM)	Allows immediate communication with others online via the keyboard.
Voice mail	Messages are left and retrieved via voice synthesis technology on telephone. Messages can be edited, stored and forwarded.
Facsimile (fax)	Document images are transmitted to another location by telephone and communication technology.
Audio and video	Allows participation in group meeting by participants at conference many locations. The conference can involve voice, image, and graphic material.
Computer conferencing	Allows synchronous or asynchronous participation in a conference on a specified topic. Typically includes the ability to poll participants and to maintain a transcript of proceedings.
Management Information System	Computer system that stores and integrates information from throughout the organization for retrieval and use in decision making.
Group decision support System (GDSS)	Computer and communication technologies configured to maintain data sources, enhance information capacity, and provide decision making structures for individuals and groups.
Internet or world wide web (www)	The internet is a complex system of telecommunications linkages among major computer facilities worldwide. The World Wide Web is a sophisticated application on the Internet that allows widespread access to graphics and information, gateways to other web sites, and interactivity for chat and customer service.
Networked computing	Computer processing is distributed among many machines dispersed in a network. This diminishes the reliance on large Mainframe computers.
Wireless networks	Cellular telephones are the most familiar form of wireless communication. Computers and hand-held computing devices (e.g., personal digital assistants) can also be connected in wireless networks for a variety of business applications.

**Source:** Miller, K. (2006). *Organizational Communication: Approaches and Processes*. (4th ed). USA: Thomson Learning.

New communication technologies offer organizational participants a wide array of interaction and decision-making options that can differ substantially from traditional ways of working.

#### **E-Communication Craze in Nigeria**

Until 1998, Nigeria had only a few dial-up e-mail providers and a few Internet service providers (ISPs) operating on slow links in the country. Present ISPs provide online advertising opportunities, Internet banking security and VSAT' (very-small-aperture terminal) services. The Economic Intelligence Unit estimates that the number of Internet users per 100 person grew from 1.25 in 2004 to 1.82 in 2005 (Country Commerce, 2009). Many bus operations are professionally organized in Nigeria, with offices adopting different forms of electronic device to carry out their core activities.

Students of tertiary institutions interact with the authorities through the Internet. Board meetings can be held online with ease as long as there is no power failure. In recent times, a lot can be done via the Internet, like studies from secondary school up to Ph.D degrees, sending money to friends/relatives, or booking a flight/hotel and praying for each other through chatting or other means of e-communication. E communication also goes far into health care; now with Tele-medicine many patients are getting healed via distance medical care. All these show how much easier, important and helpful the Internet can be.

Shema-Rutagengwa (2005) suggests that e-communication is as dangerous as the ease with which it makes operations convenient in the organization. The negative side effects of International Communications Technology (ICT) and e-communication specifically are numerous, but prominent among these side-effects is 'theft of personal information'. Many people are afraid of using credit cards for purchasing items on the Internet. This is because they risk losing all their money from their accounts in banks, all due to the high technology of thieves who access credit cards and information on individual bank accounts. This does happen despite the fact that use of e-commerce and related systems seem to be the easiest way for modern society. Scam messages have penetrated the Internet in Nigeria and scammers often lure wealthy investors, investment groups, or other business entities into frauds resulting in multimillion dollar losses.

The spam e-mails perpetrating these scams are often sent from Internet cafes equipped with satellite Internet. Recipient addresses and email content are copied and pasted into a webmail interface using a standalone storage medium, such as a memory card. Many areas of Lagos such as Festac, Yaba and Lagos Island, among others, contain many shady cybercafés that serve fraudsters (Shema-Rutagengwa, 2005). Many cybercafés seal their doors during after hours, such as from 10:30 PM to 7:00 AM, so that scammers inside may work without fear of discovery. Nigeria also contains many businesses that provide the false documents used in scams. After a scam involving a forged signature of Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo in summer 2005, Nigerian authorities raided a market in the Oluwole section of Lagos Island. The police seized thousands of Nigerian and non-Nigerian passports, 10,000 blank British Airways boarding passes, 10,000 United States money orders, customs documents, false university certificates, 500 printing plates, and 500 computers and others.

There is progress in the Internet sector, as illustrated by cybercafés springing up even in some of the more remote parts of the country. Lagos alone has more than 1,000 cybercafés. Businesses' appreciation of the value of online communication is growing rapidly. But with low household disposable income and a restrictive infrastructure, it will still be a while before Internet penetration in homes reaches a significant level (Country Commerce, 2009).

## **Conclusion**

The attitude of any top management in an organization is often reflected in the communications policy in place. The basic requirement for effective communications may be summarized as follows:

(1) Top management must recognize the need for and benefits of good communications throughout the organization, and take the steps necessary to provide a climate conducive to effective communication.

(2) Managers at all levels need to be aware of their roles in the communications system and, if necessary, be given training to help them in this role.

(3) Professionals in the field of organizational communications should be called upon to assist management in planning the communications system, in implementing it, and in measuring its effectiveness.

Within organizations, communication, or the transmission of messages, occurs through formal structures or through informal processes, both of which involve communication networks.

### Review Questions

#### Section A

- (1) "Communication is a two-way process" Discuss. Comprehensively explain the skills needed for effective communication.
- (2) List and explain the principal steps involved in developing an effective communication system. What is the essence of communication?
- (3) List and explain the various perspectives from which communication can be viewed. List and explain at least three likely barriers to effective communication.
- (4) With the aid of diagrams, explain the influences on the communication process and the various communication network patterns in a formal organization.
- (5) Explain the communication methods known to you. What factors are likely to affect your choice of communication?
- (6) Itemise and explain the kinds of messages that are likely to flow up the organizational hierarchy. Why are they necessary?
- (7) Define communication technology. What are the schools of thought on communication media usage? Give examples of organizational communication technology.

#### Section B

Fill in the gaps created in the following statements.

- (1) \_\_\_\_\_ is a two-way process of transferring information.
- (2) Encoder is to the sender, while \_\_\_\_\_ is to the receiver.
- (3) Body language is a type of \_\_\_\_\_
- (4) \_\_\_\_\_ is a distortion in the communication process.
- (5) Miller (2006) identified \_\_\_\_\_ major types of communication models.
- (6) The classical, human relations, and systems are \_\_\_\_\_ in the communication technology process.
- (7) \_\_\_\_\_ is the last step in developing effective communication.
- (8) \_\_\_\_\_ involves putting in black and white either with the use of writing materials or by electronic means.
- (9) Communication can be \_\_\_\_\_ or in oral form, or both.
- (10) \_\_\_\_\_ is often used to reflect internet website addresses.

Select the appropriate option from (a) to (e).



- (11) \_\_\_\_\_ is the process of putting thoughts into symbolic form.  
(a) Symbiotic (b) Encoding (c) Decoding (d) Transcribing (e) Thinking.
- (12) All except one of the following is involved in the communication process.  
(a) sender (b) receiver (c) message (d) model (e) response.
- (13) The \_\_\_\_\_ approach to communication technology process views organizational communication technology as a way to link sub-systems together.  
(a) systems (b) cultural (c) critical (d) classical (e) human relations.
- (14) A \_\_\_\_\_ is a set of inter-related steps involved in achieving a goal.  
(a) communication (b) process (c) plans (d) order (e) hierarchy.
- (15) Change is often linked with \_\_\_\_\_. (a) freezing (b) dynamism (c) symbolic interaction (d) reading (e) context.
- (16) Which of the followings is a communication skill? (a) sleeping (b) dancing (c) reading (d) seeing (e) working.
- (17) \_\_\_\_\_ is not a non-personal communication medium. (a) Newspaper (b) Television (c) Posters (d) Magazine (e) One-on-one.
- (18) Employees' protests directed at the top management is a kind of \_\_\_\_\_ communication. (a) upward (b) aggressive (c) downward (d) sideways (e) employment.
- (19) All but one is an effective business communication quality. (a) clarity (b) courteousness (c) language (d) correctness (e) completeness.
- (20) Shady cybercafés provide services to \_\_\_\_\_. (a) faithful businessmen (b) scammers (c) officials (d) shaders (e) painters

Answers to 'fill-in-the-gap' and objective review questions

- |      |                         |      |   |
|------|-------------------------|------|---|
| (1)  | (1) Communication       | (11) | b |
| (2)  | (2) Decoder             | (12) | d |
| (3)  | (3) Communication       | (13) | a |
| (4)  | (4) Noise               | (14) | b |
| (5)  | (5) Three (3)           | (15) | b |
| (6)  | (6) Approaches          | (16) | c |
| (7)  | (7) Collecting feedback | (17) | e |
| (8)  | (8) Writing             | (18) | a |
| (9)  | (9) Written             | (19) | c |
| (10) | (10) www                | (20) | b |

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