Effective Communication

INTRODUCTION

What This Chapter Is About

The importance of effective communication in modern organizations should not be underestimated. As Balmer and Gray (2000) and Garnett and Kouzmin (2000) have observed, organizational communications are becoming more strategic than ever. Goodman (2001) points out that in the information age, communication is an integral element of success. According to Munilla and Dosier (1991), organizations must enable employees to communicate (share information) openly in order for operations to run smoothly. Goodman (2001) cited survey findings that average annual spending on communications by large corporations was $21.6 million in 2000. Much of this, he says, was spent on sharing expertise, building trust, and building a corporate culture.

When the word *communication* is mentioned in organizations these days, people invariably begin talking about the Internet, their corporate intranet and portal, their company's electronic newsletter, information systems, and the extraordinary number of e-mail messages they must answer. These phenomena have resulted from technological innovations in information systems and modes of communication.

While much could be said here about information systems and communications infrastructure, the truth remains that the effectiveness of communications mostly depends on people themselves, whether senders or receivers. How often has someone said, "What we have here is a failure to communicate." Too often, communication problems are due to a failure to communicate at all. Such problems are usually caused by dysfunctional interpersonal phenomena such as those discussed in the last chapter. Many times, however, problems stem from a failure to communicate *effectively*. This chapter discusses what personnel can do in order to communicate more effectively.

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The basics section describes communication in terms of a basic definition; possible objectives; and the types, modes, and process involved. It then discusses (a) senders' and receivers' personal inputs to the process; (b) nonpersonal socio-technical influences on the process; (c) symptoms of faulty communication; and (d) senders' and receivers' responsibilities for effective (and ineffective) communication.

Going beyond the basics, the chapter describes (a) communication styles; (b) the phases and steps of an analytic approach to communication; and (c) advance and ongoing activities for continually improving communication skills and effectiveness.

A summary reviews how both senders and receivers can improve their part in a communication process.

What Consultants, Trainers, and Facilitators
Can Get Out of This Chapter

After studying this chapter, consultants, trainers, and facilitators should be able to help participants

- Analyze ways of communicating with other people within an organization's unique culture

- Identify, plan, and implement ways to enhance communication in an organization

- Establish policies and procedures that will further develop the communication skills of an organization's managers and employees on a continuing basis

What Practicing Managers, Participants,
or Students Can Get Out of This Chapter

After studying and discussing this chapter, the student or seminar participant should be able to

- More effectively communicate (send) ideas and feelings to others and thereby be more informative and persuasive

- Better structure communication processes, minimizing or compensating for obstacles by dealing with factors that influence effectiveness and using the most effective modes

- More effectively communicate information to others—information that affects flows of materials, services, and even information itself up, down, and across his or her organization

- Listen (receive) more effectively during communication processes

- Improve or further develop his or her own communicative (sender and receiver) skills

- More effectively improve or further develop the communication-related knowledge, skills, and behavior of his or her subordinates

- More effectively participate in dealing with personal and nonpersonal socio-technical factors that are exerting dysfunctional influences on communications throughout his or her organization

- Use an approach that prepares all personnel to participate effectively in developing themselves, their subordinates, and their organization as a whole

- Apply practices and behaviors that will reinforce developmental efforts throughout his or her organization

How Instructors (and Participants) Can Use the CD-ROM's Supplementary Materials

The accompanying CD-ROM contains these materials for Chapter Fifteen:

• *Chapter Fifteen Study Guide*. As described before, the Class/Seminar Session Preparation Guide prepares students and seminar participants not only for training sessions but also for the End-of-Module 4 superior-subordinates discussion, OD application, and team-building sessions.

• *Table 15.2. Symptoms of Faulty Communications, and Sender and Receiver Responsibilities for Preventing Them*. This table can be used to diagnose faulty communications within and between units during the superior-subordinates sessions following the training portion of this module.

• *Nonverbal Communication*. This document lists common nonverbal facial and other physical cues, some of which, if not perceived consciously, may be perceived subconsciously. Such cues often indicate another person's real, underlying, or hidden attitudes, feelings, thoughts, or intentions.

• *Guidelines for Writing Effective Reports, Memos, and Directives*

• *Quotations on Communication*. These make and drive home points regarding communication processes.

THE BASICS

Definition, Objectives, and Modes of Communication

Communication is the process of conveying a thought (a fact, bit of information, idea, instruction, decision, or piece of advice) or a feeling from the mind of one person to the mind of another.

The basic objectives of a particular communication process can be one or more of the following: (a) to *help*—that is, to inform, teach, advise, guide, or assist; (b) to *influence or persuade*—that is, to get someone to understand, accept, and agree with one's point of view or get someone to do something that one is requesting or recommending; (c) to *entertain*; or (d) to *impress*.

Communicating effectively means "getting one's message through" (that is, getting the message into the receiver's mind accurately, understandably, and persuasively)—not simply "getting it across" (that is, not just bridging the physical gap between the sender and the receiver's eyes or ears). Thus, the real test of a communication process is *whether the receiver learns, feels, thinks, or behaves as the sender intended*.

People use various modes of communication. Because they are so well known, we will not bother to define them here. The basic modes of communication are summarized in Table 15.1.

Basic Sender and Receiver Inputs to the Communication Process

Just as individual characteristics influence individual, organizational, and managerial behavior, they also influence communicative behavior. Table 10.1 describes the following: (a) motivational inputs (needs/drives, values, personal goals and expectations); (b) basic mental abilities; (c) knowledge factors; and (d) personality traits. Attitudes are reflected in opinions, beliefs,

Table 15.1. Communication Modes

	VERBAL			VISUAL AIDS	NONVERBAL			
	Oral	Written			Visual		Auditory	Tactile
		Text	H-O		Face and Body	Pictures		
One-Way (One-Sided)								
Speaking publicly, lecturing	ORAL		h-o	VA	face/body	pictures	sounds	
Issuing decision or order (written)		TEXT	h-o	va		pictures		
Issuing decision or order (in person)	ORAL		h-o	va	face/body	pictures	sounds	touch
Memo, report, letter, brief		TEXT		va		pictures		
Book, manual		TEXT		VA		PICTURES		
Newspaper, magazine		TEXT		VA		PICTURES		
Sign, poster, banner		TEXT		va		PICTURES		
Television, cable or satellite TV	ORAL	text		va	face/body	PICTURES	SOUNDS	
Radio, audio recording	ORAL						SOUNDS	
Two-Way (Two-Sided)								
One-to-One Conversation								
Face-to-face	ORAL				face/body	pictures	sounds	touch
Telephone, two-way radio	ORAL						sounds	
E-mail, instant messaging		TEXT		va		pictures		
Group conversation (informal)	ORAL				face/body	pictures	sounds	touch
Class or seminar (interactive)	ORAL	text	h-o	VA	face/body	pictures	sounds	touch
Business meeting								
Face-to-face	ORAL		h-o	va	face/body	pictures	sounds	touch
Conference phone call	ORAL		h-o*	va*			sounds	
Teleconference (TV Phone)	ORAL		h-o*	VA*	face/body	pictures	sounds	
Internet conference	ORAL	text	h-o	VA	face/body	pictures	sounds	

Notes: Capital letters indicate major or primary modes. Lowercase letters indicate other possible modes.
*H-O = handouts (briefs, exhibits).
*VA = visual aids (models, diagrams, exhibits).
*Provided for use ahead of time

biases, and prejudices. Communication skills include knowledge, experience, verbal and nonverbal skills, thinking skills, persuasive skills, listening skills, and other related abilities. All of these traits, attitudes, and skills may influence communicative behavior.

In general, these characteristics influence the *sender's* communication steps (see Figure 15.1) in the following ways: Motivational inputs are largely responsible for initiating thought in response to some internal or external stimulus. In fact, basic needs or drives (such as hunger, thirst, sexual desire, or need for social contact) often provide an internal stimulus. All types of individual characteristics may be involved in step 1 (thinking of what one wants to convey) and in step 2 (encoding it and formulating how to convey it by saying, showing, or otherwise
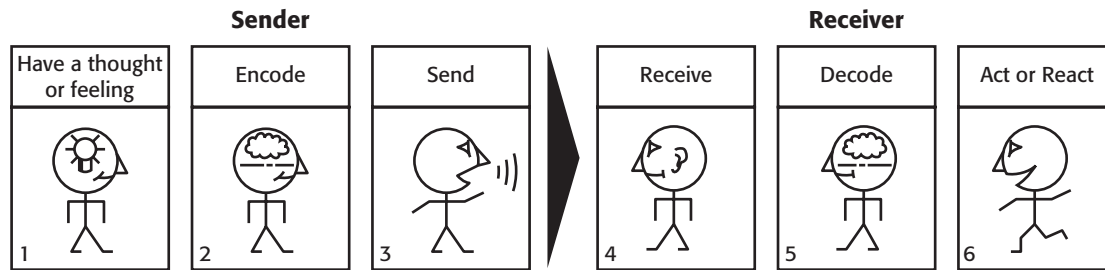
Figure 15.1. Main Sender and Receiver Steps in a One-Way Communication Process

expressing it). In step 3 (actually conveying or sending the thought or feeling), personality traits and communication skills play major roles, but other characteristics may also play important roles.

The *receiver's* characteristics influence step 4 (receiving message), step 5 (decoding or interpreting message), and step 6 (responding in some manner) in the same ways. Motivational traits have the most influence on whether and to what degree the receiver focuses attention on the sender's message and thus influence whether the receiver actually receives the message.

Nonpersonal Socio-Technical Influences on the Communication Process

Personal characteristics are not the only factors operating in most situations. Especially in organizations, task, social, organizational, and environmental factors may also influence the communication process.

Task *inputs* include factors such as job objectives, technical or functional tasks, workload, work flow, communication facilities, or job interfaces, among many others.

Social inputs include variables such as group norms and the status and roles of the sender and receiver. Group norms often influence who talks to whom, about what, and how.

Organizational inputs include factors such as lines of authority, spans of control, channels of communication, organizational traditions, formal and informal policies, superior-subordinate relationships, and the pervasive managerial style. For example, highly formalized lines of authority and channels of communication can be obstacles to communication between personnel in different units who need to directly exchange information and ideas because their jobs are highly interdependent.

Environmental inputs such as noise, poor lighting, and disrupting or distracting stimuli can render a speaker's presentation ineffective. In addition, both senders and receivers may be bombarded by messages from inside and outside an organization, all of which can compete for and interfere with receivers' attention.

Basic Symptoms of Faulty Communication

How can you recognize when communications are faulty or less than fully effective? Some symptoms indicate that the receiver is giving little or no *attention* to the message. Some indicate that the receiver is *receiving* the message either poorly or not at all. Some indicate that the receiver is *interpreting* the message improperly. These symptoms are listed in the left column of Table 15.2.

Table 15.2. Symptoms of Faulty Communications, and Sender and Receiver Responsibilities for Preventing Them

SYMPTOMS OF FAULTY COMMUNICATION	RESPONSIBILITIES FOR PREVENTING CAUSES OF FAULTY COMMUNICATION	
	SENDER'S RESPONSIBILITIES	**RECEIVER'S RESPONSIBILITIES**

Preparation Problems
  Receiver attention problems
  Receiver reception problems
  Receiver interpretation problems
	Stop to think about what you are doing and how to do it well.
	Keep two things in mind:
	  Receivers are not mind readers.
	  Communication process is both rational <u>and</u> emotional.
	Identify why you need to communicate: What are your objectives?
	Identify what ideas or feelings you want to convey.
	Think about receivers: What are their knowledge, experience, feelings, needs, motivation to listen, attitudes, objectives?
	Think about yourself: What are your attitudes, motives, biases, and so on?
	Think about which <u>modes</u> you could use to get your message through.
		Stop to think what about you are doing and how to do it well.
		Keep two things in mind:
		  Senders are not mind readers.
		  The communication process is both rational <u>and</u> emotional.

Initial Receiver <u>Attention</u> Problems
  Immediately tunes out
  Allows mind to wander
  Pays only selective attention
  Is defensive
  Disagrees
  Takes a polar position
	Attention-Getting Responsibilities
	Make the message's importance clear.
	Appeal to receiver's inner motivation (needs, goals, and so on).
	Allay fears; discuss possible threats or risks to receiver (such as impending change and threats to ego or status).
	Indicate your personal motives for communicating.
	
	Minimize environmental distractions.
	Overlook personality conflict with receiver.
		Assess the message's importance to you.
		Look for and focus on elements of personal value.
		Try to cope with perceived threats or risks to you.
		Control egotism; no one knows it all.
		Rise to challenging material. Listen openly (not selectively) even to what you don't want to hear or think about.
		Ignore noises, interruptions, competing messages, and other distractions.
		Overlook personality conflict with sender.

Receiver <u>Reception</u> Problems
  Immediately or subsequently tunes out
  Appears not to hear
  Seems not to understand
  Acts confused
  Asks to have message repeated
  Responds abnormally (while message is being sent)
	Responsibilities for Physical Aspects of Delivery
	Pick the best possible time and place, in order to minimize interruptions and distracting messages or stimuli.
	Write understandably, following the rules of good writing.
	Speak clearly, audibly, assuredly, and not too fast.
	Use visual aids to illustrate important ideas.
	Ensure that receiver can <u>see</u> well what you are showing or doing.
	Be friendly, courteous, sincere, relaxed, flexible, and honest.
		Listen; give the sender your conscious attention.
		Adjust to distractions.
		Evaluate the message, not the speaker.
		Be flexible in note taking.
		Watch what is being shown or done.
		Control your reactions to emotion-charged words.
		Withhold judgment until the sender is finished.

Receiver <u>Interpretation</u> Problems
  Acts confused
  Requests clarification, explanation, or restatement
  Does not respond, reply, or react
  Makes improper, incorrect, inappropriate, or unintended responses
	<u>Delivery</u> **Responsibilities**
	Rational or Intellectual Aspects
	Communicate directly, not through other persons (which enables more filters to scramble a message).
	Present ideas effectively:
	  Express ideas in a logical, flowing sequence.
	  Lead the receiver through the rationale, discussing both pros and cons in an objective, balanced manner.
	Use multiple <u>modes</u> to increase understanding.
		Focus on central ideas.
		Listen, watch, or read first, then evaluate.
		Objectively extract sender's intended meaning.
		Summarize points and extract key ideas.

Responds negatively or dysfunctionally
  Makes an ambiguous or vague response
	Reinforce what you are conveying:
	    Relate ideas to what the receiver already knows or accepts.
	    Cite examples or illustrations; elaborate.
	    Restate important points.
	Don't state inferences (assumptions, opinions, conclusions) as though they were facts or observations.
	Communicate what you mean and in terms that are meaningful to receivers; don't bypass them:
		Think about how the information relates to what you already know.
		Excuse the sender for not knowing everything about you.
		Distinguish between facts and inferences.

Disagrees	Use words that are in the receiver's vocabulary, not a specialized vocabulary containing technical terms, jargon, colloquialisms, acronyms, or abbreviations.
	  Be precise in word usage.
	  Talk within the receiver's experience field.
	  Define terms appropriately:
	    Don't be too abstract (by underdefining terms).
	    Don't be too restrictive (by overdefining terms).
		Try to understand the sender's point of view.
		
		To better understand something, ask for definition, clarification, illustration, or elaboration.

Takes a polar position	Say what you really mean (do not try to convey hidden meanings, use meta-talk, or be circumspect). Use proper sentence structure, word order, grammar, and punctuation.	Read between the lines when it seems appropriate. Avoid evaluating the sender's delivery.
	Emotional Aspects (Feelings, Motives, Attitudes) Describe (don't just express) the feelings you want to convey. Do not convey "allness" ("I know it all and said it all"). Be discriminating. Don't stereotype people, places, or things; acknowledge both similarities and differences.	 Excuse the sender for not knowing everything.
Makes an exaggerated response	Avoid being (and sounding) prejudiced. Avoid conveying double standards (OK if I do but not if you do). Avoid being (and sounding) condescending.	Consider the sender's motives, feelings, point of view, and possible biases. Control your ego-related emotions.
Is defensive	Avoid put-downs (judging, criticizing, blaming, ridiculing, moralizing, ordering, threatening, solving). Avoid using negative or emotion-charged words.	 Control your reactions to emotion-charged words.
Receiver Feedback Problems	Don't assume that the receiver understood what you meant. Encourage questions. Ask receiver to feed back a summary of ideas or feelings (what he or she understood; how he or she feels about message; how he or she perceives and feels about the process). Be open, honest, and sincere. Expect some disagreement. Accept receiver's different ideas, opinions, and feelings. Explore differences with the receiver.	Don't assume that you heard what the sender meant. Ask questions to ensure that you understand. Voluntarily feed back a summary of ideas or feelings perceived (what you understand; how you feel about the message; how you perceive and feel about the process). Be open, honest, and sincere. Expect some disagreement. Accept differences of opinions and feelings. Explore differences with the sender.

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Symptoms of receiver attention problems. If a receiver does not focus attention on a sender's message, he or she will not even begin to receive and interpret it. Several symptoms in Table 15.2 might require definition. A receiver is using *selective perception* when he or she is only paying attention to and perceiving a part of what he or she is seeing or hearing. Selective perception can be conscious or unconscious on the part of the receiver. *Polarity* occurs when the receiver already has or is beginning to develop a position that opposes the sender's and consequently adopts an "I'm 100 percent right and you're 100 percent wrong" attitude.

Symptoms of receiver reception problems. Obviously, if a receiver cannot see, hear, or otherwise sense a message being communicated, that message does not even get across the physical gap from sender to receiver, let alone get through to (or meaningfully penetrate) the mind of the receiver.

Symptoms of receiver interpretation problems. Interpreting (decoding) involves intellectual comprehension *filtered* through a receiver's feelings, values, interests, and attitudes. As H. M. Tomlinson once said, "We see [and hear] things not as they are, but as we are." It should also be pointed out that senders encode their messages through their own filters.

Senders' and Receivers' Responsibilities for Effective and Ineffective Communication

Many of the most important influences on communications' effectiveness lie within the control of senders and receivers themselves. Each has certain responsibilities. If they each carry out their responsibilities, they will communicate effectively. If they fail to carry out their responsibilities, their failures become causes of faulty communications. Environmental variables can also be important causes of faulty communications to the extent that they (a) negatively influence senders and receivers intellectually or emotionally or (b) disrupt the process, distract the parties, degrade the sending or reception of information, or interfere with the encoding or decoding of information. The two right-hand columns of Table 15.2 list dos and don'ts that are responsibilities of senders and receivers.

Several of the most important overall responsibilities of both senders and receivers are to keep the following points in mind. First, during a communication process, constantly *think about what you are doing and how to do it well*. Second, keep in mind that the *process is both rational and emotional*. Third, also keep in mind that *neither party is a mind reader* and that two-way communication enables each party to determine how ideas and feelings are getting through to the other.

As shown in Table 15.2, underlying causes of receiver attention problems, of receiver reception problems, and of receiver interpretation problems can all be attributed to the sender, the receiver, or both. The effectiveness of their communication process will suffer to the extent that either one fails to carry out his or her responsibilities.

One of the most important potential causes of communication problems is *faulty assumptions about the communication process*. The process is both intellectual and emotional, not just one or the other. Therefore, if the sender assumes that communication is basically an intellectual or rational process, he or she will be unaware of the process's emotional and interpersonal aspects. Consequently, the sender may try to reach the receiver with one rational argument or explanation after another, not really dealing with any of the negative feelings that may be the real obstacles to the receiver's understanding and acceptance of the message. On the other hand, if the sender assumes that communication is basically an emotional process, he or she may, for example, use emotionally persuasive appeals on a very rational receiver and fail to reach that receiver with a more intellectually convincing case.

BEYOND THE BASICS

This section discusses communication styles, phases and steps of an analytic approach to communication, and activities for improving the effectiveness of communications.

Communication Styles

Many training programs help participants assess their style of communication. Communication styles have several dimensions: (a) type primarily used (one-way versus two-way); (b) modes primarily used; and (c) tone primarily used (expressive and affiliative versus cold and impersonal). Table 15.3 associates communicative behaviors with the five distinctive managerial styles and the related interpersonal styles.

Phases and Steps of an Analytic Approach to Communication

In Chapter Fourteen, it was mentioned that people must often communicate to solve problems. Here, it is important to emphasize that if senders and receivers—especially senders—wish to maximize the effectiveness of a communication process, they should perform the all-important analytic, planning, and decision-making phases and steps of the analytic approach before beginning to actually communicate—just as they do in the problem-solving and managerial processes shown in Table 15.4. In fact, the more important the communication process is to high-priority personal or organizational goals and plans, the more advisable it is to use the analytic approach outlined in the table.

During the *analysis phase*, the communicator (1) identifies what needs to be communicated in order to get something accomplished, (2) analyzes the receiver, (3) analyzes his or her own characteristics, and (4) analyzes the environment and how it will affect the parties and the process. Essentially, this phase should involve analyzing all the responsibilities, variables, and considerations listed in the "Sender's Responsibilities" and "Receiver's Responsibilities" columns of Table 15.2.

Next, during the *planning or formulation of alternatives phase,* the communicator should use the insights gained during the analysis phase to formulate the following: (1) communication objectives (that is, how the sender wants the receiver to behave as a result of the communication process) and (2) communication plans (strategies, tactics, and action plans) for persuading or influencing the receiver. These plans should specify (a) who is the targeted *receiver* (or group of receivers); (b) what *message or content* (ideas or feelings to convey in order to persuade or influence); (c) which communication *modes* would be most effective; (d) *when* to communicate in order to achieve the maximum effect; and (e) *where* to communicate in order to minimize distractions and make all the parties feel comfortable.

Finally, during the *decision-making phase,* alternative sets of goals and associated plans should be mentally tested and compared in order to choose the most effective set for bringing about the desired receiver emotions, improvements in knowledge or attitudes, or behavior.

Table 15.2 shows responsibilities of senders and receivers but does not explicitly organize them into the phases and steps of the approach outlined in Table 15.4. And although Table 15.4 puts Table 15.2 into a broader perspective, it does not reiterate all the sender and receiver responsibilities and other considerations covered in Table 15.2. Symptoms of faulty communication occur during the implementation phase in Table 15.4. To prevent such symptoms, one should analyze the responsibilities and considerations in Table 15.2 during the analysis phase of the Table 15.4 process.

To some extent, Table 15.5 integrates Tables 15.2 and 15.4, laying out more detailed phases and steps of the approach—particularly as they apply to the sender. Note the similarities between Table 15.5 and Table 13.1 on page 290, which outlines problem-solving steps. Both processes

Table 15.3. Interpersonal (or Managerial) Styles and Their Relationships to Styles, Types, and Modes of Communication

INTERPERSONAL (OR MANAGERIAL) STYLE	High Self (High Task), Low People	Low Self (Low Task), High People	Medium Self (Medium Task), Medium People	Low Self (Low Task), Low People	High Self (High Task), High People
DESCRIPTION OF PERSON	Controller, dominator, taker, competitor, results seeker, blamer, attacker	Pleaser, supporter, giver, accommodator, conflict suppressor, yielder	Compromiser, balancer	Avoider; isolationist	Thinker, communicator, achiever, developer, team builder, integrator, positive stroker, confronter, influencer
DESCRIPTION OF PERSON'S NATURE	Superior, self-centered, aggressive, hostile, insensitive, exploitative, utilitarian	Warm, submissive, amiable, sensitive, insecure, dependent, affiliative, associative, benevolent, responsive, protective	Consultive, changeable; anxious about criticism and censure	Apathetic, indecisive, evasive, pessimistic, compliant, submissive; fears rejection; avoids separation	Self-actualized, optimistic, realistic, self-assured, assertive, responsive, supportive, expressive
WHAT THE PERSON COMMUNICATES	Instructions, decisions, orders; mostly negative strokes (put-downs, blame, criticism, faultfinding)	Feelings, support; positive strokes	Mostly instructions and decisions; some orders; some advice, information; both positive and negative strokes	Few communications	Advice, information, guidance; positive strokes and constructive, developmental feedback
TONE OF COMMUNICATIONS	"Self-superiorizing"; cold, impersonal	Affiliative, associative; very warm and congenial	Matter-of-fact; rather congenial		Mature, supportive; sensitive, congenial
PRIMARY TYPE OF COMMUNICATION				Noncommunicative	
One-way	One-way		More one-way than two-way		
Two-way		Two-way			Two-way
PRIMARY MODE OF COMMUNICATION Verbal					
Oral	Oral	Oral	Oral		Oral
Written	Written		Written	Written (so no need to interact or interrelate verbally	Written
Nonverbal Visual					Visual
Tactile		Tactile (touch)			Some tactile

Table 15.4. Relationships Between the Analytic Approach to Problem Solving and the Phases and Steps Involved in Communicating Effectively

	PROBLEM-SOLVING PROCESS	MANAGERIAL PROCESS	COMMUNICATION PROCESS
What has happened, or what is going on—and why?	**Analysis of Situation**	**Analysis of Situation** (including evaluation of past results and performance)	**Analysis of Situation** What about the situation requires communicating? Analyze receivers' knowledge, attitudes, and other characteristics (for potential attention, reception, and interpretation problems) Analyze oneself (for possible sender problems) Analyze the environment (for potential obstacles)
What needs to be done, or what might be done—and how?	**Formulation of Alternative Solutions** (and plans for their implementation)	**Planning** Goal setting Strategies and tactics, programs and projects, and action plans Budgeting	**Planning** Set goals: what communication should accomplish Formulate strategies and tactics, programs and projects, and action plans to persuade or influence, detailing target audience, ideas and feelings to convey, modes to use, when and where to communicate, facilities and equipment needed, and so on Consider and budget costs and resources
What course of action should be taken?	**Decision Making** Analytically test, compare, and select among the alternatives	**Decision Making** Analytically test, compare, and select among alternative sets of goals, plans, budgets, policies, and procedures	**Decision Making** Analytically test, compare, and select among alternative sets of goals and plans
Take action; do something.	**Implementation of Chosen Solutions**	**Implementation** Organizing Staffing Guiding and coordinating activity Guiding control processes	**Implementation** Communicate as planned (through speech, written materials, visual aids, actions, and so on) Obtain and evaluate feedback Revise communication as appropriate

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Table 15.5. Phases and Steps of a Systematic Communications Approach

ACTION	BENEFICIAL EFFECTS
PHASE I: PREPARE	
1. **Be aware; think about what you're doing** and how to do it well. 2. Increase **motivation** (consider situation's importance). 3. Seek a conducive **environment**. 4. Get **organized** (materials, references, and so on). 5. **Preview**: do a brief preliminary analysis.	Consciously structure process Increase and sustain concentration and effort Minimize distractions and interruptions Minimize distractions; be organized Determine importance and priority of situation; budget time, money, and effort; be organized
PHASE II: ANALYZE—DEFINE AND REDUCE COMMUNICATION (PROBLEM) SITUATION	
6. **Describe** situation that requires communication. 7. Identify **what needs to be improved**, changed, or done. 8. Identify **receivers** (that is, who needs to take the desired action). 9. **Analyze receivers** (their knowledge, attitudes, and traits): identify receiver factors that could affect receivers' attention, reception, or interpretation. 10. **Analyze your own characteristics**, attitudes, and skills; identify how they might affect the effectiveness of the communication process. 11. Identify **nonpersonal or environmental factors** that might affect the effectiveness of your communication. 12. Derive **criteria** for Phase IV decision making.	Increase repertoire of knowledge; look for important factors Increase one's own (sender's) focus and motivation; aim at desired result Focus message on appropriate receiver or receivers Minimize receiver attention, reception, and interpretation problems. Minimize sender planning, formulation, and message delivery problems. Minimize sender and receiver problems Improve testing of alternatives Aim at desired end result
PHASE III: PLAN—ALTERNATIVES FORMULATION (COMMUNICATION PLANNING)	
13. Formulate communication **goals or objectives**. 14. Formulate alternative strategies and tactics, programs and projects, and action **plans** to persuade or influence, including • Receivers • Contents of communication (ideas, feelings) • Modes of communication to use (verbal, nonverbal, or a combination) • Where, when, facilities, equipment 15. **Budget**: account for costs (if any).	Generate alternative approaches for getting message through Account for costs and resources
PHASE IV: MAKE DECISION—TEST AND SELECT ALTERNATIVES	
16. Analytically **test and compare** alternative sets of goals and plans. • Identify advantages and disadvantages. • Test against criteria. 17. **Select** an appropriate alternative set of goals and plans for implementation.	Anticipate sequence of implementation acts and events Mentally test alternatives, using class logic Mentally test alternatives, using propositional logic Select alternative or alternatives; make final decision
PHASE V: COMMUNICATE (IMPLEMENT CHOSEN ALTERNATIVES)	
18. **Communicate** as planned (write, speak, show, do). 19. Obtain and evaluate **feedback**. 20. **Revise** communications as appropriate.	Ensure effectiveness Correct or alleviate attention, reception, or interpretation problems

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begin with preparation steps such as (1) stopping to think about what one is doing and how to do it better, (2) increasing personal motivation by considering why the situation is important, (3) finding a conducive environment, (4) getting organized, and (5) previewing the situation (doing a preliminary analysis) to determine its scope and importance.

Given all the previous discussions and tables, the remainder of the table should not require further explanation.

Advance and Ongoing Activities for Continually Improving Communication Processes

One can continually increase personal inputs to effective communication through advance preparation and ongoing developmental activities. Although Figure 15.2 needs little explanation, the following points should be made.

First, in advance of any forthcoming communication situations, write down personal and organizational goals and plans in order to record intended or expected outcomes in memory. Doing so helps trigger your conscious awareness of important communication situations when they arise. Being aware enables you to think about you are doing and how to do it well.

Second, if you use the analytic approach in communication situations as well as problem-solving situations, use of the approach can be made habitual more quickly. As will be discussed in Chapter Seventeen, also using the approach in learning situations helps, too.

Third, because communicating effectively involves thinking, communicating can be improved just as much as problem solving by the following activities: (a) increasing goal-oriented knowledge and experience, (b) further developing thinking skills, and (c) adjusting or further developing other personal characteristics or behavior patterns in order to be more effective.

Fourth, further developing communication skills may involve the following: (a) studying references on grammar, syntax, and punctuation; (b) practicing writing; (c) speaking before groups; (d) reading more about how to persuade and influence others; and (e) listening more intently to others. Not only are these communication skills, but they are also problem-solving and learning skills.

Fifth, remember to *prepare,* then *analyze, plan,* and *decide* how to communicate effectively, and finally *communicate* (implement communication plans).

Sixth, it is difficult for an individual to communicate effectively with people who (a) do not know the concepts, principles, and practices involved; (b) do not understand why one is using phases, steps, and practices to better structure a process; (c) do not know what senders and receivers should do to respond appropriately to each other; and (d) do not appreciate what someone may be trying to accomplish by getting feelings out into the open so that they can be dealt with appropriately. This means that in organizations, the only way to make any one person a truly effective communicator is to institute organization-wide development of all personnel's communicative skills.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In order to increase communication effectiveness and minimize or compensate for common obstacles, both senders and receivers should follow a few basic guidelines.

How Senders Can Improve Their Communications

1. *Constantly develop* personal inputs to better communication.
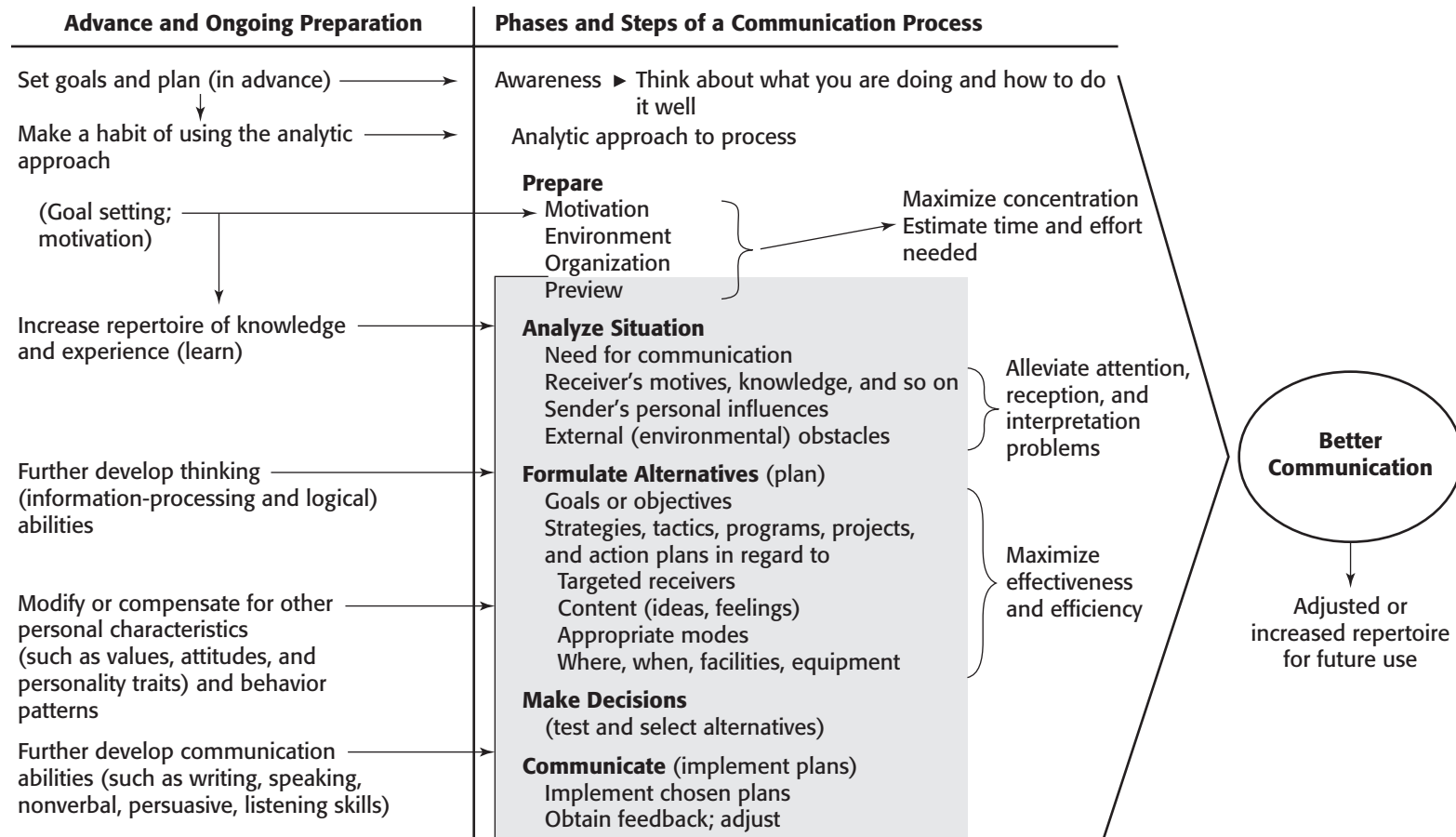2. *Stop to think about what you are doing* and how to do it better.

Advance and Ongoing Preparation	Phases and Steps of a Communication Process

Set goals and plan (in advance) ⟶ Awareness ▸ Think about what you are doing and how to do it well

Make a habit of using the analytic approach ⟶ Analytic approach to process

(Goal setting; motivation) ⟶

Prepare
Motivation
Environment
Organization
Preview

Maximize concentration
Estimate time and effort needed

Increase repertoire of knowledge and experience (learn) ⟶

Analyze Situation
Need for communication
Receiver's motives, knowledge, and so on
Sender's personal influences
External (environmental) obstacles

Alleviate attention, reception, and interpretation problems

Further develop thinking (information-processing and logical) abilities ⟶

Formulate Alternatives (plan)
Goals or objectives
Strategies, tactics, programs, projects, and action plans in regard to
Targeted receivers
Content (ideas, feelings)
Appropriate modes
Where, when, facilities, equipment

Maximize effectiveness and efficiency

Modify or compensate for other personal characteristics (such as values, attitudes, and personality traits) and behavior patterns ⟶

Make Decisions
(test and select alternatives)

Further develop communication abilities (such as writing, speaking, nonverbal, persuasive, listening skills) ⟶

Communicate (implement plans)
Implement chosen plans
Obtain feedback; adjust

Better Communication

Adjusted or increased repertoire for future use

Figure 15.2. Advance and Ongoing Activities for Continually Improving Communication Processes

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3. Remember that the receiver is *not a mind reader*.

4. Also keep in mind that the communication *process is both rational and emotional*.

5. *Think about the receiver*. Ask yourself how to appeal to his or her inner motivation and how to formulate your message (state the idea, paint the picture, or express the feeling) so that the receiver will understand the idea, get the picture, or feel the emotion you want to convey.

6. *Follow the Golden Rule*. At least, treat the receiver the way that you would like to be treated. You might even follow the Platinum Rule and treat the receiver the way that he or she would like to be treated.

7. *Get feedback* from the receiver. Make sure that what you meant to send was actually received and interpreted properly.

8. *Explore differences* between perceptions, opinions, and feelings together with the receiver.

How Receivers Can Contribute to More Effective Communication Processes

1. *Constantly develop* personal inputs.

2. Focus your attention on the *message* (not on the sender's appearance and mannerisms or on environmental distractions).

3. *Listen or read first,* then evaluate.

4. *Try to pick up the information,* idea, picture, or feeling that the sender is attempting to get through.

5. *Follow the Golden Rule*. At least, treat the sender the way that you would like to be treated. You might even follow the Platinum Rule and treat the sender the way that he or she would like to be treated.

6. Make sure that you received what the sender intended to send. *Feed back* the central points or feelings that you think the message contained. If the idea, picture, or feeling being communicated seems fuzzy, ask for clarification, explanation, or elaboration.

7. *Explore differences* between perceptions, opinions, and feelings together with the sender.

As shown in Figure 15.3, personnel must communicate effectively during the planning, problem-solving, and decision-making processes that make up the managerial (integrative) process. And, just as they should during those processes, they should also use the analytic approach when communicating. This is especially true when managers and leaders are utilizing the participative approach. Effective team interactions require effective communication.

The next section outlines recommendations for conducting the end-of-module superior-subordinates discussion, OD application, and team-building sessions that follow the training portion of Module 4. In those sessions, participants will use what they have learned about individual, organizational, managerial, social, and communicative behavior up to this point in order to analyze situations, improve behavioral phenomena, and solve organizational problems more effectively. Once those sessions have been completed and participants have moved on to Part Five of this book (the program's Module 5), that same learning will help participants learn more about guiding and participating in team-think planning, problem-solving, and decision-making processes.
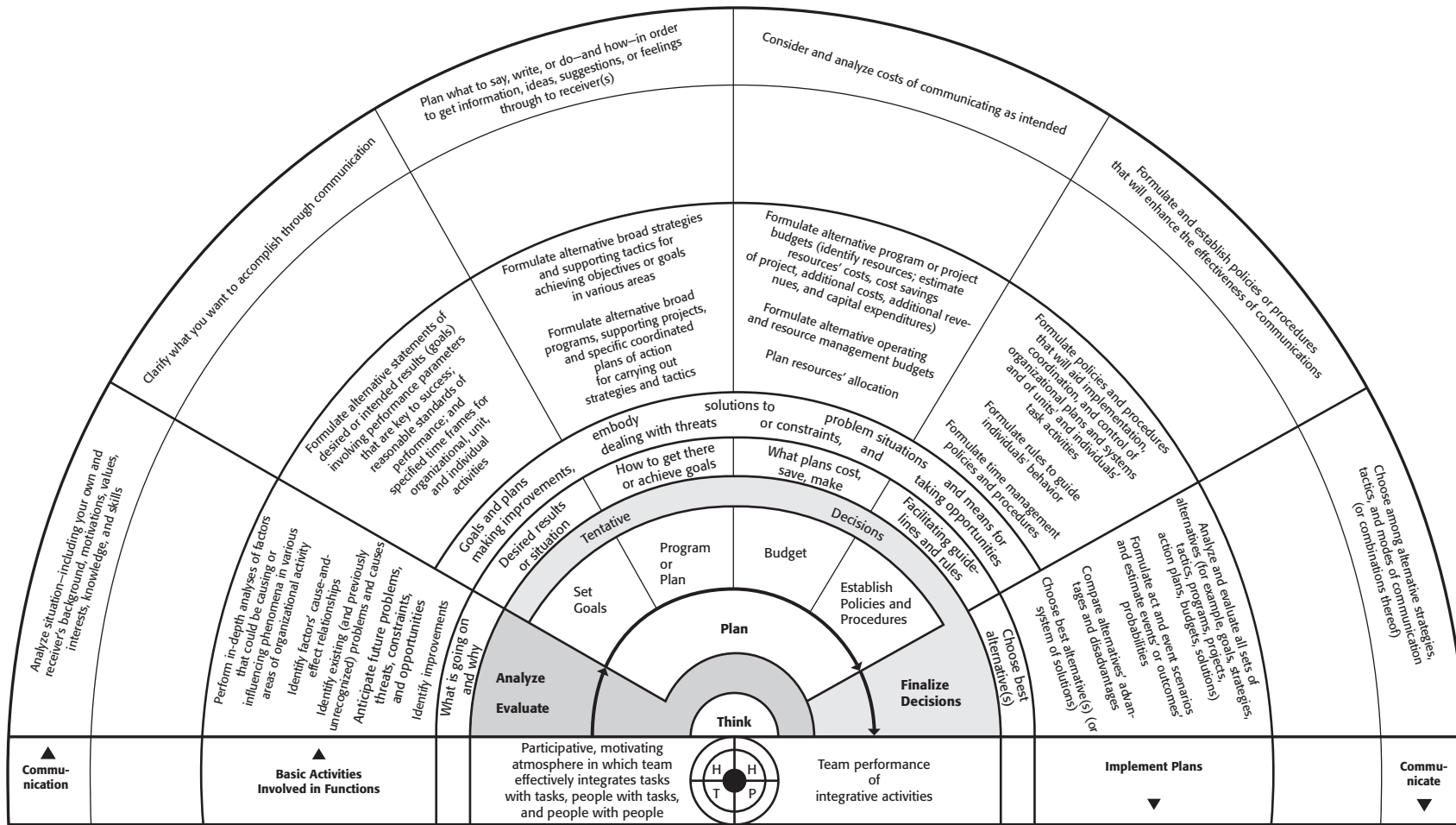
Figure 15.3. Communication in the Managerial Context

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONDUCTING SUPERIOR-SUBORDINATES DISCUSSION, OD APPLICATION, AND TEAM-BUILDING SESSIONS FOLLOWING THE TRAINING PORTION OF MODULE 4

General Information

After individuals at all the levels involved in the MD/OD program have covered the concepts, phenomena, principles, and practices in Chapters Fourteen and Fifteen, they are prepared to apply what they have learned to deal with the interpersonal aspects of their working relationships.

Objectives

These discussions (a) help participants crystallize (through further thought) what they have learned; (b) help them reinforce (through repetition and actual use) what they have learned; (c) enable participants to immediately and beneficially apply what they have learned (rather than waiting until the end of the program to experience benefits or results); (d) help improve superior-subordinate relationships; and (e) enable managers' subordinates to participate in deciding what needs doing, how it should be done, by whom, and when.

As shown in the lower Module 4 box in Figure 1.1 on page 20, superiors and their immediate subordinates will be (a) identifying dysfunctional social norms and phenomena and (b) exploring possible sources of interunit conflicts. (Intra-unit relationships and conflicts might have been addressed at the end of Module 3, but can be addressed again at this point if they are important enough and were not resolved earlier.) As shown at the very bottom of the lower Module 4 box in Figure 1.1, these sessions are aimed at improving social and organizational socio-technical variables that are affecting interpersonal relationships and communications on the job. Superiors, subordinates, and facilitators will choose the areas on which to concentrate before the sessions begin.

Preparation

If participants have used the session preparation guides provided on the CD-ROM for each chapter in Part Four, they will have already thought about the following issues and will be better prepared to discuss them.

Sessions should be scheduled for at least four hours, including breaks. Participants may choose to continue their discussions during subsequently scheduled sessions.

Cautionary Note for Facilitators and Participants

During these processes, participants will be using their developing knowledge and skills to analyze and resolve conflicts involving two units or work groups. Facilitators should not allow groups to work on conflicts between two individuals, nor should they permit discussions concerning any individual's personal traits. Participants should discuss the knowledge, skills and skill levels, values, personality traits, and interests of *groups* rather than individuals—and then only in general terms. Individuals should also be discouraged from taking it upon themselves to confront interpersonal conflicts outside of these professionally facilitated sessions. However, if they ill-advisedly choose to do so, they should first learn, practice, and then use the following approach, which works as well for individuals as for work groups.

Topics for Improvement and Problem-Solving Discussions

A. Intra- or Interunit Problems or Conflicts. First, *in separate sessions,* each group involved identifies possible job-related, nonpersonal causes of problems for which blame cannot be attributed to either group. The causal socio-technical elements may involve, for example, differences in the work groups' or units' (a) time orientations; (b) required skills and skill levels; (c) requirements for material, service, or informational inputs; (d) status within the organization; (e) types of technical, functional, or professional problems encountered; or (f) degree of vulnerability to, for example, outside technological, market, or governmental influences. Once these nonpersonal, nonthreatening, face-saving causes have been identified, the session leader should ask participants in each group (separately) to identify (a) ways in which the other group could contribute to better interaction and (b) ways in which they themselves could contribute to better interaction. The analyses and suggestions are then passed from each group to the other for consideration. When each group appears willing to do its part to resolve the situation, the two groups meet to plan what they will do.

B. Dealing with Dysfunctional Social Norms Operating Within or Between Groups. The discussions in section A usually take all the time allotted. Those sessions, however, may involve identifying and planning how to deal with dysfunctional social norms that are operating within an organization, unit, or work group. To help groups identify dysfunctional social norms and replace them with more functional norms (and perhaps more appropriate sanctions), the Social Norms Worksheet has been provided on the CD-ROM (found with the Chapter Fourteen content).

C. Roadblocks to Communication. Discussions may delve into roadblocks to effective communication within or between groups. To consider possible technical and emotional causes of faulty communication, use Table 15.2, Symptoms of Faulty Communications, and Sender and Receiver Responsibilities for Preventing Them (also provided on the CD-ROM), as a worksheet. Keep in mind that there may be other socio-technical causes of communication problems: organizational impediments (lack of communication devices, very formal channels, authoritarian bosses); task-related impediments (noise, obstructed vision); outside impediments (environmental distractions); and so on.

D. Inputs. Each unit's materials, services, and informational outputs generally are inputs to other units. As a result, each unit's performance is usually dependent on that of one or more others. Consider these questions: (1) Which units need what inputs from whom? (2) Are the units receiving the inputs they need (in terms of quality, timeliness, and so on)? (3) If not, how are attitudes, behavior, and interactions in each unit affecting the flows of materials, services, and information between units (or throughout the organization)? (4) If the answer is "dysfunctionally," what might be done to improve the situation?

Commitments to Actions and Results

During interunit conflict resolution sessions, the superior and subordinates in one unit may contract with the superior and subordinates of another unit concerning desired end results and who will do what, when, and how to bring about improvements. Solutions may involve what to do now and what to do over time.

During intra-unit sessions, superiors and their immediate subordinates should contract with each other on the following specifics of goals and plans: (a) who is going to be held responsible for which final outcomes; (b) milestones on the way to the end results; and (c) who will do what, when, with whom, and over what period of time.

Participants should apply the principles, practices, and visual tools discussed in Chapters Two through Six. They should also take into consideration other anticipated changes and their priorities and costs.

Facilitation

These discussions should be facilitated by an OD consultant, professional outside facilitator, or a well-trained internal facilitator—at least until the end of Module 5, by which point managers may have developed adequate team think-work facilitation skills.

To guide these discussions, the consultant or facilitator may use Table 16.1 (also on the CD-ROM), which outlines leader and participant responsibilities involved in preparing for and conducting group think-work processes. However, because a number of topics in that table have not yet been covered, at this point, we suggest handing out copies of Table 13.1 (also on the CD-ROM) and briefly walking participants through its problem-solving steps.

In addition to guiding the mechanical aspects of a group process, the facilitator should use his or her knowledge and experience to lead participants toward identification of (a) real, underlying causes of problems; (b) other influential (or possibly causal) factors, whose impacts are not always obvious; and (c) solutions or plans that have been or would tend to be most successful.

Evaluation and Follow-Up

At the end of each superior-subordinates session, the facilitator may ask participants to critique the process by filling out or at least discussing the items on the Group Process Evaluation Form (found with the Chapter Sixteen content on the CD-ROM).

After all Module 4 sessions are over, monitor participants' planned activities and their adherence to the commitments they made during these sessions. With guidance from an OD consultant, a facilitator, or an appropriate high-level manager, participants (superiors and their subordinates) should evaluate results upon arrival at each planned milestone.