

Developing Soft Skills and Personality
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Lecture – 34
Barriers to Communication: Miscommunication

Hello everyone, welcome back to the course on Developing Soft Skills and Personality. We are giving it from IIT, Kanpur through NPTEL work. I am Ravichandran, I have been with you for the past 6 weeks and now we are on the fourth module of the sixth week and this is lecture number 34. So, almost we have only just 2 more weeks and then 2 more lectures and this week particularly I will focus on communication skills. In the past 2 lectures, I focused on barriers to communication, this one let us look at miscommunication which I mentioned to you in the previous one.

Let us look at from illustrative examples and let us see how miscommunication happens even in organizational setup. Before I start, let us quickly try to recollect what I discussed in the previous lecture. In the previous one, I discussed to you about the barriers to communication.

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Highlights

Highlights of the Last Lecture

Barriers to Communication

- Interpersonal Transactions
- Limited frame of reference
- Emotional interference

Overcoming strategies: Removing fear of change, Choosing the right psychological moment.

Various types of language barriers:

- Same words, different cultural meanings
- Same letters, different grammatical meanings

Overcoming strategies: Making the context clear, using nonverbal correlatives, seeking clarifications

Technological Barrier

Overcoming strategies: Use of appropriate medium, avoiding excessive/misuse of media.

Particularly the focus was on interpersonal transactions and then I started with how people can commit mistakes and then cause miscommunication, when the frame of reference is limited in terms of language in terms of slang in terms of jargon used in terms of not knowing the official communication parlance that is there.

The next aspect I discussed was emotional interference and then emotional interference can happen both in terms of positive as well as negative, it can be love, it can be hate, but both can act as interferences and then even the other emotions like apprehension anger distress etcetera will act as very strong emotional block what are the overcoming strategies especially, if you are trying to introduce something new and then people are afraid of accepting it, you need to remove the fear of change and then if you have to share something tell something get something from a person. It is better that you choose the right psychological movement. So, that you get the intended and desired benefit from the person with whom you are interacting with.

Then I discussed with you about the various types of language barriers same words different cultural meanings same letters different grammatical meanings depending on the position you put and use the word. It is a verb or it could be a noun what are the overcoming strategies making the context clear using some non verbal correlatives and seeking clarifications are some of the strategies that we discussed towards the end I concluded by highlighting once again the technological barriers that we should be very vary of and the overcoming strategies I pointed out that you should use appropriate medium you should avoid excessive use of media or the misuse of media.

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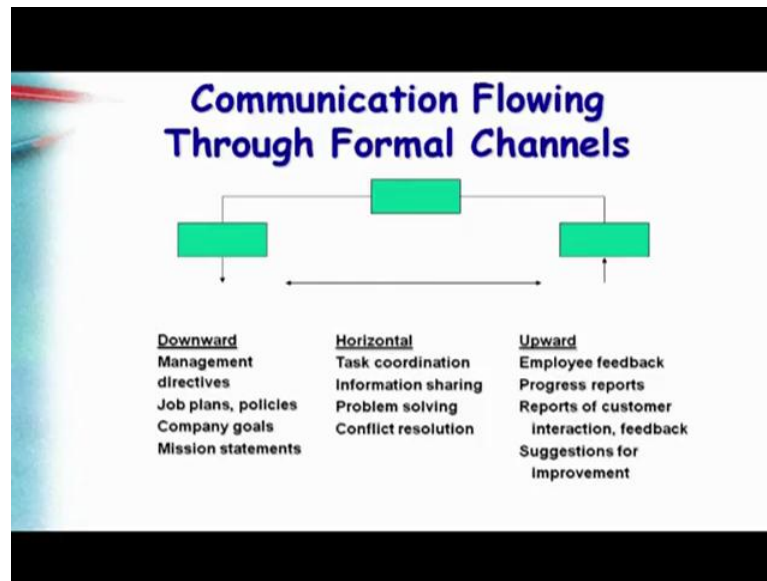


What is Miscommunication?

- Communication is *action/transaction*, and thus miscommunication can be viewed as instances of *action/transaction failure* (when the speaker fails to produce the intended effect).
- *Misperception* (when the hearer cannot recognize what the speaker intended to communicate), or both.

Now, having discussed this I mentioned somewhere in the previous lecture about miscommunication what is miscommunication? Let us focus on that for this lecture, communication is action transaction you act, you express your ideas and there is a transaction involved somebody is sending back the feedback and responding to your ideas your thoughts your actions and this miscommunication can be viewed as instances of action transactions failure, that is when the speaker fails to produce the intended effect. So, then it result in miscommunication it is also synonymous with misperceptions when the hearer cannot recognize, what the speaker intended to communicate or both it will become clear to you when I show you some very interesting illustrative examples.

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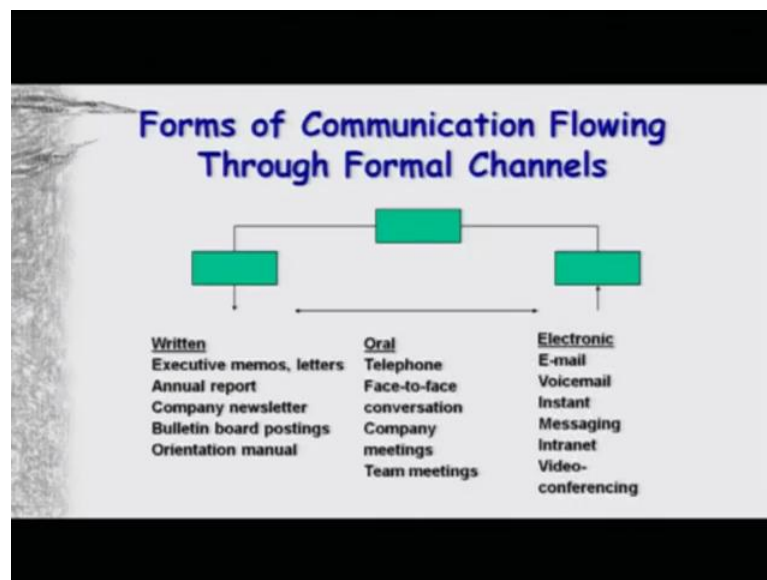
But before I go to that this particular module I am just going to focus on the organizational setup the companies the organizations where formal ways of channels are used for communication. Now, in a communication set up that is used in organizations you can have the downward flow of communication that is management is at the top like a pyramids structure, the management, the CEO or the manager gives directives and then lays down specific job plans, company policies, policies with regard to the clients companies goals and then machine statement and then within those goals and machine statements, the target that you are supposed to achieve within a deadline within a frame work.

So, that is the downward kind of flow of communication. There is also this horizontal level in which people operate where there are less chances for miscommunication because there is task coordination people can come and then integrate with each other. At horizontal level there is no upward, there is no downward information sharing happens very cohesively problem solving is done as quick as possible conflict resolution comes very easily this is the best form that is suggested.

But there is also upward form which some companies used to some extent effectively also, they will start with suggestion for improvement. They will go by feedback from the

client, from the workers, from the low level people and then they take it up further with reports of customer interaction their feedback. They also look at the progress reports and then they get also employee feedback and they try to synchronize these ones with their company's goals, objectives and the machine statements and the directives. So, that is how they try to operate as I said there are some companies which use downward very effectively some use upward effectively, but in the current scenario most of the companies which are very flexible in organizational structure go for the horizontal modal horizontal flow of communication.

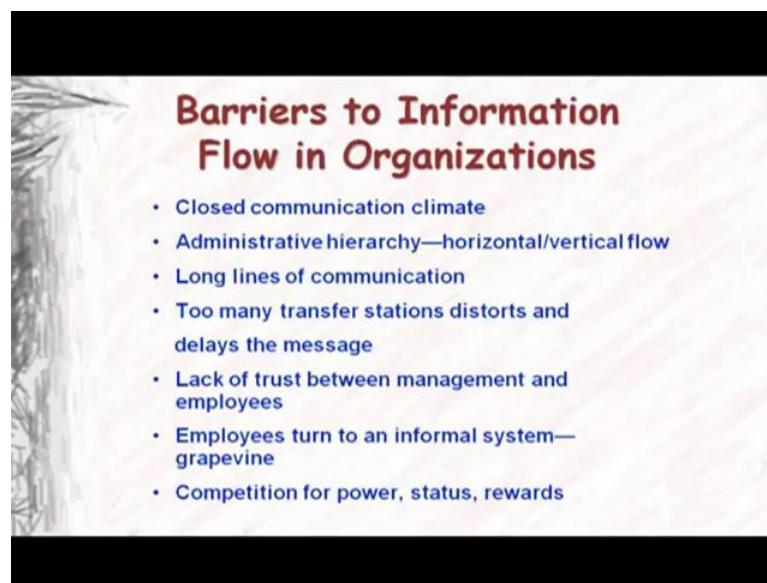
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Now, what forms of communication actually flow through these formal channels? It can be written, it can be oral, and it can be electronic form also in written form. They can send executive memos, memos or short form for memorandums short notes given to somebody about some simple notice or about even a kind of reprimanding note that is sent to somebody letters annual report is also written communication company newsletter bulletin board postings orientation manual in form of oral communication telephone face to face conversation company meetings and team meetings. So, all are oral interaction the electronic media form of communication includes e-mail on the top then voice mail instant messaging intranet use of mails communication and then video conferencing is also used.

When there is this flow of channels and then there is upward-downward horizontal movement obviously, there will be barriers especially to the information flow in organizations I will give some illustrative examples, but why are the barriers happening in companies. So, if you observe most of the times it will happen if the communication climate is closed - if it is not opened, if people are not allowed to discuss issues freely, if there is no feedback taken from them.

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If they do not receive proper information, if they have no idea as what they should be doing clearly how they should be executing their jobs administrative hierarchy can also affect this especially, the pyramid method even horizontal vertical flow of communication then there are long lines of communication that is so many nodal points are there. So, many connective points in between before you reach.

So, in a place like some educational institutions, you have to you are a teacher. So, then you have somebody who is senior teacher to whom you have to complain the senior teacher or the professor has another high higher officer to whom that has to be reported and then there is somebody at a managerial level and then after that person there is this principal or there is this deputy director or somebody, then it goes to director then it goes to this CEO or the board of governor. So, at the higher level the people are there before it

reaches. So, there are so many transfer stations and each point the communication can be distorted and that can be delay in delivering the message, but there is also a barrier when there is lack of trust between management and employees.

So, trust is a very important aspect of communication once that gets broken down then it is very difficult to patch up and then rebuild and then maintain the communication flow in a very easy manner. What employees will do when there is no trust, they will turn to an informal system that is grapevine, they will believe in rumors, grapevine means actually one's believe in going to a communication that is not formally acceptable, but gossips for examples I mean people will rely on that more than actual formal communication that is coming from the authority or the authenticated person, why this happens because there is this competition for power positions stations status rewards.

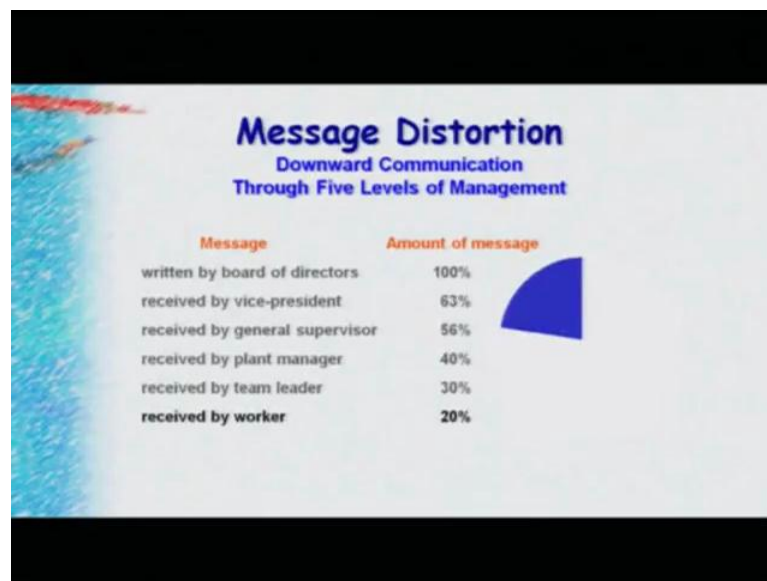
So, people compete and when they compete they hide information they do not want to share information, information they think is power. So, why will somebody share one's power with somebody else, but overall it will result in miscommunication causing huge problem for the people who are running the companies.

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Now, let us look at one message distortion as it is analyzed in terms of downward communication through five levels of management. Now, what happens when the message is first written by board of directors? The message is 100 percent the board of directors ensures that it is done in a very clear manner and then they wrote very clearly and the message was accurate and it was clear.

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But then when it was received by vice president the next level in the downward communication, he did not understand certain aspects clearly there were some jargons, but he did not want to seek clarification. So, it has only 63 percents only when the next percent received about 37 percent of clarity went off and he did not bother about it then he sent it to the general supervisor. By the time the general supervisor received it become 56 percent. Now, again the general supervisor in downward communication they cannot go high only in the flattened higher hierarchy.

They can always go high here they cannot go and seek clarification. There are just like in military army they are only meant for receiving information and acting on it they cannot see clarification. So, he again goes by 56 percent. By the time it reach the plant manager it become 40 percent and you know what when it received when it reached the team leader it become 30 percent.

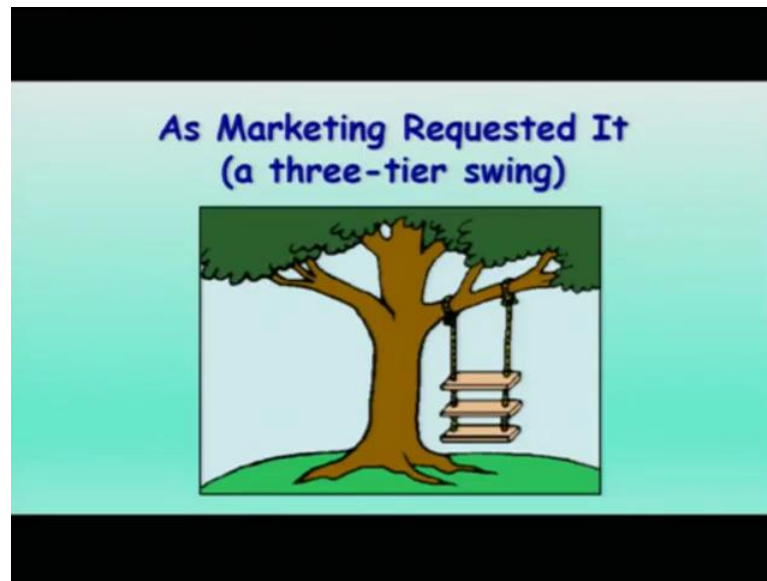
So, you can look at the levels in which the message is getting distorted and finally, the worker who is supposed to implement this when it reaches him it becomes just 20 percent. So, from 100 percent from the board of directors when it went to the worker it actually become 20 percent. So, that is the level of distortion that is possible. So, one has to be very careful.

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Let us look at the funny illustrative example of how miscommunication happens in product evolvment, a client a customer wanted a particular product and then the idea was communicated to like the highest person there and then one person after another they started executing it. So, let us see how they executed it and what is the one that the client actually wanted we will see that in the process.

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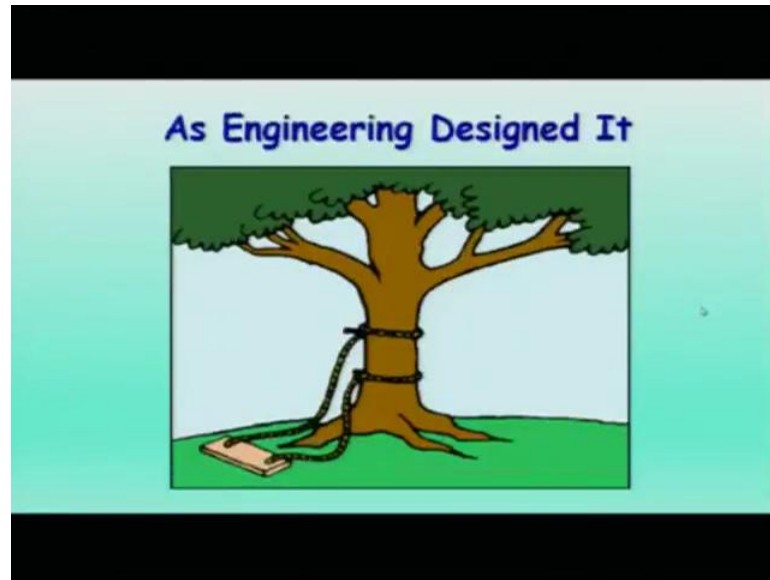
Now, what was requested by the client marketing requested it in this manner. So, they are the people who were involved in marketing. So, they wanted a three tier swing the tier in three levels. So, they wanted a swing.

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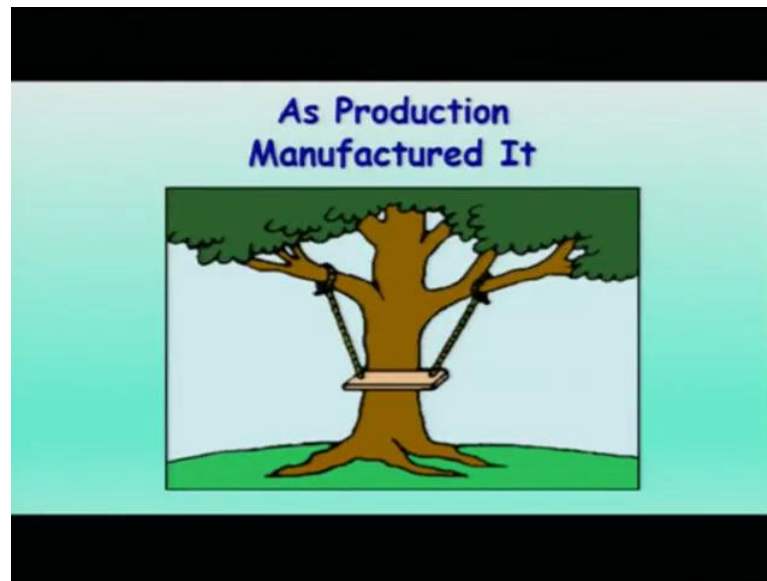
Sales when they ordered it they removed the tier part that layer. So, they understood that as three rope connected as you can see it here. So, they ordered it in this form.

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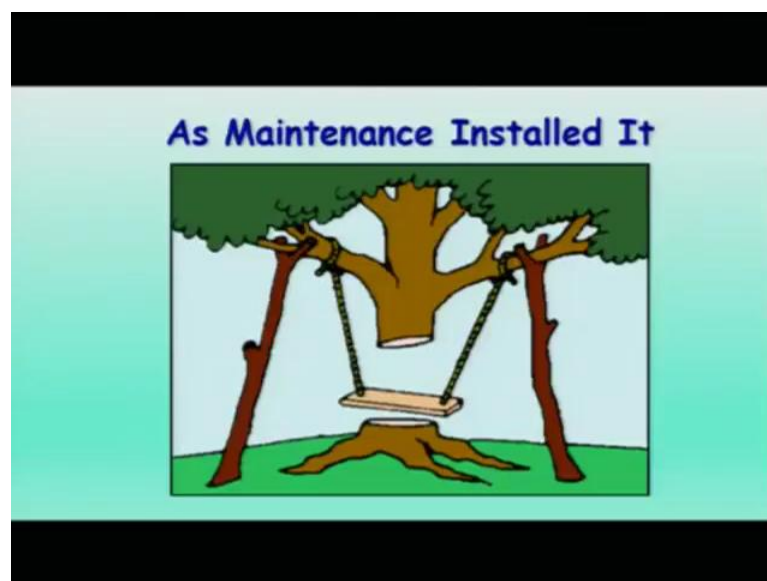
Now, from sales when it actually moved to the engineering people the engineering people decided this way. So, they got the message that this way that it should be tied to the tree, but the message that it should be like a swing somehow got missed. So, the engineer decided this way.

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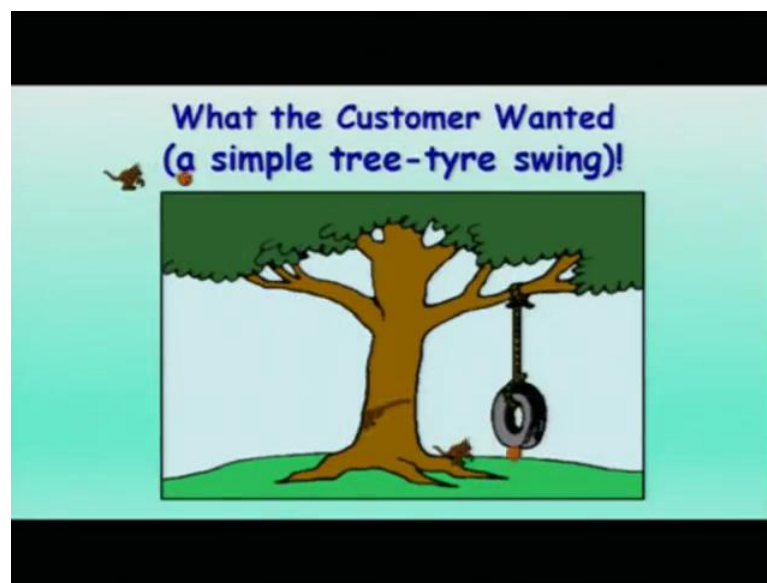
And then it went to the production who finally, manufactured it somehow they got again the idea it is a swing, but then they manufactured it in this way on the tree, but you could see it is functionally useless it cannot go back and then come forward. So, it is just laid like that.

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Then when finally, maintenance installed it, they were told that it should become functional. So, what they did they just cut the tree and then they since a tree is cut this cannot be died. So, they put some support for the tree. So, that is the job of maintenance and then with some possibility some kind of movement for this swing is possible. But where the person sit here and that will is the way communication flow happens and then this is how miscommunication takes place.

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But finally, what the customer wanted was a very simple tree tier swing the customer just wanted that tyre to be tied and that with the good robe. So, the customer wanted it to be tied, but the people understood this tyre as tier different layers and then from that the confusion started and finally, when the manufacturing set it. So, nobody can use it actually now what they wanted was a very simple tree tyre swing, you can understand how communication can completely go wrong and how people can totally misinterpret and end in this type of miscommunication, how we can surmount this kind of barriers in organizations.

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Surmounting Organizational Barriers

- **Modification of communication network— direct access**
- **Dissemination through several channels**
- **Feedback system involving more than one source**
- **Creating open environment for interaction and feedback**

The slide features two illustrations: a 3D pyramid with a person climbing it, and a 3x3 grid of small images showing various communication scenarios like people talking, using a phone, and interacting with a computer.

What is required is modification of communication network, direct access should be given that is instead of people using. So, many forms of communication talking to, many people in between using. So, many phone calls sending, many email forwards sometimes the concerned person they should be able to meet directly.

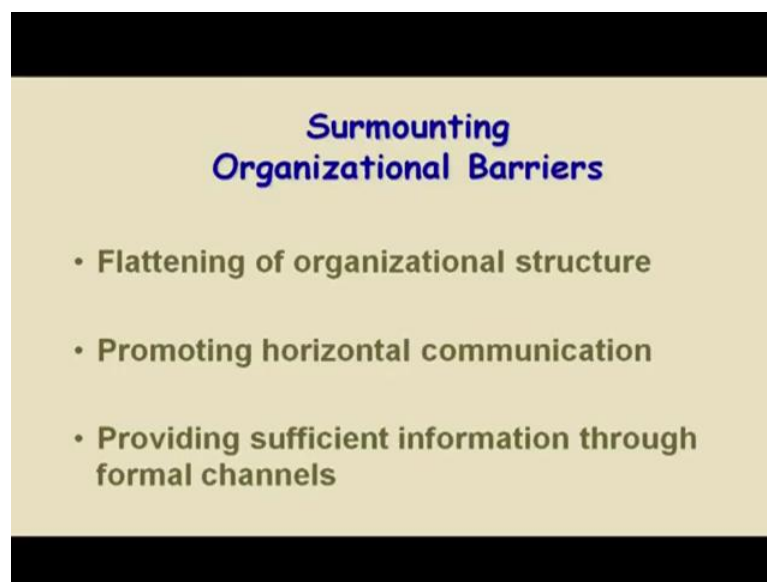
Apart from that the dissemination should be done through several channels, for example, the boss of the company announced it on loud speaker from a high distance. So, the flight went when he was making the announcement, there was some noise disturbance. So, people could not hear it the date that he mentioned the time that he mentioned they could not hear it. So, each one said something about it. So, use other channel. So, write it display it on the notice board. So, people can see it clearly, send SMS, and tell them the date and time send e mail. So, many channels when you use where it is important do not confuse that now I am suggesting excessive use I am just saying where it is likely to be misunderstood. Then you use more channels to make the meaning go very clear. So, that the persons who receive it they can use it effectively.

Also try to involve a feedback system involving more than one source. Now, there are institutes where people want to complaint about the manager or the in educational institutes, the head of the department. Now, the protocol I says if you want to complaint

about these people to higher authorities, you have to get it forwarded by these people. First your own complaint has to be signed by your head of the department against whom you giving the complaint, otherwise he will not forward it, but giving itself is going to put you in a great dilemmatic situation because he is not going to forward it that easily. So, there should be these feedback system involving more than one source it is not only this person the head or the manager who will take all feedback and give it to the higher authorities, but there should be various other sources that can be boxes kept where they give the feedback there could be hours specified once in a week at least where the higher authorities meet the concerned people.

There could be other ways they can be allowed to even email or call the people at a particular time. So, make these channels open for feedback, so that will again reduce the organizational barriers overall creating open environment for interaction and feedback will almost minimize any kind of miscommunication.

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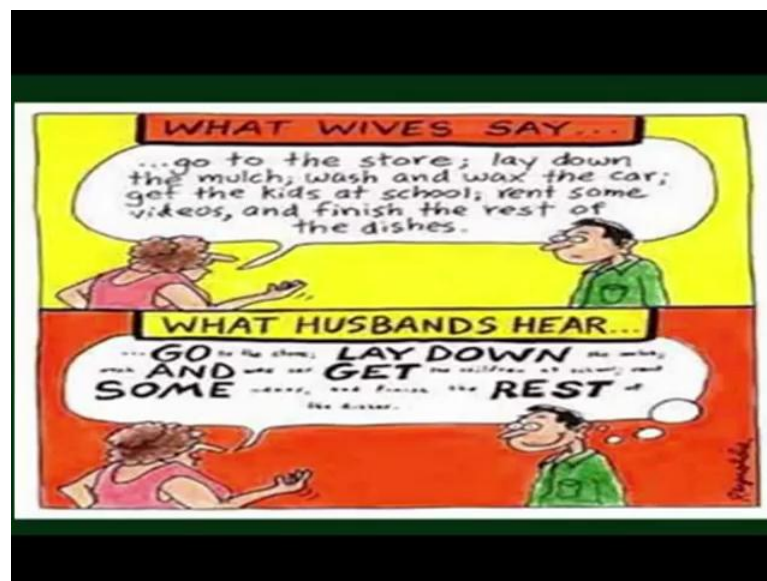


Also flattening of organizational structure that is instead of the pyramid either way the inverse modal that is from top to bottom and bottom to top, whether in the way it rises to a pyramid or it comes down from a pyramid instead of that, if you follow flattened model that anybody can get across to anybody that is the horizontal mode of communication if

that is promoted further. So, that will again create harmony, minimize miscommunication, and enhance effective communication also. If you are there at the helm of affairs try to provide sufficient information through normal channels. So, in some companies e mail is the formal channel in some other sending notice is the formal channel. So, all this formal channel when you send the information give sufficient information do not reduce information. So, that it causes confusion.

Just I want to conclude this with a lighthearted note on miscommunication, it is a joke and I found it interesting from the net I thought I should share it with you. This is the kind of miscommunication happens sometimes because of misperceptions you use filters in your mind and you selectively choose what you want to hear. So, that is illustrated in a jovial manner.

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So, what wife say, the wife says go to the store lay down the mulch. So, that is like putting it on the ground wash and waxes the car, get the kids at school rent some videos and finish the rest of the dishes, now she has given. So, many jobs for the entire day and what husbands hear as the way it is represented by the cartoon the husband here he hears only the key words that he wants to hear and he has put a filter in his mind and then he misperceives what is said to his favor. So, he hears only these words go lay down and get

some rest simply he takes it as go and sleep where as the wife has given the work for the entire day now this is a funny way of telling how misperceptions leads to miscommunications.

Hopefully with this example and the other illustrative examples that I gave you are able to grasp what I mean by miscommunication. So, keep your action interaction process complete and then use appropriate language used to remove the other emotional interferences, used to avoid this type of filters, the perceptual filters you keep in your mind do not take only what is favorable even if somebody trying to criticize you, try to listen to the criticisms with complete utmost intent of listening it actively. So, that it will help you positively if you remember all these once.

So, you will be able to develop grow as an effective communicator and as it was pointed out in the previous one developing your communication skill is not a big issue it is just like any other skill it is just a matter of practice. So, your patience perseverance that will help you to practice it and avoid a miscommunication to the maximum extent possible I hope these tips and suggestions will definitely help you to grow further in terms of developing your personality and becoming a very effective communicator.

Let me conclude this with wishing you once again to become a very effective communicator in all your chosen areas. Thank you for watching this video, I will get back to you with more aspects related to communications particularly the non-verbal communication.

Thank you, have a nice day.