Advance Course in Social Psychology

Lecture 33: Communication - Part VI

Hello friends, welcome back. Today I am going to continue my discussion related to communication. And in this discussion, I will talk about directions of communication that is types of communication in form of formal and informal communication that how information flows formally and informally among employees. Then I will also talk about informal communication and how different patterns of communication takes place in form of rumors, types of rumors and grapevine. Grapevine a pattern of informal flow of information among members and most importantly barriers in communication. Before coming to this point, I will start talking about directions of communication that is formal and informal communication.

Formal communication is sharing of official information at the workplace among all the members through established hierarchical structure or organizational structure which pertains that information will flow from one point to other routes of the organization in a very formalized fashion. There is hierarchy and information will flow in hierarchical manner. It can be defined as a flow of sharing of information regarding organizational activities through a proper channel right from top to bottom, but it will only flow through proper channel. So, this is informal communication.

It is dictated by the established hierarchical organizations of the business and can be defined as sharing information regarding organizational activities. So, examples of formal communication can be in form of reports, in form of post descriptions, it can be about work commands, it can be about sharing of policies and procedures, it can be about distribution of rewards and allocation of resources for performance of the employees. It is also related to sales and marketing of any particular product even maintaining the inventory that what kind of units are being used to assemble any product. All these information are being shared in a very formal fashion which is termed as formal communication. Most of the time when we are talking about formal communication it is between the superior and the subordinate and it comes under formal communication through written most of the time through written source of communication.

So, formal communication is issued by group leaders and managers to assign goals, to retain some information, to retrieve some information from the other authorities, to provide job instructions and formulate company policies and procedures and feedback to employees. Now feedback is a filter mechanism of information that who has performed at what level and that is being communicated to every employee in a formal fashion. This is not only about sharing information it is about procedures, policies, feedback mechanism, inventory, maintenance, about sales, about marketing, about allocation of resources. This is the pattern of formal communication in any organization. So, the direction of communication in formal communication is from top highest authority to the subordinates and through proper channel.

So, there are four kinds of formal communication upward, downward and horizontal. Upward communication the information is transmitted from a lower to a higher level may be any subordinate would flow the information from his level to the higher authority that is from subordinates to supervisors and this kind of communication boost the morale of the employees and is found in a democratic environment. When any subordinate is approaching or communicating any information to higher authority and it is being acknowledged and appreciated by higher authorities it has a very profound effect on the employee because the person feels respected and he experiences a right of freedom to voice his opinion. This kind of communication is only possible or can be experienced where the work environment or the leader is democratic in nature. The other is downward communication as the term implies the communication flows from the higher to the lower level that is from superior to the subordinates and it is suitably found in any authoritarian environment where strict organization or hierarchical structure is being followed for the flow of the information.

This is downward communication. Other is horizontal or lateral communication. This kind of communication takes place among peers of the same or different departments. That means here the communication network can also be all channel network. So, in this kind of communication members from different levels or departments come and interact with each other, share all the technical or formal information with each other regarding the policies and procedures of the overall organization.

This is how this type of communication is being maintained under the term formal communication where all the members of the organization are coming together to share any information. So, upward, downward and horizontal or lateral communication are the three forms of formal communication. So, here it is just a diagram to define and give a pictorial representation that what kind of formal communication flows in any organization. So, it is being mentioned on the slide that when an organization communication occurs by following the prescribed or official or predetermined rules, policy and regulations of the organizations it is called formal communication. It is governed by the established chain of command.

So, in all the three pictures on this slide there is a formal environment and how communication is being shared among members of the organization. So, we can say that communication can be described in four characteristics. That means formal communication has four major characteristics. The first is the density of communication or the volume of information that is being shared among members. The quantity of communication among the members, the distance between the members, how far the message must travel through the network to reach the receiver.

So, it all depends between the leader and the manager that which relevant information must go to which level for its processing. This is the distance between the members that is the leader and the member, the path of the channel to communicate with others, the ease with which members communicate with each other. So, this all depends on the type of leadership styles that are being followed whether it is authoritarian, it is democratic or laissez-faire. What kind of leadership patterns are being followed accordingly the information can be flowed or shared within the other members in the organization. So, the path if it is from it is downward communication that is from subordinate to superior then definitely the channel is open, it is free.

But if it is authoritarian it becomes difficult to channelize the information. And the other is the centrality of the position of members that is to what extent the members are peripheral to the group. Members who are central to the position are more committed to work than those in less position. For instance in any stranded or chain command communication network, may be the first person the leader or the manager is a central intercommunication network and he is the central to the position. He may be the most person who is very much interested in performing the task.

But since the communication network is so slow and stranded that may be the last member in the network will not have that kind of zest and enthusiasm to perform the task because the communication is obstructive. The first member cannot communicate with the last member in the chain. So, this can sometimes delay the communication or processing of the information although the person who is central in the network will have access to the maximum information and at the same time he is more eager and enthusiastic to work and maintain communication with the other members of the group. So, these are the four characteristics of any formal communication. Next comes informal communication.

Unofficial information which is being flowed among members from one group to another or from one department to another irrespective that person is falling in which hierarchy within the organization. But still it is being shared with the other members in a very unofficial manner that is termed as informal communication. So, informal communication is unofficial in nature and is based on the informal social relationships of members at the workplace. Irrespective that employees are coming from different departments, but still member have social relationship with each other they tend to share maximum information in a very unofficial manner. This information is outside the hierarchy of the business structure and is a result of the natural desire to communicate with each other freely and frequently.

So, as soon as member becomes unofficial to share the information with their colleagues who are very close to them and they have informal relationship with those members or colleagues then that information sharing or tendency to share information is termed as grapevine. It spreads like wildfire from one branch to another or from one department to another and people tend to rely on

those information. So, this kind of information is known as informal communication. It stretches in the department from one direction to another or from one department to another. So, grapevine is an informal chain of business communication and is called because it stretches throughout the organization in all directions irrespective of the authority levels.

  Even the topmost authority can share in any information in a very unofficial manner to different kind of peoples in the department or organization. The most important feature of grapevine is that it is not at all controlled by the management. Nobody can control these kind of tendencies at workplaces and people tend to believe those news because it also reflects an individual desire that some information should be true and it should be happened in the environment. It is not controlled by the management. It is perceived to be reliable than the formal communication issued by the top management.

  In any information that has been shared by the management officially, but unofficially it is shared to other members of the group. It automatically becomes unofficial and people tend to tarnish those information for their own sake and tend to rely at the same time. The other features are that the information is communicated to only those whom he or she trusts. One member will share that information to another coworker if the relationship is very strong and it is trustworthy. The other person is trustworthy.

  It largely serves the self-interest of the people as I mentioned that people tend to believe because it reflects their own desire and at the same time it serves their own interest to happen in its own way. It helps in achieving better human relations because more trust is generated among members that if A has disclosed some information about his own department to the other, then people tend to trust each other a lot. At the same time people tend to share this information to be more close and proximal to their employees and satisfy the psychological needs for instance sense of belongingness and they are being respected. In order to satisfy the psychological needs people tend to engage in this kind of informal communication. It helps in identifying the issues that create anxiety among members and can act as filter and feedback mechanism.

  And people tend to react to those informal communication, people tend to express their desires their anxiety and the system tend to understand that what is the state of discomfort among members and at the same time based on these feedback mechanisms sometimes the structure also focuses on the problems of the employees they face in their day to day work life. It is particularly valuable for translating formal communication into groups own jargon. Now jargon is a technical word that when people share any information unofficially they use jargons they will not use any direct or official language to communicate that information. They have a technical language which has a very different meaning and it is very difficult to crack the meaning of those words. Only people in the same organization can only understand or decode the meaning of those words.

So, those words are termed as jargons used in profession and that people easily do not understand. So, this is the nature of informal communication in form of grapevine. Next comes rumors. This is another form of informal communication and is termed as rumor derived from Latin word rumorum which means noise. Different kind of rumors news are coming from all the corners of the organization and people have different meanings associated with those rumors or information.

So, rumors can be defined as a tall tale of explanations of events circulating from one person to another in any organization related to any person event or object or related to any issues of public concern. The rumors are recurrent form of communication through which people are caught together in an ambiguous situations. It leads to confusion only. Different kind of information is being shared with the members which is twisted, which is manipulated and people ultimately fall in a situation of ambiguity which is full of misinterpretations and ambiguity that how to understand the real information or crack the meaning of the real information. So, rumors attempt to construct a meaningful interpretation by pooling their intellectual resources.

We tend to hear some news within the organization from some person. We are not clear what information is all about and we tend to pool our own understanding and resources in a very constructive manner and try to associate meaning to that information. This leads to distortion of information processing, but at the same time it is termed as rumors because people attempt to create a situation of ambiguity. So, rumors are baseless and unverifiable. Nobody can ask anybody that who has spread this rumor because it is coming from unreliable resources.

We cannot find the original source of that rumor and we cannot verify. They are based on overactive imagination of a person and it spreads like wildfire. Again it represents an individual self-interest although it is not going to happen, but when it is been expressed in form of rumor then it spreads like wildfire. People become confused and elated that something good or bad is going to happen and it creates anxiety among people. Rumors consist of inaccurate messages and become taken as fact as it must be true because everyone knows it.

Nobody has the idea that from where that rumor which is a wrong information has evolved. It is circulating among all the members like fire, but people tend to trust it because everybody knows about it. So, they have an impression that if everybody is doing it then that information has to be true. Although the information is not true and people tend to pool all the intellectual resources to make it true. This is the feature of rumor which is about recurrent form of communication through people and are caught together in an ambiguous situation.

There are lots of rumors, pipe dreams. Rumors which reflect public desires and wishes for outcomes are known as pipe dreams. For instance, employees would spread any rumor that this Diwali the bonus will be doubled. Although it is not going to happen, but it is an employee's interest, self-interest to happen. So, it has been spread in a way that people tend to wait that that wish should come true and it becomes a rumor. Ultimately, the outcome is in form of disappointment when it proves to be false.

This is an example of rumor in form of pipe dream where people have a desire or wish that something should come true, but in the end the outcome of that desire is disappointment because it was a rumor and the organization did not plan as what the employees are desiring for. The other is bogey rumors. Rumors that are based on people's fears and anxiety. Any country who is in danger can spread a rumor out of anxiety, fear and insecurity that the counterpart can attack anytime.

This is a bogey rumor. People are fearful, they are full of anxiety and insecurity and they express their anxiety and insecurity in form of rumor that what if it happens. Now what if it happens is not looked upon it and people tend to spread that this can happen. So, people this express people's fears and anxiety and such rumors are likely to arise under conditions in which people are uneasy about things. Uneasy here means they have fear, they have insecurity.

The other is wedge drivers. Rumors in which people intentionally give malicious statements about other person or coworkers in order to tarnish their images. This is an example of wedge drivers where one coworker can spread malicious information and statements about his or her coworker to damage his reputation and it is a form of verbal attack or verbal aggression. This is how people tend to spread bad words about the other person. So, this is wedge drivers.

And the other is home stretchers. It is a kind of rumor where even organization authority tend to spread deliberately any rumor before any specific decision has to be taken. Before any merger and acquisition should occur in any organization, the authorities would tend to spread a different kind of rumor in order to wait for the employees for the real decision and they tend to engage members in different direction. So, rumors designed to reduce the degree of ambiguity in a situation by telling a story about something before it happens. So, this is how for example, any merger and acquisition has to happen in any organization then authority would create or spread or design any rumor in a way that people are not focusing or engaging in the final decision making and at the same time they are engaged in a different differently designed rumor. So, these are the types of rumors which exist in any organization which express people's wishes and desires, their anxiety and insecurity and at the same time their insidious nature in terms of verbal aggression.

So, these are the types of rumors in form of informal communication that takes place in any organization which are not controlled by the management, but this is a natural communication that occurs at workplaces. Next comes barriers to effective communication. Now since we are talking about communication that how information flows or information is being shared from one channel to another, from one employee to another, higher to lower to higher levels, but at the same time communication can never be smooth. Some barriers are being experienced by the employee or the employer or the leader or the manager which sometimes makes it difficult for people to understand the real message of the information or the message that has been shared by the other person. So psychologists have identified certain barriers to effective communication.

The first is semantic barriers, the other is psychological barriers and organizational barriers. The first is semantic barriers. This is the possibility of misunderstanding the feelings of the sender of the message or getting the wrong meaning to it. Similarly the sender has shared some information based on his knowledge and experiences and sends the information to the receiver. Since the receiver is not having a concise knowledge about any issue or topic, there are chances that may be the receiver will be unable to interpret the meaning of the information and it can create a conflict between the two people.

Now this misinterpretation can be based on the words or the signs or figures that can be used in the communication flow and how the person face to understand the meaning of that information contained in that information. This creates doubtful situation or sometimes conflict between two people. So this happens because the chief language related barriers have been experienced while sharing information. Now chief language related barriers means that there is some semantic barrier in the communication or interpretation of the information because the words, the speech, the language that has been used are not clear to the receiver. This kind of barrier creates linguistic chaos in the process of information.

So semantic barriers can happen because of badly expressed message. For example, the sender has used any improper or obscure language that can hurt the feeling of the receiver and at the same time the receiver can also misinterpret the information hidden in the message. This barrier is created because of the wrong choices of the words or the invalidating language and wrong sequence of the sentence that what should be the arrangement of the information also can create some confusion, ambiguity or chaos. So this kind of barrier is termed as linguistic chaos as a information is not sent in simple language. So the best way to avoid this kind of barrier, semantic barrier especially in sharing information is to use unambiguous language and words.

That means simple language and words will enable the sender and receiver to maintain communication at every point of time. The other is faulty translation. A manager receives much information from his superiors and translate it for the employees. Once the information has to be

molded according to the understanding of the environment, if there is little carelessness in this process, it can lead to faulty translation and create a barrier in communication. Another example may be that whatever communication network has been used to share information whether it is stranded, chain, wheel or circular or all round network, no matter when the information is being transferred or transmitted from leader to manager or from subordinate to superior or vice versa, that information must be translated in a proper way and language so that the processing of the information and execution of the task is very much in alignment else it leads to faulty communication and can obstruct the performance of the employee or the organization.

So meaningful translation plays very effective role to make the communication smooth and conducive. The other is technical jargons. The more the technical words are being used in day to day communication at work places, the more it is difficult for the employees to crack or decode the meaning of the process. So avoiding technical jargons is very important although it exists in any organizations. So generally it has been observed that the people or employees are connected to some unique technical group who have a separate technical jargons or words and it is difficult to understand those words then it creates a communication gap or barrier among members of the organizations and it ultimately blocks the communication and the work process also gets hampered.

So if I repeat that means badly expressed message, faulty translation and technical jargons if can be handled effectively can lead to avoidance of semantic barriers. Apart from it some technical jargons that are being used at work places are for example in business environment bank for the buck. This means a term that means to get the most of your money. So all these kind of jargons are being used in day to day life at work places. Due diligence that is putting maximum effort to come to a decision or complete a task.

Sweat equity, getting a stake in the business instead of pay. 9 to 5 it is very much relevant to us that it is a 9 to 5 job that means a standard work day or standard amount of time that has to be invested at work. Chief cook and bottle washer a person who holds many responsibilities. Similarly, even in business worlds we have discussed about social networks how network jargons are used in day to day life in business environment. BTW by the way CU around CYA, FAQ frequently asked questions, H2H hope this helps, message of the day, laugh out loud, TTYL talk to you later or BFF best friends forever. So these are the technical jargons that are being used in business environment and sometimes create a lot of confusion and communication gap among members and ultimately creates a semantic barriers to communication.

The other is body language and gesture coding. We are in a board meeting just only shaking head does not mean that the person has agreed to it. So the way the facial expressions and body movements align with each other will tend to create more confusion. So the person has to be more

explicit even in body language that what message you are trying to communicate to the other members in the meeting. So this is body language or gesture decoding. How you decode the body language of the other person? For example, moving one's neck to reply to a question does not indicate appropriately whether the meaning is yes or no.

   So one has to keep his body language in alignment with his thought process so that it is easily decoded by the other members of the group. Once it is not decoded then again a communication gap has been created within that interaction or meeting. Next comes psychological barriers. It is all about emotions and affect, effective events that a person encounters at workplaces. The first barrier is premature evaluation that even the information has not been received by the person.

   The person tries to dig out different kind of meaning from that information that has to be received and there is premature evaluation. But premature evaluation will ultimately lead to chaos or conflict between two people. So before information has not been received creating meaning out of that information will ultimately create some chaos only. Therefore receiving information full at once in hand helps to interpret the information in a very meaningful manner. Otherwise the information gets dampened and it can create a communication gap between the receiver and the sender.

   The other barrier psychological barrier can be lack of attention. Any person who is preoccupied and at the same time receiving some new information can never be aligned in the brain and this leads to create a confusion to what kind of information or what quantity of information has been absorbed by the receiver and how it will be interpreted in future. For example, the boss is already occupied with some important task and some other employee comes and add on some information to him. Because the boss is already preoccupied in the previous task it can lead to distraction and there can be misinterpretation of the information. So premature evaluation and lack of attention can create a sort of communication barrier between two people.

   The other is loss of transmission and poor retention. When a person receives a message after it has passed through many people generally it loses some of its truth. Definitely it can be transformed into rumor or grapevine as well. This is termed as loss of transmission. The loss of real content in the transmission of information during the communication process it is a psychological barrier because it has a very different impact on one person to another. Whereas poor retention of information means that with every next transfer of information the actual form of truth in the information is altered.

   So definitely one person is receiving this quantity and quality of information if it is being transferred to the other half information will be reaching to the next person and that too with loss

of truth in it. So this creates a psychological barrier based on ambiguity, based on complete information about facts and figures and how it creates a barrier or difficulty to decode the meaning out of that information. The other is distrust. The sender and the receiver must trust each other. If there is a conflict between the sender and the receiver both cannot trust each other and there can be a chance that one person can hide information to share with the other person.

So this has an opposite meaning for the message and the communication will become meaningless. So trust plays a very important to avoid any kind of barrier in communication. And the last is organizational barrier.   This affects the capability of the employees as far as communication is concerned. Some major organizational hindrances in the way of communication are complexity in organizational   structure that is the formal division acts as a barrier in communication.

For example, when a lower level employee has to send his message to the superior to the top level there is a lurking fear in his mind that the communication may be faulty and this type of fear cannot convey himself clearly. He cannot convey himself clearly on time and delays decision making process because there is difficulty to approach the higher authorities. The person is hesitant and is inhibited to convey the message or share the information to the higher authority. When these kind of hesitation and inhibition occurs within an individual then the person is delayed in processing the information and the outcome is that there is delayed decision making process which hampers an individual's functionality.

This is complexity in organizational structure. If the environment is more democratic in nature then the same subordinate can easily approach any superior employee or authority and that decision making can be fastened. This is the difference that if a structure is complex then definitely it creates organizational barriers in terms of communication. The other is unwillingness to communicate. The subordinates do not want to send any information to the superiors and the subordinates feels that the information is negative and will adversely affect them.

The effort is made to conceal that information. It becomes imperative to send the information it is shared in a modified or amended form. Thus the subordinates by not clarifying the facts becomes a hindrance to communication. If there is distrust among members even in the between higher and lower authority then any information can be amended, can be manipulated which can create a sense of distrust among members and as a result the communication becomes hampered. So unwillingness to communicate either from the subordinate side or from the superior authority side any end that manipulates the information will make or create a barrier in the communication process and the other is lack of proper incentive.

Lack of incentive to the subordinates creates a hindrance to communication. Here lack of incentive means that the suggestions or ideas are not given any importance. The more the system is free, the structure is free and approachable to each other. People have more confidence on the higher authorities, trust on the higher authorities that their ideas and opinions will be respected or they have right to voice their opinion. So it is an incentive to them to understand each and every word of the communication sharing. But once they understand that there is no respect to their own opinions and beliefs then subordinate itself become indifferent towards the higher authorities and it creates a communication gap among higher and lower authorities.

So based on these barriers we can say that if the organization structure is less complex members are more willing especially the lower level employees are more willing to share information based on the type of environment they have and having incentives of freedom to voice their opinion can reduce organizational barriers to communication. This is all about communication, barriers to communication. We are through with this unit. Thank you so much. Thank you.