

# BUSINESS COMMUNICATION (FA1)

## CERTIFICATE IN FINANCIAL ACCOUNTING



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## **PREFACE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Institute noted a number of difficulties faced by students when preparing for the Institute's examinations. One of the difficulties has been the unavailability of study manuals specifically written for the Institute's examinations. In the past students have relied on text books which were not tailor-made for the Institute's examinations and the Malawian environment.

### **AIM OF THE MANUAL**

The manual has been developed in order to provide resources that will help the Institute's students attain the needed skills. The manual has been developed in such a way that even those who would like to study on their own can do that. It is therefore recommended that each student should have their own copy.

### **HOW TO USE THE MANUAL**

Students are being advised to read chapter by chapter since subsequent work often builds on topics covered earlier.

Students should also attempt questions at the end of the chapter to test their understanding. The manual will also be supported with a number of resources which students should keep checking on the ICAM website.

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## FA 1: BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

### AIM OF THE COURSE

To equip students with skills necessary for effective communication in business.

### OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course the student should be able to:-

- i. Demonstrate an understanding of the communication process in business settings.
- ii. Write business documents effectively.
- iii. Demonstrate an understanding of the flow of communication in an organization.
- iv. Communicate effectively in different oral settings.
- v. Use information technology for communication in business settings.

### FORMAT AND STANDARD OF THE EXAMINATION PAPER

The paper will consist of 6 questions each carrying 25 marks. Candidates will be required to answer 4 questions. In addition to the content, the Business Communication module emphasizes on the correct use of language in terms of sentence construction, correct spellings, choice of words and punctuation. Therefore, **5 marks** will be allocated to **correct language use in each question**. However, in those questions which require extended writing, like memos, letters and reports there will be additional marks for correct use of language.

### SPECIFICATION GRID

This grid shows the relative weightings of topics within this subject and should guide the relative study time spent on each. Over time the marks available in the assessment will equate to the weightings below, while slight variations may occur in individual assessments to enable suitably rigorous questions to be set.

Syllabus area	Weighting (%)
Communication Theory	10
Language Skills	8
Business Communication	25
Oral Communication	17
Organizational Communication	15
Small Group Communication	7
Interpersonal Communication	10
ICT	8
TOTAL	100

### Learning Outcomes

#### 1. Communication theory

In the exam candidates may be required to

- 1.1. Explain the aims of communication
- 1.2. Describe the communication process
- 1.3. Identify the eight elements of communication

- 1.4 Describe the three media of communication
- 1.5 Define non-verbal communication
- 1.6 Explain the functions of non-verbal communication
- 1.7 Discuss types of non-verbal communication.
- 1.8 Outline the barriers to the communication and suggest how they can be overcome

## **2. Language skills**

In the exam candidates may be required to

- 2.1 Identify the parts of a sentence
- 2.2 Construct effective Sentences

## **3. Business communication**

In the exam candidates may be required to

- 3.1 Describe the characteristics of good business writing
- 3.2 Explain the 7 principles of effective business writing (7C's)
- 3.3 Write coherent paragraphs
- 3.4 Describe the four aspects to consider when planning business messages
- 3.5 Explain the uses of a memorandum
- 3.6 Outline the parts of a memorandum
- 3.7 Write memos in response to different situations in the organization
- 3.8 Demonstrate understanding of effective notices
- 3.9 Outline the features of a notice
- 3.10 Design effective notices
- 3.11 Describe the purposes of business letters
- 3.12 Describe the importance of each of the parts of a business letter
- 3.13 Write different types of business letters.
- 3.14 Define a report
- 3.15 Describe the parts of a short formal report
- 3.16 Write effective reports

## **4. Oral communication**

In the exam candidates may be required to

- 4.1 Describe the basic principles of oral communication
- 4.2 Outline the measures to be taken when preparing for oral presentations
- 4.3 Discuss types of speeches
- 4.4 Explain the different oral presentation styles
- 4.5 Describe the methods of delivering a presentation
- 4.6 Use audio-visual aids in a presentation
- 4.4 Describe the listening process.
- 4.5 Discuss the reasons for listening
- 4.6 Describe the approaches to effective listening
- 4.7 Describe the effective use of the telephone in the organisation
- 4.8 Identify different types of interviews
- 4.9 Explain the communication skills related to interviews
- 4. 10 Outline the roles of the interviewer and the interviewee

- 4.11 Describe the phases of the interview process
- 4.12 Mention the purposes of meetings
- 4.13 Describe the types of meetings
- 4.14 Outline the roles of officers and participants in a meeting
- 4.15 Convene a meeting

## **5. Organizational communication**

In the exam candidates may be required to

- 5.1. Examine the importance of communication in an organization
- 5.2. Describe the functions of communication in an organization
- 5.4 Differentiate the various communication network patterns
- 5.5 Discuss the flow of communication in the organisation
- 5.6. Analyze the advantages and disadvantages of informal communication

## **6. Electronic communication**

In the exam candidates may be required to

- 6.1 Demonstrate understanding of computerized systems of communication
- 6.2 Explain usage of different forms of electronic communication
- 6.3 Set up relevant electronic communication according to different situations
- 6.4 Analyse the effectiveness of messages transferred electronically

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# UNIT 1: COMMUNICATION THEORY

## OVERVIEW

This unit provides you with information on:

- Definition of communication;
- Elements of the communication process;
- Media / Forms of communication;
- Nonverbal communication; and
- Barriers to communication.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- a) Define communication;
- b) Explain the stages of the communication process;
- c) Identify barriers to communication; and
- d) Suggest ways of overcoming the barriers.

## Introduction

Communication is an important element in life. Both animals and human beings need communication to survive. It is something we do all the time, mostly without thinking about it. All too often there is a difference between what we say and what we think we have said, and between how we feel we have handled other people and how they think they have been treated. Hence the need for careful planning to communicate effectively when such 'gaps' occur.

## Aims of communication

Communication must have an aim or a purpose. The aim can be to:

- Inform, for example the desire to supply factual information;
- Persuade-the desire to influence the recipient to accept a particular idea or opinion;
- Initiate action-the sender requires the recipient to perform a particular task;
- Enquire-to find out on the availability of a product, equipment etc; and
- Educate-give someone information about something they do not know.

## THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

### Definition of Communication

Before we discuss the communication process we need to start from the definition of the term **communication**. The word communication has been defined differently by different authors.

Here are some of the definitions:

- i. Communication is the process of sending and receiving information using previously agreed upon symbols in order to produce a desired response.
- ii. Communication is the art of imparting or exchanging of information.

- iii. Communication is the imparting, conveying or exchanging of ideas or opinions using oral, written or visual forms.
- iv. Communication is a two-way process where information (a message) is sent from one person (the sender) through a channel (medium) to another person (the receiver), who reacts by giving feedback (the response).

The common aspect of all the definitions is that communication is the exchange of information through a medium.

When you look at all these definitions you will appreciate that communication is a two way process, therefore, there should be two parties involved, a sender (transmitter, source/encoder) and a receiver (audiencerecipient/decoder). For instance in the accounts office the sender could be the accountant and the receiver could be the accounts clerk vice versa.

### Stages in the Communication Process

Communication takes place in stages as follows:

- i. The sender has a desire to communicate he/she makes a decision to communicate a message in form of an idea, feeling, attitude, opinion and so on.

Example

It could be where a member of staff has a personal problem and needs to ask for a loan.

- ii. The sender then encodes the message-puts it in a meaningful form that s/he and the recipient would be able to understand – an appropriate language (a spoken word, written word, number, picture, non-verbal communication).

Example

The member of staff has to consider how much he/she requires and purpose.

‘I would like to apply for a loan of K200, 000 to pay school fees for my children’.

- iii. The sender chooses the right medium in which to encode the message.

Example

The member of staff could choose to write a memo or meet his/her supervisor in person.

- vi. Then the message reaches the receiver who decodes/interprets it to understand the meaning.

Example

The supervisor reads the memo and understands the staff member’s need.

- v. The receiver provides feedback/response as an indication of whether the message has been received as intended.

Example

Then the supervisor advises the member of staff to complete a loan application form.

Feedback can either be positive or negative.

Positive feedback shows that the message has been understood in the way the sender meant it to be understood. The results may be the following:

- The right action is taken;
- A letter/memorandum/note is written to confirm that the message has been received;
- In telephone conversation there is accurate repetition of the message; and
- In body language there is a smile, a nod or murmur of agreement.

Sometimes negative feedback shows that the message has not been understood and the results may be the following:

- Wrong action is taken;
- No answer to the letter/memorandum is given;
- Letter/memo etc seeking clarification of the message is written;
- In a telephone conversation, there is failure to repeat the message correctly; and
- In nonverbal communication silence or protest may show lack of understanding.

## The Communication Cycle

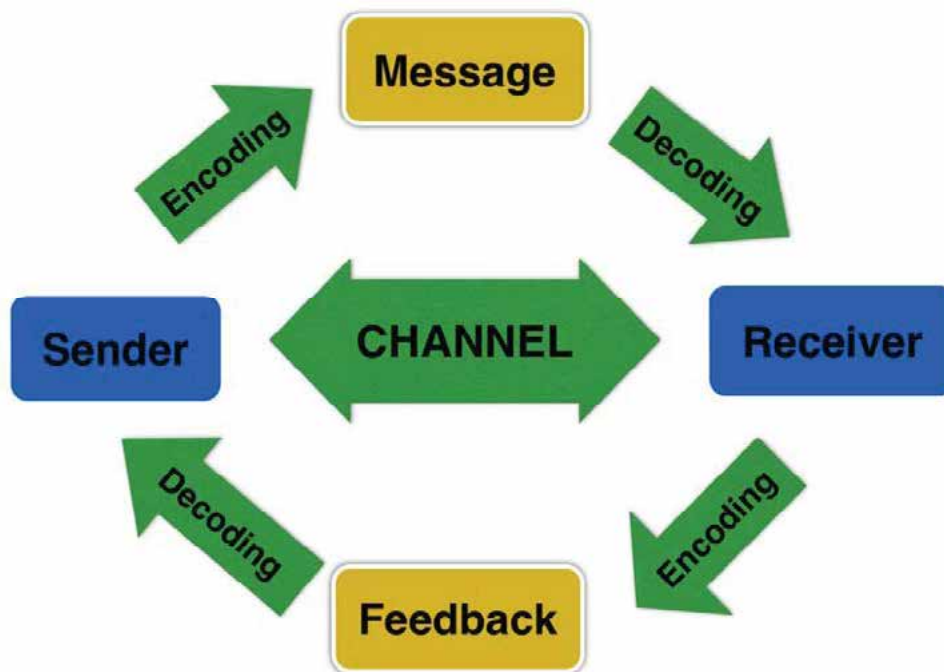


Figure 1.1 The Communication Cycle

## **ELEMENTS OF THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS**

In order to understand the communication process, you need to look at a description of the elements of the process.

### **1. The sender/The encoder/transmitter**

The sender is the source of the message. The sender initiates the process of communication-whenver the sender feels there is a need to communicate some information to the other (receiver) he/she starts the process of communication.

### **2. Encoding**

Encoding is the process in which the sender puts the information into a form suitable for sending. For example, if an accounts clerk wants to show a visitor that he/she is welcome at the accounts office he/she can greet the visitor with a smile.

At the encoding stage, the sender decides how to formulate the message and can opt for any of the following:

- The sender can use either spoken or written language,
- In other cases, the sender can also use non-verbal communication or 'body language' a gesture or sign, or
- In other instances, such as advertising, it could be a photograph or film with an accompanying slogan.

The way in which the information is encoded is crucial to the understanding of the message.

### **3. The Message**

The encoded information is known as the message. The message contains the meaning that the sender wishes to convey.

### **4. The medium**

The medium serves as means of communication it can be written, oral or nonverbal.

### **5. The channel**

A channel refers to the means of transmitting a message from the sender to the receiver. For example, for oral communication the channel could be the telephone system, personal interviews, meetings and so on; for written communication the channel could be a notice board, messenger's services and postal services etc and for visual communication the channel could be body language, a drawing etc.

### **6 The Recipient**

The recipient is the target of the message. The recipient may be an individual, a group (such as a committee), or the general public in the case of an advertising campaign.

### **7. Decoding**

Decoding is the process by which the recipient interprets the meaning of the message. Depending on other factors, the meaning may or may not be the same as the interpretation originally intended by the sender.

### **8. Feedback**

Feedback is the response or reaction the recipient gives which indicates to the sender how the message was interpreted.

## **Exercise**

1. Define communication.
2. Give two aims of communication.
3. Using an illustration, explain the communication process.
4. Differentiate between medium and channel of communication.

## **MEDIA OF COMMUNICATION**

Communication between people occurs through three modes, verbal, written and visual-non-verbal communication. Each one of the modes has both advantages and disadvantages. Therefore, effective communication depends on the sender's ability to choose the right medium.

### **ORAL COMMUNICATION**

The oral medium is the most basic of all of them and it is the most readily available in our communication. Examples of the oral medium include face-to-face interaction, oral presentations, seminars, conferences, telephone conversations, interviews, meetings and so on. Just like the other media of communication, the oral medium has both advantages and disadvantages.

#### **Advantages**

- It is a direct medium of communication.
- The physical proximity enables the listener to read the speaker's nonverbal signals.
- It provides instant interchange of opinions.
- The speaker gets instant feedback such that any signs of misunderstanding, corrections, amplifications or explanations can be made on the spot.
- It is easier to convince/persuade the listener.
- It allows the participation of all those present.
- It is ideal for establishing relationships and for resolving conflicts.

#### **Disadvantages**

- The speaker might find it difficult to hold ground in face of opposition.
- The communication among a group of people is very difficult to control.
- The decisions made on the spot are inferior because the speaker does not have the time to analyse the implication of what is said/proposed.
- In most cases there are no records of what was agreed that is why it is advisable to keep minutes of a meeting as reminder and record of what was agreed.
- Disputes could arise on what was agreed.
- The effectiveness of oral communication heavily depends on the listener. Thus the impatient, prejudiced or anxious listener might not get a speaker's message as intended.

## WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

Some of the examples of the written medium are letters, memorandum, reports notices, agenda, minutes, leaflets and so on.

### Advantages

- It provides a written record of what was communicated.
- It provides evidence of dispatch and receipt.
- It can be used to present complex ideas.
- It gives a chance for analysis, evaluation and summary.
- It can be duplicated and multiple copies produced.
- It can confirm, interpret, and clarify oral communication.
- It is appropriate for sensitive messages.

### Disadvantages

- It takes time to plan, prepare and transmit the message.
- It can be expensive.
- It is formal and impersonal.
- The reader might have problems interpreting the message.
- Feedback cannot be given instantly.
- When it has been sent, the message cannot be modified.
- The two parties cannot exchange views immediately.

## VISUAL COMMUNICATION

There are times when both the oral and written medium prove inadequate for a particular communication. Some of the examples of visual communication are charts, graphs, tables, pie charts, diagrams, non-verbal signals and so on.

### Advantages

- It reinforces oral communication.
- It provides an added visual stimulus to the message.
- It simplifies written and spoken word.
- Ideas can be quantified in number form.
- It provides simulations of situations, as in films DVDs and so on.

### Disadvantages

- It can be difficult to interpret if there is no explanation.
- There is a need for skills in comprehension and interpretation.
- It might turn out to be expensive.

## FACTORS WHICH DETERMINE THE CHOICE OF A MEDIUM

Everyday people in commerce and industry are faced with the recurring problem of choosing the appropriate medium for communicating particular information. Making such a choice is not always as straight forward as it may seem. Some of the decisions are influenced by the following basic factors:

**a) Time**

The time necessary to prepare and transmit the message, considering its urgency. A phone call, for example, is quicker than a letter; a memo is quicker than a full-scale report.

**b) Complexity of message**

If the message is complex the sender should choose a medium which makes it readily understood. A written message, for example allows the use of diagrams, calculations and so on – but if something needs to be explained and questions answered on the spot, a discussion may be preferred.

**c) Distance**

When choosing the medium, the sender should consider the distance the message is required to travel and in what condition(s) it must arrive (to be used). For instance, is there a need for a hard copy on the receiving end? Then written communication should be used.

**d) Need for written record**

The need for a written record, for example for confirmation as evidence, identification or authorization can mean that written communication would be preferred to oral. .

**e) Need for interaction**

When the message requires exchange of information, question and answer, or instant feedback, oral communication is used. Oral communication enables you to discuss complex problems or persuade the listener more effectively, because you can adapt the message to the audience's reactions.

**f) Need for confidentiality**

When the delivery of the message requires that there should be confidentiality then you have to choose the appropriate medium for such a message. In fact, to ensure confidentiality the message should be delivered straight to the receiver. The message could be either oral or written. You will appreciate that a notice board is obviously different in application from a private interview or confidential memorandum.

**g) Sensitivity.** The choice of medium should take into account the effect of the message on the recipient: the need for tactful presentation of the message or persuasive influence on the recipient, the need for personal involvement or impersonality. The effect of a letter and a face-to-face discussion in announcing news of redundancies, for example, will be quite different.

**h) Cost.** When choosing a medium, in addition to considering the other factors that have been discussed, you also need to ensure that sending the message should not be too expensive. Nevertheless, the cost of using the system (material, maintenance, charges and so on) is not the only consideration: staff time is also an expense which is why face-to-face discussion with a customer is not always an effective option.

**Exercise**

1. Mention the **three** media of communication.



2. Give **three** advantages and **three** disadvantages of each of the medium of communication.
3. Explain any **four** factors which could determine the choice of the medium.

NOT FOR SALE

## NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Non verbal communication is a powerful form of communication and it has been defined in a number of ways. The following are some of the definitions:

- All communication that occurs without using words or symbols;
- Bodily actions and vocal qualities that accompany a verbal message; and
- The communication which occurs without using words.

### Characteristics of nonverbal communication

- a) Nonverbal communication can either be **intentional or unintentional**. For instance upon seeing a friend you can smile at them to show you are pleased to see them or frown if they annoyed you the last time you met or talked to them.
- b) The meaning of nonverbal signals could be **ambiguous**. One such signal is silence which could either mean that someone is thinking about what to say or is being rude, or is deliberately withholding the information.
- c) You will also appreciate that nonverbal signals primarily **transmit feelings**. Looking at a person you might notice that the individual is either happy or sad but you cannot tell the reason behind the feelings if the person does not disclose.
- d) Through nonverbal communication an individual gives out messages **continuously**. In this case it means you cannot be in a position where you do not send a message to those looking at you. For instance in the morning when you enter the office, your colleagues can tell whether you are happy or not before you talk to them. The information comes from your facial expression.
- e) The meaning of nonverbal signals can **vary between cultures**.

### Functions of non verbal communication

#### a) To provide information

- i) **Repeating:** This is when words and their nonverbal equivalents are used at the same time. For instance verbal statements of agreement or disagreement are often accompanied by a nod or shake of the head in order to indicate either positive or negative feelings. The nonverbal signals convey the same meaning as the verbal message.
- ii) **Substituting:** In situations where hearing or speaking is impossible, nonverbal communication often replaces verbal messages. In such cases, nonverbal communication signals are substitutes because they take the place of words. For instance, someone may beckon you in a noisy place.
- iii) **Complementing:** Nonverbal signals are sometimes used to complete or accent explanations of how to do something or in descriptions to specify sizes, shapes and so on. Nonverbal signals can also be used to emphasise feelings or attitudes. However, the same complementing gesture can accompany different emotions; for instance tears/crying can mean excitement/sadness depending on the context.

iv) **Emphasizing:** You can draw attention to the most important part of your message using gestures or tone of voice to stress on the message.

**b) Revealing or hiding emotions**

i) **Deceiving:** Nonverbal signals can be used purposely either to deceive or to give a false impression.

ii) **Revealing:** There are cases when deception can be seen through one's nonverbal behaviour if the other party is sensitive or alert. For instance an exaggerated smile can reveal the communicator's inner feelings.

iii) **Accenting:** Accenting can be achieved by changing the pitch to stress on a word. For instance *address* with the stress on the first syllable means box number through which mail is sent either on post or the internet. While *address* with a stress on the second syllable means speaking either to someone or a group

Example

He is going to *ad'dress* us.  
What is his '*address*'?

iv) **Regulating:** Nonverbal communication is used to control turn taking in speech. For example you might gaze at someone in order to signal that you want to say something or you want to contribute in a meeting.

**TYPES OF NON VERBAL SIGNALS**

**1. Body Language(Kinesics)**

Body Language concerns the use of parts of the body other than the tongue to communicate feelings, attitudes, opinions and so on. This is done either consciously or unconsciously. Examples of body language include:

a) **Eye contact:** Eye contact is a direct and powerful form of nonverbal communication. Eye contact provides a lot of information. It elicits feelings of trust, openness, innocence but on the other hand, it may mean deviousness, lack of interest or show interest.

b) **Facial expressions:** Facial expressions are another obvious sign of feelings which are difficult to hide. Facial expressions include a smile, frown, raised eye-brow etc denoting, pleasure, boredom, deep thought/concentration etc.

c) **Body movements:** quick pacing up and down, finger drumming, leisurely strolling transmit impatience, boredom or relaxation.

d) **Gestures:** Gestures refer to any significant movement of limbs or body and a deliberate use of such movements as well as an expression of feelings. Gesture can also be understood as a step or move calculated to evoke response from another person. It could also be used to convey intention. The most common gestures include: nodding, shaking of the head, shrugging shoulders, scratching, yawning etc.

e) **Posture:** Posture is the carriage, state of the body and mind. It includes standing straight and erect, lounging, sitting hunched up, leaning forward, spreading oneself in a chair, lying down, crossed legs, folded arms. They convey alertness, formality, care, relaxation self confidence or (even over confidence), nervousness etc.

2 **Touching:** Physical contact or touching is an extension of the idea of personal space. It is an instinctive form of communication: research has shown that touch is an important part of the psychological development of babies and children, a source of security and the assurance of affection. As a nonverbal signal touching can be used to emphasise, interrupt, calm and provide reassurance. How a person touches another communicates a great deal of information: Is the grip gentle or firm, and does one hold the other person on the back of the upper arm, on the shoulder, or in the middle of the back? Is the touch closer to a pat, a rub, or a grabbing? In addition to the caring and nurturing/caring function, touching can communicate other messages. Social conditioning affects the extent to which touch is regarded as acceptable in a range of social contexts.

Some of the uses of touching are the following:

- Functional-Professional e.g. medical examination, haircut and so on;
- Social-politeness e.g. handshake;
- Friendship-warmth e.g. a hug, a pat on the back

### 3 **DISTANCE (PROXEMICS)**

Proximity is '*nearness*': we use the space around us to communicate our attitude to other people and objects. The following are the examples of the various distances between people:

a) **Intimate distance/zone**-this distance begins from actual skin contact to half a metre. Within this zone physical contact takes place easily. Therefore this distance is used between people who are emotionally close especially in private situations. However, the distance can also be used in public for the purpose of comforting and protecting.

b) **Personal distance/zone**-this distance of half to one metre allows communication without physical contact e.g. desks in a classroom or people in the workplace. It is also the space used in the boardroom.

c) **Social distance/zone**-consultative-when a distance of one to two metres is maintained. This allows socializing e.g. lounge furniture, or manager/client round a low coffee table or workers in an office.

d) **Public distance/zone**-a distance of more than three metres, such as a lecturer addressing students, or a speaker at a public meeting. This is the distance between a speaker and the audience during an oral presentation.

The distance between people has an effect on their communication. The seating arrangement can:

- Suggest dominance

- Aid/hinder discussion by either encouraging or discouraging interaction.

At a meeting you can control the amount of discussion through seating arrangement as follows:

- Straight rows-minimises discussion;
- Circular-encourages discussion. However, it also depends on who sits next to whom.

### 3. Orientation

Orientation is the direction in which one's body is facing, or how people present themselves in various ways, as in face-to-face communication; when they sit side-by-side or when they face each other. If you face the person who is speaking to you, you give the impression that you are listening to him. On the other hand, if you look away, it suggests that you do not care.

4. **Paralanguage**-the way we say what we say (tone) communicates a message about how we feel about the message being communicated. Paralanguage can suggest a number of emotional feelings. Paralanguage is reflected in feedback sounds of surprise, agreement, annoyance or impatience 'uh-uh, 'whew!' 'oops!' 'tsk', 'tut tut'

A heightened awareness of what people are saying non-verbally greatly assists one (manager/secretary) to read a situation and to act perhaps to head off a personality clash or calm an irate customer.

### 5. Dress and General Appearance

Dressing and appearance reflect a person's personality, attitude, interests, status, age and so on. Your personal style can indicate self-confidence or insecurity, and taste. In business contexts, it also indicates awareness of what is appropriate for a given situation. The way in which you dress says volumes about the way you regard the people you are meeting. There are different dress codes – usually just understood, but sometimes actually stated – under which you are expected to dress for a particular occasion. Breaking these codes can convey a strong message about attitudes towards the situation.

### 6. Physical Environment

The arrangement of desks, chairs, tables, and the design of the office affect the way in which the encounter or communication takes place. So the physical can either promote or hinder effective communication.

### 7. Use of time

The way we perceive time, structure our time and react to time, is a powerful communication tool, and helps set the stage for communication. Time perceptions include punctuality and willingness to wait, the speed of speech and how long people are willing to listen.

#### Exercise

1. Define nonverbal communication.
2. Outline any **three** functions of nonverbal communication.
3. Mention any **four** types of non verbal communication.

4. Mention any non verbal communication which could be important in the following situations:
- i. When you are speaking on the phone
  - ii. When you are attending an interview
  - iii. When you are participating in a meeting

NOT FOR SALE

## BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION

A barrier refers to anything that interferes with the success of the communication process.

### 1. Distortion

Distortion refers to the way in which the meaning of a communication is lost through 'handling'. There are two forms of distortion:

- **Encoding distortion** is when the precise intention of the sender (what he wants to communicate) is not translated accurately into language, so that the 'wrong' message is sent.
- **Decoding distortion** is where the language used is not properly understood by the receiver, so that the 'wrong' message is received.

### 2. Noise

**Noise** is another barrier to communication and refers to distractions and interference in the environment in which communication is taking place. Noise can take the following forms:

- Physical noise**, such as other people talking in the accounts office, customers talking at the cashier's office sound from machines or passing traffic.
- Technical noise** involves a failure in the channel (means) of communication while information is being transmitted. For example a breakdown in a computer printer as you are printing a report, a crackle on a telephone line or bad handwriting may prevent an effective exchange of information from taking place.
- Social noise** is interference created by differences in the personality, culture or outlook of the sender and recipient.
- Psychological noise** such as excessive emotion (like anger or fear) prejudice or nervousness, can interfere with the effective transmission of a message: the meaning may get clouded by irrelevant expressions of emotion or attitude, or the message may reach the recipient in a garbled state (because of a nervous stammer).

**The following are other barriers to communication:**

### 3. Lack of knowledge

- a) It is difficult to communicate effectively with someone whose knowledge of a particular subject is considerably less than yours.

### 4. Perceptual Bias/Differences in perception

People view certain things in life differently because of a number of factors such as differences in age, culture, education, social status, etc. Such perceptions could cause communication breakdown.

### 5. Lack of interest

If the recipient of the message has no interest in what is being communicated, the result is communication breakdown.

6. **Jumping to conclusions**  
Sometimes we conclude about the outcome of a communication based on previous misconceptions even experiences we have about the sender or the receiver.
7. **Stereotyping**  
Sometimes we have prejudice against certain groups of people without proper grounds. Our convictions of certain people/individuals/tribes etc. have no valid basis.
8. **Language**  
The fact that two people speak different languages to each other means that there is likely to be communication breakdown between them.
9. **Personality**  
Someone who is arrogant can affect the behavior of the other person. This kind of ‘clash of personalities’ is one of the most common causes of communication failure.
10. **Failure to offer or seek feedback**  
A situation where the receiver of information fails to answer questions asked by the sender and fails to ask questions when the information is not clear.
11. **Information overload:**  
Information overload is where the sender communicates a lot of information which the receiver is unable to handle within the given time.

### **Overcoming the barriers**

Now let us move on to examine ways in which we might make sure that we communicate as effectively as possible. If we can predict some of the likely problems before we communicate, we may be able to avoid them. Here are a few simple rules that we can follow:

#### **1. Defining the purpose:**

You could ask yourself the following questions:

- Why am I communicating?
- What is my reason for writing or speaking?
- What am I hoping to achieve? Change attitude? Change of opinion?
- What do I want the receivers to do?
- What is my purpose? To inform, persuade, entertain?

#### **2. Audience Analysis**

- Who is my audience?
- What sort of people are they in terms of personality, education, age, status, etc?
- How are they likely to react to the content of my message?
- What do they know already about the subject matter?

#### **3. Place and context**

- Where will the message be communicated? In an office?
- What is my relationship with the receiver?
- Is the message a response? Query? etc



#### 4. Subject

- What exactly do I want to say?
- What do I need to say?
- What do they need to know?
- What information can I omit?
- What information must I include?

#### 5. Tone and Style (How)

- How am I going to communicate my message? With words or pictures, or both?
- Which medium will be appropriate? Written or spoken?
- Which words will I use to create the right tone?

In some cases the answers to these questions will come quickly. Still, the golden rule is to think ahead to ensure effective communication.

#### Exercise

1. Explain what is meant by barrier in communication.
2. Explain how any four barriers can affect communication.

## UNIT 2: LANGUAGE SKILLS

### OVERVIEW

This unit provides you with information on:

- Using English effectively;
- Spelling rules and punctuation;
- Grammar;
- The PASS Principle for planning business messages;
- Principles of business writing;
- Paragraph development; and
- Forms of business writing.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- a) Use English effectively;
- b) Use punctuation appropriately;
- c) Write grammatically correct sentences;
- d) Develop effective paragraphs;
- e) Use the principles of business writing; and
- f) Write effective memos, letters, notices and reports.

The ability to use English correctly and effectively is an essential skill which all those working in business or the public service must seek to master. Often the most effective use of the language is the result of much conscious effort and practice. As such it is a **must** for the manager, accountant or clerk to appreciate the importance of speaking or writing in a way which will achieve positive results.

### USING ENGLISH EFFECTIVELY

#### Grammar for communication

A good communicator must be able to use words appropriately in order to get positive results. To achieve this, the communicator requires mastering the following language skills:

### CONSTRUCTING SENTENCES

When you are writing, ensure that the sentences give a complete meaning. As such, every sentence must have a subject and a verb.

#### Subject

The subject can be a noun, a noun phrase, a noun clause or a pronoun.

#### Examples:

- a) *The accountant* signed all the cheques this morning.
- b) *The new accounts clerk* prepared the payment vouchers.
- c) *That the strike lasted four weeks* is true.

d) *He* refuses to sign the cheques if they are not brought in a folder.

Note: The italicized words are subjects

### **Verb**

The verb expresses action or a state of being. For example the words *signed, prepared, is, and refuses.*

### **Sentence Types**

When you are writing, use a variety of sentences to express the ideas in order to give or show a particular effect.

#### **The simple sentence**

Use the simple sentence if you want to express a single idea. e.g. The customer did not settle the bill.

#### **The compound sentence**

Use the compound sentence when you want to express two independent ideas. For example The customer did not settle the bill and closed the account.

#### **The complex sentence**

Use the complex sentence to express an independent and a dependent idea. For example Although the customer settled the bill, he closed the account.

#### **Passive and Active Voice**

Use the active voice in most of your sentences, however, in situations where you want to give unpopular messages you may use the passive where emphasis is on the action rather than the doer of the action.

##### Example:

*Active* – Chikondi photocopied a lot of documents last weekend.

*Passive* – A lot of documents were photocopied last week (by Chikondi).

## **WRITING BETTER SENTENCES**

Every sentence should express a complete idea should be grammatically correct.

### **Subject Verb Agreement**

The subject and verb must agree in number. If the subject is singular then the verb must also be singular. If the subject is plural then the verb is plural too. In the present tense when the subject is in the third person singular you must add an –s or –es at the end of the verb. The singular subjects are singular nouns or pronouns.

##### Examples:

*Wrong:* The woman *walk* with a limp

*Correct:* The woman *walks* with a limp.

*Wrong:* He *like* signing the cheques in the morning.

*Correct:* He *likes* signing the cheques in the morning.

*Wrong:* They *signs* all the cheques in the morning.

*Correct:* They *sign* all the cheques in the morning.

### **Sentence fragments**

A fragment is a sentence which is not complete; and therefore not grammatically correct. Causes of fragments might be a missing subject or a missing verb.

*Examples:*

*Wrong:* Looking forward to doing more business with you.

*Correct:* We look forward to doing more business with you.

*Wrong:* Wishing you the best in your studies.

*Correct:* I wish you the best in your studies.

*Wrong:* The students working in the computer laboratory.

*Correct:* The students were working in the computer laboratory.

*Wrong:* The lecturer marking the assignments in the office.

*Correct:* The lecturer is marking the assignments in the office.

The first two examples do not have subjects. While the other two do not have complete verbs.

### **Run-on sentences**

Run-on sentences are two or more sentences which are joined without a punctuation mark.

*Examples:*

*Wrong:* Kamwendo is a lazy student he does not submit assignments.

*Correct:* Kamwendo is a lazy student. He does not submit assignments.

*Wrong:* The members of staff were given an increment they are not satisfied.

*Correct:* Although the members of staff were given an increment, they are not satisfied.

*Wrong:* Chimwala is sick he did not report for duties.

*Correct:* Chimwala is sick. He did not report for duties.

### **Parallelism**

Parallelism is a balance of words or expressions which match each other in form and usage. When words or expressions are used in a sentence they should be consistent with one another.

*Wrong:* He is strong and a competitor.

*Correct:* He is strong and competitive.

*Wrong:* John is hard working and can be trusted.

*Correct:* John is hard working and trust worthy.

### **Dangling modifiers**

The dangling modifier occurs when there is a modifier in a sentence without a noun to be modified.

*Wrong:* After watching the game, the snacks were put away.

*Correct:* After watching the game, we put away the snacks.

### **Misplaced modifiers**

A misplaced modifier is when a modifier is placed far away from the noun it modifies such that the meaning is distorted.

*Wrong:* Mavuto only has K50, which is not enough for his bus fare

*Correct:* Mavuto has K50 only, which is not enough for his bus fare

As a communicator you need to pay attention to some of the language problems which can affect the clarity of your message and render your communication ineffective.

## EXERCISE

The following sentences are incorrect. Write their correct versions

1. I like this class, it is very interesting
2. My professor is intelligent I've learned a lot from her.
3. Because I forgot the exam was today
4. Then I attended Chimwala Academy. An Academy that was a bad experience.
5. The Scene was filled with beauty.  
Such as the sun sending its brilliant rays to the earth and the leaves of various shades of red, yellow and brown moving slowly in the wind.
6. He talked for fifty minutes without taking his eyes off his notes. Like other teachers in that department, he did not encourage students' questions.  
Join two independent clauses with one of the following co-coordinating, conjunctions (and, but, for, or, nor, so, yet).
7. He enjoys walking through the country. He often goes back packing on his vacations.
8. He often watched TV when there were only reruns. She preferred to read instead.
9. They weren't dangerous criminals. They were detectives in disguise.
10. I didn't know which job I wanted. I was too confused to decide.  
Choose the correct form of the verb that agrees with the subject.
11. Annie and her brothers (is, are) at school.
12. Either my mother or my father (is, are) coming to the meeting.
13. The dog or the cats (is, are) outside.
14. George and Tamara (does not, do not) want to see the movie.
15. Benito (does not, donot) know the answer
16. One of my sisters (is, are) going on trip to France.

## UNIT 3: BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

### OVERVIEW

This unit presents you with information on:

- Planning business messages;
- Principles of effective business communication;
- Memorandum;
- Notices
- Letters in business.
- Reports

### Learning outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- a) Explain the factors to be considered when planning non-routine messages;
- b) Describe the principles of effective business communication
- c) Explain the uses of a memorandum;
- d) Explain the parts of a memorandum;
- e) Design effective notices;
- f) Outline the importance of the various parts of a business letter;
- g) Identify different types of letters;
- h) Write letters that achieve their purpose-to convey your message and maintain goodwill;
- i) Demonstrate understanding of the mechanics of letter writing and letter lay out; and
- j) Write short formal reports.

### Introduction

Business communication is a form of deliberately planned communication. In business, apart from communicating the message you also portray the image of the organization. Therefore it is important that you take your time to plan the message.

### PLANNING BUSINESS MESSAGES

Planning is an important stage of any form of communication. The planning ensures that the communication presents a message which is meaningful to the recipient/audience.

Proper planning helps you to organize what you are going to say or write bearing in mind the needs, the expectations and the abilities of the intended receiver of the message

So, the first thing you must do when faced with any task of presenting information is to come up with a plan for the communication. One common approach is PASS, and it highlights four key elements to consider in planning.

**PASS** stands for:

- Purpose - Identifying purpose or objective for the communication
- Audience - Identifying who you are communicating with
- Structure - Identifying the organization of the material you wish to communicate
- Style - Identifying the appropriate type of formality and the tone of the voice you will use.

It is worthwhile to consider the importance attached to each of the four elements mentioned.

### **The importance of considering purpose**

The basis of all organization and planning is the clear identification of the aims and objectives you are trying to achieve.

In business you might want to communicate for many reasons. For example in internal communication situations, you might be:

- Informing colleagues, line managers or subordinates about something:
- Responding to a previous communication
- Obtaining a decision or requesting action

In external markets you may be:

- Trying to raise awareness in the media
- Persuading customers to buy or
- Stimulating some other response such as ringing a customer for more information

Why is it important to identify the purpose of your communication?

- To focus your mind on what you have to communicate
- To enable you to accumulate or gather information you need for the message
- To consider the best way to send the message
- If you have a clear idea of your intention, you are more likely to know if you have achieved your objectives

### **The importance of the audience**

In any form of communication, what you are trying to do is to convey information to an audience. 'Audience' refers to the recipients of the message. Whatever is said or written must therefore, take into account the needs of the audience including:

- Who they are
- What they need to know
- Their level of knowledge
- Their circumstances of the communication
- What will most appeal to or motivate them

You should bear in mind that your relationship with the audience also matters.

## **Structure**

In business communication, the structure of the message refers to the organization of ideas. Therefore, effective communication depends on which aspects of the message the sender would want to emphasise. Nevertheless, every message should have an introduction, a body and a conclusion/summary.

## **Style**

Style is about using the best words in the best order. When planning a business message you should decide on the words to be used in order to convey the intended meaning. The choice of words determines the way the message is understood, this is called the tone.

## *Exercise*

Explain the importance of each of the following in planning business messages:

- i. Purpose
- ii. Audience
- iii. Structure
- iv. Style



## PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

In business and industry, as well as in government, important decisions, agreements and statistical information are often put in writing. Written communication is preferred to oral communication because of the permanency of the record it provides. It can also reach distant places without any distortion. Effective written communication involves planning the content and choosing the appropriate words to present the ideas. Therefore, whatever you write, a memorandum, a letter or a report, it must have the following qualities which are called the 7 C's.

### 1. Completeness

When you present information, make sure to include all the facts the reader needs for you to achieve your purpose. Therefore completeness means comprehensive treatment of the subject at hand; it results in clear motivating messages. Specific, pertinent details aid clarity whereas Nonessential details and long descriptions confuse the reader. To achieve completeness in your message always consider the reader. The person familiar with the subject will need few details but the unformed person will need complete explanations and interpretations. One way to ensure that you provide all the necessary information is to check if the communication answers all the questions asked either directly or indirectly. Provide all the information required for the reader to understand and act as desired. The information should provide answers for all the 5w and h questions. The questions are: what? Who? Where? When? Why? and How?

### 2. Conciseness

In order to ensure that you present all the points on a particular issue, you might be tempted to cover a number of pages. However, as a sender, ensure that you present all the ideas in as few words as possible. Therefore, conciseness simply means saying all that you want to say in the fewest possible words without sacrificing completeness and courtesy. The following could assist you to achieve conciseness:

#### a) Omit trite expressions

Trite expressions/clichés also called 'deadwood' should be avoided in memorandum, letters and reports. For example:

- It has come to the notice of management = Management has noticed
- Enclosed please find a copy of my C.V. = I have enclosed a copy of my c.v.
- *Please be advised that* the computer will be dispatched to you within the next two weeks=wasted words which should be left out.
- The two reports have been sent *under a separate cover*=separately.

#### b) Avoid unnecessary repetition and wordy statements

You should refrain from saying the same thing more than once unless you are convinced that the effectiveness of your communication depends on such repetition. Avoid wordy expressions like the following:

- i) A long period of time *instead of* a long time

- ii) At this point in time    *instead of*    now
- iii) Due to the fact that    *instead of*    because
- iv) In due course            *instead of*    soon

### 3. Consideration

When you write, put the recipient in mind in order to avoid offending him/her. You should try to put yourself in the recipient’s place in order to visualize the receiver’s needs, expectations, desires while at the same time taking into account the interests of your organization. Such an approach enables you to handle the issue from their point of view. This approach is called the ‘you attitude’ empathy, the human touch, or the understanding of human nature. You need to show interest in the reader and try to show how s/he is going to benefit from what you say. Emphasise positive, pleasant facts while playing down negative ones.

#### Consideration can be achieved in four main ways

- i. Focus on ‘you’ instead of ‘I’ and ‘We’. Begin the message with ‘you’ and keep your reader in the message until you finish. Nevertheless, it is not advisable to use the you approach in the following situations:
  - When the receiver has made a mistake;
  - When the receiver has expressed a different opinion from your own.
- ii. Show interest in the reader. Show your reader how s/he will benefit from what the message is saying.
- iii. Emphasise the positive, pleasant facts. Although you cannot always have a positive message, you need to de-emphasize negative information as you emphasize the positive aspects of the message. Avoid using negative words by stressing what can be done instead of what cannot be done. Above all, avoid words like no, never, impossible, cannot and so on.

Remember the golden rule: Show to others the same fairness and honesty you expect from them. In short, consideration means you are genuinely thoughtful about the recipient of your message and consider his/her probable reactions to the message.

### 4. Concreteness

Make sure that the message you write creates a vivid picture in the receiver’s mind by using specific facts and figures. You should avoid using vague ambiguous words like the following: large, low, short, several, soon, few and so on.

However, there are cases when general expressions are permissible, for example:

- i. When it is not possible to be specific.
- ii. When you want to be diplomatic.
- iii. When you want the reader to form his/her opinion or when the exact figures are unimportant.

#### *Examples*

##### **Abstract**

A significant  
The majority  
In the near future

##### **Concrete**

A 53 % loss  
62 percent  
By the end of the month

## 5. Clarity

When you write ensure that the reader should understand what you conveying. The reader should interpret your words with the meaning similar to the one you have in mind. Communicating clearly simply means writing to be understood rather than misunderstood. Clarity depends on careful, efficient planning that produces a logical, easy-to-follow arrangement of material in which ideas flow smoothly from the beginning to end.

Clarity can be achieved through:

- a) The use of short, familiar conversational words. When you have a choice between a long and short word, use the short and familiar word.
  - Avoid technical jargon. If you must use them then define them briefly and clearly
  - Ensure to write within the reader's level of understanding
  - Do not use wordy expressions
- b) Ensure that the sentences and the paragraphs express the ideas effectively through unity, coherence and emphasis.

## 6. Courtesy

As individuals, we all want to be treated with courtesy, but, when you are writing, the absence of the reader can make you discourteous. Such an approach will not get the desired results. So, always strive to write tactfully by avoiding expressions that may belittle, irritate or hurt the reader. The following are some of the expressions that can hurt the reader:

- I do not agree with you
- We do not believe
- You claim that
- Your complaint
- You have to
- Surely you do not expect
- Your failure to
- You should know

Promptness is another form of courtesy. In business, it is necessary to answer letters or memos promptly.

## 7. Correctness

When you write, ensure to use the right level of language. The appropriateness of the language will be determined by the subject matter, the purpose of the communication and the reader. Correctness is accuracy as a result of good judgement and conformity to an accepted conventional standard. After writing, you need to check your work in order to get rid of errors in the figures and the facts. You also need to check errors in tense, punctuation, choice of words and sentence construction.

## PARAGRAPH DEVELOPMENT

In addition to writing effective sentences, you also need to develop a skill in paragraph development. Therefore this section provides you with the basic information on how to write good paragraphs. Effective letters and memos are a result of well developed sentences and paragraphs.

**A paragraph is a** collection of related sentences dealing with a single idea. Good paragraphing assists your readers in following the ideas which you have presented in a piece of writing. You can have fantastic ideas, but if those ideas are not organized, your readers will not understand your message.

### Basic Rule

The basic rule of thumb when writing paragraphs is to **keep one idea to one paragraph**. If you begin transition into a new idea, that new idea belongs to a different paragraph. There are times when you can have one idea and several bits of supporting evidence within a single paragraph. You can have several points in a single paragraph as long as they relate to the overall idea of the paragraph.

### Elements of a Paragraph

To be as effective as possible, a paragraph should be unified, coherent and well developed. However these elements overlap. Using and adapting them to your individual purposes will help you to construct effective paragraphs.

### Unity

The ideas should be presented in sentences and paragraphs which are unified. Each sentence should present a clear idea and each paragraph should have one main idea. To ensure unity, link sentences together by arranging them to form a close relationship of ideas. The same point of view should also be maintained among sentences making up a paragraph. The main idea is expressed in the topic sentence. Usually the topic sentence is placed at the beginning of a paragraph. The rest of the sentences contain the details that develop the main idea. However, if the main idea is unfavorable, use the indirect approach where you start with the less important points and then the most important one.

### Coherence

Coherence is the trait that makes the paragraph easily understandable to the reader. You can help create coherence in your paragraphs by creating logical bridges and verbal bridges. In a paragraph, a logical bridge is where the same idea of a topic is carried over from one sentence to the other while a **verbal bridge is where key words** are repeated in some sentences.

### Development

The topic, introduced by the topic sentence should be discussed fully and adequately. This varies from paragraph to paragraph depending on the author's purpose. Some paragraphs have two or three sentences in which case, the paragraph could not be fully developed.

### Guidelines for paragraph development

- Use examples and illustrations
- Cite data (facts, statistics, evidence, details)
- You can use quotes and paraphrases of what other people say.

- Use an anecdote or story.
- Define terms in the paragraph.
- Compare and contrast.
- Evaluate causes and reasons.
- Examine effects and consequences.
- Analyse the topic.
- Describe the topic.
- Offer a chronology or sequence of events.

### **A Topic Sentence**

A topic sentence is the sentence that states the main idea which the paragraph is going to develop. You will notice that not all paragraphs have clear-cut topic sentences. The topic sentences can be anywhere in the paragraph.

You should start a new paragraph in the following situations:

#### **1. When you begin a new idea or point**

If you have extended idea that requires multiple paragraphs each, new point within that idea should have its own paragraph.

#### **2. To contrast information or ideas**

Separate paragraphs can serve to contrast sides in debate, different points in an argument or any other difference.

#### **3. When the paragraph is too long or the material is complex**

#### **4. When you are ending your introduction or starting your conclusion**

Your introductory and concluding material should always be in a new paragraph. Many introductions and conclusions have multiple paragraphs depending on their content, length, and the writer's purpose.

## FORMS OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

### MEMORANDA

Among the most frequently used means of communication in companies and institutions are memoranda, letters, notices and reports. Some of these means of communication are used externally as well as internally in the same way as the letter, while one, the memorandum is only used within an organization. The word memorandum (memo in short) originally meant a reminder or confirmation; a note to help the memory. It has since come to include a wide variety of written messages exchanged between people working within the same organization

In any organization, the recording and storage of the details of a lot of policies, decisions, and routine daily business is essential for the efficient running of hierarchic organization. More importantly the storage of information in written form is very essential in the accounts department.

#### Characteristics of Memoranda

- 1) Memoranda are generally short and deal with one subject.
- 2) The contents of memoranda are usually neutral and routine, but can sometimes be sensitive and confidential. Memoranda convey many different types of messages.
- 3) Unlike other forms of communication memos are written by:
  - i. One individual to another;
  - ii. An individual to a group;
  - iii. A group (representatives of members of staff) to an individual (the accountant).

#### Uses of memos

In the organization memos are used to:

- a. Send unsolicited suggestions or ideas upwards.
- b. Instruct or give advice downwards.
- c. Request or seek help or cooperation.
- d. Confirm a message, especially following a telephone conversation or discussion.
- e. Seek information, confirmation or advice.
- f. Clarify, explain or introduce a message
- g. Amend or modify existing policies or practices.

Memos sent from juniors to their senior are usually responses to requests, but memos are also used as juniors to formally convey information and ideas to seniors without being asked.

Memos are also exchanged between equals for instance arranging meetings, asking for information, placing orders among other messages.

#### Format

1. A memo contains no addresses for either the sender or receiver and no salutation or complimentary close.
2. Most organizations have their own particular style of printed form which varies considerably from firm to firm.
3. A memo may have the name of the organization and/or department across the top, simply headed '**MEMORANDUM.**'

4. The following information should be included in the memo format
  - i. **To.** identifies the receiver of the memo;
  - ii. **From.** identifies where the memo is coming from;
  - iii. **Date.** shows when the was written;
  - iv. **Subject.** states the issue(s) to be discussed in the memo, the subject must be capitalized or underlined so that it stands out;
  - v. **CC.** indicates who have received copies of the memo;
  - vi. **Encl'/Att.'** tells the receiver what else should be expected together with the memo.
5. If you have used your full name at the top, you need only your initials at the bottom. End with a full name if you have not used it at the top.

<b>ORGANISATION'S NAME</b>	
<b>To:</b> (Recipient's name or designation)	<b>Ref:</b> (for filing)
<b>From:</b> (author's name or designation)	<b>Date:</b> (in full)
<b>Subject:</b> (main theme of message)	
<b>CONTENT</b>	
<b>Signed:</b> (optional) Author signs/initials	
CC (recipient(s) of copies)	
<b>Encl. Att':</b> to indicate accompanying material	

### STRUCTURE OF A MEMORANDUM

**SUBJECT:** Synthesis of the theme/central idea of the memo.

#### Content

**Introduction** Puts the message in context by providing the reason/purpose for the memo.

Identifies the related components i.e. people, places, events, time who, why what when or where.

#### Body

Presents the main idea/essence of the memo's message- gives information, instructions, and explanations and so on.

It could be several paragraphs depending on the subject.

#### Conclusion

It states what the sender expects from the recipient of the memorandum.

## NOTICES

While the memorandum tends to receive more attention as a means of internal communication within the organisation, the importance of the notice should not be undervalued. A notice is a written or graphic message posted for general attention, which aims to attract attention to information or advice in such a way as to promote speed, ease and memory. A notice is used in situations when you want to reach out to a large number of people as a group rather than individuals. Notices are designed to achieve this through providing information in a concise and eye-catching way. Sometimes a notice is used as a back-up to the circulation of a memorandum to members of staff, reinforcing and confirming the message. The aim of the notice is to provide:

- impact and emphasis in the presentation of the message;
- longer-term display of the message, as a continual reminder and record; and
- ease and speed of reading.

Notices are designed to impart important information, therefore, you should identify the purpose of the communication. After planning the content, you can plan the design of the notice. The following are some design elements:

You should use simple and direct vocabulary and the message should be short. In addition, you should use a clear heading for the notice. The use of space between lines and wide margins helps to make the message to stand out. You should also highlight the most important words and phrases.

### DESIGNING AN EFFECTIVE NOTICE

The notice should attract attention through visual appearance and impact. The design of the notice depends on the content.

#### Essential features of a notice

**Visibility:** Use big font size on a large paper.

**Attractiveness:** Use pictures, graphics and colour to attract attention.

**Brevity:** Present the message in as few words as possible.

**Clarity:** Use a clear heading. This will ensure that the notice will draw the attention of its intended recipient.

Use action verbs to emphasise what the audience should do after reading the notice.



### Use plenty of space

- Always leave plenty of space between lines.
- Leave wide margins on both sides and at the top and bottom.

Highlight important words or phrases like dates, times of meetings, telephone number to ring in an emergency; places to assemble in case of fire and so on by:

- Using capitals
- Underlining them
- Using different colours

### Use illustrations like in the example below:



### Displaying notices

The notice must be displayed at places where it will be seen easily.

Notice boards should be sited in areas where all the relevant people will see the notices.

- They should be set at a height where the average person can read the notices
- Notice boards should be kept tidy. Out-of-date notices should be removed.
- The board should be divided clearly into sections so that notices on different topics are placed in different areas.

#### *Example of a notice*

**NOTICE**  
**ATTENTION: ALL PAEC CANDIDATES**  
**MAKE SURE YOU PAY YOUR EXAMINATION FEES**  
**BEFORE THE CLOSING DATE**

#### *Exercise:*

Design a notice to discourage noise in a library.

## BUSINESS LETTERS

### The nature of business letters

A business letter is a written medium of communication used by people belonging to two different organisations. In spite of electronic communication the business letter is still used widely to make enquiries, confirm information, collect outstanding debts, settling, advertising, complain and answer complaints etc. A business letter can further be used as a means of relaying many other messages which arise from specializations and different business situations in both the commercial and public service scenarios / world. In many instances the letter forms the only contact between organizations and acts as either ambassador, or salesman or both. Hence the appearance of the letters matters because the organizations reputation depends on it. Managers further realize the importance of composing the letter in such a manner that it evokes response from the recipient. A mastery of the skills of letter writing, an appreciation of the displayed letterhead and the letter layout are therefore essential to an efficient letter writer.

### Lay-out of business letters

Business letters have several features in common. However, some of these features may only be included if required by a specific letter. The following are the specific features:

#### a) Letterhead

A letterhead is the printed part of an official letter sheet. It is carefully designed and printed. It contains information that the recipient needs in order to reply to the letter. It has the following information:

- i. The organisation's name and status e.g. Ltd denotes it is a limited company.
- ii. The address of the organization from which the letter was sent (including postcode)
- iii. Telephone, fax, telex numbers and e-mail address.

Furthermore the letterhead gives some indication of the organisation's activities if this is not implied in its name. (Hardware and General Dealers Stockists of iron sheets, electrical appliances etc) A printed letter sheet may also include:

- A list of company directors
- The address of the company's registered office.
- Its registered number
- Its country of registration

#### b) Letter logos

The logo is the graphic symbol on the letterhead. It is very often the same trademark used for product packaging, delivery lorries, newspaper advertisements, etc. In short the logo is a concise visual symbol of what the organization does, the values it represents, how it sees itself and wants to be seen. Below is an example of Malawi College of Accountancy's logo



### c) References

Each letter will have to be precisely identified for filing and retrieval purposes. The letter reference consists of the author's and text processors' initials and paper file. For example:

**Our Ref:** Signals the reference given to the current letter-the one being written for example Ref JKF/sh, F99.6

**Your ref:** Tells the recipient the reference number of the letter to you which you are acknowledging and referring to.

**Date:** Set in sequence, day, month, year, for example 23 March,2000.

### d) The recipient's address

The recipient may be any of the following:

- An organization
- A designated' individual: The Finance Officer
- A named individual: Mr J Pahuwa - Invoice Clerk

Details of address follow immediately after the recipient's name/designation. For example:

Malawi College of Accountancy  
P O Box 30644  
Chichiri  
Blantyre 3

### e) Salutation

The opening greeting is conventionally paired with an appropriate complimentary close to mark to the end of the letter depending on the tone and degree of formality.

e.g: Dear Sir/Madam	→	Yours faithfully
Dear Dr./Mr/Mrs Dear Sir Ketumile	} }	Yours sincerely Yours sincerely

Dear Joe/Mary  
My dear Chikonde



Yours sincerely  
Kind regards  
Best wishes  
Affectionately

**f) Subject heading**

This gives a one-or-two word identification of the main subject of the letter. It directs the reader's thought to the matter in hand and provides a convenient signal for those scanning for contents when sorting mail or retrieving material from files.

e.g. House Allowance

**g) Main body**

The main body of the letter carries the content of the letter. It is divided logically into paragraphs taking the form of blocked or indented paragraphs with, perhaps, centred tables, separated by double spacing. In most cases the paragraphs are divided into introduction, body, and conclusion.

**h) Writer's signature, name and designation**

This is the writer's identity. The typist should leave space for the writers' signature. Since the signature is often illegible, the writer's name should be printed below by his department or designation. Where necessary if someone else is signing a letter on behalf of the writer, the writer's name is preceded by 'For' or **pp: (per procuorem)**. For example:

For: O M Kathamalo  
SALES MANAGER

**i) Enclosures and copy references**

If you are putting something other than the letter in the same envelope, such as a cheque, you must call the reader's attention to it. Refer to it as having been enclosed. A clear 'signal' must be put at the foot of the letter. For example Att: Curriculum Vitae or Encl: Annual Report.

If a duplicate of a letter has been sent to an interested third party, it must be acknowledged in the following manner:

C.C. (Carbon Copied to)  
e.g. CC : The Finance Officer  
The Registrar, etc

Sometimes the letter continues on the second page and these are called **Continuation Sheets**.

**j) Continuation Sheets**

The second sheet, and subsequent sheets, of the letter will be on plain (un-headed) paper. To ensure that these subsequent sheets are linked to the first sheet, they should be headed as follows:

**Name of recipient, page number in the letter, date**

e.g: P Masamba -2- 28<sup>th</sup> March, 2000

**k) Open or closed punctuation**

i. Open punctuation involves omitting all punctuation from the elements outside the body of the letter. There is no punctuation mark in the presentation of the following elements:

- the date, the address block, the salutation and the complimentary close.
- Abbreviations and initials.

ii. Closed punctuation involves the inclusion of commas after the date, each line of, the name, address block, salutation and complimentary close.

**NOTE:** The body of the letter should be fully punctuated.

**l) Letter content**

The presentation of the message in a letter is important and needs careful planning. The writer needs to plan how the letter will be introduced, how details will be presented, and how the conclusion will be given.

**The opening paragraph/ The introduction**

The opening paragraph puts the message into a context, either by initiating an action, by responding to a received stimulus etc. This can be achieved by:

- (a) Acknowledging receipt of previous correspondence
- (b) Giving the reason for writing the letter.

**The middle paragraphs – the body of the letter**

- Develops the issue(s) raised in the introduction. For example the nature of the complaint may be described.
- Depending on the nature of the letter and issues at hand you can write several paragraphs, each dealing with one principal aspect.

**The closing paragraphs**

The conclusion does the following things in a letter. It:

- Provides a summary of the main points.
- States the essential action the writer needs from the recipient for example paying a bill as in the case of a collection letter.
- Emphasizes the reason for writing the letter.

**Common types of letters**

There are different types of letters according to their functions. The following table summarizes these types:

Area	Letter Classification	Use/Purpose
General	Inquiry Acknowledgement Information Complaint Adjustment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To seek information/ confirmation</li> <li>• To provide information/confirmation.</li> <li>• To seek redress of a deficiency.</li> <li>• To rectify a complaint</li> </ul>
Financial	Collection 1,2,3 Letter of Credit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To obtain settlement of a debt.</li> <li>• To authorize an advance of credit</li> </ul>
Sales advertising	Sales Letter Follow –up sales letter Unsolicited sales letter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To sell goods or services</li> <li>• To remind of sales offers</li> <li>• To advertise goods or services.</li> </ul>
Appointment	Application Resignation Reference enquiry Reference reply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To apply for a post</li> <li>• To confirm resignation from a post</li> <li>• To seek confidential particulars</li> <li>• To provide confidential particulars</li> </ul>

### Planning a letter

Letters that get results do not just ‘happen’. They are thought about like every other form of effective communication. The writer may be guided by considering the following: What? Who? When? Where? Why? How? Etc.

To plan your letter well you will need to review the background that has led to the need for a letter. This will often mean reviewing previous correspondence, and it is helpful to underline key points in incoming correspondence and make notes in the margins which will ensure you don’t leave out important details.

As you review the background, the reader and reason for writing, the nature of the problem you have to solve will become apparent. At this point determine the type of the letter you must write. For example if a customer is claiming unsatisfactory service on your part and you are unable to satisfy the claim – an unfavourable adjustment is the likely result.

The writer of a letter acts as an ambassador for an organization who tries to maintain or build goodwill. This task may either be simple in some cases or difficult in others, depending on the anticipated reader reaction.

Letters should begin by clearly *identifying the subject* in the first paragraph and end by *suggesting what happens next* so that the reader is quite clear *who* has to do something next, or whether the matter is now complete. In between the introduction and the conclusion you include the details which should be set out in paragraphs –one main idea in each paragraph. Within this basic framework you can use your skill in choosing words to create goodwill whatever the nature of your message.

## EXERCISE

1. Read the following letter carefully and correct the errors of convention, structure and language use.

	Malawi Bureau of Standards P O Box 946 BLANTYRE
Our Ref: IMB/tp	
Mr A Zangwa P O Box 50 Blantyre	
Dear Sir	
<b>QUALITY COMPLAINT</b>	
With reference to your letter of yesterday's date, we have thoroughly investigated your complaint regarding the quality of the items dispatched to you on the 3 <sup>rd</sup> January and their does seem to have been a temporary problem in our Inspection Department on that day.	
I would appreciate further details, of the defects found, the particular product effected and its batch number. I enclose our Defects report Form, and would be grateful if your could complete and return it to me as soon as possible. I will then be more than happy to immediately replace the relevant items without delay.	
Meanwhile please accept my apologies for any inconvenience caused.	
Yours sincerely	
N Chiyembekeza Sales Director	

2. Imagine that you are working in the credit section. You have received a request for credit reference for a small company with which your firm has never had any debt collection problems. Write an appropriate reply.

## REPORTS

### What is a report?

Scholars do not agree on one definition of reports, as such, the definitions range from one extreme to another. However, the following definition is the one which has been accepted by a number of scholars. *A business report is an orderly and objective communication of factual information that serves a business purpose.* Now, let us look at the key words in the definition. The first is *orderly*. By being orderly it means the various sections of the report are presented using a specific arrangement. Reports are prepared carefully and the care in the preparation distinguishes reports from casual exchange of information. The second key word is **objective**. In a report, the facts should 'speak' for themselves. Therefore, the facts should not be biased. The basic ingredient of reports is *factual information*. The information in a report is based on facts which present the situation as it is - not as the writer sees it. The factual information is based on events, records, data and so on. Reports are not written just to be kept, but to serve a *business purpose*. Although some reports are not used immediately, they serve as a record and are used when the need arises.

A report can also be simply defined as *a document written in response to a request for information*. This definition it means that before writing a report, the writer receives instructions to investigate a problem or give feedback. In the instructions, the writer is required to gather the facts, write the report and draw a conclusion and then recommend action. In fact, reports are a form of written communication used heavily in business and organizations as a formal summary statement in response to a specific request for information.

### CLASSIFICATION OF REPORTS

Reports can be classified in various ways depending on their nature and purpose. The following are some of the classifications.

- a) **Regular and Routine.** These are reports which are submitted regularly. The examples include: health and safety reports, maintenance reports, progress reports, staff appraisal reports, sales reports, production targets reports, financial reports and so on.
- b) **Occasional reports.** These reports are submitted when something unexpected happens. For instance accident reports, disciplinary reports and so on.
- c) **Periodic reports.** These reports present an account of the activities of a task that have taken place over a definite period of time. Depending on the arrangement such reports can be written monthly, quarterly, or annually. These reports serve to appraise what has been done in the reported period and help to plan for the future.
- d) **Progress reports.** As the term suggests, the reports specify what job has been done and what still remains to be done. Progress reports are often associated with construction works and projects.

### PURPOSE



In the organization, reports are written to be used. Reports could be meant to:

- a) **Assist management** in decision-making. Those in management do not have the time to carry out detailed investigation into the matters on which they make decisions. They depend on the information collected by other members of staff. Some people are commissioned to carry out an investigation and write a report.
- b) Provide a **permanent record** and be a source of reference. The report should provide all the details necessary to be confirmed and recalled in future.
- c) Provide **information** to interested parties, such as through an article in a newspaper. This may also involve persuasion, if it is related to an issue, product or topic that is relevant to your organization or department.
- d) **Make your own views known.** There are times when you might want to suggest change of some sort, it is at this time that you might need to write a report in order to present your ideas. In this case you make the reader to appreciate the weaknesses of the current situation then you recommend the changes that should be made.

#### **Audience/Reader**

As the writer of a report, you need to realize that you know more about the subject matter of the report than the user (s). Therefore, the information should be communicated objectively so that the report users should make their own judgments. You must recognize the needs and abilities of the report user. For the report to be effective you should:

- Keep the vocabulary, sentence and paragraph structures as simple as possible to ensure that the ideas are clear.
- Be aware of the 'jargon' or technical terms which the user might not understand. If possible define these terms or jargon.
- Know the type and level of detail that will interest the users and be relevant to their purpose.

#### **Planning the report**

As a report writer, before you can begin to think about what information you will need and where you will find it, you need to consider answers to the following questions:

- i. Who is the user of the report?
- ii. What type of report will be most useful to the user?
- iii. What exactly does the user need to know, and for what purpose?
- iv. How much information is required, how quickly and at what cost?
- v. Do you need to give judgements, recommendations and so on?

When you know the user, what he/she wants and why, and if you are aware of particular constraints imposed on you in terms of report size and time, you will have a good framework for planning the structure and the content of the report.

## Style

Unlike other forms of writing such as the memorandum and the letter, the report has certain stylistic requirements. In fact, a report is unique in presentation and it is expected that the facts in the report should speak on their own and facts should be presented in a way that makes them easy to follow and understand. Some of the aspects of style are the following:

**Objectivity and impersonality.** The report should be presented objectively. Ensure to avoid all value judgements and emotions in the content of the report. The report should not be biased. Avoid using personal pronouns in the report; the pronouns can undermine the credibility of report and the recommendations. Instead use only the third person, e. g. ‘the writer’ or ‘the researcher’. For instance you should avoid expressions like *In the investigations I discovered that...* instead you say *The investigation/It was discovered that...* It often helps to use the passive voice.

**Use plain English-**simple, straightforward words that will be understood by most people. Although the report has to be clear and brief, you have to always write full sentences (not telegraphic style). Use a well-worded title that summarizes the report.

**Tense.** Reports usually present information on events that have already taken place, so they are written in the past tense, e. g. The writer *found* that...A discussion was *held*....

**Ease of understanding.** In order for the report user to follow the facts, you must organize the material logically using clear headings and the facts should lead to the conclusion(s) or recommendation(s). Relevant themes should be signaled by appropriate headings, or simply be highlighted for easy scanning.

## Structure

The structure of the report gives us three types of reports. The reports are:

- The short formal report
- The short informal report
- The long formal report

### The short formal report

The short formal report is used in contexts where a middle manager reports to senior management. It should be laid out according to certain basic guidelines. The report will be split into logical sections, each referenced and headed appropriately.

## Parts of the short formal report

### **Title/subject head**

*come up with the title*

You should write this in capital letters, for example: **REPORT ON AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE CAUSES OF LOW STAFF MORALE**

The title of the report should be written at the top of the report.

1. **Terms of reference/introduction** . The terms of reference (TORs) are the instructions which you received for you to write the report. They state what you were asked to do, who asked you and when you received the instructions. When you are writing the report, then you turn the TORs into an introduction. In the introduction you should write the purpose of the report and if necessary include the scope. In simple terms the report states what the purpose of the report was, who requested the report and when, who the writer is and if necessary when (the date) the report is to be submitted.

2. **Procedure (or method)**. In this section, you should tell the reader the steps which you took to investigate the problem, collect the facts for the report so on. The reader should know how you gathered the information. Was it by library research, observations, questionnaire, interview and so on. Where necessary, you can also indicate the number of people interviewed. For you to answer the question: How did you gather the data? You need to give information on the observations made, interviews conducted, telephone calls made, documents or computer files consulted, analyses made, meetings held and questionnaires administered. You should briefly describe the methods.

3. **Findings** The findings constitute the main part of the report. The findings section is where all the information you gathered using various methods must be presented. It does not matter whether the data are favourable or unfavourable, you should still present the facts objectively. The one who authorized the report wants to have the truth- and the truth need not always be pleasant. If you try to withhold the facts you will distort the true picture.

If the report covers more than one topic, you should use appropriate headings and subheadings. The content should be complete, but concise, and clearly structured in chronological order, or order of importance or any other logical relationship. The information could be set out as follows:

- A. Section heading
- i. Sub heading
- a) sub point

4. **Conclusions**. In this section you present your interpretation of the findings. The conclusion serves to tell the report user what the findings of the report mean. You should make sure that the conclusions are drawn from the facts which you have presented.

5. **Recommendations** In the recommendations section you suggest solutions to the problems

investigated so that the recipient can make a decision if necessary. All the recommendations should be in line with the facts.

### **The short informal report**

The other type of report is the short informal. The report is used for less complex information especially on issues which are not strictly business. For instance, if you wanted to make suggestions on social life in the organization, the short informal report would be the most appropriate. The structure of the short informal report is less developed, it will not require an elaborate layout. There are three main sections, each of which may be headed in any way appropriate to the context in which the report is written. The three parts are:

**1. Introduction/background/situation-**This section combines the introduction and the procedures and it creates the context for the report.

**2 Findings/analysis/information-**This section presents the facts of the report. The information is sometimes called situational information.

**3. Summary/conclusion/recommendations.** The third section gives the direction of the report, it could be a summary or a conclusion or even recommendations. In the organization, the informal report could be sent in a memorandum format or an e-mail.

### *Exercise*

1. Define a report
2. What do you expect in each of the five parts of a report?
3. Explain style in relation to report writing.

## UNIT 4: ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION

### OVERVIEW

Unit 6 provides you with information on:

- The importance of communication in an organization;
- Functions of communication in an organization;
- Formal communication which includes directions of communication and network patterns;
- Informal communication/grapevine; and
- Barriers to organizational communication.

### Learning Outcomes

On completion of this unit, you should be able to:

- a) Explain the importance of communication in an organization;
- b) State the functions of communication in an organization;
- c) Describe the directions and network patterns of formal communication;
- d) Explain informal communication and state its advantages and disadvantages
- e) Identify barriers to organizational communication.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION IN AN ORGANIZATION

An organization is a group of people constituted to achieve certain goals. The achievement of those goals largely depends upon proper co-ordination and intergration of human effort. Co-ordination and intergration of various human activities is possible if there is an effective system of communication in the organization which provides for the exchange of information and sharing of various ideas at various levels.

Organizations have clearly defined systems of communications so that every member knows who to approach for information.

### FUNCTIONS OF COMMUNICATION IN AN ORGANIZATION

Communication serves four vital functions an organization: These can be summarized as follows:

#### i) Informative function

There must be some information about the people and activities of the organization for example the organization's hierarchy, products etc. The receiving or giving of information underlines all communications functions, either directly or indirectly.

**ii) Command or instructive function (regulatory function):**

Those who are superior in the organization, often initiate communication either for the purpose of informing their subordinates or telling them what to do, how and when to do it. Examples include policies, procedures, instructions etc.

**iii) Persuasive function**

The persuasive function of communication is to influence employees/employers in changing their behavior in the desirable direction. Examples include junior staff lobbying for better conditions of services, increased salaries etc and managers satisfying employees' needs to increase productivity, reduce labour turnover etc.

**iv) Integrative function**

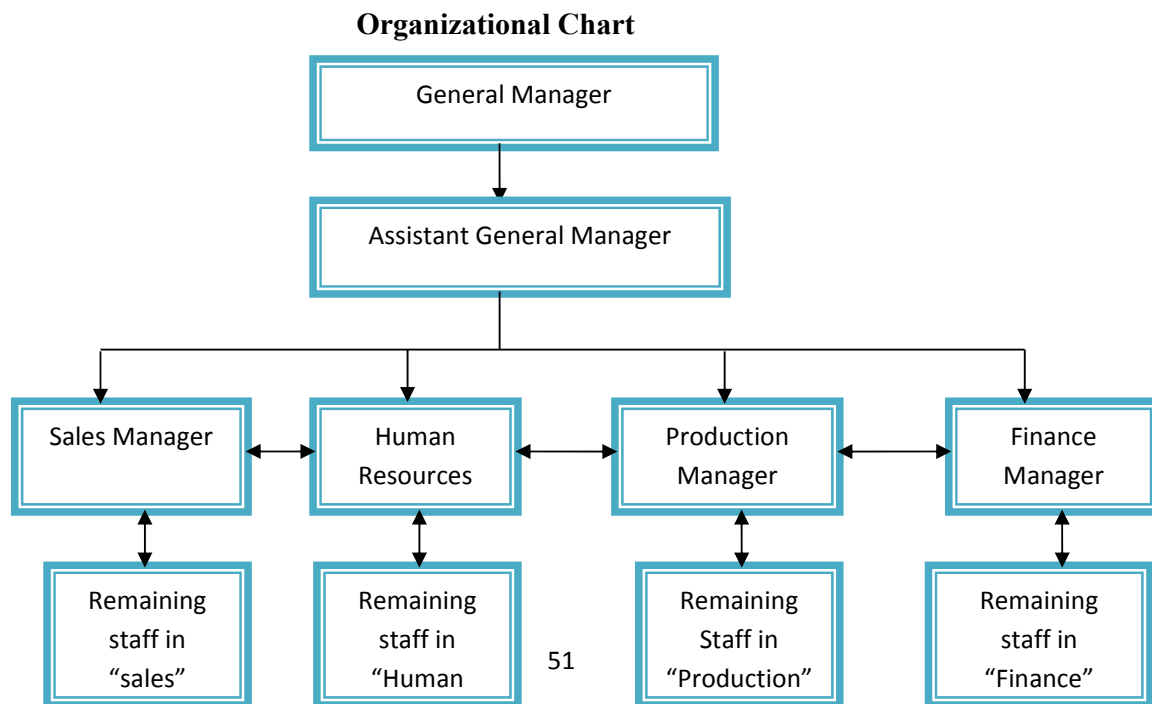
Communication ensures that there is a synergy of the various sections, departments of the organization to enable goal accomplishment. This helps in maintaining organizational stability and identity.

**Organizational structure**

An organization is a structured entity with clearly defined positions, these different positions result in an organization chart. The organizational chart shows which subordinates answer to which supervisor(s). The chart shows the following:

- a. Authority: the chart shows who is responsible to whom?
- b. Unity of command: The principle is that each person should get instructions from one boss is shown in the chart.
- c. Span of control: It shows the number of subordinates who answer to a single supervisor.

An example of an organization chart is presented in figure 1



## FORMAL AND INFORMAL COMMUNICATION

In the organization both management and employees need information in order to perform their functions. To satisfy such information needs management sets up formal communication networks which are used to send and receive the information. Alongside the formal communication, the informal communication also operates. The informal communication arises on its own but management should not ignore its existence because it has a role to play in the organization. The informal communication plays positive and negative roles in the organization.

### Internal formal communication networks

Vertical communication passes up and down in various departments:

#### i) Downward communication

Downward communication is the flow of information and messages from higher levels of management to subordinates working within the organization through an organization's formal chain of command or hierarchical structure. Messages and orders start at the upper levels of the organizational hierarchy and move down toward the bottom levels. Responses to downward communications move up along the same path. Examples include notices, circulars, instructions, announcements etc.

*Downward communication has the following advantages:*

##### a) Organizational discipline

Downward communication follows the organizations hierarchy. As such organizational discipline and member compliance is much easier to maintain.

##### b) Efficiency

Downward communication offers efficiencies because instructions and information come from the sources in power that are able to co-ordinate activities from the top of the organization. Employees receive feedback from the superiors who manage them.

##### c) Effective communication of goals

Management can easily communicate goals and assign responsibilities regarding achieving those goals.

##### d) Ease of delegation

Delegation is much easier if the delegation comes directly from above.

*Downward Communication has the following disadvantages:*

- a) Distortion: Downward communication can become distorted as it proceeds through multiple levels of the organization.

- b) **Slow feedback:** It takes time for messages to go down the organization vice versa and then down again. Feedback can be slow.
- c) **Interpretation problems:** Due to distortion and the time it takes, downward communication can have a negative impact on organizational morale.

**ii) Upward Communication:**

Upward communication is the flow of information from lower levels of a hierarchy (subordinates) to the upper levels (bosses). Examples include responses to requests, suggestions, reports, grievances etc.

***Some advantages of upward communication are:***

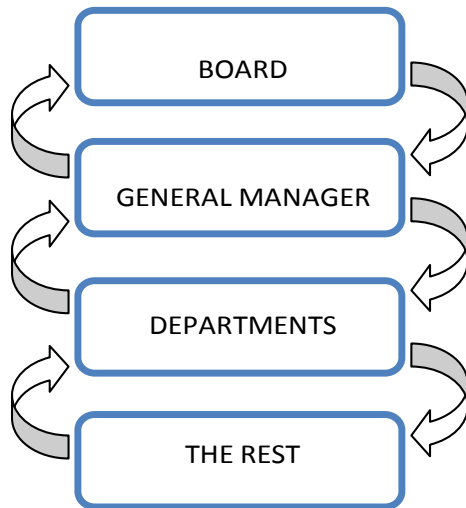
- a) **Feedback:** Managers can get feedback from employees that can help to improve organizational development. Employees who are encouraged to provide feedback feel respected and that they have a say in how the organization is run.
- b) **Mutual Trust:** Mutual trust brings employees and managers closer to each other. As trust grows, relationships between employees and managers become stronger.
- c) **Introduction of new policies.** Frontline employees do the work every day. They can tell managers if something works or does not. Employees can be instrumental in forming new policies or changing those that are outdated. Etc.

***Disadvantages***

Some disadvantages of upward communication are:

- a) **Filtering:**  
Filtering occurs when an employee passes a message intended for upper level management through an immediate supervisor who may change the message to reflect his opinion or understanding of the situation. Consequently, upper management may not receive the intended message sent by the employee.
- b) **Delay:**  
Frontline employees hesitate to let managers know of a problem because doing so means acceptance of failure. Delays occur
- c) **Reluctance:**  
Sometimes employees are reluctant to provide information through upward channels because of fear.
- d) **Technical language:**  
For example where professionals use specialist language  
If an IT technician has an issue to communicate, he may use technical terms which the manager may not understand etc.  
In vertical communication information is disseminated in a chain like fashion.





### iii) Horizontal Communication

Horizontal communication is the transmission of information between people, divisions, departments or units within the same or similar levels of organizational hierarchy. It is also known as lateral communication for example communication that takes place between departmental managers.

#### *Advantages*

- a) Decreased misunderstandings between departments working on the same project.
- b) It may result in better implementation of top-level decisions because employees at this level co-ordinate directly with each other.
- c) Horizontal communication facilitates team work if a project requires tasks from different people or departments.
- d) It may also increase job-satisfaction and motivation by creating more employee empowerment in communication.

#### *Disadvantages*

- a) Management may have a greater problem maintaining control as horizontal communication increases.
- b) Horizontal communication can also create conflict between employees exposed to each other through the communication process.
- c) It is also time consuming if vertical communication is required to ratify decisions or to confirm information received through horizontal communication.
- d) It may create lack of discipline if strict procedural rules of communication are not imposed and followed.

## Internal Informal Communication Networks

Informal communication takes place through the social networks formed by individuals and groups within the organization. A typical example of informal communication is 'grapevine'. Unlike formal communication, it is not set by management hence not organized. However grapevine is present within all levels of staff in the organization. It exists because of a natural desire to know things and it brings as sense of belonging to employees and managerial staff alike.

### *Advantages of Grapevine*

- a) It is faster than formal channels
- b) It is about 75% accurate
- c) People rely on it when they are insecure, threatened or faced with organizational change.
- d) employees use the grapevine to acquire the majority of their, 'on the job information'
- e) It allows managers to know the reaction of its subordinates.

### *Disadvantages*

- a) It is not controlled by management
- b) It serves the interests of those involved
- c) It is based on gossip and rumour
- d) Can fuel anxiety, conflict, misunderstanding, resentment etc.
- e) It is a challenge to management.

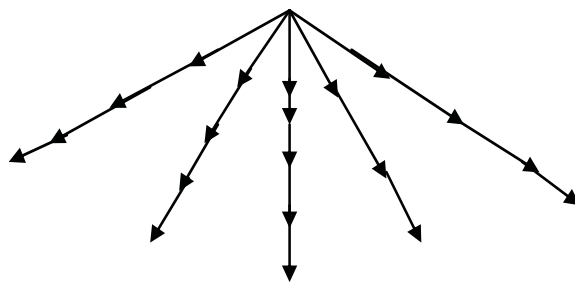
### iv) **Diagonal communication**

Diagonal communication is the flow of information between people who work in different departments/sections at different levels. For example Human Resource Manager sending information to an accounts clerk in the Accounts Department. This type of communication was introduced in organizations to cater for communication challenges associated with new organizational forms such as matrix and project-based organizations.

## COMMUNICATION NETWORK PATTERNS IN AN ORGANIZATION

Organization communication as already discussed can be transmitted downward, upward, horizontally, diagonally and through the grapevine. The actual patterns of communication connecting senders and receives are called communication networks. The following are five of the more frequently used networks: wheel, circle, and all channels.

**Fan Network**-In this network, information originates from one source and sent (disseminated) to many people at the same time. An illustration of the fan network is presented below.



Flow of communication

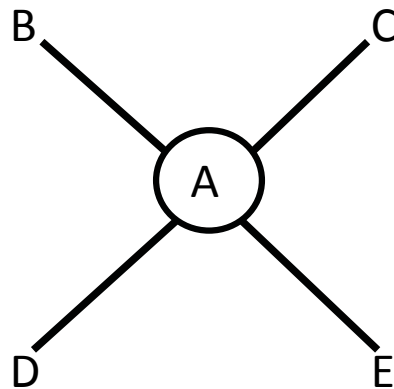
- It acts like a fan.
- It is used by executive management to the rest of the organization.
- The message here reaches everyone at once.
- It can be done orally or in written form.

When it is orally done, it is difficult to get feedback, for you cannot tell whether people are listening or whether they understand or not. For example, a speaker at a mass rally cannot get feedback easily.

When the fan network is in written form, feedback is almost impossible to get, because there is no guarantee that the message is getting to the right people (e.g. a memorandum and a notice). For example a memorandum on a notice board directed to specific groups of the audience may not get to them.

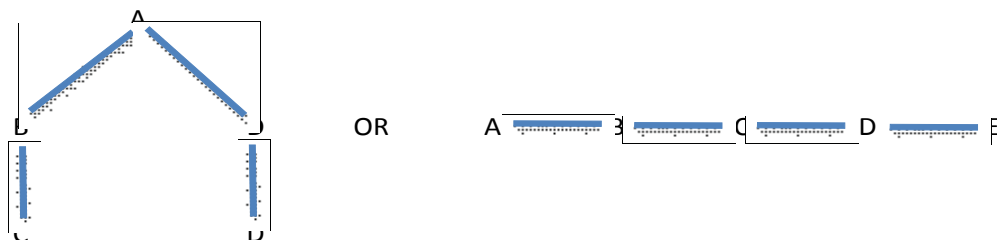
An example of the fan network is when a notice is placed on the notice board in a college to give information to students.

## The wheel Network



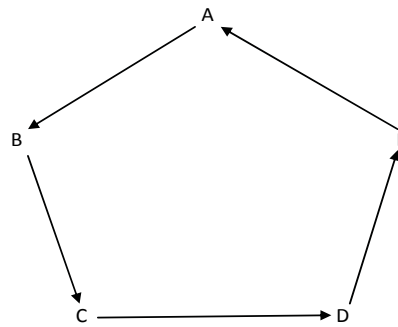
- In the wheel network, interaction and communication go through the centre.
- The wheel is common in a situation where there is little interaction between group members and there is reliance on central decision-making. For example four lecturers reporting to the Head of Programmes may not interact with one another directly but may do so through the head of programmes.

**The Chain Network**-The chain network is a network where information is sent by the sender to the receiver who in turn passes it to the next recipient. It can be done either vertically or horizontally. In an organization information travels along reporting lines. An employee knows to whom he is supposed to get information and to whom he gives information and instructions. The chain network is illustrated below.



- No single member can interact or communicate with all the others.
- It may be represented as a straight line for example in the chain of command

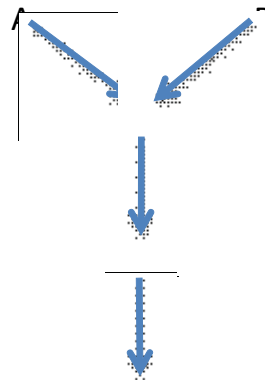
## The Circle Network



The circle works in the following ways. It:

- Links together the ends of the chain providing an opportunity for each member to interact with two others directly.
- Gives a higher level of satisfaction for all members.
- Is common in informal situations such as discussion around a table.
- Can be effective for transmitting messages.

## The Y Network

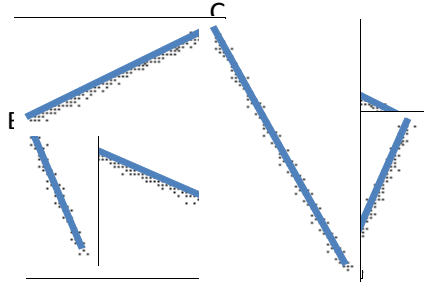


The Y combines elements of the wheel and the chain, because it focuses on C as the central contact

- However it does not allow interactions and communication among members in different areas.
- It characterizes the pattern of relationships often found between an organisation and its customers (A & B) and the organization is represented as a chain with customer contact at the end (C)
- It can also be found in an organisation where a department head (C) forms the only link between that department and others.

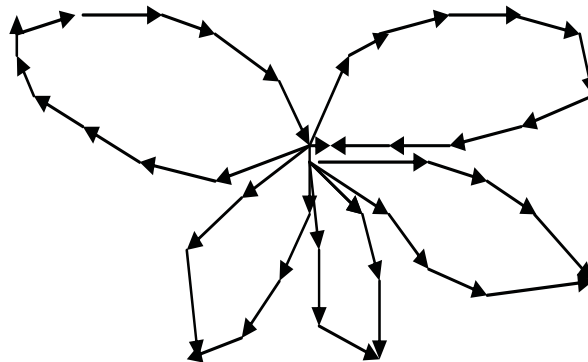
## The web or all channel network / Star network

### The Web Network



- Each person can communicate freely with every other individual within the group.
- It is the most common pattern of informal interaction and communication. For example in friendship groups, everyone can talk to everyone.
- Provides the greatest level of members' satisfaction.

**Daisy Network**-In the daisy network the source of the information will talk to people individually on a personal basis. S/He can also receive feedback from them in form of comments, suggestions and so on. The daisy network is illustrated below.



- It looks like a daisy flower
- It is a network similar to one-to-one pattern of communication
- It provides an opportunity for individualizing the message.
- It facilitates easier feedback

An example of this is when a General Manager sees each of the staff members individually to give them his evaluation of their performance instead of addressing them as a group. He therefore listens to their feedback individually.

*Exercise*

1. Explain the importance of communication in an organization.
2. State the functions of communication in an organization.
3. Describe the directions and network patterns of formal communication.
4. Explain informal communication and state its advantages and disadvantages.
5. Identify barriers to organizational communication.

NOT FOR SALE

## UNIT 5: ORAL COMMUNICATION

### OVERVIEW

The unit provides you with information on:

- Oral communication in general;
- Skills for effective oral communication;
- Speaking skills;
- Listening skills; and
- Oral presentation skills.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

**By the end of this unit you should be able to:**

- a) Define oral communication;
- b) Describe the listening process;
- c) Explain the benefits of listening;
- d) Discuss speaking skills; and
- e) Make effective oral presentations.

### Introduction

Oral communication is an important and perhaps the most widely used verbal medium of communication and the most basic way of sending and receiving messages. From the time you wake up to the time you go to sleep you do more talking than writing. Some people even talk in their sleep but we rarely hear of people writing in their sleep!

Oral communication can be **informal** like in day-to-day conversations and face-to-face encounters, or it can be formal like in meetings, interviews, public address or speeches at a formal gathering. Formal communication is usually referred to as a presentation.

### ORAL COMMUNICATION DEFINED

Oral communication is the exchange of information, thoughts, ideas, and feelings using speech or word of mouth.

## SKILLS NECESSARY FOR EFFECTIVE ORAL COMMUNICATION

There are two main categories of language skills used in oral communication namely: **speaking skills** and **listening skills**. Since these are used simultaneously it is important for both communicators (sender and receiver) to develop and perfect these skills for effective communication.

### 1. LISTENING SKILLS

Listening is an integral aspect of oral communication. You probably spend more time listening than you do speaking, reading or writing. Like all communication listening is an active process that requires careful thought and practice.



## Types of listening

- **Content listening** – this is listening for information on a particular subject or topic. From a myriad of information you screen the message for those facts that are relevant to you or the situation.
  - E.g. Listening to a lecture you only select main points and those points that will help you remember certain facts about the topic
- **Critical/ discriminative listening** – it involves evaluating the importance and validity of facts.
  - E.g. if you are called to settle a dispute you evaluate statements given by both sides.
- **Emphatic listening** – this is emotive listening where the listener tries to understand the needs and feelings of the speaker, puts himself/herself in the place of the speaker and identifies with the speaker's situation, feelings and appreciates facts put forward.
  - E.g. if an employee asks for a loan to take his/her mother to hospital company rules could be relaxed a bit if the accountant puts himself in the situation of the employee.
- **Pleasurable listening**- it is listening that gives pleasure or is pleasant to the ear because the message is good to hear.
  - E.g. listening to management talk about salary increment ,bonuses for the end of year, or an office outing for employees and their spouses

## Process of listening

An effective communicator needs to understand that listening is a process. As a process it goes through the following well defined **stages**:

1. **Reception/ hearing** is the act of registering what is being said by the speaker
2. **Attention** is the act of focusing the mind to understand what the speaker is saying. You tend to pay more attention to information you think is important and interesting.
3. **Perception/judging** is the act of interpreting and absorbing what you have heard in order to get meaning. It also involves evaluating the message and deciding whether it makes sense to you. E.g. a student taking notes in a lecture will take down only the key points which make sense.  
The meaning of a message may differ from person to person.
4. **Retention** refers to committing to memory what you hear and
5. **Retrieval/ recall** is the ability to remember what you hear.

## Skills required for effective listening

Listening is an art that requires skills if it is to be effective. To be a good listener you need to understand that different situations call for different types of skill to suit a particular situation. There are a number of skills you need in order to be a good listener but we are going to look at only a few namely:

- **Listening actively** - listen closely to content and intent. Give the speaker your undivided attention and process the message as you listen. Active listening may be shown by actions like nodding, taking down notes and asking questions for clarification to ensure mutual understanding.
- **Thinking fast**- while you are listening you should be able to think about what you are hearing and ensure mutual understanding.

- **Identifying main ideas**-listen for the main ideas that the speaker is making. Differentiate facts from opinions.
- **Correct interpretation**- you should be able to interpret both verbal and non verbal messages correctly to ensure that the meaning you get is the one intended by the speaker.
- **Offering/sending feedback**-this means responding appropriately. it is important because it assures the speaker that you understand what is being said.
- **Awareness of potential barriers** – a good listener should know the potential barriers to listening and avoid them.

### **Benefits /rewards of good listening**

Good, active listening has more benefits and rewards than one can imagine. Some of the important rewards or benefits are:

- It enables the listener to get new information and broaden your knowledge.
- It leads to the development of good interpersonal relationships with workmates, employers, customers, friends, family members, because it is people like those who give them a listening ear.
- It reduces misunderstanding since any questions or queries can be clarified.
- It leads to improvement in personal efficiency, i.e. you do what is required by the person giving the information.
- It results in problems being identified in good time and solutions being found.
- It saves money by avoiding errors which would be costly to the organization.
- It ensures goodwill and wins clients – a good listener builds trust in people

While good listening has a number of benefits or rewards, the converse is true i.e. that poor listening will result in the listener losing these benefits

### **Barriers to effective listening**

As communicators we rely on the spoken word for a large portion of the information we require every day to function and survive socially, educationally, and professionally. As such we would expect that listeners should be able to retain the bulk of the information they get. However, studies have shown that an average person remembers only about half of what is said in a ten minute conversation. This means that there are more barriers to listening than expected. Some of the most common barriers are:

- **Fast rate of speaking** – if a speaker is fast the listener loses track of the content and finally loses interest.
- **Distractions** (both external and internal) –a person has a limited memory span and attention is distracted easily. So any form of distraction can be a barrier to listening.
- **Lack of motivation** – people often lack the motivation or interest to listen. This usually happens for several reasons for example when the subject matter is not relevant to their needs, or because of the approach the speaker uses.
- **Attitude**– receiver’s listening might be affected by a negative attitude. For example, if the listener decides beforehand that subject or the speaker or both are going to be boring they might not listen and might miss the essence of the talk.
- **Prejudice** – this is when the listener anticipates beforehand what the speaker is going to say. This may prevent the listener from listening with concentration.

- **Context** – if the context in which the verbal message is conveyed is ignored the listener might misinterpret the message.
- **Non – verbal cues** – non verbal cues like facial expressions, gestures, etc add meaning to a verbal message. If the listener ignores these he/she might miss the underlying message.
- **Pretence** – sometimes people pretend they are listening when, in fact, they are not.

## 2. SPEAKING SKILLS

Next to listening, speaking is the second mostly used communication activity. Speaking and listening go together and complement each other to complete communication. Just as it is important for communicators to have listening skills, it is even more important to have speaking skills since in the majority of cases, speakers are the ones who initiate the communication process.

The following speaking skills are necessary for effective and efficient oral communication:

- **Knowing and defining the purpose** – whatever you say must have an aim or a well defined purpose. You should also be able to judge how much to say and how to say it. Only then can communication be meaningful.
- **Understanding of the audience/receiver** – you must have a reasonable knowledge of the person you are going to talk to i.e. know their background, personality, level of education, even possible reactions to the message.
- **Logical structuring of a message** – the message has to be structured in such a way that it is easy to understand but also it is receiver-friendly. For example an employer who is about to fire an employee should formulate the message in such a way that the employee feels that he/she has been of service to the organization but the firing was inevitable.
- **Choice of an appropriate style** - adapting the style to suit the purpose and audience.
- **Masterly of mechanics of speech** – this includes selection of an appropriate vocabulary, proper pronunciation and clear articulation of words and expressions. Poor pronunciation can distort meaning and put off the audience. For example ‘rice’ and ‘lice’ mean different things. If pronounced the same in different contexts the meaning might be distorted.
- **Seeking feedback** – a speaker should be on the look-out for feedback from the audience. This will help him/her adjust the speech, talk or conversation accordingly.
- **Tactfulness and sensitivity** – consider the feelings and needs of the audience and aim to address these positively as you speak.
- **Good listening skills** – as a speaker you also need to learn to listen actively. This helps to make the communication interactive and much more meaningful.
- **Persuasiveness** – learn the art of persuasion.

## 3. ORAL PRESENTATIONS SKILLS

The speaking skills discussed in the preceding section are general skills that can be used in **informal** oral communication like in conversations, or in **formal** communication in business settings. Oral communication or using speaking skills in a business setting is referred to as an **oral presentation**.

Oral presentations are basically **public speaking** verbal communication techniques. They may include a speech, talk or lecture. They are used in a work setting to pass on information to groups of people. For example:

- A Supervisor giving technical instructions to a group of new apprentices or
- Sales Manager addressing his field sales personnel.

Public Speaking (PS) can also be used at formal social gatherings. For example, at wedding ceremonies, funerals, receptions, meetings, social and religious functions.

### **Oral presentation contexts in business**

Oral presentation context are varied. Some common oral communication contexts in a business setting are:

- **Meetings** to discuss issues and make decisions.
- **Inductions** of new members of staff to inform them about the job, the organizations culture.
- **Consultant's presentation** to management to recommend course of action.
- **Briefings** on findings or facts related to the work.
- **Technical presentations** by specialists/experts made to management and staff in a specific are of work.
- **Sales people making a presentation** to clients to demonstrate the benefits of a product.
- **A demonstration** on how to perform a specific task.
- **Oral reports** presented after a research to interested parties.
- **Press conference** with Journalists to clarify an issue.
- **A brief speech** to introduce a new member of staff or a guest speaker at a gathering.

### **THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN PLANNING PRESENTATIONS**

Presentations vary. The type and mode of presentation will to a large extent be determined by the following factors:

#### **a) Audience**

The speaker should consider the size and the composition of the audience. The material (content) to convey and language to be used during the speech will be dictated by the composition of the audience. The speaker will not speak to villagers in the same way he/she would to city dwellers. Neither will he/she speak to politicians in the same way as he/she would to football players.

- **Audience factors to be considered:**

*Topic* – is it to their interest? Is it relevant to their situation? How much of the knowledge/information do they need?

*Categorization* – what kind of grouping do you have? By sex, age, education geographical area etc

*Orientation* – determine whether they are senior decision makers, lower level staff, new recruits, technical experts etc

*Motivation – why are the audience at your presentation?*

### **b) Purpose of the speech**

The purpose of any Speech will also affect the choice of the material to be used by the speaker. Again, the purpose of the speech will influence the Speaker's tone as he speaks. For an effective and impressive presentation, the purpose should be relevant to the needs and expectations of the audience. The speaker should identify the purpose to the audience in order to focus their mind to the topic. Some common purposes of presentations may include:

- **Briefing** to provide technical information to staff and management
- **Instructions** to tell others how to perform a task
- **Introduction** of a person or product
- **Persuasion** to get your audience to accept your proposal or point of view.

### **c) Subject matter (message) and approach**

The subject matter to be presented and the approach to be used will largely be determined by the needs of the audience and the complexity of the content. Some topics are simple and straight forward while others are complex. Some require basic knowledge while others require technical expertise.

The subject matter of the presentation will also be determined by the availability of the time in delivering the speech.

Since most of the speakers are limited by time, it will therefore be necessary for the speaker to select the subject content. To sustain the attention of the audience, the subject matter should have the following attributes:

- **Interest** – it should be lively, entertaining and relevant to the audience.
- **Congeniality** – it should be audience friendly, positive and supportive. It should not be offensive or tackle sensitive topics.
- **Credibility** – it should be believable, from a source perceived to be trustworthy. It should also contain facts which are known or can be verified.
- **Accessibility** – this means that the message should be clear, easily understandable and visible in case of visual or non verbal communication.

## **PREPARATION OF THE ACTUAL PRESENTATION**

Once you have thought of the audience, purpose and subject matter carefully, then you should start collecting the relevant material for the presentation. The following may include sources of your material.

- Your own vast experience
- Books
- Newspapers
- Magazines (local and international)
- Films
- Television and radio

As you take down notes from these sources always keep in mind the main purpose of your speech.

### **Structuring the content (message) of the presentation**

The message has to be well thought out, well organised, following a logical order. Follow these steps:

- **Brain storm** – jot down as many ideas on the subject as you can manage.
- **Prioritize** – classify related ideas and select a main idea or “theme” which will be the focus of your presentation. Then put together several key points on the “theme”.
- **Structure** – the key points should now be put in a logical order to show how your presentation will flow from one point to the other.
- **Outline** – Once the material has been arranged, then start thinking how to present it. Using the key points which you have arranged in logical order you make an outline of the actual presentation to include:
  - a. *An introduction* - this announces the main areas of concern in that speech.
  - b. *The body*-this will discuss or develop those main areas of concern which have been outlined in the introductory paragraph.
  - c. *The Conclusion* - this summarizes the main points of your speech including personal views.

### **Compilation of the presentation / speech**

There is no rigid way of doing it. It varies from speaker to speaker. Here are some of the notable ways of compiling it.

- Write out the whole speech in full and then condense it on small cards in a note form.
- Write out the introduction and the conclusion in full and then condense it on small cards in a note form.
- Write out the whole speech in full. However, make sure you don't read it as you deliver it. If you read it listeners will be bored, for your whole attention will be on the printed paper.
- The most commonly used method of compiling a speech is simply to write out the main points and any factual data such as dates and figures on separate post cards. This allows the speaker to keep eye contact with his audience and will also act as a prompt to help through your speech.

### **Use of illustrations or Visual Aids**

You may want to use some illustrations for some aspects of your speech. Well and good. These may be photographs, video clips, films, real objects, charts; or graphs to present some of the following items:

- Statistical data;
- Technical specifications

- Business growth or deterioration;

In this case then we should always remember that our illustrations/Visual Aids should be:

- Simple
- Clear;
- Displayed in such a way that the whole audience can see them, or it.

## **DELIVERY OF THE PRESENTATION /SPEECH**

It is very natural to feel nervousness when speaking to the public for the first time.

The best way to overcome this feeling is to be confident about yourself and your subject matter.

For you to be confident in both cited aspects, you need a thorough preparation of your speech.

Effective delivery of your presentation therefore depends on the following factors:

- Knowledge of the subject matter
- Non verbal communication
- Good knowledge of your audience

These will give you confidence.

### **Helpful tips**

Your personal **appearance** is very important in that it gives you credibility. Remember first impressions matter.

Before the delivery of your speech, know well in advance the layout of **the room** where you will deliver your speech.

Make sure that any **equipment** that you might want to use e.g. Overhead projector/OHP is in good condition. Again, check in advance any notes or illustrations (diagrams, pictures, graphs etc) which you might want to use.

During the **delivery** of the speech, keep the following points in mind:

- Speak naturally clearly and audibly. Speak to the whole audience and not just one section.
- Do not be afraid to use gestures and expressions in your speech
- Do not speak too fast and do not be afraid to pause
- If you are using illustrations or chalk board remember always to face your audience you speak.
- When using illustrations or chalk board, remember not to block the view of your audience.
- Try to avoid mannerisms such as jiggling things in your hands or playing with your hair, as this distracts and eventually irritates the audience.
- Speak slowly, giving the audience time to take in what you saying or doing.
- Maintain eye contact by looking directly at the audience. This will show confidence which in turn will make the audience have confidence in you.

## Questions

A good speaker should have the ability to respond to questions from the audience. Questions provide the opportunity to clarify misunderstandings. Normally, the speaker invites questions at the end of the speech.

Do not allow questions during the delivery of the speech for the following reasons:

- To avoid disrupting the flow of the speech. Some people in the audience will forget points already made.
- To avoid forgetting the place you were at in the notes.
- To avoid side tracking and losing focus of the main topic.
- To avoid initiation of a dialogue between the questioner and speaker, thus ignoring the rest of the audience in the end.

## TYPES OF ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Oral presentations in the business setting are normally divided into two general categories:

- Informative
- Persuasive

### Purposes

- An informative presentation is used to promote understanding of an idea.
- Persuasive presentation is used to influence decisions, viewpoints or choices.

However there is an overlap between informative and persuasive presentation because for an individual to be persuaded he/she has to understand the situation first and to understand they need to have adequate information.

### a) INFORMATIVE PRESENTATIONS

These are normally used in business situations to provide information that enables operations to go on in the business. Supervisors are updated on ongoing activities to enable them to make sound decisions. Supervisors are able to communicate company policies and operational procedures downwards to employees. Additionally employees communicate ideas and proposals upwards to supervisors and horizontally to fellow workers.

### Examples of informative presentations

**An oral briefing:** designed to present maximum facts in a short period. For example, a briefing given to an individual employee or supervisor or a group of supervisors to furnish each other with the latest developments. Oral briefings are generally informal but others are formal such as a status of a project to the entire department.

**An oral report** is designed to present detailed information hence requires a longer period of time. For example, a **research report** on the feasibility of introducing a new accounting package, a demonstrative report explaining how to use a new machine, or investigative report examining a problem area such as causes of high labour-turnover in an organization will require a longer period of presentation time.



### Characteristics of high –quality informative presentations

- Accuracy: providing correct facts and figures
- Objectivity: reporting facts of the situation or events rather than one's biases or feelings about facts
- Completeness: reporting all relevant facts
- Impartiality: reporting all or both sides'
- Selectivity: reporting only the facts that are relevant.
- Interpretation: providing background meaning where necessary for the listeners'/readers' comprehension or drawing others view as believable- someone in whom they can place their confidence.

### PERSUASIVE PRESENTATIONS

Persuasion is communication intended to influence choice therefore it is used to limit options that are perceived acceptable.

Many persuasive presentations are fairly informal and are given **within** the organization by supervisors to their employees or by employees to their supervisors. For example, policy change or postponement of a deadline for a planned activity.

On the other hand persuasive presentations given to individuals or groups **outside** the organization are more **formal**. For example, Standard Bank might plan a formal presentation about a new product to a number of companies.

### FACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED IN PERSUASION

When preparing a persuasive message the sender should consider the following:

- His attitude;
- His credibility;
- His personality;
- His social standing, economic status, gender, education religious and political ties.

### The basic elements that enhance a speaker's credibility are the following:

- **Trustworthiness** - Can be viewed from different angles. For example speakers who avoid eye contact, shift their eyes from place to place, always looking over listeners heads seem to have something to hide.
- **Competency** - Means an expert knows what he is talking about. He can relate personal experiences which are relevant to the topic.
- **Dynamism** is another element of credibility. The speaker should be forceful, enthusiastic and a good clear voice.
- **Objectivity** - An objective speaker is one who is open minded, impartial and appears to view evidence and arguments in an unbiased manner. She/he will discuss all view points but will still show why his/her arguments are the best.
- **Status/rank** - In organizations another element of credibility is the formal position/(status) or rank of the speaker.

- Therefore, the higher the organizational status of the speaker the higher his credibility and the greater the effect upon the audience.
- **Psychological needs of the listener** - Persuasive presentations will even be more successful if arguments are adapted to personal needs of the listeners.

There is need for speakers to carefully analyse their listeners to determine for example their personal and job reward needs and then relate the persuasive proposals to those needs.

**Other listeners' Opinions** - Groups have key persons who the rest look up to. To persuade the group a speaker must first persuade these key people or opinion leaders.

**The receiver of the message:**

The sender of the message should consider the following points in his/her persuasive speech:

- First get the receiver's attention;
- Motivate him to get a positive response
- Analyse his needs to make his speech in line with these needs; and
- Give him a reward if necessary.

**The sender can get the receiver's attention by:**

- Telling him/her unexpected information;
- Telling him/her pleasing information;
- Telling him/her only relevant information.

**FACTORS THAT LEAD TO PERSUASION IN BUSINESS**

- **Evidence and logic of a message**

Evidence is defined as factual statements and opinions not originating from the speaker but another source. This forms the basis for the logical arguments a speaker develops.

These include

- **Comparison:** A comparison shows similarities or differences between two or more items from the same class or category. For example monthly travel expenses of the five top managers. Comparisons should relate something the audience does not know or understand to something they do know and understand.
- **Illustrations:** are effective and provide variety to your presentation. A narrative or story is told in such detail that the listener can visualize mentally. Illustrations can be factual (something that actually happened or **hypothetical** (imaginary)).

Phrases commonly used are:

*“suppose for a moment”*

*“imagine”*

*“put yourself in this situation”.* And other similar phrases.

They should be detailed and vivid and must relate clearly to the point you are supporting.

## TECHNIQUES IN PERSUASION

Persuasion techniques are part of interpersonal communication skills. They are aimed at persuading or influencing people to do something for us. So our concern in this section is to show how to persuade other people to do something for us.

### Preparing Persuasive Presentations

- Determine the exact reaction you hope to achieve from your listeners who you are hoping to inspire into agreement or conformity.
- Analyze your audience and their needs. It would also be important to identify key people who are likely to influence decisions of the other listeners. If your listeners are worried about not having enough to pay their bills you could persuade them to increase productivity which would lead to increased sales as well as their salaries. This would make the presentation more persuasive.
- Determine your initial credibility with your listeners can then be increased.
- Carefully research your topic (in bold). Then decide the best method for presenting evidence to your listeners.
- Decide how to organize your presentation for the best effect.
- Practice the presentation until you feel confident with it.

### PROCESS OF SUCCESSFUL PERSUASION

#### 1)Preparation Stage

- a. Know the purpose of the message;
- b. Know your audience
- c. Know your subject matter.

#### 2)Stage

- a. Have interest in the receiver first. Engage him into a genuine conversation. Appeal to him emotions.
- b. Inform and convince him in the following manner.
  - State facts and statistics
  - Give supporting case histories
  - Quote personal experience
  - Clarify through visual aids
  - Use comparisons
  - Involve audience in demonstration
  - Anticipate and answer any question from them

#### 3) Urge Action

Tell the listeners what to do, how, when, and where to do it.

As a presenter you need to decide how you can assist the audience to understand the points which you make. In addition to the explanations, visual aids help to clarify the points. Some of the visual aids you can use are presented below.

## TYPES OF VISUAL SUPPORT

Equipment/Medium	Advantages	Disadvantages
<p><b>Slides</b> Slides are usually still photographs, but may include text and diagrams, projected onto a screen or other surface.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow use of colour photos: good for mood, impact and realism</li> <li>• They are pre-prepared: do not use up the speaker's time</li> <li>• Controllable sequence/timing: pace content/audience needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Require a darkened room: may hinder note-taking</li> <li>• Malfunction and/or incompetent use of the projector cause frustration and distraction.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Film/Video</b> shown on a screen or TV monitor</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They show moving images which have impact and realism</li> <li>• Can enhance the credibility of the presenter.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not allow interruption</li> </ul>
<p><b>Overheads:</b> films or acetates projected by light box onto a screen behind/above the presenter</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be used for different content</li> <li>• Low cost</li> <li>• Additional points can be added on the sheets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Require physical handling which can be distracting</li> <li>• There is a risk of technical breakdown</li> <li>• Not adaptable to other means of projection</li> </ul>
<p><b>Flipcharts:</b> large paper pad mounted on frame-the sheets are 'flipped' to the back when finished with</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low cost, low risk</li> <li>• Can be prepared in advance</li> <li>• Easy to refer back</li> <li>• Allows addition of information during presentation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small, still, paper-based</li> <li>• Since they are hand-prepared they could be of low quality</li> </ul>
<p><b>Handouts:</b> supporting notes handed out for reference during or after the session</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be prepared in advance</li> <li>• The audience does not need to take many notes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May encourage passive listening</li> </ul>
<p><b>Props and demonstrations:</b> objects or processes referred to are themselves shown to the audience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhances the speaker's credibility because the audience can see the object</li> <li>• The presentation has impact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May not be available</li> <li>• There is a risk of self-defeating 'hitches'</li> </ul>
<p><b>Presentation software:</b> for example, Microsoft PowerPoint. PC-generated slide show (with animation and sound) projected from PC to screen via data projector</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It has impact and interest due to the multi-media</li> <li>• Professional design and functioning (smooth transitions)</li> <li>• Use of animation to build, link and emphasise as points are added</li> <li>• 'presentation notes' can be added to slides for presenter cues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires PC, data projector: expensive, may not be available</li> <li>• There is a risk of technical breakdown: not readily adaptable to other means of projection</li> </ul>

**Exercise**

- 1) Define oral presentation
- 2) As an accountant, how useful are the skills in oral presentation to you?
- 3) Outline the format of an oral presentation or speech of your choice
- 4) What are the major factors you would consider before the formation of your presentation?
- 5) Identify and explain the vital sources of information any public speaker would have at his disposal.
- 6) Describe the structure of a presentation / speech.
- 7) Explain the factors you would have in mind during the delivery of a public speech.

NOT FOR SALE

## THE TELEPHONE

### Purpose of telephone calls

All areas of the organization use the telephone for sending and receiving information. Using the telephone as an effective communication tool requires an understanding of the purpose of the communication and the effect that telephone communications can have on your audience.

Using the telephone effectively can result in a number of benefits:

The first benefit is that it could result in an increase in the level of personal contact and the development of good interpersonal relationships both internally and externally. As you speak on the phone you have an opportunity to interact with the other party on the receiving end and it enhances personal contact.

In addition, using the telephone enables the caller to get an immediate response on issues. Such responses might be important in maintaining good customer relations because the customer might get a response.

- Improved information flow within and around the organization.
- A reduction in the time spent writing letters (and awaiting a response) and consequently reduction in administrative costs.

### Preparation

Effective use of the telephone requires that the user should know how to use the equipment. When you want to make a call you need to prepare for it.

- a) Know why you are making the call. What information do you wish to convey or obtain?
- b) Know to whom you should be talking. Find out names if possible.
- c) Know what you want to say, and the order and manner in which you want to say it.
  - i. Have a checklist of points.
  - ii. Have all relevant documents and references material to hand.
- d) Make sure you will not be interrupted, distracted or disturbed once you have dialed.

## Making calls

When you get through to the dialed number, wait for a greeting and identification from the answering party. If necessary, seek the identification. ('Good morning. To whom am I speaking?') It is time-wasting and embarrassing to start giving information to a wrong person.

If the target recipient of your call is out or otherwise unavailable, then carry out your 'Plan B', which may be one of the following.

- i. Ask to speak to someone else who might be knowledgeable enough to help you.
  - ii. Leave a message with the one who answered the call. Make it a brief one, but dictate clearly all essential details of whom you are, where you can be contacted, and what the main subject of your call was to be. State whether you wish to be called back.
  - iii. Arrange to call back at a convenient time, when it is anticipated that the target will be available.
- Once you get through to the appropriate person, the business of the call should be covered as briefly as possible.
  - Greet the other person by name: if you do not know it-find out first.
  - Prepare the ground by briefly explaining the context of your call, what it is about, and any other relevant details.
  - Remember that the other person cannot see you to read your lips other nonverbal signals. Therefore, speak clearly, spell out proper names and figures; use your tone of voice to reinforce your message.
  - Seek feedback. If you are not receiving any signals, ask for some ('Have you got that?')
  - Close the call effectively. Emphasise any action you require, and check that the other person has understood your expectations.

## Taking calls

It is very important that those who answer the telephones in an organization should be efficient, courteous and helpful. When taking calls there is a need to:

- Give a **courteous greeting** and **identify yourself** in whatever way is appropriate (name, department, organization)
- **Identify** and note the caller's name and organization as soon as possible.
- **Listen** carefully to the message: it might require instant action or response.
- **Check your understanding.** If the other person speaks too fast, or you do not catch something, are not sure you have heard it right, or simply do not understand, say so: a courteous interruption to ask for a repetition or spelling is helpful to the caller.
- **Never leave callers hanging.** If you have to transfer them to another extension or put them on hold, tell them what you intend to do.
- **Speak clearly** and with a certain formality, and keep your tone appropriately helpful, courteous and alert.
- **Take concise notes** of any details you require in order to follow up conversation. If you are giving information, pace it so that the caller can take notes.

**Sample telephone message**

<b>CLEAR VISION GRAPHICS</b>		
<b>Telephone message form</b>		
<b>For</b> .....		
<b>Date</b> .....		
<b>From</b> .....		
<b>Of</b> .....		
<b>Time</b> .....		
<b>Message taken by</b> .....		
.....		
.....		
.....		
.....		
<b>Please</b>	<b>Will call again</b>	<b>Returned your call</b>

*Exercise*

1. Explain how you can prepare to make a telephone call.
2. Explain what an individual should do when receiving a call.
3. Outline any four habits which should be avoided when receiving a call.

NOT FOR SALE



## INTERVIEWS

### Definition

An interview is a form of oral communication involving two parties one of whom has a preconceived and serious purpose and both of whom speak and listen from time to time. In the definition, you will notice that the key words are '*oral communication*' '*two parties*', '*purpose*', '*speak and listen*'. What you will notice from these key words is that an interview is a deliberate plan to communicate specific information orally in order to fulfill a purpose. Therefore an interview is conducted for two reasons. The first is to obtain information (interviewer) while the second is to convey information (interviewee).

### TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

There are several types of interviews and these interviews are distinguished by the goals they are meant to accomplish.

- 1) **Information-gathering interview**-in this interview the purpose is exchange of information. It focuses on giving and receiving data for decision-making, problem-solving and building good will. The one who conducts the interview seeks to obtain some specific information to achieve a particular goal. Some of the people who are involved in this type of interview are buyer-seller; doctor-patient; lawyer-client; teacher-student and so on.
- 2) **Persuasive interviews**-meant to convince someone to accept a particular idea. For instance interview with customers to open accounts. Negotiations of pay and conditions of service.
- 3) **Counseling interview**-the aim is to assist an employee on a personal problem either inside or outside the organization. It is common knowledge that people do not leave their private problems in a drawer when they arrive at work and pick them up when they leave for home. Therefore, the interview focuses on creating a favourable work relationship through showing interest and concern in helping an individual person.
- 4) **Interrogation interview**-this interview is different from others in that there is usually an offence involved. Therefore this type of interview has a negative connotation because the victim is treated as a suspect. For example when there is some money or items missing from the accounts office the officers might be interviewed either internally or interviewed by the police in order to get their side of the story which would lead to the conviction of the one involved.
- 5) **Exit interview** is conducted with someone who has resigned from the organization. The interview is conducted when the one who has resigned was holding a very important position. The aim is to know the reasons for the resignation in order to find ways of retaining staff.
- 6) **Disciplinary interview** is conducted when an employee is accused of misconduct. Therefore the interview is meant to investigate the offence and decide on the action

required. The interview focuses on changing undesirable behaviour, improving relationship and performance.

- 7) **Performance appraisal/Evaluation interview** is meant to evaluate the performance of an individual holding a particular position in order to recommend him/her for promotion or training and so on.
  
- 8) **Recruitment/selection/employment interview** is face-to-face encounter between a prospective employer and a prospective employee. The objective of the employer is to hire the best person possible while the applicant is interested to get the job. This type of interview is one of the most important because within it some of the most critical, original, and personal decisions are made. The productivity of an organization depends on the ability of its management to recruit and select the best personnel.

### **Communication skills**

The success of an interview depends on the communication skills of both the interviewer and the interviewee. The skills involved may include the following:

- The ability to **interpret other people's body language** and to use your own effectively. When the interviewee enters the interview room he/she might be nervous, therefore there is need to assist him/her to settle down.
- The ability to **identify what roles** you and others are in. The interviewer is the leader during the interview, therefore, it is necessary that he/she exercises his/her role effectively throughout the interview.
- The ability to **listen attentively** and actively. Both the interviewee and the interviewer need to listen effectively. The interviewee needs to listen to the questions while the interviewer should listen to the responses to the questions and analyse how effectively the question is addressed.
- The ability to **read between the lines of a message**, by recognizing underlying attitudes, bias, or deliberate ambiguity. The interviewer should analyse the responses for any inconsistencies.
- The ability to **put the interviewee at ease**, to persuade, to smooth over difficult situations i.e. diplomacy.
- The ability to **identify false or dishonest** arguments when they are being used, and to construct a logical argument yourself. The interviewer needs to be attentive when listening to the responses in case of false responses.
- The ability to **recognize how much information**, and of what kind, another person will need and be able to take in.
- The ability to **use appropriate questioning styles** to obtain relevant, complete and accurate information.
- The ability to **convey enthusiasm**, sympathy, support, trustworthiness and other personal factors, as required.

## **Limitations of interviews**

The employment interview as a way of assessing an individual's suitability for employment has a number of weaknesses some of them are that:

- Interviews are of limited scope and duration. It is not possible to address all the areas that may need coverage, in depth.
- Interviews are artificial situations. It should be noted that both parties come prepared for the interview. Due to the advance preparation it is difficult to get true behaviour, opinions, feelings or personality.
- An interview often puts the interviewee under pressure and in some cases the interviewer could also be under pressure.
- An interview involves complex communication processes, and its success depends on the willingness and skill of both parties to communicate. If the interviewer is not skilled enough, he/she may make the interview less effective.

Nevertheless, planning and skilled conduct of the interview can minimize the effect of most of the limitations. It is necessary to set out and adhere to the scope and agenda of the interview. The interviewer should ensure that the interviewee is put at ease in order to enable him/her to communicate effectively.

## **THE INTERVIEW PROCESS**

The basic organization of an interview is generally the same for all interviews. Most interviews are organized into five main phases. As an example, we are going to discuss the organization of the employment/recruitment interview because such an interview takes place in every organization.

### **The Employment Interview**

#### **1. Preparation**

During the preparation stage, the interviewer has to determine the objectives to be achieved and make a plan to achieve them. The plan is in form of the framework of the interview which must spell out what points must be made or the information that must be obtained or given to the interviewee. However, the interviewer should not adhere to the plan rigidly, there is need to be flexible in order to respond to the situation as the interview progresses.

The interviewer also needs to prepare the physical setting for the interview. The physical preparation includes setting a suitable time for the interview. The room and layout of chairs should create a relaxing atmosphere for the interview.

The interviewer should plan the framework of the interview by

#### **2. Opening phase of the interview**

The opening phase of an interview has three basic steps: rapport, orientation and motivation.

- I. **Rapport:** Since interviews are stressful situations, the interviewer has the duty of setting the tone of the interview by putting the interviewee at ease. The interviewer has to establish rapport with the interviewee. Rapport is a comfortable relaxed feeling (I respect you as an individual) that makes both parties receptive to the interview situation and willing to talk. The first few minutes of the interview are very important in the interview because they determine the course of the whole interview. Therefore, it is necessary to create an atmosphere where the interviewee will exhibit real feelings; in fact, first impressions are difficult to erase. If both parties establish a good relationship in the opening phase, the purpose of the interview is likely to be achieved.

**The venue** of the interview also contributes to the atmosphere of the interview session, therefore, to provide a relaxed feeling, the interview should be held in a room which is free from distractions. When the interviewee enters the interview room, the interviewer should greet him/her. In order to remove tension, the interviewer should refer to a topic of mutual interest to make the interviewee talk so that he/she could settle down in a relaxed mood.

On the other hand, the interviewee can create a good first impression by being on time, dressing appropriately, being prepared for the interview and appearing confident and relaxed.

- II. **Orientation:** In addition to establishing rapport in the opening phase of the interview, the interviewer should give a clear orientation (overview) of the interview to the interviewee. The orientation step should include the following information:

- **The interviewers' names:** There is a need to introduce the interviewers to the interviewee.
- **The purpose of the interview:** There is a need to mention the position for which the interviewee is being interviewed and state the purpose of the interview at the outset of the interview.

- III. **Motivation:** The third step in the opening phase of the interview involves motivating the interviewee to give straight forward and complete answers.

- Motivation involves encouraging the interviewee to give more points/facts. The motivation can be done either verbally or nonverbally. Some of the verbal positive cues are the following: That's very interesting, tell me more, 'Yes, I see what you mean', 'Alright, Yes and so on. On the other hand, the following are the positive nonverbal cues: Occasional affirmative nodding of the head, Leaning forward, Sitting appropriately and so on.

#### IV. **Body/Question-answer/Substantive phase**

This phase of the interview is the longest because it is at this stage where the interviewer asks the questions which were prepared in advance.

Although the list of questions is important, it is not necessary always to follow them precisely. The set questions should provide guidance and where necessary some questions

could be arise from those which were set in order to explore some areas which appear important as the interview progresses. It could also happen that when answering one question the interviewee can provide the information sought in another question either directly or by implication. In short, there is a need to know the areas that need more exploration and those that will not seem worth pursuing.

The interviewer also has responsibility to answer questions and when necessary anticipate them. The interviewer is expected to control the interview by asking questions, monitoring the interviewee's answers and soliciting whatever clarification is needed to make the meaning clear.

On his part, the interviewee should come prepared for the interview with a list of strengths, areas of knowledge and past accomplishments usually in form of curriculum vitae. The interviewee should also anticipate possible questions and carefully think through honest answers to each question. Some of the types of questions which can be asked in an interview are presented below.

### **Types of questions**

- a) *Direct questions* these are questions which aim at obtaining precise details and directing the interview towards a specific goal. For instance: *Why are you interested in joining this organization?* The direct questions have an advantage in that they save time and help in focusing the interview. However, too many of the direct questions may put off the interview as the interaction will not give a chance to the interviewee to express himself freely.
- b) *Open-ended questions* these are questions which do not demand exact responses. The questions force the interviewee to respond in complete sentences, encouraging the interviewee to talk, and keeping the interview flowing. The questions allow the interviewee to express his ideas freely without being defensive. For example: *Who do you think people say you are?* However, such questions can easily let the interview lose direction. The success of such questions depends on the interviewer's listening skills because he/she has to select relevant information from non-essential information.
- c) A closed question is one which offers a choice of responses, such as 'yes' or 'no'. However, the question has a number of disadvantages:
  - The question elicits answers only to the question asked by the interviewer;
  - It does not allow the interviewee to express his personality so that interaction can take place;
  - It makes it easier for interviewees to conceal things.
- d) *Clarification questions* these questions aim at obtaining detailed information where the response was not clear or was misunderstood. The questions are used to clear up confusion, get more facts, seek a definition of some term or phrase or show the interviewee that you are interested in what he has just said.

e) *Probing questions* these questions aim at pursuing issues the interviewee has raised. The interviewer wants to get more information on specific topics; he/she wants to confirm his own interpretation or clear shady areas; to substantiate to the other party that this is indeed what he has stated; to demonstrate a feeling of concern and interest.

f) *Hypothetical open questions* these are questions which are set on an invented but possible situation in the work environment. The aim is to find out how the interviewee would handle such a situation. For instance: *If one of the customers overpaid you, but he/she did not realize it, what would you do?*

g) *Leading questions* suggest a certain reply to the interviewee. For instance we are looking for somebody who likes detailed figure work. How much do you enjoy dealing with numbers? However, the problem with these questions is that the interviewee will simply give the answer that he thinks the interviewer wants to hear.

h) *Multiple questions* are just two or more questions asked at once. These types can be used to encourage the interviewee to talk at length, without straying too far from the point. The questions might also test the interviewee's ability to listen to a large amount of information.

#### **IV. Closing phase of an interview**

The closing phase of the interview is the time to establish the future relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee. It is used to decide if any future meetings are necessary and set a date for such a meeting. In the closing phase is also a time to give the interviewee a chance to ask questions. Finally, the closing of an interview should always end with each participant thanking the other for the time given and the cooperation shown.

#### **V. Follow up**

Once the interviewee has left, the interviewer should:

- a) Assimilate the information gained
- b) Determine any action required or agreed as a result of the interview
- c) Make notes, or build the notes up into a more complete record for the relevant file or report
- d) Initiate any actions agreed at, or required by, the interview

#### **Exercise**

1. Define an interview.
2. Give any **four** types of interviews.
3. Outline any **four** communication skills required in an interview.
4. Explain any **three** roles of the interviewer and any **three** roles of an interviewee.
5. Give any **three** questions that can be asked in a job interview.

## MEETINGS

### What is a meeting?

A meeting is a gathering which brings together a number of people within a system with a definite communication purpose.

Meetings can either be formal or informal. The formal meeting is the gathering of specific people where decisions have to be made on particular matters by means of set procedures. On the other hand, an informal meeting could be a gathering of accounts clerks discussing plans to form a social football team.

### Types of meetings

- a) **Board meeting.** A body such as a limited company operates through board of directors who are responsible for managing the company's affairs. Some of the business at such meeting might include:
- Assessing the development of the company's business;
  - Agreeing to acquire additional capital;
  - Receiving reports from various committees;
  - Appointing senior staff and so on.
- b) **Committee meeting.** In most cases the board of directors delegates powers and duties to committees which carry out certain tasks and report back to the board. Some of the committees in an organization are: Executive, Advisory, standing, ad hoc sub, joint and so on.
- c) **Annual General Meeting (AGM).** This is a meeting which is held once a year to which all shareholders must be invited. Some of the business to be transacted includes:
- Receiving the director's and auditor's reports;
  - Examining the accounts and balance sheets;
  - Sanctioning the dividend;
  - Appointing or re-appointing directors and so on.
- d) **Extraordinary meeting.** An extraordinary general meeting is normally called to transact business which cannot conveniently wait for the next the next scheduled meeting.

### Purposes of meetings

#### Giving information:

- To hear a statement of policy;
- To receive instructions, to learn about new procedures;
- To brief a group of subordinates;

**Obtaining information or ideas:**

- To hear subordinates views on a problem;
- To find out what happened;
- To investigate a situation;
- To obtain information.

**Progressing or coordinating activities of individuals or departments:**

- To discuss what action is needed;
- To coordinate the work of different sections or departments.

**Negotiating a contract or agreement:**

- With Trade Unions or a contractor.

**Resolving a problem:**

- To overcome an obstacle to the implementation of a plan;
- To discover what the problem is;
- To motivate members of staff in order to get them committed.

**Formulating policy:**

- About the use of certain equipment.

**Preparing a plan or recommendations:**

- To formulate proposals for senior management to consider.

**Reaching a decision:**

- How to apply a plan.
- What to do about something or someone.

**Benefits of meetings**

A meeting can be beneficial in the following ways:

- **Communication and personal contact.** A meeting helps people to get to know one another. In fact, establishing good personal relationships is important in organizational life.
- **Motivation and satisfaction.** When members participate in a meeting decisions may improve individual motivation.
- **Representation.** Meetings enable the various different interests in a decision to be represented as 'equals'.
- **'Letting off steam'.** A meeting provides an opportunity for members to air their grievances. Such grievances might have been blocking an employees' effective performance.
- **Participative problem-solving.** Members feel that a meeting gives them an opportunity to contribute to a decision.
- **Learning.** Participants benefit from the knowledge and opinions of others.
- **Involvement.** Members feel part of the policy under which they would be working.
- **Self-assessment.** Members can evaluate their own opinions beliefs and attitudes in the light of those of others.
- **Understanding.** Members develop a better understanding and appreciation of each other.



## Organization of a meeting

The basic documents used for a formal meeting are:

Notice of meeting;

Agenda;

Chairperson's agenda;

Minutes of the meeting.

### Notice of meeting

Before a meeting is held, a notice must be given to those entitled to attend. The notice can only be sent by a person authorized to call the meeting, usually the chairperson, although the notice is often signed by the secretary.

The notice must show the title of the meeting, the day and date, time and place where the meeting will be held. It will specify whether an agenda has been attached. It will be signed, and that person's official position in the group will be indicated.

The notice is usually sent in advance of the meeting date (usually 21 days) so that members can reschedule their other activities in order to keep the date and time free, and can prepare themselves for the meeting. The notice required is often laid down in the regulations governing how meetings should be convened in the organization.

A sample of notice of a meeting is presented below.

#### SHOP OWNERS ASSOCIATION

**TO:** All members of Shop Owners Association  
**FROM:** The chairman  
**DATE:** 31<sup>st</sup> September 20...

**SUBJECT:** NOTICE OF MEETING

The next meeting of the Shop Owners Association will be held at Shoprite complex on Sunday, 21<sup>st</sup> October, 20—from 8a.m.

I hope it will be convenient for you to attend. Items for inclusion on the agenda should reach me by Friday 5<sup>th</sup> October.

Signed:

NdazonaKamowatimwa (Secretary)

## Agenda

A meeting should (and can effectively) only discuss one subject at a time. It is standard practice to draw up a list (called 'an agenda'-Latin for 'things to be done'); therefore an agenda is a list of items to be discussed at a meeting. The agenda is prepared by the secretary in consultation with the chairperson. In most cases, the agenda is sent at the same time as the notice of the meeting.

The agenda is distributed in advance to those attending the meeting, so that:

- Everyone knows the subject of the business to be covered at the meeting, and can prepare speeches, questions and so on accordingly.
- Everyone knows the order of business, and can if necessary arrange to attend only the relevant sessions of the meeting.
- The chairperson can keep the meeting to a schedule, and within a framework for debate, of which every participant of the meeting is aware of.

The agenda will usually contain the following elements:

- a) **Apologies for absence simply presented as apologies.** Once the meeting has been declared open by the chairperson, apologies sent to the secretary by members who are unable to attend the meeting for various reasons are read out.
- b) **Minutes of the last meeting.** Members are asked whether or not the minutes of the previous meeting are a correct reflection of what was agreed during the meeting. The members are expected to say if the minutes are a true record of the meeting. The minutes are sent in advance, therefore the members are expected to have read them before coming to the meeting; otherwise members would waste time reading the minutes in the meeting. However when you are told to draft an agenda for a recently formed committee you must not include an agenda item, 'minutes of the last meeting'.
- c) **Matters arising.** At this point members consider the progress that has been made since the previous meeting. If a situation has developed, or action been taken in response to the previous meeting, the fact should be reported. However, this section should not be taken as an excuse to re-open a dispute.
- d) **Correspondence.** Letters received by the secretary from outside parties relevant to the meeting are reported.
- e) **Fresh business.** This may include plans to be made, reports to be delivered and discussed, or particular proposals to be debated and decided on.
- f) **Any other business (AOB).** If a topic has been overlooked, or has arisen between the drafting of the agenda and the meeting, it may be dealt with at this point. 'AOB' should not be considered an excuse to bring up an item on an unprepared (and probably tired) meeting; if the matter is important enough it may be carried over to the next meeting.
- g) **Date of the next meeting.** Members can agree as to when they could meet again for the next meeting. The meeting is then formally declared closed.

## Sample agenda

### SHOP OWNERS ASSOCIATION

#### Agenda

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the last meeting
3. Matters arising from the minutes
4. Parking restriction
5. Security around the shopping areas
6. Any other business
7. Date of the next meeting

In some cases the notice of the meeting and the agenda are presented on different pages such that the agenda is attached to the notice, but in other cases the two can appear on the same page as in the example below:

### SHOP OWNERS ASSOCIATION

**TO:** All members of Shop Owners Association  
**FROM:** The chairman  
**DATE:** 31<sup>st</sup> September 20...

**SUBJECT:** NOTICE OF MEETING

The next meeting of the Shop Owners Association will be held at Shoprite complex on Sunday, 21<sup>st</sup> October, 20—from 8a.m.

I hope it will be convenient for you to attend. Items for inclusion on the agenda should reach me by Friday 5<sup>th</sup> October.

#### Agenda

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the last meeting
3. Matters arising from the minutes
4. Parking restriction
5. Security around the shopping areas
6. Any other business
7. Date of the next meeting

Signed:

NdazonaKamowatimwa (Secretary)

### Chairperson's agenda

A special version of the agenda is usually produced in order to help a chairperson lead and control the meeting efficiently. This agenda gives additional information including times and reminder notes. Each item on the agenda is followed by brief notes: information updates, background detail, explanations, reminders of when an item was previously discussed, any problems that might arise between members and need sensitive handling. There is also space for the chairperson to make notes. Documents or papers to be discussed during the meeting will be attached to the chairperson's agenda.

## SHOP OWNERS ASSOCIATION

### CHAIRPERSON'S AGENDA

For the meeting to be held at Shoprite complex on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup>October, 20—from 8a.m.

#### Agenda

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the last meeting
3. Matters arising from the minutes
4. Parking restrictions
5. Security around the shopping areas
6. Any other business
7. Date of the next meeting

#### Notes

### Preparing the location

Most of the considerations for the venue of the meeting are the same as those for interviews, however, due to the nature of the gathering the following need to be considered:

- **Accessibility.** For meetings which are not held in the organisation's boardroom, the location should be chosen so that participants can get to it, and find it.
- **Size.** The room should be big enough to accommodate the number of people attending the meeting comfortably. However, the room should not be too big or small that people feel swamped or lost.
- **Facilities.** There should be provision for facilities required:
  - For use within the meeting (power points, overhead projectors, desks or tables.
  - For the participants' comfort and convenience (refreshments, cloak rooms, and so on)
- **Seating arrangements.**
  - A large formal meeting may be more appropriately seated around a table: a circular table being less confrontational and less status-conscious than a rectangular.

## DUTIES OF OFFICERS AND MEMBERS

<b>Duties of the chairperson</b>		
<p><b>Before the meeting the chairperson is responsible for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Fixing the date and time of the meeting</li> <li>▪ Choosing and preparing an appropriate location/venue for the meeting</li> <li>▪ Establishing and understanding the items to be discussed</li> <li>▪ Ensuring that members are informed about the meeting</li> <li>▪ Ensuring that correct procedure is observed in convening the meeting</li> <li>▪ Starting the meeting on time</li> </ul>	<p><b>During the meeting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Introducing topics clearly by identifying the related elements</li> <li>▪ Exchanging, developing and summing up the ideas from the members</li> <li>▪ Preserving order and harmony and dealing with irrelevances by:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ensuring that only one person speaks at a time</li> <li>○ Speakers must address the chair</li> <li>○ Observe procedures</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Guiding the meeting through its business, making sure that each item is valid within the regulations</li> <li>▪ Making sure that only those entitled to speak do so               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Get decisions effectively by giving rulings on points of dispute</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>After the meeting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Checking and signing the minutes of the meeting</li> <li>▪ Monitoring the progress of the actions agreed at the meeting</li> </ul>
<b>Duties of the secretary</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Obtain the material for the meeting from previous minutes or new sources</li> <li>▪ Drafting the agenda to a logical order of priorities</li> <li>▪ Agree with the chairperson on the draft               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Circulating the notice of the meeting, the agenda and any other related documents</li> <li>▪ Preparing the venue of the meeting</li> <li>▪ Arrive at the venue of the meeting before starting time</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure to bring all necessary documents</li> <li>▪ Take notes on the agreements made</li> <li>▪ Assist the chairperson by providing the necessary information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prepare a draft copy of the minutes</li> <li>▪ Act on and communicating the decisions made</li> </ul>
<b>Duties of members</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Inform the secretary/chairperson about items for the agenda</li> <li>▪ Read all the papers received and if necessary prepare their own supporting papers</li> <li>▪ Attend on time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Make disciplined contributions</li> <li>▪ Take note of decisions and actions required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Read and verify minutes</li> <li>▪ Carry out any actions required and if necessary report back</li> </ul>

## Minutes

Minutes are a true and accurate record of the deliberations of a meeting. As a written record of a meeting, minutes are an important and effective means of communication in an organization.

- a) They serve as a record of the proceedings and they are a source of reference.
- b) Minutes are meant to check on ill-considered contributions.
- c) Minutes are used as a basis for implementing a particular action agreed in the meeting.
- d) Minutes can also serve as a basis for coming up with policy based on the agreement in the meeting.

## Presentation of minutes

**HEADING.** The heading of minutes presents the following information:

<b>Declaration:</b>	The minutes of the meeting of the
<b>Convener:</b>	Shoppers Owners Association
<b>Venue:</b>	held at Shoprite complex
<b>Day and date:</b>	on Sunday 21 <sup>st</sup> October, 20---
<b>From:</b>	8 am

The complete heading will read as follows: The minutes of the meeting of the Shop Owners Association held at Shoprite complex on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> October, 20---from 8a.m.

**MIDDLE BODY.** Below the heading are entries of the names of the participants in the meeting under the respective labels as follows:

- Present: Names of all those who attended the meeting starting with the chairperson's name.
- By attendance/Invitation: Names of special delegates invited to the meeting.
- Absent: Names of those who did not send any communication after the formal invitation.
- Apologies: Names of those participants who excused themselves for one reason or another from attending the meeting.

## END BODY

The presentation of the end body of minutes varies according to the types of minutes.

### Types of minutes

There are three types of minutes.

1. **Resolution minutes.** The resolutions (or decisions) are recorded without describing the debate that preceded the agreement. This is a brief, strictly relevant method, which also serves to disguise possible conflicts and division within the meeting. For instance:

Minute	Minutes
7/2007	<b>Parking restrictions</b>

Members **agreed** to restrict the parking of vehicles in the complex to customers and members of staff within the complex.

2. **Narrative minutes.** In these minutes a concise summary of the discussion leading up to the resolution is added. This presentation enables individuals to go on record with their views and also enables the organization to assess their soundness of judgment in light of events: on the other hand the individual gains the satisfaction of 'making his mark' but also makes himself/herself accountable for his/her words. Narrative minutes are presented in the reported speech for example:

'The chairman told members that a number of customers and members of staff have complained about the lack of parking space due to the taxi drivers who use the same car park. Mr. Chimwendo proposed that the taxi drivers should be asked to pay for parking as a way of scaring them away. However, Mrs. Sizimpita disagreed and argued that if all the drivers are able to pay then the problem will not be solved. Mr. Kameza suggested that the taxi drivers should be asked to relocate to the other side of the road where minibuses are parked.

The members **agreed** to restrict the parking of vehicles in the complex to customers and members of staff.'

3. **Action minutes.** In organizations where the chair of the meeting has clear authority to direct members' actions, the format of 'action minutes' may be used to indicate explicitly what is expected as a result of resolutions, and who is responsible. A right hand column may be used to note the name of the person who has undertaken or been asked to perform the necessary action. The column is labeled action.

## FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE SUCCESS OF A MEETING

1. **Agenda.** The agenda enables the participants to prepare thoroughly for the meeting. It also shows the sequence of the discussion items. The accompanying notice gives details of the venue, day and time of the meeting.
2. **Participation.** A meeting can only be held when there is requisite attendance called quorum. The success of the deliberations depends on the active participation of the participants.
3. **Advance notice.** Participants to the meeting need enough time for them to reschedule other engagements in order of priority. A hastily convened meeting, unless it is of emergency in nature should be discouraged because people caught off-guard either do not bother to attend the meeting or come to the meeting ill-prepared.
4. **Requisite documents.** Apart from the agenda, relevant documents that will be discussed in the meeting need to be circulated to participants beforehand.
5. **Venue.** The venue of the meeting should be ideal for the purpose of the meeting for instance the boardroom for a management meeting. The venue should comfortably accommodate the participants and it should be free from distractions; hence conducive to discussion.
6. **Time.** The time of holding the meeting should be in general convenient to the participants. It would be inconvenient for people of some religious persuasions to conduct business meetings on the Sabbath. Monday mornings and Friday afternoons would not be convenient times for holding meetings.
7. **Duration.** The duration of the meeting should also be within reasonable duration for mental aptitude. A meeting which is unnecessarily long wears participants down. The time allocated for an item should also be rational.
8. **General organisation and administration.** Depending on the nature of the meeting, such arrangements as messengerial services, refreshments or communication facilities should be available for participants.
9. **Chairperson's abilities.** The success of the meeting largely depends on the abilities of the chairperson. For the meeting to be a success there is need for standing orders to be followed and ably interpreted and applied by the chairperson. In addition the chairperson should be able to structure, control, summarize and record the discussion in order to give the meeting a direction,



## TERMINOLOGY OF MEETINGS

<b>Ad hoc</b>	From Latin, meaning ‘for the purpose of’, as for example, when a sub-committee is set to organize a particular activity.
<b>Adjourn</b>	To stop the discussion of a meeting before reaching a conclusion so that the discussions would be continued at a later date.
<b>Advisory</b>	Providing advice or suggestion, not taking action.
<b>Apologies</b>	Excuses given in advance for inability to attend a meeting.
<b>Bye-laws</b>	Rules regulating an organisation’s activities.
<b>Casting vote</b>	When two sides are deadlocked, a chairperson may record a second or casting vote to ensure a decision is made.
<b>Consensus</b>	Agreement by general consent, no formal vote being taken.
<b>Co-opt</b>	When a member is <i>appointed</i> to a committee and not elected, as is the usual method.
<b>Ex officio</b>	Given powers or rights by reason of office.
<b>Honorary post</b>	A duty performed without payment.
<b>Lobbying</b>	A practice of seeking member’s support for a motion before a meeting.
<b>Motion</b>	The name given to a proposal when it is being discussing at a meeting.
<b>Mover</b>	One who speaks on behalf of a motion.
<b>Nem. Con</b>	From Latin, literally <i>no-one speaking against</i> .
<b>Opposer</b>	One who speaks against a motion.
<b>Point of information</b>	The drawing of attention in a meeting to a relevant item of fact.
<b>Point of order</b>	The drawing of attention to a breach of rules or procedures.
<b>Postpone</b>	To change the day of a meeting before the meeting starts
<b>Proposal</b>	The name given to a submitted item for discussion before a meeting takes place.
<b>Proxy</b>	Literally, <i>on behalf of another person</i> - a proxy vote, therefore it means a member attending a meeting or doing something in the meeting for instance voting on behalf of another.

<b>Resolution</b>	The name given to a <i>motion</i> which has been passed or carried; used after the decision has been reached.
<b>Sine die</b>	From Latin, literally, meaning <i>without a day</i> , that is to say indefinitely, e.g. adjourned sine die
<b>Standing committee</b>	A committee has an indefinite term of office.
<b>Second</b>	One who supports a motion presented by the proposer

*Exercise*

1. What is a meeting?
2. Outline any **four** purposes of meetings
3. Give any **four** benefits of meetings
4. Explain the documents associated with meetings.
5. Describe the roles of the following in relation to meetings:
  - i. Chairperson
  - ii. Secretary
  - iii. Participant

## UNIT 6: ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

### Overview

This unit provides you with information on:

- Electronic communication;
- Forms of electronic communication; and
- The effectiveness of electronic messages.

### Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- a) Demonstrate understanding of computerised systems of communication;
- b) Explain usage of different forms of electronic communication;
- c) Set up relevant electronic communication according to different situations; and
- d) Analyse the effectiveness of messages transferred by electronic means.

### What is Electronic Communication?

Electronic communication refers to the use computerised systems to send or receive messages. One needs to know how computers work in order to communicate electronically. A computer is a device that can receive, process and store data. They are used as tools in every part of society. There are different forms of computers like mainframe computers, mini computers, desktop computers, laptop computers, tablet computers and palmtop computers. All these computerised systems have the same basic parts in their hardware which enable them to perform these four functions:

1. Receive input
2. Process information
3. Store into memory
4. Give output

Using computers or computerised systems, electronic communication can take different forms like internet, websites, e-mails, telephones, teleconference, video conference, data conference, and fax.

### INTERNET

Computers nowadays are complex; there are a lot of different components inside them, and they all serve different purposes. When computers work together, they are said to be in a network. When the networks are also lined up they establish the internet. An **intranet** is a mini version of the Internet belonging to a particular organisation. It includes the company's own Local Area Network (LAN) or Wide Area Network (WAN). On the other hand, an **extranet** is a private intranet that is accessible to authorized outsiders.



Figure 1: People around the world connected by computers and internet

To access the Internet, an individual or an organisation needs the following:

- A computer
- Telecommunication link
- A modem
- Subscription to an Internet Service Provider (ISP) – ISPs are organisations that connect people to the Internet upon subscription. The ISP has a computer permanently connected to the Internet. When one [subscriber] wants to use the Internet, they access it via the ISP's permanently internet-connected computer).
- Internet Browsing Software, such as Ms Explorer and Mozilla Firefox, installed on the computer is used for Internet access.

### Website

A website is a set of documents on the Internet belonging to an individual or an organisation, which contains information relating to the individual or the organisation. All information on the Internet is on websites. An individual or organisation wishing to do business by using the Internet will need to make its information systems available on the Internet. This can only be possible by creating a website.

When a website has been created, it has its own unique address called its Uniform Resource Locator (URL). The structure of a URL is as follows:

**http://www.imis.org.uk**

**http://** Stands for Hypertext Transfer Protocol, the protocol used on the World-Wide Web for exchange of documents.

**.www** This stands for World Wide Web.

**.imis** The domain name of the organisation or individual whose site (*a website is also commonly referred to as a site*) is located at this URL. In this case this is the site for IMIS.

**.org** The type of the organisation concerned.  
.com or .co for commercial organisation  
.ac or .edu would indicate an education institution such as a University.

**.uk** This indicates the organisation's country of location

### Finding Information on the Internet

To browse the Internet, one needs web-browsing software (Web Browsers) such as Microsoft Internet Explorer and Mozilla Firefox. Using a Web Browser, the user needs to supply the software with a URL, although most web browsers can make life much easier by supplying the most recently visited sites. If you do not know the site's URL, it is also possible to find information by using search engines like Yahoo!, Google and Excite. With a search engine,

the user may simply type a word and institute a search. The search engine would then give a list of website links containing information relating to the typed word.

## Internet Uses

After connecting to the internet, you can use your computer to access information from different websites. You can do the following:

- Research
- Get education and training
- Do commerce (*buying and selling over the Internet is called e-commerce*)
- Get entertainment
- Recruit or seek Jobs
- Seek messages and receive messages using e-mail
- Enhance your relationships
- Advertise

## E-MAIL

E-mail is the name given to systems for sending and receiving mail electronically. In a company, communication can be faster, more efficient and effective if e-mail is used. Externally, using the Internet as the backbone technology infrastructure, e-mail can facilitate faster inter-organizational communication. On the Internet there are several free e-mail services such as Yahoo! Mail and Gmail. However, you may need to pay for the subscription for the service in most cases.

Using e-mail for inter-organizational communication offers the several **benefits** including:

- Faster than post.
- Cheaper than post.
- Efficient: can send message to thousands of recipients simultaneously.
- Electronic reach or read receipt can be obtained.
- More secure messages due to use of passwords.

However, using e-mail for inter-organizational communication offers the several **drawbacks** including the following:

- It requires computer literacy.
- If telecommunication systems fail, there will be no communication.
- It can be a source of Viruses.
- Initial costs of setting up the system can be high.

## Common E-Mail Terminology

- **E-mail Address**

Upon subscription, a client is assigned an e-mail account which is identified by the e-mail address. The e-mail address is of the form *client@serviceprovider.com*

### Example

*miyovano@yahoo.com*

Note: The above means that miyovano is a client of Yahoo! mail service.

- **Sign Up**

To open an e-mail account.

- **Sign In**

To access one's e-mail account so that you can read or send e-mail messages. Every time you want to read or send messages you need to sign in. The process involves supplying an e-mail address and the corresponding password.

- **Sign Out**

To get out of one's e-mail account.

- **Spam**

Unimportant and unsolicited mail.

- **Forward**

Send a received message to another person.

- **Reply**

Send a message to the sender of a received message.

- **Compose/New Message**

Write a new e-mail message

- **Attach**

To attach a document (e.g. an Ms Word document) to an e-mail message. The attached message is called *an attachment*.

## TELECONFERENCING

Teleconferencing is a technology that allows people in different locations to participate in a conference over a telephone line or using e-mail group communication software. Benefits of this are quite obvious. They include time saving as the participants save on travel time and also you save on travel on travel costs. When teleconferencing involves participants editing and modifying data simultaneously, it is called a **dataconference**.

### Videoconferencing

People in different locations can also participate in a conference electronically using videoconferencing. Here the technology enables participants not only to hear each other but

also see one another on the screen. Usually a videoconferencing room is required which should among other things be equipped with a computer, a Screen, microphones, video cameras and speakers.



*Figure 2: A Video Conference*

## **The Telephone**

Telephones enable people from different geographical locations to communicate orally. Telephones are controlled using a computerized system called a Private Automatic Branch Exchange (PABX). The PABX is a switchboard that provides an organization with internal telephony services and the interface with external telephone lines. PABXs often provide extra features, not available on a standard telephone, connected directly to the public telephone exchange.



*Figure 3: A PABX system*

### **Facilities in modern Telephone and PABX systems include:**

- Automatic message switching
- Different ringing tones for different users in an office, for example.
- Different ringing tones for internal and external calls
- Call waiting
- Automatic dialling
- Call redialling if line is busy
- Conference calls
- Call Barring

### **Facsimile Transmission**

- The fax machine combines telephone, scanner and printer services into one gadget. This enables it to scan documents, send them over a telephone network and print them again at the other end. The document is converted to electronic form and reconverted back at its destination to ordinary form.



*Figure 4: A Fax Machine*

**Advantages of sending documents by fax include:**

- Quick document transfer
- Fax allows documents to be sent in their original state thereby saving time of special preparation
- Reduced cost of sending documents
- There is proof that the document was sent and received
- Fax messages can be received anytime even off duty hours

**Disadvantages of sending documents by fax include:**

Machines are prone to technology failure

- Documents you transmit via fax may not be as safe and secure as you would like.
- An important message may be placed below other fax messages which arrived later and therefore cause a delay in dealing with the information.



## ELECTRONIC WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

Written communication can be more accurate, faster, clearer and effective by using different application software. Some of the application software include: Word Processors, Publishers, and Spreadsheets.

### Word Processors

A word processor, such as Ms Word, is a ready-made program designed to enable users to create and manipulate textual documents such as letters, memos, CVs, and reports. Word processors are also sometimes referred to as *Word Processing Software Packages*.

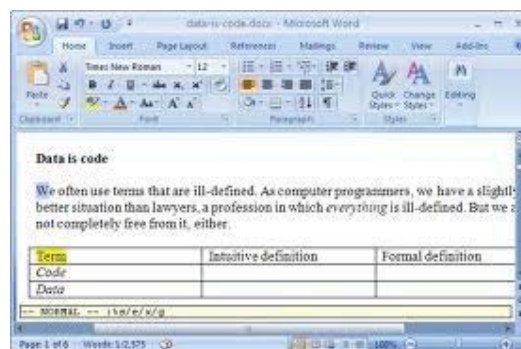


Figure 5: Ms Word

When used for producing documents, word processors offer the following **facilities**

- **Capability to store** (the usual term for store is *save*) a document on backing storage for later retrieval. (*An ordinary typewriter is void of this*)
- **Capability to type a document once and print as many times as desired.** (*with an ordinary typewriter to produce multiple 'original copies' you have to retype many times*)
- **WYSIWYG facility.** (*What You See Is What You Get – a facility that enables users to view a document on screen in exactly the same format as its printed copy. In Ms Word, it is normally called the **Print Preview facility***)
- **Formatting** (changing the appearance of text). (*this allows users to change the appearance of text as desired. Text can be made to be **bold**, in italics, underlined, *big* or *small*, among many other formatting options. With an a typewriter such formatting options are not there.*)
- **Editing facility** (*you can easily, erase, copy , move or insert text on screen, with a great deal of tidiness* )
- **Spell Checking Facility** (*allowing users to check their documents for spelling and some grammatical mistakes-enabling users to produce English spelling mistake-free documents. You can't do this with a typewriter!*)
- **Graphics facility** (*This allows users to insert drawings, diagrams or pictures into their document so as to add clarity of the text*)

- **Mail Merging** (*This facility allows the user to type one standard letter, for example, and merge it with names and addresses of customers stored somewhere else in the computer to produce multiple personalised letters.*)
- **Templates** (*a template is an already designed document ready for the user to simply edit to create their document as desired. There could be in a word processor, for example, a template CV, a template Memo or a template Report. These would enable users to create high quality documents quickly.*)

### **Benefits of Using Word Processors**

- Easy production of personalized letters by use mail merging
- On-screen amendment, correction and updating of text
- Low production costs
- Easy editing and formatting
- Improved text quality
- High speed printing is possible
- Faster document preparation
- Retyping is minimised by use of editing facilities
- Data storage is more compact and convenient
- Graphical presentation is easy
- Communication with other word processors is possible if e-mail is used in conjunction with word processing
- Faster access to information
- Faster processing of information
- Faster distribution of information
- Direct access to information, rather than via a secretary is possible.

## Desktop Publishing (DTP) Packages

A desktop publishing (DTP) package, such as Ms Publisher and Adobe PageMaker, is a program that is designed to allow users to create publications such as Company Newsletters, Calendars, Greeting Cards, Invitation cards and Business Cards using their desktop (or laptop) computers.



Figure 6: Ms Publisher

## Web Publishing

Most companies today have a website that they use for one or more business purposes. A company's website can be a communication tool to its suppliers or customers. The essentials of written communication discussed earlier in this manual are all applicable to website design. For example, simplicity, intuitiveness, accuracy and clarity of the website content are very crucial if the website is to be a useful business tool.

Good websites will use a balance between the use of graphics and ensuring the ease of downloading by the users since graphics may take a lot of time to be downloaded. While the use of colour can make web content clear, it must be born in mind that some people are colour blind and also that too many colours can be a little irritating to the eye. A FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) section on the website makes life easy for many users.

## Spreadsheets

As a program basically consisting of, and operating from intersected rows and columns. A single intersection point is called a *cell* while a collection of cells forms a *range*. As a package it is essentially a modelling tool. It is software for carrying out calculation-oriented tasks.

One of the facilities of a spreadsheet (see details below) is production of graphs. Using a spreadsheet package high quality graphs can be produced that will make written communication clearer.

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Excel window titled 'Microsoft Excel - Book1'. The spreadsheet contains the following data:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1		Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Average		
2	Student 1	95	92	90	92.33		
3	Student 2	78	85	79	80.67		
4	Student 3	90	88	93	90.33		
5	Student 4	86	87	82	85.00		
6	Student 5	67	73	80	73.33		
7	Student 6	72	86	79	79.00		
8	Student 7	69	78	74	73.67		
9							
10							

Figure 7: Ms Excel

### Typical Uses of Spreadsheets include:

- Cash flow analysis
- Forecasting
- Balance sheets
- Stock Control (Inventory Control)
- Ledgers
- Profit projections
- Profit budgeting
- Sales Analysis
- Sales Forecasting

### Facilities in spreadsheet package

- Storage of spreadsheet files on backing storage
- Printing
- Presenting data graphically (producing graphs from the spreadsheet data)
- Easy editing
- Formatting cell contents
- Filtering (enables users to view only those data items meeting certain criteria)
- Sorting
- Sensitivity Analysis: It is also called **What-if analysis**. A spreadsheet can assist a manager to ask “what-if? Questions” when a forecast or budget is made. By using a spreadsheet model to answer such questions quickly, the editing facility in the spreadsheet can be used. The manager is thus able to see the effect on changes on original values quickly.

### Exercise

1. What is internet?
2. Why was the development of the telephone so important for current information technology?
3. Explain briefly how facsimile transmission works.
4. List any three benefits and three drawbacks of ‘electronic mail’
5. What are teleconferences used for?
6. Explain the importance of IT in today’s communication activities.

NOT FOR SALE

# BUSINESS COMMUNICATION (FA1)

## CERTIFICATE IN FINANCIAL ACCOUNTING



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