

ALESKANDRIA INSTITUTE 360.



DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS/MANAGEMENT STUDIES

Module:

Communication Skills

Diploma Programme

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COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Session Objectives

By the end of the Session, learners should be able to:

1. Define Communication and understand
2. Elements of Communication
3. Importance of Communication
4. Barriers to effective Communication
5. Strategies for effective communication in Organizations

1.0 Introduction

Communication is an important aspect of human behaviour. Communication is central to everything that we do. Without communication an organization can't function at all. No managers can be successful without communicating effectively.

1.1 What Is Communication?

The term **Communication** has been derived from the Latin word “*communis*” which means common. Communication stands for sharing of ideas in common.

According to Keith Davis, “communication is a process of information and understanding from one person to another. ” It is the transfer of information from the sender to the receiver with the information being understood by the receiver. It is the process of transmitting and sharing of ideas, opinions, facts, and information in a manner that is perceived and understood by the receiver of the message.

1.2 Elements of Communication

The process models of communication contain six main elements such as

- i) Sender,
- ii) Message,
- iii) Receiver,
- iv) Feedback,
- v) Channel,
- vi) Noise or interference.

As communication occurs, sender and receiver interact by encoding/sending and decoding/receiving messages. Encoding means putting the message into words or diagram or nonverbal signals so that it can be transmitted i.e. a process by which the sender converts, translates the information to be transmitted into appropriate symbols that can make sense to the receiver. The receiver hears, reads or looks in order to decode or interpret the message i.e. translation of symbolic message into meaning:

i. Sender:

Source of message. Communication begins with sender, the individual who reacts to situations from a unique vantage point, interpreting ideas and filtering experiences through their own perception. Sender conceives his/her ideas based on the accumulated attitudes, experiences skills and cultural conditioning.

ii. Message/Meaning:

Concept, feelings, thoughts, facts, ideas to be conveyed to someone else and exists in the sender's mind: The message is the idea of feeling transmitted from the sender to the receiver to achieve understanding. It makes a connection between the sender and the receiver and may be made up of signs, words and movement. The tone of voice, inflection, the rate of speech, facial expression,

touching and body movement may be misinterpreted by the receiver, or poorly constructed message may lead to misunderstanding. The message the sender meant to send is not always the message received.

iii. Receiver:

Target audience. The receiver decodes or interprets the message to achieve understanding. In doing this, the receiver also acts as an individual from a unique vantage point, interpreting the idea according to a particular personal perception of the message. This perception is also the result of the receiver's unique background of experiences, beliefs and concerns. Interpretation of the same message may vary between people.

iv. Feedback:

The Receiver's response to the sender after receiving the message. Feedback is an essential part of successful interpersonal communication. It is the receiver's response to the sender's message, telling the sender how their message is being received and helping the receiver confirm whether their perception of the message is correct. It can be intentional or unintentional. Feedback: Provides continuity in the communication- Indicates effective understanding or misunderstanding of the message- Stimulates further communication and discussion.

v. Channel/Medium/Conduit:

Channel/carrier of information e.g. Newspaper, magazines, radio, TV, etc. A communication channel is the means of techniques used to signal or convey a message – for example, a conversation, letter, telephone call, e-mail or television program. Sometimes these channels are internal to the organization; other channels are outside the organization and are thus external channels. An appropriate channel suits the communication purpose, the need of the sender, the message and the needs of the receiver. Different lines or channels of communication are used inside an organization. Horizontal channels operate between colleagues at the same level within the organization's structures, while vertical channels move communication up and down between different levels in the organization.

vi. Noise:

An element that can distort communications and it can occur at any point of communication. The message received is not necessarily the same as the message sent. Something other than the intended message is received because noise or interference interrupts the intended message. Noise or interference that interrupts the message or communication flow between sender and receiver can lead to misunderstanding or to confused or ambiguous communication.

1.3 Types/Forms/Patterns of Communication

1) Downward communication

It refers to the flow of communication from supervisor to the subordinate. To improve downward communication, managers can present job instructions clearly to subordinates, explain why things need to be done in a particular way so that people who perform the jobs understand better. For example, clear staff regulations, rules, handbooks, procedures manual etc. are the good examples of downward communication.

2) Upward communication:

It refers to the flow is from the subordinate to the superiors. To improve upward communication, screen upward messages so that the more relevant aspects of the information are received by top management, provide the climate in which members can communicate both positive and negative messages, detect biases when they occur, reduce status difference and wherever possible, require quantified data to be submitted rather than provide subjective

information for decision making. For example, instituting suggestion scheme, union leader voicing their demands to management, etc.

3) Lateral/Horizontal Communication:

It takes place between or among members who are at the same level in the organization. For example, two supervisors of the same department or different department are discussing work matters with each other. To improve lateral communication, it is desirable to establish openness and trust among members of various department, develop reward systems that facilitate inter-departmental cooperation, learn that what the other departments are doing by getting involved in interdepartmental meetings and, if possible design the organization structure in such a way so that greater opportunities of interdepartmental contact exist.

4) Diagonal Communication:

It refers to the flow of messages between persons who are in position at different levels of the hierarchy and also in different departments. This type of communication takes place under special circumstances.

5) Formal Communication:

The channels of communication established formally by the management are called formal communication. These are used for the transmission of official messages within or outside organization. However it suffers from delay and also chances of distortion.

6) Informal communication:

Communication which takes place on the basis of informal or social relations among people in an organization is known as informal communication. It is otherwise known as grapevine communication. The grapevine has three main characteristics:

- ☒ It is not controlled by management
- ☒ It is perceived by most employees as being more believable and reliable than formal communication issued by top management
- ☒ It is largely used to serve the self-interests of those people within it and
- ☒ It is one of the quickest means of communication.

7) Verbal Communication:

When the message is conveyed orally, it is called verbal communication. It is most economical in terms of time and money.

8) Written Communication:

Communication that takes place between people in written form is called written communication. For e.g. memos, reports, bulletins etc. It is permanent, tangible and verifiable. But it is time consuming.

9) Nonverbal/Gestural Communication:

Communicating nonverbally with body movement, with some gestures is known as nonverbal communication. The types of nonverbal communication can be classified into the following categories: Body movements or kinesics; Physical characteristics; Vocal qualities or paralanguage; Use of space or proximity; Artifacts; Environment.

1.4 Importance of Communication

1) Motivation:

Through communication, employees can express their frustrations and satisfactions to each

other and to management. In addition, communication provides a mechanism for individuals to compare attitude and resolve ambiguous about their jobs, their roles and areas of conflict between groups and individuals. If an employee is dissatisfied with his pay, he will often communicate with others informally, to determine whether the feelings are justified or not.

2) **Information:**

Communication serves a vital information function for decision-making. It is based on technological orientation and facilitates information processing activities and ways to improve the accuracy with which communication channels carry information going into individual, group and organizational decisions.

- 3) **To increase acceptance of employees:** it allows management and the subordinates discuss challenges resolve problems with jobs and settle conflicts among themselves.
- 4) **To gain commitment to the Organizational objectives:** A major function of communication is to motivate, direct, control and evaluate the performance of organizational members.
- 5) **Basis of leadership action:** Leadership is an influence process by which supervisors attempt to control the behaviour and performance of subordinates. Communication is the major vehicle of such control available to leaders. Hence, leadership activities, such as issuing orders, rewarding behavior and performance, reviewing and evaluating performance, making job and task assignments, and training and developing subordinates all involve communication leadership is impossible without communication between the leader and the led and the leader can exert his influence or ideas only through conveying ideas and decisions to the followers.
- 6) **Job satisfaction:** mutual trust and confidence between the management and operations can be increased by communicating what management wants and employees perform.
- 7) **Promotion of healthy public relations:** this leads to good image hence increasing business prospects since more loyal customers are attracted.
- 8) **Promotes customer/client satisfaction:** it enhances better understanding of one's clients' needs and hence better services/good delivery.
- 9) **Coordination:** it helps in securing desired coordination of enterprise operations in Organizations.
- 10) **Promotion of management efficiency:** it is the lubricant for fast smooth operations of the management process because it enables people to work in accordance with the decisions of the management. It helps in clarifying tasks, identifying authority positions and accountability for performance.
- 11) **Control:** Organizations are attempting to control the activities of individuals through the design and use of formal communication channels. Most types of programs or standard operating procedures have a large communication component to them. Hence, formal communication channels represent a major structural means of control within organizations.

1.5

Barriers To Effective Communication

- 1) **Jargon misuse:** jargons are special terms/words used by particular professions, peer groups, or Organizations and this can be a barrier to communication when the sender and recipient attaches different meanings to the same words or use different words for the same meaning.
- 2) **Semantic Problems:** this occurs due to individual interpretations of words and symbols. The choice of a wrong word in a sentence sometimes may alter the meaning of the intended message. The use of inappropriate language, symbols, and words may affect the understanding capacity of the receiver. The sender must ensure that the proper words and language are chosen to communicate the intended message so that there is no room for misinterpretation or confusion as the receiver decodes the message exactly as it was encoded. Many words commonly used in communication carry quite different meanings for different people. Two general kinds' of semantic problems present barriers to communication. i) Some words and phrases are so general or abstract that they invite varying interpretation. ii) Semantic problem arise when different groups develop their own technical language.
- 3) **Status effects:** Status effect also hinder communication in as much as people occupying higher positions in the organization have a tendency to tell a lot to the subordinates but not to listen. When people do not listen, they do not understand each other and thus effective communication is blocked. Thus, the superior-subordinate status comes in the way of effective communication taking place.
- 4) **Physical Distraction/ Noise:** this is an external factor that interferes with effective means of communication and this may cause interference in the process of communication by blocking a part of communication or by diluting the strength of communication .When people communicate with each other, noise may also enter in the form of various types of distraction. Distractions may occur because of situational factors such as constant telephone interruptions, people walking in and out of the room, or loud noises in the background. Apart from these physical noises, certain peculiar mannerism of the speaker may also be distracting to the listener and hide effective listening.
- 5) **Information Overload:** this occurs when an individual receives more information than what they are capable of processing. This could result into confusion and in the process; some aspects of information may be laid aside for purpose of convenience i.e. this refers to too much volume of information which is beyond the level of a person to comprehend. Communication may be ineffective when too much information is transmitted at one time or when complex information is presented within a short time frame. The problem is compounded if the individual also has limited attention span and poor memory retention. Managers are literally drowned in communication and unable to attend to them fully. This includes variety of information received from different mode such as e-mail, memos, official letters, reports, instructions, circular, telephone, meetings etc. is required to attend.
- 6) **Feedback barriers:** feedback is the only way to ascertain how the message is interpreted since it closes the communication gap and any person who misunderstands any message and does not have provision to ask for clarification may end up giving wrong answers.
- 7) **Time Pressures/Fatigue:** Time is always short, and this fact often leads to distortion in communication. A major temptation when pressed for time is to short-circuit formal communication channels. Because of time pressures, many messages are hastily and inadequately communicated by managers, leaving the listener with much ambiguity and

confusion as to what has been said and what action should be taken. Since managers have to deal with a large number of people on an ongoing basis within limited periods of time, giving incomplete information and verbally transmitted short, telegraphic message seems inevitable.

- 8) **Cultural Differences/diversity:** people from different cultural backgrounds have differences in communication approaches. This is particularly true with body language: Words, colors and symbols have different meanings in different cultures and sometimes even between subcultures within a national boundary.
- 9) **Sender credibility:** if the sender is not trusted, the receiver will scrutinize the message heavily and deliberately by trying to look for hidden meanings and may end up distorting the entire message.
- 10) **Trust Level** When there is lack of sufficient trust between the communicating parties, selective listening takes place, resulting in ineffective communication. Complete information is seldom exchanged under such circumstances and the withholding of information by one or both parties will further aggravate the trust issue and **impersonal** problems. Evaluating tendencies develop selective listening increases further and messages get distorted.
- 11) **Selective Perception/ Information filtering:** This refers to the process of transmitting only particular information i.e. telling only pleasant information while hushing bad news. People have a tendency to listen to only part of a message and “block out” other information for a variety of reasons. One of the most important of aspect is a need to avoid or reduce cognitive dissonance. Thus, people have a tendency to ignore new information that conflicts with or denies already established beliefs, values, and expectations.
Selective perception occurs when the receiver values the context of the communication including the role, identity, values, mood and motives of the sender (Perceptual Distortion).
- 12) **Self-Concept:** An individual’s motives and personality strongly influence the decoding or symbolic interpretation process. An employee who has a highly felt need for advancement in an organization and whose personality tend be to quite optimistic might read a smile and casual comment from a supervisor as an indication that he is being groomed for promotion. A person with low need for advancement and a pessimistic disposition may read nothing more than a casual comment unrelated to anything else into the supervisor’s comment.
- 13) **Absence of Two-way Communication:** If communication is only one way – from top to bottom or from superior to subordinate – without any feedback, would hinder communication from taking place in an effective manner. For instance, the receiver might decode the message in a way that was not intended. Neither the receiver nor the sender will then realize that the message was misinterpreted until it becomes too late to rectify the situations. For example, an examination question is one way communication which could easily get misinterpreted by some students since attempts by students to seek clarifications in the examination hall is usually discouraged.
- 14) **Opinions and attitudes:** held by the sender and the recipient often disrupts communication since they may affect the sources and medium of communication.
- 15) **Information over load:** this occurs when an individual receives more information than what they are capable of processing. This could result into confusion and in the process; some aspects of information may be laid aside for purpose of convenience.

- 16) **Poor memory/retention:** people to whom messages are passed may have poor memories and this affects free flow of information. This may be due to senility and other factors.
- 17) **Emotions and moods:** such as anxiety, worries, fears, happiness, enthusiasm or any of these often disrupts effective communication.

1.6 Overcoming Barriers to Communication/Strategies for Effective Communication

There are number of ways managers can minimize a number of communication barriers. In general, communication can be improved in two ways. First, the manager must sharpen his or her skills in manipulating symbols, that is, process of encoding. This implies that the sender must take as much care as possible in choosing symbols and establishing the context within which the message is transmitted.

There are number of techniques that are commonly employed by managers to accomplish these ends.

- 1) **Active listening:** It implies that the receiver of information engages in the following patterns of behavior.
 - a) Stop talking since it is impossible to talk and listen at the same time,
 - b) Remove the distracting elements as much as possible
 - c) is patient and lets the other person say whatever needs to be said,
 - d) Appreciate the emotion behind the speaker's words and is empathetic,
 - e) is attentive,
 - f) Creates a positive listening environment
 - f) Uses feedback mechanisms to check understanding
 - g) Withholds judgment
 - h) Asks questions,
 - i) Reacts to the message and not the person. Active listening takes a lot of energy and be perfected by conscious and constant practice.
- 2) **Follow up and Feedback:** The process of feedback makes communication a two-way process. In face-to-face situations, the sender should try to become sensitive to facial expressions and other signs that indicate how the message is being received. It is often important to solicit questions of clarification from the receiver. When more formal communication is involved, the writer may specify specific forms and times for responding to insure feedback.
- 3) **Parallel Channels and Repetition:** A major principle of communication technology is to provide parallel channels of communication that reinforce each other. Thus, a verbal request may be followed up with a memo. In this way, the sender has ensured getting the attention of the receivers and also ensured that the sender will have a record to refer to in case he or she forgets in its order.
- 4) **Sense of timing:** an important message should not only be timed so that decisions can be taken in time but also timing of the message and the environmental setting in which the message is received is equally important. A manager may ignore a memo or request simply because other problems are pressing in at the same time. Two kinds of actions can be taken by management to ensure the accurate reception of communication through timing. i) they may want to standardize the timing of specific messages, ii) many organizations establish "retreats" or time away from normal job pressures to transmit material, ideas and instructions to employees. This action insures the undivided attention of the receivers.

5) **Be patient and paying adequate attention:** When choosing a style of language, the sender must give a due consideration to the listener's intention, and his background. Effective use of language consists of tailoring one's message for the context of the receivers in order to maximize overall between the intended and received messages.

6) **Information Communication and Information Centers:** Running parallel to formal communication channel in an organization is an informal network commonly called grapevines. They tend to be a universal fact of life in all organizations. They have been used to serve not only informational functions but also motivational functions as well. A number of employees' needs are served by the powerful reinforce. Effective communicators often combine formal and informal (grapevine) channels of communication. Thus a manager may reinforce information received through formal with an off-the record talk with key subordinates. In reverse directing, he or she might reinforce and clarify a formal written with an informal chat session among employees.

7) **Exception principle and need to know:** In order to deal effectively with the information overload problem many organizations try to establish certain principles for actually limiting the extent of communications. Many firms implement an "exception principle" in communication channels. This principle orders that only communications regarding exceptional derivations, from orders, plans, and policies be communicated upward on a routine basis. Hence, upper levels of management will receive only that information which truly demands their attention. A closely related principle involves downward communication. Here, managers should be selective and transmit information on a "need to know" basis. In this way, lower level personnel receive only communication that is immediately critical to carrying out their tasks. The success of these two principles depends on the type of organization within which jobs are carried out. They will be most effective in highly structured organizations where tasks are relatively simple and routine. In less formal organization, in which work is rather complex and not highly structured, communication needs to be as open and unrestricted as possible.

8) **Being empathetic in understanding:** Good communicators are able to reduce the chance of communication barrier and the associated problems by communicating with empathy – a feeling and awareness of the other person and their point of view. A good communicator is able to recognize emotions in others and respond appropriately. It is reported that empathy as the foundation for the quality of a relationship. In a satisfying relations both parties have empathy for the other person's point of view and are also willing to provide appropriate and sufficient feedback to achieve the understanding.

9) **Using feedback mechanisms:** Since feedback involved both receiver and sender, it is important to understand the conditions under which feedback session will be more effective both from the sender's and receiver's perspective. For feedback to be most effective, the person giving the feedback must:

- Give specific and not general or vague feedback
- Give feedback immediately or soon after the event has taken place rather than long after the event has occurred;
- Give feedback on aspects that the receiver can rectify rather than on aspects over which the individual has no control.
- Be descriptive than evaluative.
- Give feedback on a few critical issues where improvement is most urgently expected rather than on a wide range of problem areas.

- f) Examine your own motivation in giving the feedback.
- g) Be sure that the receiver is ready to receive feedback.
- h) Be non-threatening and disregard your superior status while offering feedback.

10) **Minimize Physical distraction:** Taking due care in minimizing the external noise, interruptions, awkward mannerism, unusual and unwanted incidences etc facilitate to heighten the attention levels of the members in attempting to satisfy a higher-level need can result in regression to a lower-level need.

11) **Courtesy:** the receiver's interest should be taken into account. The management should clarify any part of communication that is necessary and must encourage any comments, questions and feed backs.

12) **Completeness:** All business communication has to cover relevant facts and details because incomplete communication can be detrimental or costly to the organization.

13) **Integrity:** All business communication should reflect integrity e.g. Honesty and sincerity. This is an ethical issue that can greatly impress recipients.

14) **Use of simple words:** avoid complex words and sounding too formal as well and avoid use of jargons.

15) **Clarity of expression:** this involves encoding messages in a way that enables easy decoding.

16) **Conciseness:** in business transactions, messages should be brief and exact to the point as much as possible and this can be through good planning and choice of words.

17) **Confidence (authenticity):** it is important to be current in your message and this can be through stating facts using appropriate language and avoiding obsolete information or data.

18) **Avoid ambiguity:** this is mostly caused by misuse of pronouns, and adverbs such as "only" 'else' must be placed clearly.

19) **Prompt response:** it is important to respond to an incoming communication as immediate as possible as you need time for collecting facts.

STAGEFRIGHT **WHAT STAGEFRIGHT IS**

Stage fright or performance anxiety is a persistent phobia which is aroused in an individual when required to perform in front of an audience - fear of public speaking.

What Makes the Fear Happen Again and Again

As the primitive part of the brain goes through life, it adds every experience that feels overwhelming to its list of life threatening dangers. Anything that feels like the original fearful event triggers the same level of intense fear.

Causes of Stage Fright

Self-consciousness in-front of large groups

- Fear of appearing nervous
- Concerns that others are judging you
- Past failures
- Poor or insufficient preparation
- Narcissism
- Dissatisfaction with your abilities
- Discomfort with your own body
- Poor breathing
- Comparing yourself to others

Symptoms of Stage Fright or Performance Anxiety

The symptoms of public speaking fear often begin before the public speaking event or performance. It's common for people to begin experiencing anxiety as soon as they are tasked with a public appearance. This is known as anticipatory anxiety. As the dreaded event gets closer, the anxiety intensifies. As the individual approaches the microphone after being introduced, symptoms often include:

- A state of real terror
- Shaking or cracking voice
- Pounding heart
- Excessive sweating
- Disrupted sleep
- Twisting stomach - stomach distress
- An ongoing state of worry about the event
- Headaches and preoccupation with potential failure

Strategies to Overcome Stage Fright When Speaking In Public

Many people with anxiety for public speaking can overcome their fear with training and years of speaking in front of others. Others, however, find that no amount of training, coaching, or speaking experience reduces their anxiety level at all. There are two types of people in the world and these are those who love speaking in public and those who are scared at the thought of it. Performance anxiety and stage fright are perfectly normal phenomena that occur to many people. It is important for you to understand what stage fright is, so that you can fully overcome it through some of the following ways:

1. **Know your stuff:** Nothing will stop stage fright in its gripping tracks like being prepared. Know your content, your speech and more importantly your audience. If you know what you are talking about then you have no reason to be nervous.

Understanding your topic will enable you to speak more naturally and hence more confidently. Also, should a technical hitch occur, this won't faze you as you are already confident on the subject.

2. **Practice, practice, practice:** Knowing your stuff helps, but it doesn't necessarily eradicate the problem. You need to practice as much as you can before the performance or public speaking D-day. Really know your content inside out and practice as much as possible to build your confidence.
3. **Talk yourself down:** You need to realize that even though stage fright is "all in the mind," the fear manifests itself in physical ways. Stop worrying about, "What if I forget the content?" Change that into positive talk like, "What if I am great at this?" It may sound simplistic or too easy, but positive affirmation will go a long way in reducing stage fright when speaking in public.
4. **Wallow in the worst:** If you can't calm yourself down with positive talk, then maybe it is time you thought about the worst case scenario. Once you do this, you'll realize that the worst case scenario isn't really that bad. This might help calm your nerves.
5. **Visualize the outcome:** Call it what you will: reflection, visualization, meditation whatever you call it, just do it. Spend time visualizing yourself giving a perfect presentation and speaking in public – filled with humor, warmth, confidence and intelligence. The more you imagine being great, the more likely you will achieve it.
6. **It is not all about you:** Though you might feel like everyone is out to laugh, criticize or judge you, that is not the case. Get over the feeling that the world is going to hang on your every mistake. Focus on your speech, audience and what they deserve from you. This will ease the pressure that is already accumulating.
7. **When things go wrong:** Sooner or later, something will go wrong. Your projector or microphone might stop working. If you already know your content, then chances are that this won't faze you as much. If for instance your microphone stops working, don't stress over it, carry on with a louder voice. Chances are the technical people are already stressing and working to sort the problem out, so you getting worried over the same issue won't help.
8. **Keep calm, don't rush it:** Don't rush your presentation. Start slow and allow yourself time to get into a comfortable pace. You need time to get used to the audience and the audience also needs time to get used to you.
9. **Focus on getting through the first 5 minutes:** Imagine your entire presentation is only five minutes long. This will make it less stressful. Focus on just getting through the first five minutes and by this time you will have already calmed down and the rest is downhill.
10. **Never apologize for being nervous:** Three quarters of the time, no one will notice you are nervous. Why tell them? You may feel yourself shaking and shivering, but your audience might not be aware of it. Don't mention it. It will make your audience nervous too and they will be too worried about your performance to get much out of your presentation.
11. **Don't share your mistakes:** You have prepared, practiced and feel good about your speech or presentation. Suddenly, on stage you realize you mixed the order of topics or you forgot an

important point. But remember, you're the only one who knows about this. Your audience doesn't. So, don't make them aware of a mistake that they didn't even know existed.

12. **Arrive early:** Obviously, if you are late, this will only heighten your anxiety. Arrive early and familiarize to your surroundings. You can even check out the stage and the auditorium as get yourself used to the environment.
13. **Stretch:** If you are nervous, odds are your body will be stiff and your muscles tight. Fifteen minutes before speaking in public and going on stage, do a few stretches. This will loosen the tense muscles and relax your body.
14. **Breathe:** Nervousness is always accompanied by fast, short breaths and if this is not addressed, it will throw you off balance. Minutes before you go on stage, take some slow, deep breaths, so that by the time you get to the stage your breathing is relaxed.
15. **Double check everything:** Do you have a laptop or notes? Check that everything works. When you walk on stage and suddenly realize that you forgot your notes, it's too late. Of course, your nerves will take over. Know your speech or presentation so well that should this happen, you can continue without a hitch.
16. **Don't fight your stage fright ... work with it:** You have to expect and accept the fact that you will feel anxious, especially the first few minutes of your presentation. The more you resist your anxiety, the more it will work against you. Again, focus on the presentation when speaking in public and the anxiety will slowly ease off.

Effective Oral Presentation Strategies

Oral Presentation is one of the basic needs of every business, whether it is a small-scale or large-scale. Usually, professionals get over excited or more nervous that causes them the lack of speaking in public which is known as **Gloss phobia**. The main purpose of an **oral presentation** is to grab the attention of the audience and highlight points which may not grab attention when put in written form.

Oral Presentation Strategies

Oral Presentation Strategies can help decrease the fear of speaking in public or in front of a few listeners. These strategies do not only improve **Business Communication** skills of the presenter, but also improve the skills with a new form that enhances the career of the presenter. The following strategies will grab the attention of the audience and will improve the talking ability of the presenter:

1. **Homework:** Homework stands on top in the oral presentation strategies, because if you did not do your homework, you may not get better results. It is impossible to deliver a good presentation and put the idea of the presenter in the minds of the audience without spending serious time on preparation, thus, spend huge time at home for preparing the presentation.
2. **Try the Presentation:** After doing the complete preparation of the presentation at home, the next thing is to try it on the office staff or the boss to make sure it is on the right track and the tone of the presenter is exactly according to the presentation.
3. **Organize in Parts:** An effective presentation is prepared by dividing into a few parts. Most effective presentations contain two to three main parts. The presenter should tell the audience that what these parts are, before or during the presentation and this may lead to a win.

4. **Go Through:** A night before the presentation, the presenter should go through the presentation a few times to check the time period and ability of delivering the ideas. To make it more convenient, the presenter should ask a friend to pretend like the audience, who will help the presenter to improve the weak spots of the presentation.
5. **Attire and Talking:** Few things about a presenter are as visible as attire. It is the first and most visible thing an audience sees and something they view throughout a presentation. Wearing the highest quality suit is not necessary; the presenter should just get an attractive dress that creates an impression on the audience. Don't keep looking down or reading from the papers constantly as it will bore the audience.
6. **Vocal cues:** A voice communicates a great deal more than words alone. A presenter's voice is a potentially powerful tool to make an oral delivery effective and impressive. Professionals whose careers depend on skilled communication take seriously the need to develop positive and powerful vocal attributes. The qualities of a speaker's voice should be varied and congruent with the message.
7. **Volume:** Listeners want to clearly hear a speaker without straining to do so and without being blasted out of their chairs. A presenter who speaks too loudly may be perceived as bombastic, aggressive, or insensitive to listeners. On the other hand, one who speaks too softly may convey the impression of being passive or insecure.
8. **Rate:** An average rate of speech is 140 words per minute. The rate of speech should be varied during a presentation. For emphasis, a speaker may periodically slow down to less than 100 words per minute to voice a point in a deliberate manner.
9. **Tone:** The quality of tone is a combination of pitch, strength, and character. Character refers to the sense or meaning a particular tone conveys. For example, a tone of voice may be described as gentle, angry, sarcastic, childish, or serious. The tone of voice with which a speaker expresses a point says more to an audience than the words themselves.
10. **Speech Patterns:** The term speech pattern refers to any vocal trait that is habitual. Although usually learned behaviour, speech pattern are sometimes a reflection of a psychological or emotional condition. A person who repeatedly voices the phrase like "you know" may have acquired the habit from a peer group, or the pattern may signal that the person is nervous when speaking before a group.
11. **Inflection:** Proper inflection is the practice of altering the tone or pitch of voice to more clearly express or magnify meaning. It is an effective communication technique that can help to sustain audience attention and make a message more memorable.
12. **Articulation:** Articulation is the skill of speaking in distinct syllables. Articulate speech is characterized by correct pronunciation and clear enunciation. More articulate speech is developed by listening to articulate speakers and emulating their speech patterns, checking a dictionary when in doubt about the pronunciation of a word, and practicing enunciation exercise.
13. **Fillers:** One of the more distracting patterns of speech is the use of fillers - unnecessary words or phrases that are repeatedly interjected into a message. Expressions such as "uh," "um," "you know," "basically," and "it's kinda like" add no meaning. Fillers interrupt the continuity of

communication. They signal uncertainty or nervousness on the part of a speaker who tries (often unconsciously) to fill up every silence with sound.

14. **Pauses:** While a presenter is speaking, the audience is working at listening. A moment of silence gives listeners an opportunity to digest what they have heard. Pauses help a speaker avoid the use of fillers. They can serve to slow a too-rapid rate of speech. Intentional pauses can add importance to a message.
15. **Accented Speech:** Every speaker has an accent. How pronounced an accent sounds depends upon how much the presenter's speech varies from that of the listener. Some accents are pleasing to listen to. They add a distinctive flavour to a presentation and enhance how the presenter is perceived. In other cases, accented speech is difficult for an audience to understand.
16. **Visual cues:** People in an audience are viewers as well as listeners. They see a speaker before they hear the first words of a message. As with vocal cues, visual cues convey meaning, spark attention and response from the audience and shape audience perceptions of the presenter. Skilled presenters are alert to what they communicate by facial expressions, eye contact, gestures, movement, and attire.
17. **Facial Expressions:** Standing before an audience, a presenter looks at the expressions on people's faces to ascertain audience reactions. Mentally, the presenter checks, "How does the audience feel about this point?" Likewise, an audience observes the presenter. From facial expressions, an audience derives a sense of how a presenter feels about a point and about them.
18. **Eye Contact:** Of all the features of the face, none has more potential for expression than a person's eyes. Making eye contact with people in an audience is important because it sends a signal that the speaker is connecting with them. Attention to eye contact forces a presenter to become sufficiently prepared so as not to be dependent on reading from notes.
19. **Gestures:** Natural spontaneous gestures are an asset to a presentation provided they are consistent with the meaning a speaker intends to convey. Appropriate gestures give physical expression to the spoken word and they are symbolic in nature.
20. **Posture:** On the matter of posture, the most becoming posture is upright (not rigidly erect), shoulders back and squared, head held up. A slouching or slumped posture suggests disinterest or low self-esteem. A presenter wants to appear at ease and, at the same time, attentive and on the ready. Good posture is an attribute that contributes to a speaker's presence.
21. **Using Aids and Keeping Slow Speed:** In a few important presentations, it is necessary to use visual-aids for defining major points properly. This will make the audience to memorize every single idea of the presentation. Sometimes, a couple of things are incomplete without aids. Same as aids, it is also necessary that the presenter should keep a slow speed while talking.
22. **To the Point Information:** Putting unnecessary dates and huge number of quotations will bore the audience even if the audience is attentive. Simply, including all the data which is to-the-point will be good because it will engage the audience. Besides, the presenter should try to show what he/she really is.
23. **Interruptions:** Many speakers think that raised questions from the audience are hurdles, but in fact, two-way communication not only clarifies the idea of the person who asked the question

but also clarifies the ideas of others. The presenter should be prepared to answer relative question to the topic and offer a warm welcome to the interruptions.

24. **Avoid distracting habits:** Some behaviours do not belong on the platform of a business presentation, among them those listed below:

- Never chew gum in a business presentation.
- Never smoke in a business presentation.
- Refrain from fiddling with clothing, jewellery, hair, and fingernails, audio-visual equipment, or in any manner that could distract the attention of the audience.

Nonverbal Communication

This is the interaction we make with others as we continuously give and receive wordless signals. All of our nonverbal behaviours such the gestures we make, the way we sit and stand - posture, how fast or how loud we talk, how close we stand, how much eye contact we make, our facial expressions and tone of voice send strong messages. These messages don't stop when you stop speaking either. Even when you're silent, you're still communicating nonverbally.

Oftentimes, what comes out of our mouths and what we communicate through our body language are two totally different things. When faced with these mixed signals, the listener has to choose whether to believe your verbal or nonverbal message, and in most cases, they're going to choose the nonverbal because it's a natural, unconscious language that broadcasts our true feelings and intentions in any given moment.

Improving Your Nonverbal Skills and Reading Body Language

Good communication is the foundation of any successful relationship, be it personal or professional. It's important to recognize that it's our nonverbal communication - our facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, posture, and tone of voice and so on that speak the loudest. The ability to understand and use nonverbal communication or body language is powerful tool that can help you connect with others, express what you really mean and build better relationships.

Importance of Nonverbal Communication

The way you listen, look, move and react tells the other person whether or not you care, if you're being truthful and how well you are listening. When your nonverbal signals match up with the words you are saying, they increase trust, clarity and rapport. When they don't, they generate tension, mistrust and confusion. If you want to become a better communicator, it's important to become more sensitive not only to the body language and nonverbal cues of others, but also to your own. Nonverbal communication cues can play five roles: slumber

- **Repetition** - they can repeat the message the person is making verbally.
- **Contradiction** - they can contradict a message the individual is trying to convey.
- **Substitution** - they can substitute for a verbal message. For example, a person's eyes can often convey a far more vivid message than words do.
- **Complementing** - they may add to or complement a verbal message. A boss who pats a person on the back in addition to giving praise can increase the impact of the message.
- **Accenting** - they may accent or underline a verbal message. Pounding the table, for example, can underline a message.

Types of Nonverbal Communication and Body Language

There are many different types of nonverbal communication. Together, the following nonverbal signals and cues communicate your interest and investment in others:

1. **Facial expressions:** The human face is extremely expressive, able to express countless emotions without saying a word. And unlike some forms of nonverbal communication, facial expressions are universal. The facial expressions for happiness, sadness, anger, surprise, fear and disgust are the same across cultures.
2. **Body movements and posture:** Consider how your perceptions of people are affected by the way they sit, walk, stand up or hold their head. The way you move and carry yourself communicates a wealth of information to the world. This type of nonverbal communication includes your posture, bearing, stance and subtle movements.
3. **Gestures:** Gestures are woven into the fabric of our daily lives. We wave, point, beckon and use our hands when we are arguing or speaking animatedly - expressing ourselves with gestures often without thinking. However, the meaning of gestures can be very different across cultures and regions, so it's important to be careful to avoid misinterpretation.
4. **Eye contact:** Since the visual sense is dominant for most people, eye contact is an especially important type of nonverbal communication. The way you look at someone can communicate many things, including interest, affection, hostility or attraction. Eye contact is also important in maintaining the flow of conversation and for gauging the other person's response.
5. **Touch:** We communicate a great deal through touch. Think about the messages given by the following:
 - A weak handshake
 - A timid tap on the shoulder
 - A warm bear hug
 - A reassuring slap on the back
 - A patronizing pat on the head
 - A controlling grip on your arm
6. **Space:** Have you ever felt uncomfortable during a conversation because the other person was standing too close and invading your space? We all have a need for physical space, although that need differs depending on the culture, the situation and the closeness of the relationship. You can use physical space to communicate many different nonverbal messages including signals of intimacy and affection, aggression or dominance.
7. **Voice:** It's not just what you say, it's how you say it. When we speak, other people "read" our voices in addition to listening to our words. Things they pay attention to include your timing and pace, how loud you speak, your tone and inflection and sounds that convey understanding such as "ahh" and "uh-huh." Think about how someone's tone of voice for example can indicate sarcasm, anger, affection or confidence.

How Nonverbal Communication Can Go Wrong

What you communicate through your body language and nonverbal signals affects how others see you, how well they like and respect you and whether or not they trust you. Unfortunately, many people send confusing or negative nonverbal signals without even knowing it. When this happens, both connection and trust are damaged.

Setting the Stage for Effective Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication is a rapidly flowing back-and-forth process requiring your full concentration and attention. If you are planning what you're going to say next, daydreaming, or thinking about something else, you are almost certain to miss nonverbal cues and other subtleties in the conversation. You need to stay focused on the moment-to-moment experience in order to fully understand what's going on.

How to Improve Nonverbal Communication

To improve nonverbal communication, learn to manage stress. Learning how to manage stress in the heat of the moment is one of the most important things you can do to improve your nonverbal communication. Stress compromises your ability to communicate. When you are stressed out, you are more likely to misread other people, send confusing or off-putting nonverbal signals and lapse into unhealthy knee-jerk patterns of behavior. Furthermore, emotions are contagious. You being upset is likely to trigger others to be upset, making a bad situation worse.

If you're feeling overwhelmed by stress, it's best to take a time out. Take a moment to calm down before you jump back into the conversation. Once you've regained your emotional equilibrium, you'll be better equipped to deal with the situation in a positive way.

How Emotional Awareness Strengthens Nonverbal Communication

In order to send accurate nonverbal cues, you need to be aware of your emotions and how they influence you. You also need to be able to recognize the emotions of others and the true feelings behind the cues they are sending. This is where emotional awareness comes in. Emotional awareness enables you to:

- Accurately read other people, including the emotions they are feeling and the unspoken messages they are sending.
- Create trust in relationships by sending nonverbal signals that match up with your words.
- Respond in ways that show others that you understand, notice and care.
- Know if the relationship is meeting your emotional needs, giving you the option to either repair the relationship or move on.

Tips for Reading Body Language And Nonverbal Communication

Once you've developed your abilities to manage stress and recognize emotions, you'll naturally become better at reading the nonverbal signals sent by others.

Pay attention to inconsistencies. Nonverbal communication should reinforce what is being said. Is the person is saying one thing, and their body language something else? For example, are they telling you "yes" while shaking their head no?

Look at nonverbal communication signals as a group. Don't read too much into a single gesture or nonverbal cue. Consider all of the nonverbal signals you are receiving, from eye contact to tone of voice and body language. Taken together, are their nonverbal cues consistent—or inconsistent—with what their words are saying?

Trust your instincts. Don't dismiss your gut feelings. If you get the sense that someone isn't being honest or that something isn't adding up, you may be picking up on a mismatch between verbal and nonverbal cues.

Evaluating Nonverbal Signals

1. **Eye contact** – Is eye contact being made? If so, is it overly intense or just right?

2. **Facial expression** – What is their face showing? Is it masklike and unexpressive or emotionally present and filled with interest?
3. **Tone of voice** – Does their voice project warmth, confidence, and interest, or is it strained and blocked?
4. **Posture and gesture** – Are their bodies relaxed or stiff and immobile? Are shoulders tense and raised, or slightly sloped?
5. **Touch** – Is there any physical contact? Is it appropriate to the situation? Does it make you feel uncomfortable?
6. **Intensity** – Do they seem flat, cool, and disinterested, or over-the-top and melodramatic?
Timing and place – Is there an easy flow of information back and forth? Do nonverbal responses come too quickly or too slowly?
7. **Sounds** – Do you hear sounds that indicate caring or concern?
As you continue to pay attention to the nonverbal cues and signals you send and receive, your ability to communicate will improve.

Steps to Effective Listening

In today's world, communication is more important than ever, yet we seem to devote less and less time to really listening to one another. Genuine listening has become a rare gift—the gift of time. It helps build relationships, solve problems, ensure understanding, resolve conflicts, and improve accuracy. At work, effective listening means fewer errors and less wasted time. At home, it helps develop resourceful, self-reliant kids who can solve their own problems. Listening builds friendships and careers. It saves money and marriages. Here are 10 tips to help you develop effective listening skills.

Step 1: Face the speaker and maintain eye contact

Eye contact is considered a basic ingredient of effective communication. When we talk, we look each other in the eye. That doesn't mean that you can't carry on a conversation, but if the conversation continues for any length of time, you will get up and move. The desire for better communication pulls you together.

Look at them, even if they don't look at you. Shyness, uncertainty, shame, guilt, or other emotions, along with cultural taboos, can inhibit eye contact in some people under some circumstances. Excuse the other guy, but stay focused yourself.

Step 2: Be attentive, but relaxed

Upon making eye contact, relax. You don't have to stare fixedly at the other person. You can look away now and then and carry on like a normal person. The important thing is to be attentive. The dictionary says that to "attend" another person means to:

- Be present
- Give attention
- Apply or direct yourself
- Pay attention
- Remain ready to serve

Step 3: Keep an open mind

Listen without judging the other person or mentally criticizing the things s/he tells you. If what s/he says alarms you, go ahead and feel alarmed, but don't say to yourself, "Well, that was a stupid move."

As soon as you indulge in judgmental bemusements, you've compromised your effectiveness as a listener. Listen without jumping to conclusions.

Remember that the speaker is using language to represent the thoughts and feelings inside her brain. You don't know what those thoughts and feelings are and the only way you'll find out is by listening.

Don't be a sentence-grabber. Occasionally your partner can't slow his mental pace enough to listen effectively, so he tries to speed up yours by interrupting and finishing your sentences.

Step 4: Listen to the words and try to picture what the speaker is saying

Allow your mind to create a mental model of the information being communicated. Whether a literal picture, or an arrangement of abstract concepts, your brain will do the necessary work if you stay focused, with senses fully alert. When listening for long stretches, concentrate on and remember, key words and phrases.

Step 5: Don't interrupt and don't impose your "solutions."

When listening to someone talk about a problem, refrain from suggesting solutions. Most of us don't want your advice anyway. If we do, we'll ask for it. Most of us prefer to figure out our own solutions. We need you to listen and help us do that. Somewhere way down the line, if you are absolutely bursting with a brilliant solution, at least get the speaker's permission. Ask, "Would you like to hear my ideas?"

Interrupting sends a variety of messages. It says:

- "I'm more important than you are."
- "What I have to say is more interesting, accurate or relevant."
- "I don't really care what you think."
- "I don't have time for your opinion."
- "This isn't a conversation, it's a contest, and I'm going to win."

Step 6: Wait for the speaker to pause to ask clarifying questions

When you don't understand something, of course you should ask the speaker to explain it to you. But rather than interrupt, wait until the speaker pauses. Then say something like, "Back up a second. I didn't understand what you just said about....."

Step 7: Ask questions only to ensure understanding

Our questions lead people in directions that have nothing to do with where *they* thought they were going. Sometimes we work our way back to the original topic, but very often we don't.

When you notice that your question has led the speaker astray, take responsibility for getting the conversation back on track by saying something like.

Step 8: Try to feel what the speaker is feeling.

If you feel sad when the person with whom you are talking expresses sadness, joyful when she expresses joy, fearful when describing fears, then convey those feelings through your facial expressions and words—then your effectiveness as a listener is assured. Empathy is the heart and soul of good listening.

Step 9: Give the speaker regular feedback.

Show that you understand where the speaker is coming from by reflecting the speaker's feelings. "You must be thrilled!" "What a terrible ordeal for you." "I can see that you are confused." If the speaker's

feelings are hidden or unclear, then occasionally paraphrase the content of the message. Or just nod and show your understanding through appropriate facial expressions and an occasional well-timed "hmmm" or "uh huh."

Step 10: Pay attention to what *isn't* said—to nonverbal cues.

If you exclude email, the majority of direct communication is probably nonverbal. We glean a great deal of information about each other without saying a word. Even over the telephone, you can learn almost as much about a person from the tone and cadence of her voice than from anything she says. Face to face with a person, you can detect enthusiasm, boredom, or irritation very quickly in the expression around the eyes, the set of the mouth, the slope of the shoulders. These are clues you can't ignore.

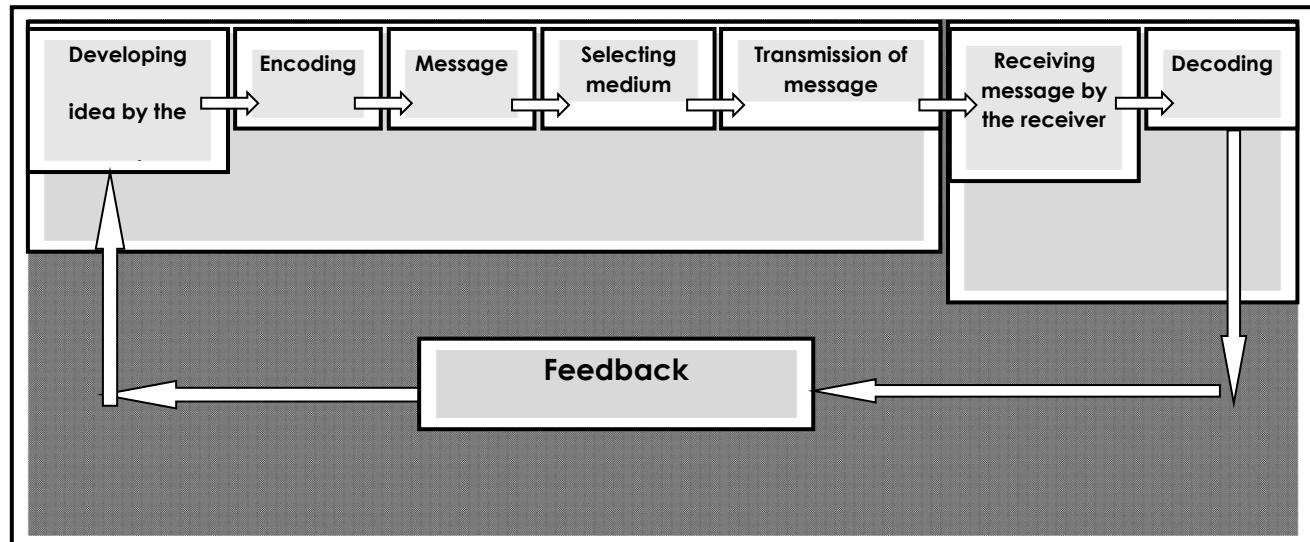
TOPIC III COMMUNICATION IN ORGANIZATIONS

Introduction

Communication is the most important tool of management and can be defined as the act, or any natural or artificial means of conveying information. An office as a Centre of Communication for any business can be justified if it imparts information effectively say the right information must be given to right person in the right manner or format and at the right time.

Communication goes beyond just passing information, it involves dialogue, transmitting and sharing ideas, opinions, facts, and information which should be perceived and by the receiver. Here, there is meaningful interaction among people and thoughts are transferred from one person to another and the value and meaning should be the same between the two communicating. What can be shared or exchanged in communication include feelings, attitudes, opinions, facts, beliefs, hopes and knowledge, etc.

STEPS OR ELEMENTS OF COMMUNICATION PROCESS



Communication process refers to the steps through which communication takes place between the sender and the receiver. This process starts with conceptualizing an idea or message by the sender and ends with the feedback from the receiver.

Thus, from the fig. above, **communication process** is the set of some sequential steps involved in transferring message as well as feedback. The process requires a sender who transmits message through a channel to the receiver, and then the receiver decodes the message and sends back some type of signal or feedback. In details, communication process consists of the following eight steps:

1. **Developing idea by the sender:** In the first step, the communicator develops or conceptualizes an idea to be sent. It is also known as the planning stage since in this stage the communicator plans the subject matter of communication.
2. **Encoding:** Encoding means converting or translation the idea into a perceivable form that can be communicated to others.
3. **Developing the message:** After encoding the sender gets a message that can be transmitted to the receiver. The message can be oral, written, symbolic or nonverbal. For example, when people talk, speech is the message; when people write a letter, the words and sentences are the message; when people cry, the crying is the message.

4. **Selecting the medium:** Medium is the channel or means of transmitting the message to the receiver. Once the sender has encoded his ideas into a message, the next step is to select a suitable medium for transmitting the message to the receiver. The medium of communication can be speaking, writing, signalling, gesturing etc.
5. **Transmission of message:** In this step, the sender actually transmits the message through chosen medium. In the communication cycle, the tasks of the sender end with the transmission of the message.
6. **Receiving the message by receiver:** This stage simply involves the reception of sender's message by the receiver. The message can be received in the form of hearing, seeing, feeling and so on.
7. **Decoding:** Decoding is the receiver's interpretation of the sender's message. Here the receiver converts the message into thoughts and tries to analyze and understand it. Effective communication can occur only when both the sender and the receiver assign the same or similar meanings to the message.
8. **Feedback:** The final step of communication process is feedback. Feedback means receiver's response to sender's message. It increases the effectiveness of communication. It ensures that the receiver has correctly understood the message. Feedback is the essence of two-way communication.

LISTENING

Listening is the process of receiving, attending, and understanding auditory messages; that is, messages transmitted through the medium of sound. Often, the steps of responding and remembering are also included.

The Listening Process

1. **Receiving or hearing:** This involves the accurate reception of sounds. To hear you must focus attention on the speaker, discriminate among sounds and concentrate.
2. **Understanding:** This takes into consideration the thoughts that are expressed as well as the emotional tone that accompanies these thoughts. It likewise includes establishing links between what the listener knows about the topic and the new information given by the speaker.
3. **Remembering:** This is retaining messages for at least some period of time. What you remember is actually not what was said but what you think was said.
4. **Interpreting:** When you interpret messages you do two things:
 - First, you take into account the total communication context so that you are better able to understand the meaning of what is said from the speaker's point of view. Your ability to see a situation from the other person's perspective requires that you pay attention to emotional meaning and to the communication context.
 - Second, effective listeners let their partners know that they have been understood.
5. **Evaluating:** You listen from a unique point of view and are influenced by your perceptual filters – your past experience, attitudes, personal values and predispositions. It is therefore impossible not to evaluate everything you hear to some extent. Effective listeners should deliberately reduce the influence of their own viewpoint until they have first understood the speaker's ideas.

6. **Responding:** This is when you send signals while the speaker is talking to let him know that he is understood and responding after the speaker has stopped talking. This stage marks the start of a new cycle where the listener takes his turn as a speaker.

Techniques for Effective Listening

1. **Decide to listen:** Listening is a choice. So deciding to stop talking and start listening is an important first step.
2. **Let go of your own personal agenda:** To truly hear someone, you need to let go of your own agenda, and prejudices. Focus your attention by clearing away all distractions and any preconceived notions, so that you can be fully present and create space in your mind for different views.
3. **Be curious:** Effective listening requires you to be curious about how other people see the world. Seek to understand all you can, ask open questions and try to see the world through the other person's perceptual lens.
4. **Listen with your eyes:** Maintain eye contact with the speaker and pay attention to all the visual clues. People will appreciate your attention and be better able to communicate with you. With practice, you will become more able to read the signs and understand the meaning of what is being communicated.
5. **Listen for the whole message:** Make sure you hear and understand the whole message before you respond. A common bad habit is to only hear what you expect to hear, and then begin rehearsing your response, ready to pitch in as soon as the dialog has stopped. (Or worse still, interrupting with a response to what you think you are likely to hear)
6. **Be patient:** Some people take longer to find the right words, to make a point or clarify an issue. Leave time for them to think and complete their message. Wait, and then wait some more.
7. **Listen with respect:** Respecting the right to differ is a key concept that is especially important when you are listening. Differences may lie in the opinions being expressed, or in the communication style that is being used. Remember that even when you are not communicating verbally, your own non-verbal cues speak for you. Listen to understand, not to judge.
8. **Feel empathy:** This is particularly important when people communicate something personal or painful. Empathy is more than feeling sorry for someone. Empathy requires you to first understand and feel others' emotions and feelings so that you can then acknowledge the message and share your new understanding.
9. **Manage your own emotions and reactions:** If what others are saying creates an emotional response in you, be attentive to listen for the intent and full meaning of their words. Don't allow others to blow wind into your sails. Remember you have control of your reactions. You cannot stop the wind, but you can choose to let it spill off your sails! Maintaining your calm, even when you feel like your 'buttons' are being pushed, is a powerful skill that will help you achieve your goals in all aspects of your life. Getting defensive and angry makes it difficult to impossible to listen.
10. **Test for understanding:** Periodically summarize what you have heard to test your understanding. Also, by asking questions to clarify your understanding, you will draw out a clearer picture of what is being said.

Role of Culture and Diversity on Communication in the Workplace

Cultural diversity is common in work place today, it is important to ensure that managers and employees are effectively communicating when cultural differences exist. There are many cultural differences that affect communication and different ways of viewing them. Other cultural issues that affect communication in the workplace are roles and status, personal space and body language:

1. The roles and status of men and women, for instance, can affect how a male employee relates to a female supervisor or how comfortable a female worker feels when addressed by a male manager.
2. In terms of personal space, an American worker is used to five feet of distance when conversing with another. German and Japanese workers may need more distance while Arabs and Latinos normally stand much closer together when talking.
3. Body language cues differ among cultures. Eye contact is a very important distinction among cultures. Westerners often insist on eye contact as a measure of attention and honesty while it is considered disrespectful in some Asian and Latin cultures.

It's important for you to tailor your management according to such cultural differences by ensuring that communication is clearly received and understood. Other tools for improving cross-cultural communication include:

- Learn how different cultures best receive information. Some cultures don't trust information that comes from a manager and would rather take direction from a shop foreman or team leader.
- Employees differ in whether or not they appreciate praise for their efforts in front of a group or in private.
- Prepare all of your employees with cultural awareness and diversity programs. Teach empathy and mutual respect.
- Provide cultural training to new employees so that they can understand company's overall culture especially on the goals and the behavior expected.
- Assign mentors to employees so that integration is facilitated and employees have someone that understands them to turn to.
- Avoid using slang, common jargon or metaphors when you address employees of different cultures. These can make no sense at all to someone from a different culture.
- Use graphics whenever possible in explaining goals and processes to employees of different cultures.
- Ask for feedback but be prepared to use an intermediary if necessary.

TOPIC IV

INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES

1.0 Introduction

Interview is a face-to-face interpersonal communication in which an interviewee is asked questions to assess his capability for the recruitment, promotion or the expected situation. It is a systematized method used to assess a person, usually by a panel of experts. The evaluation could be for employment or promotion or a situation of data collection. Interview consists of verbal responses between two persons or between several persons.

A job interview is a pre-arranged and planned conversation with a definite purpose and informality. It is said to be the most intense dyadic communication seeking to exchange information. Success in job interview depends on knowledge, self-confidence, good speaking skills, good study of the job profile and using the proper strategies. Job interview provides the best opportunity to examine the knowledge and experience of a candidate and thus makes it an effective technique for evaluating the suitability of a candidate.

2.0 Importance of The Interview Method

Information is collected through face-to-face contact. Since interview is a direct technique of collecting data, lot of information can be collected from the respondents. The interviews conducted for research purpose serve as a device to help identify variables and relations. Interviews help to assess the qualitative facts found in the form of ideas, feelings, beliefs etc. Interviews can be used to assess persons at all levels, irrespective of level of intelligence. Also the information supplied by the candidate in the resume can be verified in the interview. Depending on the requirement, interviews could be with the group or with an individual.

3.0 Interview Techniques

Before we pass onto the actual conducting of interviews, let us discuss the basic techniques:

- 3.1 **Screening:** Since the number of applicants for any job is large, several firms screen the applications to weed out the unsuitable candidates i.e. some more candidates are eliminated through a preliminary interview. Only very few who are really good are called for the final interview.
- 3.2 **Random appearance:** Some interviewers hold the belief that man is more important than the application and they call every applicant for interview to judge them from their physical appearances. But this method is expensive and confusing.
- 3.3 **Tests:** These days a number of firms resort to tests, written or oral designed to judge the candidate's intelligence, proficiency in language and general knowledge. In addition psychological testing has also come in and the candidates who qualify then are invited for final interview.
- 3.4 **Experience:** Some employers believe that practical experience is more important than personal qualifications, that one years' experience is equivalent of fifteen years spent in schools and colleges. Some do not call fresh candidates for interview. This is not a very sound policy since it eliminates fresher, some of whom must be brilliant, enthusiastic and committed.
- 3.5 **Under stress interview:** This is a special technique to ascertain how a candidate will acquit himself under conditions of exceptional stress and strain. He is exposed to embarrassing questions and provoked in various ways to find out whether he can retain his poise in such a condition. This kind of interview is useful to select candidate for posts that require great presence of mind.

4.0 Types of Interviews

4.1 **Clinical Interview:** These Interviews are conducted to identify certain behaviour abnormalities. It is used by the counsellors or medical professionals. These help to decide the line of treatment for the candidates. It is essential for the interviewer to give a patient listening to the affected.

4.2 **Selection Interview:** To select a person on the basis of certain qualities the interview is conducted by a single expert or usually a panel of experts. This type of interview is also called as 'job interview' or 'employment interview'. The main objective is to select the right candidate for the right position. Job interview is a pre-arranged and planned activity for better results.

4.3 **Appraisal Interview:** This interview is conducted for the employees already in the job. This process is used on regular basis to evaluate the performance of employees. The discussion during such interview may include past performance, targets for the future, and prospective plans of the organization and the role of the employees in it. It helps the employer to share views on the performance of the employee with the employee himself/herself.

4.4 **Exit Interview:** In any organization, an employee may leave the job for better prospects or because of lack of satisfaction with the work-culture or the interpersonal relations. An interview conducted while the employee is leaving gives an opportunity to the employee to give his/her frank opinions about the organization. The interviewer may invite suggestions for improvement from the employee. The aim is to seek information that will help the organization to improve and to take care to reduce the tensions between the existing employees. However, the information is to be used judiciously since it may contain exaggeration. Thus the exit of an employee can be turned for the benefit of an organization.

4.5 **Grievance Interview:** Allowing the employees to express their complaints/problems is helpful to the management since it helps resolve issues in time which may be aggravated otherwise. The management can make efforts to rectify the problem and thus win goodwill and confidence of the employees. At this interview, it is essential for the employer to listen to the grievances attentively, then summarise it and reconfirm with the employee. This opportunity to vent the feelings of the employees helps to strengthen the employee-employer relationship.

5.0 Interviewers' Preparation for The Interview

The basic structure of most interviews needs to be pre-planned. Factors like time, venue, inviting the experts and other arrangements at the venue make the interview a smooth process. The interviewers on the panel may also consider the opening, the questions asked by the members and the closing of the interview. Interview takes place in a conversational mode. Hence the approach and the way of asking questions may vary from person to person. A candidate also has to be an attentive listener just as the interviewer has to be one. Working to a structure improves the quality of interviewing and this helps to:

- Ensure that nothing significant has been missed
- Keep track of how the interview time is being used
- Give candidates a sense of progress through the interview
- Help ensure consistency between candidates

Lot of time and money is invested by the organizations in planning the job interviews so that correct selection takes place. The purpose of the job interview has to be pre-defined so as to make it as full-proof a technique as possible.

- The personality traits of the candidate are tested through HR interviews.
- Specific knowledge is tested through technical interviews

- Situational interviews are held to test problem-solving skills.
- For counselling an employee about a particular problem, treatment option can be offered
- An employee having an opposite view can be persuaded with effective arguments.
- The job interview is a highly structured interview. Hence the interviewer would channelize and direct the course of the interview.

6.0 Interviewer's Objectives

The interviewer has mainly four objectives and these include:

- 6.1 To evaluate the oral communication ability of the interviewee
- 6.2 To test interviewee's analytical and logical ability
- 6.3 To verify the job qualifications stated in the resume.
- 6.4 To orient the candidate about the nature of the job and the policy of the company. In the process of interview, establish goodwill on behalf of the company.

7.0 How To Conduct The Interview

- 7.1 **Interview Opening:** It is the interviewer's responsibility to set the interviewee at ease. As a gesture of welcome, the interviewer may greet the candidate with a firm handshake and a warm smile. The interview can begin on the note of the hobbies/interests of the candidate.
- 7.2 **Main Content of the Interview:** The main job of the interviewer includes asking questions so as to assess the candidates and evaluation after the interview. While asking the questions, the applicant is encouraged to do the talking. But the interviewer has to take care to see to it that it does not wander away from the topic. Asking appropriate questions would include letting the applicant describe his/her education and then move to the work history and other interests and activities.
- 7.3 **Interview Closure:** Candidates should always be given the opportunity and sufficient time to ask any questions they may have. They should be informed of the timescales and methods of notifying them of the outcome and should be thanked for attending the interview.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 does not prevent you asking questions about a candidate's disability but this information must not be used to discriminate. When asking a candidate how their disability may affect their ability to do the job it is important to focus on competencies required by the post, place these questions in the latter part of the body of the interview, and indicate where possible a willingness to make those reasonable adjustments which would enable the job to be performed.

8.0 Other Aspects of Critical Importance

There are a number of other aspects of critical importance in planning the interview:

- 8.1 Timing - enough time must be allowed for the interviews and making notes between each. Each candidate should be given the same length of time in the interview. There should be sufficient breaks built into the interview programme.
- 8.2 Re-read the application form or CV, job description and person specification to identify areas which need further exploration or clarification.
- 8.3 The appointment panel should agree the format of the interview and identify questions to cover the key competencies required by the post. The different subject areas should be allocated between the panel members in advance of the interview date.
- 8.4 The panel should agree on how they will operate as a team during the interviews. The first interview of the day should not be used as 'a dress rehearsal' - otherwise the appointment panel could be accused of acting unfairly.

- 8.5 The venue of the interview should be of an appropriate size and one which encourages the interviewee's concentration. It should be comfortable for both interviewers and the interviewee in terms of (seating, heating, lighting, ventilation, noise level) and be well sign-posted with a waiting area containing literature about the organization. There should be no interruptions of any kind with phones off. Reasonable adjustments must be made to the facilities as necessary where a candidate has requested this because of a disability.
- 8.6 The reception arrangements for candidates should be so welcoming and the receptionist briefed about the exercise.
- 8.7 The seating arrangement should be as inclusive as possible so that the candidate does not feel isolated.

9.0 How to Become an Effective Interviewer

- 9.1 Let the applicant do most of the talking. If you talk more than 50% of time then you are interviewing yourself not conducting an interview.
- 9.2 Use brief verbal responses that will keep the applicant talking e.g. "tell me more", "that's interesting", "what happened then", etc.
- 9.3 Give your entire attention to the interviewee and respond by encouraging facial expressions, movement of the eyes and nods of the head.
- 9.4 Allow pauses in the conversation. If you think the applicant will reveal important information avoid pauses. Avoid pausing when the applicant has finished a point.
- 9.5 Try to understand the applicant who intern may volunteer really useful information.
- 9.6 Make self-expression easy for the applicant.
- 9.7 Respect the feelings of the other persons even though you consider the person wrong.
- 9.8 At all times accept what the applicant says. Never show surprise or disapproval.
- 9.9 Avoid the impulse to cut the applicant off or change the subject abruptly.
- 9.10 Never argue with the applicant.
- 9.11 Sit on the either side of the desk as the as the applicant is on the other.

10.0 Preparing the Candidates By Interviewer

Ensure that candidates should have sufficient information about the post, the requirements of the post and the organization. Candidates should be given adequate notice of the interview date, panel composition and designation and, ideally, be given a brief tour of the place of work prior to the interview. Candidates should produce documentary evidence of their qualifications as stipulated in the person specification. The candidate can be helped by:

- 10.1 The Convener introducing the panel and having name cards placed in front of them.
- 10.2 The panel putting the candidate at ease
- 10.3 The convener explaining the structure and length of the interview
- 10.4 Being informed that notes will be taken to ensure a fair assessment to be made
- 10.5 Being asked whether they have any queries after the introduction
- 10.6 The use of an opening non-discriminatory 'warm-up' question

11.0 Types of Questions

11.1 Open-ended questions

Are usually preferred since the applicant can give more information than closed questions which restrict the expression of the candidate. Some examples of open-ended questions are:

- (a) Tell us something about yourself.
- (b) What are your interests besides studies?
- (c) Which courses were the most useful in your graduation program?
- (d) Which courses did you like the best? Why?

- (e) How would you assess yourself as compared to your classmates?
- (f) What is the reason for leaving the present job?

11.2 **Closed questions or dead-ended questions:**

These give scope for 'yes' or 'no' answers, or specific answers. Some examples are:

- (a) How many courses did you attend in the college?
- (b) How many students graduated in your class?
- (c) What was your major subject at graduation?

The responses to these questions are easy to tabulate, but the information is limited and does not give scope for additional information.

11.3 **Probing Questions:**

These questions elicit a detailed answer or clarification of a statement made earlier. For example, after the response, "The education system needs a reform", the interviewer may ask the probing question "In what way do you think the reform is needed?" Reflective questions are asked to confirm the statements made by the candidates. Examples of these are:

- (a) So you are of the opinion that corruption can be fought by everyone?
- (b) That means you prefer a job where the HR is involved?

Questions should be neutral that is they should not be unfair, leading or negative questions. One of the things I have supported for years is...; what is your opinion on it?

11.4 **Hypothetical questions**

Involve a hypothetical situation. The candidate is given a situation and asked how he/she will deal with it. For example:

- (a) How will you handle a staff member who is disobedient to his/her senior and hence does not perform up to the mark?
- (b) Leading questions are asked to get a desired response. Such questions express the interviewer's point of view and call for agreement with a yes answer. For example: Don't you think that our company is a pioneer in the software?

11.5 Multiple questions: These occur when two or more questions are asked at one time. Candidates will normally only answer one of them - the one they find easiest or heard last. These types of questions should not be used in interviews.

Example - 'Why have you applied for this job, and why do you want to leave your present job?'

11.6 Leading questions: The answer which is expected is suggested in the question, and thus it is not appropriate for selection interviewing.

Example - 'We need someone who has good planning skills. How well do you plan ahead?'

11.7 Behavioral questions: Are useful questions, as you gain evidence of how the candidate has handled similar situations in the past and these can concentrate on the specific skill areas of this post.

Example - 'Can you give me an example of when you had to deal with a difficult customer complaint?'

11.8 Reflective questions: These are powerful and seldom used with skill or consistency. Each question is based on the previous answer and reflects its content.

Example - 'So, you think that there could have been some improvements. What would have altered the outcome?'

As far as possible the effort of the interviewer should be to ease out the tensions in the candidates. There are many illegal questions which must be strictly avoided by the interviewer. These could include questions pertaining to the issues like race, gender, nationality, religion etc. Such issues could be offensive to the applicants. However, in certain interviews certain loaded questions may be asked deliberately to assess the candidate's response to a sensitive issue and test the candidate's ability to handle sensitive situations.

12.0 Evaluation after the Interview

While evaluating an applicant, criteria like educational background, work experience, personal characteristics and an overall impression of the personality in the context of the position in the company applied are important. The evaluation criteria would vary as per the job and as per the company policy. Hence there are diverse formats for interview evaluation.

13.0 Preparation by the Candidate

Any candidate, when applies for the job needs to prepare systematically. Thorough preparation gives confidence to the candidate. It is due to the fact that the oral interaction of a short duration is going to be crucial and a deciding factor for being selected for the job. The preparation by the candidate involves basically the understanding of the position applied for, the standing of the organization and their expectations about a candidate. The preparation for the job involves analysing oneself, assessing one's skills, analysing the job, understanding the organization, revising the subject knowledge and developing the interview file.

- 13.1 **Analyzing Oneself:** Before presenting oneself in a favourable light before the interviewer, it is essential to know one's strengths and weaknesses. One needs to analyze one's background, major achievements and identify the special interests. While appearing for the interview, the candidate needs to give a thought to analyze his/her career goals. The career goals stated have to be realistic in terms of the job position applied for. And then the candidate can justify how he/she is suitable to pursue the specific career.
- 13.2 **Assessing the skills:** Since the job interview is meant to assess the skills required to carry out the specific responsibilities of the job, the candidate has to analyze his/her skills and do self-assessment. The questions pertaining to the strengths and weaknesses can be answered better by such skill-analysis. For example, interpersonal skills or communication skills are examples of learned skills such as courage, creativity are those of intuitive skills.
- 13.3 **Analyzing the Job:** A candidate should have proper knowledge about the job in terms of the exact nature of the job, the responsibilities involved in it, the challenges of the position if any, the expertise required and the future prospects. Questions like "Why should you be selected for this position?" can be answered confidently if this preparatory stage is taken care of.
- 13.4 **Understanding the Organization:** Before appearing for the interview, a candidate needs to thoroughly gather all the pertinent information about the organization. This will include information about the products/services, work culture, activities and expansion plans, new products etc. and the strengths of the organization.
- 13.5 **Revise the subject Knowledge:** There could be in-depth questions asked about the candidate's competency in the subject claimed for. Hence it is recommended to revise the subject knowledge. It would also mean keeping an update with the current socio, economic, political news, etc.

13.6 **Arrange the Interview File:** Arranging the documents and preparing the file for the interview is very important. The call letter for the interview, original degrees, certificates, experience certificates and reference letters, testimonials, copies of resume and any other relevant documents need to be organized for easy reference.

13.7 **While Answering the Questions:** The way a candidate answers question is more important than the answer itself. Hence while answering, the candidate has to reflect a positive attitude and have a clear focus on the content. The candidate should remember that it is a two-way process and should play the role of a listener and pay attention before answering questions.

14.0 Arriving for the Interview

14.1 **Dress appropriately:** You should be suitably dressed for the occasion. Your clothes as well as general appearance should be neat, finger nails should be clean, shoes polished and preferably closed and hair style should be appropriate, lotions, creams and perfumes used should be used sparingly. The occasions should complement the suit or dress. Your appearance should not be garish in any way.

14.2 **Take with you your certificates:** If the interview letter mentions some certificates, testimonials or other documents, do not forget to take them along. If you think there are some other papers that might be of use to you during the interview put them also in your briefcase.

14.3 **Arrive for the interview in time:** This is of almost importance. Try to arrive at the place of interview ten minutes to fifteen minutes before the scheduled time. This will give you enough time to relax and prepare yourself for the interview.

15.0 How to Conduct Yourself During The Interview

- Do not be nervous or agitated while entering the interview room.
- Greet the interviewer(s) with a polite morning or afternoon.
- Do not sit down until you have been asked to. Even if your posture is important don't sit either stiff nor relax but sit natural.
- When the interviewer starts conversation pay attention to what he/she says. Do not interrupt him/her. Respond to him/her only at the appropriate time.
- Give very relevant answers to the questions; do not ramble along since the interviewer will be bored. Do not be too abrupt as you will appear to be rude.
- Do not try to make an exhibition of your knowledge - do not boast of your capabilities. It is for the interviewer to find out how capable you are and he/she will judge you with the help of some penetrating questions which you must answer frankly.
- If there is something you do not know, admit it straightly. It is useless to pretend to have knowledge where you are actually ignorant.
- If you are being interviewed by someone who does not possess as much college degrees as you have, do not put on airs. Give the interviewer your full cooperation and respect in addition to knowing your qualifications.
- You are exposed to have your individual views and you need not agree with everything the interviewer says. But you also need not to annoy or offend him unnecessarily. You must remain calm and friendly throughout the interview and don't lose your temper.
- Be positive in your attitude. Express your enthusiasm for the job and the company. If you give the impression that you are not really interested, you will discover that your employer is also not really interested in.

- Do not keep shifting in your seat, don't bite or chew your fingernails, and don't start adjusting the color of your blouse or shirt or neck tie. All these are signs of nervousness and nervousness is the biggest enemy during an interview.
- When you are asked question about previous job, be frank but avoid criticism of your former employer or colleagues even if you had a grudge. Mention only the positive, pleasant and constructive aspects of your earlier employment.
- If your interviewer has not talked about the job, do not be afraid to ask a question yourself. Full knowledge of the job will help you to either accept the job or not.
- When the interview is over, do not forget to thank the interviewer. You may even tactfully ask when the results will be made known to you.
- If the job is offered to you, you may accept it immediately or ask for the time to think over it depending upon your circumstances.

16.0 How to Carry a Successful Interview

The responsibility for the failure of an interview lies both with the interviewer and the interviewee. If the following points are kept in mind, a lot of unnecessary, unpleasantness and wastage can be avoided:

- You should structure the interview so that the interviewer follows a set of procedures.
- You provide interviewers with basic interview skills.
- Interviewers should get detailed information about the job in question.
- Keep other information away from the interviewers to avoid other irrelevant information.
- You should have standardized evaluation forms.
- Interviewers take notes during the interview.
- You avoid very short interviews
- The interviewer should not frame an overall opinion about the candidate on the basis of a single aspect of his/her personality. For example if the candidate said something about his or her previous employer, it is not an indication that he or she will betray the next employer also.
- The interviewer should not judge a candidate's mental capability and his character on the basis of such factors as his personal appearance date of birth, number of letter in his name, his hand writing, etc.
- The interviewer must vary the nature of his questions and the tone of his voice to suit individual candidates. If interviewer goes on asking stereo typed questions mechanically, he or she will get stereo typed answers and he or she will not be able to make a correct decision.
- The interviewer should try to judge the candidate on fresh and not going by what his or her former employer has to say about candidate.
- The interviewer should not be cold and unfriendly. He should not try to unnerve candidate by putting on aims of superiority.
- The interviewer should not accept small facts stated by the candidate without probing to determine their meaning and accuracy.
- The interviewer must observe non-verbal communications like gesture, facial expression, voice changes, hesitations, etc.

17.0 Limitations of Interviews

The interviews along with the application forms have proved to be almost universal selection tool. However, it has been argued that despite its popularity the interview is a costly, inefficient and usually invalid procedure. This is so because:

- Prior knowledge about the applicant will bias the interviewer's evaluation.
- The interviewer holds a stereotype of what represents a good applicant.
- The interviewer tends to favor applicants who have his/her own attitudes.

- The order in which applicants are interviewed will influence evaluations.
- Negative information is given unduly high weight.
- The order in which information is elicited will influence evaluations.
- The interviewer makes an early decision as to the applicant's suitability.
- The interviewer forgets much of the interviews content within minutes after its conclusion.

18.0 TABLE GIVING TIPS ABOUT DOING THE INTERVIEW

SN	Interview question	What is to assess
1.	What are your greatest strengths?	How well you sell yourself. Give abstract qualities expressed in concrete terms.
2.	What are your greatest weaknesses?	Give a weakness that reflects a professional strength Style and poise. Give a synopsis of your skills.
3.	Where do you hope to be in five years?	Realistic progression. With company knowledge you can provide a position reasonably achieved in the years
4.	What do you do in your spare time?	Give hobbies that highlight aspects of the job atmosphere and climate you seek. Be specific
5.	Are you applying to any other jobs?	Are you serious about changing jobs? Show how your skills are applicable to several types of jobs. Can the employer afford you?
6.	What type of salary did you have in mind?	Deal with this at the end of the interview, if possible give a salary range
7.	Personnel Questions.	Can you handle stress? Smile and keep quiet underlying motive. Be calm and collected.

TOPIC IV **RUNNING AN EFFECTIVE MEETING**

Introduction

Organizational meetings have several functions. They give members a chance to discuss and evaluate goals and objectives and keep you updated on current events. They provide a chance to communicate and keep the group cohesive. But, most of all, meetings allow groups to pull resources together for decision making. If the facilitator starts with a careful plan and finishes with a thorough follow-up, the meeting will "run itself." The following are some tips to help make your meeting successful, productive, and even fun.

Selecting Participants

- 1) The decision who is to attend depends on what needs to be accomplished.
- 2) Ask several other people for their opinion as well.
- 3) Call each person to tell them about the meeting and its overall purpose.
- 4) Follow-up your call with a meeting notice, including the meeting purpose, venue, date, the list of participants and whom to contact if they have questions.
- 5) Send out a copy of the proposed agenda along with the meeting notice.
- 6) Have someone designated to record important actions, assignments and due dates during the meeting.

Developing Agendas

- 1) Develop the agenda together with the key participants for the meeting.
- 2) Design the agenda so that participants get involved early by having something for them to do right away and so they come on time.
- 3) To each major topic, include the type of action needed and output expected.
- 4) Ask participants if they will commit to the agenda.
- 5) Keep the agenda posted at all times.
- 6) Be willing to adapt the agenda where there are changes during planning process.
- 7) Think about how you label an event, so people come in with that mind-set

DOs and DON'Ts of Effective Meetings

DOs:

- 1) Right people in the room
- 2) Thoughtfully schedule, consider invitees and everyone necessary
- 3) Send reminders
- 4) Start/end on time
- 5) Follow the agenda
- 6) Manage the discussion
- 7) Shorter is better
- 8) Summarize key decisions and next steps
- 9) Confirm action items

DON'Ts:

- 1) Flounder
- 2) Diggess
- 3) Go on a tangent

Before the Meeting

- 1) Define the purpose of the meeting.
- 2) Develop an agenda with the officers and advisor.
- 3) Distribute the agenda and circulate background material

- 4) Choose an appropriate meeting time.
- 5) If possible, arrange the room so that members face each other.
- 6) Choose a location suitable to your group's size.
- 7) Post a large agenda up front for members to refer to.
- 8) Vary meeting places if possible to accommodate different members.

During the Meeting

- 1) Opening Meetings:
 - ¤ Always start on time; this respects those who showed up on time and reminds late-comers that the scheduling is serious.
 - ¤ Welcome attendees and thank them for their time.
 - ¤ Review the agenda at the beginning of each meeting, giving participants a chance to understand all proposed major topics, change them and accept them.
 - ¤ Note that a meeting recorder if used will take minutes and provide them back to each participant shortly after the meeting.
 - ¤ Model the kind of energy and participant needed by meeting participants.
 - ¤ Clarify your role(s) in the meeting.
- 2) Greet members and make them feel welcome, even late ones when appropriate.
- 3) If possible, serve light refreshments, they are good ice breakers and make your members feel special and comfortable.
- 4) Start on time. End on time.
- 5) Review the agenda and set priorities for the meeting.
- 6) Stick to the agenda.
- 7) Encourage discussion to get all points of view and ideas
- 8) Encourage feedback
- 9) Keep conversation on topic toward an eventual decision.
- 10) Keep minutes of the meeting for future reference.
- 11) Leader, be a role model by listening, showing interest, appreciation, and confidence in members. Admit mistakes.
- 12) Have a positive attitude, members will reflect the attitude you model.
- 13) Summarize agreements reached and end the meeting on a unifying note.
- 14) Set a date, time and place for the next meeting.

After the Meeting

- 1) Write up and distribute minutes within 2 or 3 days.
- 2) Discuss any problems during the meeting with other officers; come up with ways improvements can be made.
- 3) Follow-up on delegating decisions.
- 4) Give recognition and appreciation to excellent and timely progress.
- 5) Put unfinished business on the agenda for the next meeting.
- 6) Conduct a periodic evaluation of the meetings. Weak areas can be analysed and improved for more productive meetings.

Minutes

Minutes and Record Keeping

Being a secretary for your organization is not a job to take lightly. This responsibility should not be assigned to just anyone. This task requires someone who is:

- 1) Well organized and reliable and completes her/his tasks timely.
- 2) Good listener, objective and hears both sides of an issue.
- 3) On top of what is going on and records what is key.

Immediately after the meeting, the secretary must go over her/his notes while everything is still fresh in her/his mind. S/he should check notes for the following:

- 1) Type of meeting (executive, committee, etc.)
- 2) Date, time and place
- 3) List of attendees and those absent
- 4) Time of call to order
- 5) Approval and/or amendments to previous meeting minutes
- 6) Record of reports from standing and special committees
- 7) General matters
- 8) Record of proposals, resolutions, motions, seconding and final disposition, and a summary of the discussion as well as a record of the vote
- 9) Time of adjournment

NOTE: These minutes should be sent out to all members within 3 or 4 days of the meeting. This allows members time to read the minutes for accuracy before the next meeting and while the previous meeting is still fresh in their minds.

If the secretary is unable to attend, a substitute, preferably with the characteristics defined earlier, needs to be appointed. If a substitute is taking minutes, the following hints will make the job easier:

- 1) Identify yourself before speaking
- 2) Speak slowly
- 3) Present motions in writing to the secretary (this is a good practice even when the regular secretary is present)
- 4) Raise hands high during vote counting
- 5) Summarize discussions

There are several ways to take meeting minutes and each organization needs to choose the most appropriate method for them. Minutes can be recorded in writing or on tape. If you choose to tape the minutes, you can either tape the entire proceedings word-or-word or listen to them later, pulling out the pertinent information. Taping an entire meeting is an extreme form of minute taking; it is akin to sitting through the same meeting twice!

A second more practical option is to record a summary of debates, agreements and disagreements with a sufficient explanation of the character of each. It is often helpful for minute taking and for those attending the meeting if either the chair or the secretary summarizes decisions that are reached. The summarizer should be most careful in clarifying those points of greatest controversy.

Action Plan

Once your organization has written its goals and objectives, it is time to take this task one step further by developing an Action Plan. This is the actual mapping out in detail of what is to get done within a time framework.

- 1) What is to be done - your objective?
- 2) How will it be accomplished?
- 3) What are the resources in terms of people, money, materials?
- 4) Who is responsible for completing each task?
- 5) When will it be accomplished?
- 6) How will you know when it is accomplished? How will you measure success?

Closing Meetings

- 1) Always end meetings on time and attempt to end on a positive note.

- 2) At the end of a meeting, review actions and assignments, and set the time for the next meeting and ask each person if they can make it or not (to get their commitment)
- 3) Clarify that meeting minutes and/or actions will be reported back to members in at most a week (this helps to keep momentum going).