



PDHonline Course P215 (2 PDH)

Barriers and Gateways to Communication

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This overview of Communication Barriers was prepared by Courtney T. Harper while a Management major in the College of Business at Southeastern Louisiana University.

Introduction

This report is a general explanation of communication barriers and how to overcome them. People communicate in every aspect of their lives, such as personal relationships and in the work environment. Communication with another person successfully requires work by the sender and the receiver. In this report, I discuss how to convey your message sufficiently and explain what is needed to be a good listener.

The Idea in a Nutshell

Communication barriers are obstacles that distort interpersonal or organizational communication processes. Barriers can take many forms, such as physical, emotional, or structural. Each barrier may not be preventable or anticipated. The barriers can be on the end the receiver, sender, or both. There are ways to overcome barriers and achieve successful communication. Successful communication can be achieved by overcoming barriers. If a message is delivered to the right person at the proper time with the correct amount of emphases on the important parts, the information likely to be perceived by the receiver is at its fullest potential. It doesn't matter how important or impressive the subject of the communication is, if it is delivered without any 'punch', it will not get people to take the desired action intended.

The Top Ten Things You Need to Know About Communication Barriers

1. On average, an individual must hear new information seven times before he or she understands accurately. Many communication problems can be directly attributed to misunderstanding and inaccuracies. Active listening, which is listening for full meaning without making premature judgments or interpretations, demands total concentration. A manager can ask questions about a message to determine if it was received and understood as intended. To be an active listener you must be empathic, make eye contact, exhibit affirmative head nods and appropriate facial expressions, ask questions, avoid distracting actions or gestures, paraphrase, avoid interrupting speaker, and don't over talk.
2. Defensiveness can damage the way someone perceives the message at hand. When someone believes he or she is threatened, the individual will become defensive toward the speaker, using sarcasm or may attack the person delivering the message. This can reduce the listener's ability to understand and minimize the chance to reach an agreement.
3. Different words can have different meanings to each individual person. Because language can be a barrier, managers should consider the audience to whom the message is directed and tailor the language to those individuals. Taking the time to paraphrase what has been said can help clarify the intended meaning.
4. Communication can be affected by the emotional state of the sender or the receiver despite what is being said and how it is being said. Emotions can cloud and distort communication. It is best to calm down and get your emotions under control before communicating. When delivering an emotionally charged message pick the most appropriate time.

5. Body language also gives meaning to the message. Remembering to remain aware of nonverbal cues and what the cues may be saying is important. Actions speak louder than words; therefore align words with actions so to express a clear meaning. Using a yes head nod and saying no can give a mixed message to the receiver.
6. Background noise or large work areas can cause a physical barrier in communication. These can be overcome by the use of technology or they can be taking care of prior to delivering the message. Physical barriers can be easily created by distance of the speaker or by outside sources.
7. Structure is an essential part of how well the message is being received. Every message should have a beginning, middle, and end. The points and supporting details just be easily identifiable by the receiver. This makes active listening easier and the message more comprehensible.
8. Using the wrong type of medium can also harm the delivery of a message. If the content is confidential then the message should not be given in a group meeting. Same as if the message can be delivered to more than one person at a time it is more efficient to hold a meeting rather than going to each person individually.
9. Cultural differences can hinder the meaning of a message. Not all countries promote a relatively formal approach to communication. Some cultures rely on face to face conversations and more interpersonal interaction, while other cultures may become offended by eye to eye contact.
10. Sandra Baigel, author of “Overcoming Communication Barriers” says, “See yourself as a hurdles champion the next time you need to communicate something important”. Her closing advice is to take time to identify those barriers that are unique. Only then will you find the best way to approach your task and deliver your message.

My Take

Many barriers should be considered when preparing to convey a message. Not all barriers are under your control. With proper preparation and consideration for the audience and the surroundings you can almost eliminate any communication barrier. In today’s business world it is important to treat people with respect when talking to them and showing respect by listening well.

References

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