

4.3.1: The Process of Managerial Communication

Learning Objectives

1. Understand and describe the communication process.

Interpersonal communication is an important part of being an effective manager:

- It influences the opinions, attitude, motivation, and behaviors of others.
- It expresses our feelings, emotions, and intentions to others.
- It is the vehicle for providing, receiving, and exchanging information regarding events or issues that concern us.
- It reinforces the formal structure of the organization by such means as making use of formal channels of communication.

Interpersonal communication allows employees at all levels of an organization to interact with others, to secure desired results, to request or extend assistance, and to make use of and reinforce the formal design of the organization. These purposes serve not only the individuals involved, but the larger goal of improving the quality of organizational effectiveness.

The model that we present here is an oversimplification of what really happens in communication, but this model will be useful in creating a diagram to be used to discuss the topic. Figure 16.1.1 illustrates a simple communication episode where a communicator encodes a message and a receiver decodes the message.¹

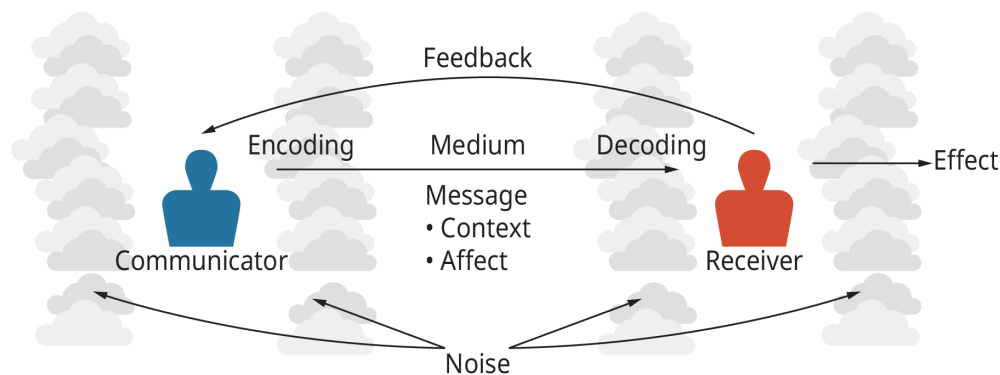


Figure 4.3.1.1: The Basic Communication Model (Attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC-BY 4.0 license)

Encoding and Decoding

Two important aspects of this model are encoding and decoding. Encoding is the process by which individuals initiating the communication translate their ideas into a systematic set of symbols (language), either written or spoken. Encoding is influenced by the sender's previous experiences with the topic or issue, her emotional state at the time of the message, the importance of the message, and the people involved. Decoding is the process by which the recipient of the message interprets it. The receiver attaches meaning to the message and tries to uncover its underlying intent. Decoding is also influenced by the receiver's previous experiences and frame of reference at the time of receiving the message.

Feedback

Several types of feedback can occur after a message is sent from the communicator to the receiver. Feedback can be viewed as the last step in completing a communication episode and may take several forms, such as a verbal response, a nod of the head, a response asking for more information, or no response at all. As with the initial message, the response also involves encoding, medium, and decoding.

There are three basic types of feedback that occur in communication.² These are informational, corrective, and reinforcing. In informational feedback, the receiver provides nonevaluative information to the communicator. An example is the level of inventory at the end of the month. In corrective feedback, the receiver responds by challenging the original message. The receiver might respond that it is not her responsibility to monitor inventory. In reinforcing feedback, the receiver communicated that she has clearly received the message and its intentions. For instance, the grade that you receive on a term paper (either positive or negative) is reinforcing feedback on your term paper (your original communication).

Noise

There is, however, a variety of ways that the intended message can get distorted. Factors that distort message clarity are **noise**. Noise can occur at any point along the model shown in Figure 16.1.1, including the decoding process. For example, a manager might be under pressure and issue a directive, “I want this job completed today, and I don’t care what it costs,” when the manager does care what it costs.

? concept check

1. Describe the communication process.
2. Why is feedback a critical part of the communication process?
3. What are some things that managers can do to reduce noise in communication?

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