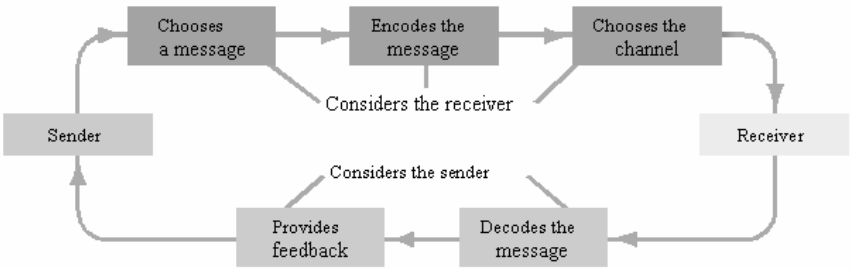
Chapter 7: Communication

THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

communication = transfer and understanding of a msg btwn 2 or more ppl

- problems occur when sth disrupts the flow during encoding, channel selection, decoding, or feedback
- interactive & iterative process
  → sender must keep in mind the receiver/audience, may decide to revisit decisions about msg, etc.

The Communication Process Model



Encoding & Decoding

encoding = converting a msg to symbolic form

decoding = interpreting a sender's msg

both influenced by 4 Factors:
- Skill (writing, reading, reasoning)
- Attitude (values, beliefs; affect interactions w/ others)
- Knowledge (affect clarity of msg)
- Socio-cultural system (rank in hierarchy)

The Message

message = what is communicated

affected by:
- code (group of symbols)
- content of msg itself
- decisions we make in selecting & arranging both codes & content

can get "lost in translation" when 2 parties formalize their understanding thru contracts(written legal terms)
→ may not always capture underlying meaning of parties' understandings

The Channel

channel = medium thru which a msg travels

- can distort communication if poor one selected / noise level high

Formal channels: transmit msg's that pertain to job-related activities of members
follow authority network within org.

Informal channels: personal / social msg's
e.g. formal memos, voice mail, email, meetings

communication apprehension = undue tension & anxiety about oral / written communication, or both

- ppl who suffer from this rely on memos, letters, email

channel richness = amnt of info that can be transmitted during a communication episode

rich channel: (1) handle multiple cues simultaneously (2) facilitate rapid feedback (3) be very personal

(opp: lean)

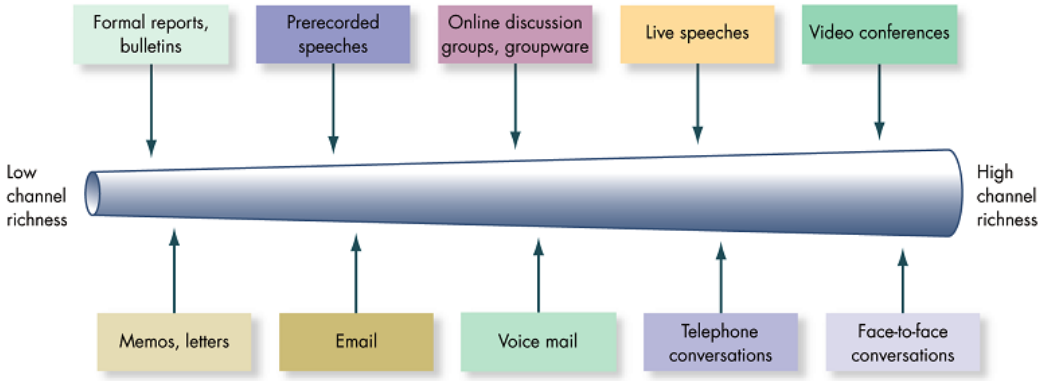
- face-to-face convo scores highest b/c it provides max. amnt of info transmitted (words, expressions, intonations, immediate (non)verbal feedback, "being there")
- impersonal written media (e.g. bulletins, formal reports): lowest in richness

Choosing channels:

- Routine msg's – straightforward, min. ambiguity → use channels LOWER in richness
- Non-routine msg's – complicated, potential for misunderstanding → RICH channels

*high-performing managers: more media sensitive

*not all –ve msg's should be sent thru email



The Feedback Loop

feedback loop = final link in the communication process

= puts msg back into system as a check against misunderstandings

- if sender or receiver fails to engage in feedback process → one-way communication
- talking + listening → two-way communication

The Context

- all communications take place within a context
- violations of context may create additional problems in sending/receiving msg's

e.g. @ work: formal interaction

@ bus stop: informal communication

BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Filtering	= sender's manipulation of info so that it will be seen more favourably by receiver - result of personal interests & perceptions of what's important of the synthesizer - major determinant: levels an org. has (more levels, more chances for filtering)
Selective Perception	receiver selectively see/hear based on needs, motivations, exp, bg, characteristics, interests, expectations (☹)

Defensiveness	when ppl feel threatened, they tend to react in ways that reduce their ability to achieve mutual understanding (become defensive) → verbally attack others, sarcasm, be overly judgmental, question others' motives
Information Overload	= condition in which info inflow exceeds one's processing capacity - emails, phone calls, faxes, mtg's… more managers/professionals are complaining that they're suffering from too much info - result: ppl tend to select out, ignore, pass over, forget info OR put off further processing until overload is over
Language	- words mean diff. things to diff. ppl (age, education, cultural bg influence lang. & def's of words) *diff. departments: their own jargon / technical lang. *vertical levels: lang. of senior exec's → unfamiliar management jargon - senders tend to assume the words they use mean the same to receiver (☹)
Communicating Under Stress	Tips: • *Speak clearly:* be direct, avoid hiding behind words • *Be aware of nonverbal part of communicating:* speak in neutral manner b/c tone, facial expression, body lang. send signals that may (not) be consistent w/ msg • *Think carefully about how you state things:* often it's better to be restrained so that you don't offend listener

▌ ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION (ways that communication occurs in org's)

Direction of Communication

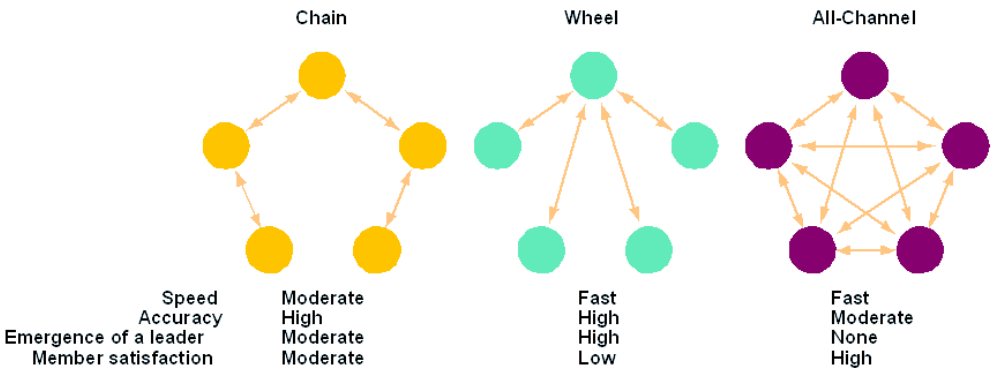
Downward communication	- communication flows from one level of a group/org to a lower level e.g. managers→employees (assign goals, provide instructions, offer feedback, etc)
Upward communication	- communication flows to a higher level e.g. performance reports prepared by lower management for review by middle / top management, suggestion boxes, employee attitude surveys, etc
Lateral (Horizontal) communication	- communication occurs among members of same workgroup / @ same level / among managers @ same level / among any horizontally equivalent employees - saves time (short-circuit vertical hierarchy & speed up action) - POV of manager: is **+**ve (faster; occurs w/ knowledge of manager), or **–**ve (dysfunctional conflicts – vertical channels breached, members go above/around managers to get things done, actions taken or decisions made w/o knowledge)

Small-Group Networks

communication networks = channels by which info flows

formal networks = task-related communications that follow the authority chain *(vertical)*

Chain	follows formal chain of command - best if accuracy is most important
Wheel	relies on leader to act as central conduit*(medium/channel)* for all group's communication - best if emergence of leader needed
All-Channel	all group members to communicate actively w/ each other - best if high member satisfc'n is most important



The Grapevine

informal networks = communications that flow along social & relational lines

- comm'n free to move in any direction, skip authority levels, likely to satisfy members' social needs

grapevine = org's most common informal networks (e.g. rumours)

Rumours - will exist until wants/expectations creating uncertainty are fulfilled or anxiety reduced

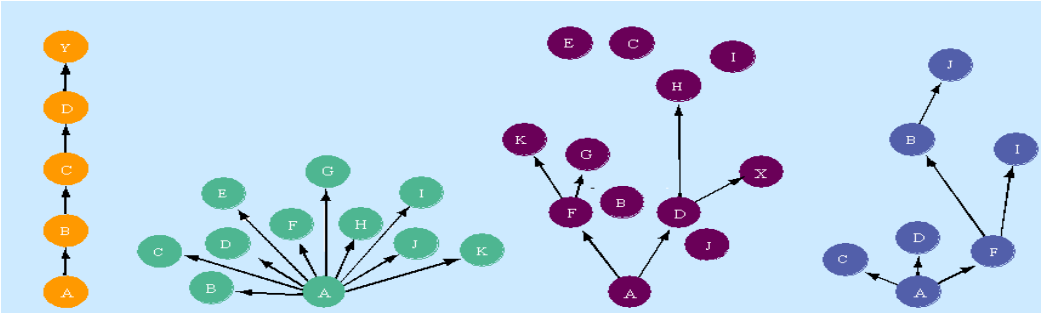
- emerge as response to situations important to us (where there's ambiguity / anxiety aroused)

Purposes:

- structure & reduce anxiety
- make sense of limited / fragmented info
- serve as a vehicle to organize group members (& possibly outsiders) into coalitions
- signal sender's status *("I'm an insider, you're an outsider wrt this rumour")*

  & power *("I have power to make you into an insider")*

Grapevine Patterns



Single Strand	Gossip	Probability	Cluster
Each tells one another	One tells all	Each randomly tells others	Some tell selected others

Single Strand	each person tells info to just one other person
Gossip	one person tells everyone the info (10% of org members)
Probability	individuals randomly told info (no pattern)
Cluster	individuals selectively choose others to whom they will rely info (may strategically select to make sure info gets spread)

*Liaison individuals: those who consistently pass long info they hear

Electronic Communications

Email

- added to # of hours worked per week
- does not provide verbal or nonverbal nuances
- used by some to hide from direct interaction, protect their power, create one-way communication
- companies often claim that they have the right to read your email (not necessarily private)

*Tips for writing/sending email:

- don't send emails w/o subject line
- be careful in use of emoticons & acronyms for business communication
- write msg's clearly & briefly
- copy emails to others only if they really need the info
- sleep on angry emails before sending to be sure you're sending the right msg

Instant Messaging (IM)

- no delay, inbox clutter of msg's, uncertainty as to whether the msg was received
- managers can monitoring employees' physical presence @ work stations
- however, easily broken into → security concern

OTHER ISSUES IN COMMUNICATION

Nonverbal Communication

= msg's conveyed thru body movements, facial expressions and physical distance btwn sender & receiver

kinetics = study of body motions, such as gestures, facial configurations, other movements of the body

- body lang. & facial expression adds meaning to & often complicates verbal communication
- eye contact: gain credibility & deemed more confident

proxemics = study of physical space in interpersonal relationships

- proper spacing is dependent on cultural norms
  ("contact" cultures: Arabs, Latin Americans, S Europeans; "noncontact" cultures: Asians, N Americans)
- seating arrangements, conditions of the room also send intended/unintended msg's

Silence As Communication

- do not ignore silence as a powerful form of communication
- can mean someone is thinking a response to a Ques
- person may be anxious & fearful of speaking
- agreement, dissent, frustration, anger
- critical element of groupthink (agreement w/ majority)
- a way to express dissatisfaction
- thinking over what others have said in group decision making

Communication Barriers BTWN Women and Men (Research by Deborah Tannen)

MEN	WOMEN
- use talk to emphasize status - speak/hear lang. of status & independence - convos are to preserve independence & status in hierarchical social order - complain that women talk to much about problems & only offer solutions (desire for independence and control) - sets himself as more knowledgeable, more reasonable, more in control - directness ("I think you're wrong on that point") - criticize women for seeming to apologize all the time (they see "I'm sorry" as weakness)	- use talk to create connection - speak/hear lang. of connection & intimacy - convos are for negotiations for closeness (try to seek & give confirmation, support) - criticize men for not listening, want to promote closeness, gain support and connection – not just get advice - indirectness, don't take definitive stands ("Have you looked at the marketing department's research on that point?") - women often use "I'm sorry" to express empathy

*research said to be anecdotal & faulty (Goldsmith & Fulfs: men & women have more similarities than differences)

Cross-Cultural Communication

Cultural Barriers caused by…

Semantics	some words don't translate btwn cultures words mean diff. things to diff. ppl *e.g. word "sisu" from Finland has no translation in English*
Word Connotations	words imply different things in diff. languages *e.g. Japanese "Hai" may mean "Yes, I'm listening", not "Yes, I agree"*
Tone differences	in some cultures lang. is formal, some informal in some culture, tone changes depending on context (e.g. @ home, work…)
Differences Among Perceptions	ppl who speak different lang. actually view the world in different ways *e.g. Inuit perceive snow differently b/c they have many words for it*

Cultural Context

- cultures diff in the importance of context in influencing the meaning that individuals take from what is actually said or written vs. who the other person is

High-context cultures = cultures that rely heavily on nonverbal & subtle situational cues in comm'n

- what is not said may be more significant than what is said
- person's official status, place in society, reputation → important in comm'n
- imply more trust by both parties
- oral agreements & age, seniority, rank in org → highly valued, influence credibility
- managers tend to "make suggestions"
- China, Vietnam, Saudi Arabia

Low-context cultures = cultures that rely heavily on words to convey meaning in communication

- body lang. & formal titles is 2ndary to spoken/written words
- values directness
- contracts tend to be in writing, precisely worded & highly legalistic
- managers are explicit & precise in conveying intended meaning
- Europe, North America

Overcoming Cross-Cultural Differences

- *Assume differences until similarity is proven*
- *Emphasize description rather than interpretation/evaluation*

  Delay judgment until you've had sufficient time to observe & interpret situation from differing perspectives of all cultures involved
- *Practice empathy*

  Try to see the other person as he really is; put yourself in recipient's shoes
- *Treat your interpretations as a working hypothesis*

  …that needs further testing, rather than as a certainty

  Carefully assess feedback provided by recipient to see if it confirms ur hypothesis

  Can check w/ other foreign colleagues to make sure