

Principles of Professional Communication 1

What is Communication
– meaning or message?

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What is communication?

- The ordered transfer of meaning
- The process by which messages are sent and received
- Social interaction through messages
- The reciprocal creation of meaning
- The sharing of information, ideas and attitudes between or among people

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When constructing a message we consider ...

- WHAT we wish to communicate
– the content
- WHO we wish to communicate with
– the audience
- HOW we wish to send the message
– the medium or channel
- WHEN we wish to communicate
– the timing of the message

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Why communication models?

According to Dennis (2012, p. 1), a model, be it a model car or an economic model, is a simplified representation of a more complex mechanism. A model is typically smaller, simpler and easier to build than a full scale replica. A model sheds light on the main features of the reality it seeks to represent.

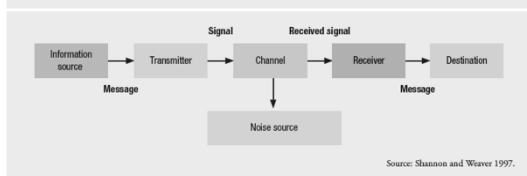
- They are useful but limited.

Two ways of looking @ communication

- Transmission models which see communication as the transfer of messages through various stages eg Shannon & Weaver, Berlo
- Transaction models which see communication as the creation or negotiation of meaning in two or more parties responding to the environment

Shannon & Weaver's Model of Communication

EXHIBIT 1.2 The Shannon and Weaver model of communication



Source: Shannon and Weaver 1997.

Shannon & Weaver's Model of Communication

- Devised in 1949 to describe the process of telephonic transmissions
- Sees communication as linear
- Uses mechanical terms to describe the process eg encoder, decoder
- Identified the concept of noise
- Important because it was the first attempt to systematically analyse communication as a series of component parts or steps

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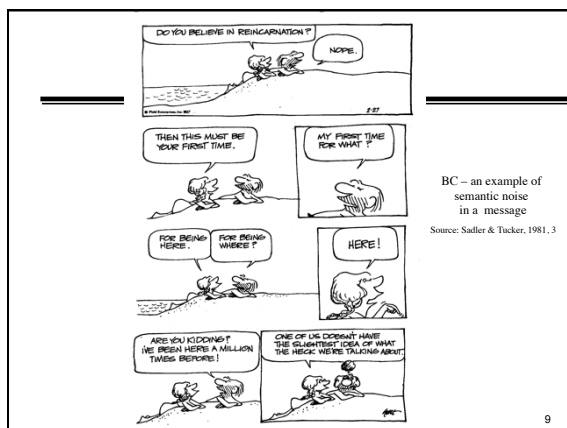
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What is noise?

- Any interference in the process of communication (first identified by S & W)
- Physical noise eg telephone static, poor acoustics, background noise
- Semantic noise arises from the misuse, misunderstanding or misinterpretation of language
- Psychological noise where interpretation is affected by the attitudes, motivations or prejudices of the sender or receiver

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Berlo's Model of Communication

The diagram illustrates Berlo's Model of Communication, structured into four main components: SOURCE, MESSAGE, CHANNEL, and RECEIVER. Each component is further divided into sub-elements:

- SOURCE:** Includes Personal, Social, and Cultural systems, and Attitudes and Knowledge.
- MESSAGE:** Divided into Elements (Verbal and Non-verbal) and Structure (Form and Content).
- CHANNEL:** Includes Seeing, Hearing, Touching, Smelling, and Tasting.
- RECEIVER:** Includes Personal, Social, and Cultural systems, and Attitudes and Knowledge.

Figure 2.3 Berlo's model of the communication process

- Devised in 1960 by David Berlo, from Michigan University
- Builds on Shannon & Weaver's model but shows communication as a human rather than a mechanical process
- Analyses the elements of each part of the process
- A problem in any part will impact on the rest
- Emphasises the need for communication to be purposive

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Components of a message

- The Elements – letters in words, non verbal actions or gestures
- The Structure – the way the elements are assembled eg order of information
- The Content – information of the message as the source intends it
- The Treatment – the way the message is presented eg use of humour, series of quotes
- The Code – how particular elements are combined eg certain style of language, pictures, use of colour, font types etc

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Transaction models take a more holistic approach

- See communication as the result of the *interaction* between a range of elements
- More focus on *contextual, situational or environmental* factors
- See meaning as *negotiated* not *fixed* but
- Meaning is an *evolution* not a *process*

EXHIBIT 1.4 A meaning-oriented model of communication

Source: Mohan et al. 1997, 40

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Comparison of the two approaches

Transmission models	Transaction models
See communication as linear or as a series of steps	See communication as dynamic, circular and unrepeatable
Assume the "meaning" lies in the components of the message itself: words chosen, treatment etc	Believe the "meaning" lies in the individuals who participate in the communication. Shared experiences and common language important.
Show that any variation in the <i>elements</i> eg inappropriate channel, can impact on the clarity of the message	See communication as being dependant on a wide range of factors, including: situations, contexts, psychological characteristics of the sender (encoder) and receiver (decoder) of a message
Believe communication describes the production of messages.	Believe communication describes the evolution of meaning rather than the production of messages.

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Cultural contexts

- Culture has a profound effect on communication
- Cultural norms dictate the meanings of objects, symbols (including words), and actions
- Sometimes we can be blinded by our own culture

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Communication Breakdown

- Can be said to occur when the message sent differs from the message received in ways not intended
- People look at the same things and can interpret differently
- People misunderstand each other's motives
- People fail to transmit messages, leaving gaps in the data available



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Communication Breakdown

- People can be reluctant to risk embarrassment, conflict or animosity by making contact to negotiate differences in their readings of a situation
- Too much information or information overload can cause messages to be missed or misinterpreted
- Too many links in the communication chain can create “Chinese whispers” syndrome

What happens when we get it wrong?