

HOW TO LISTEN AND COMMUNICATE – PART 1

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

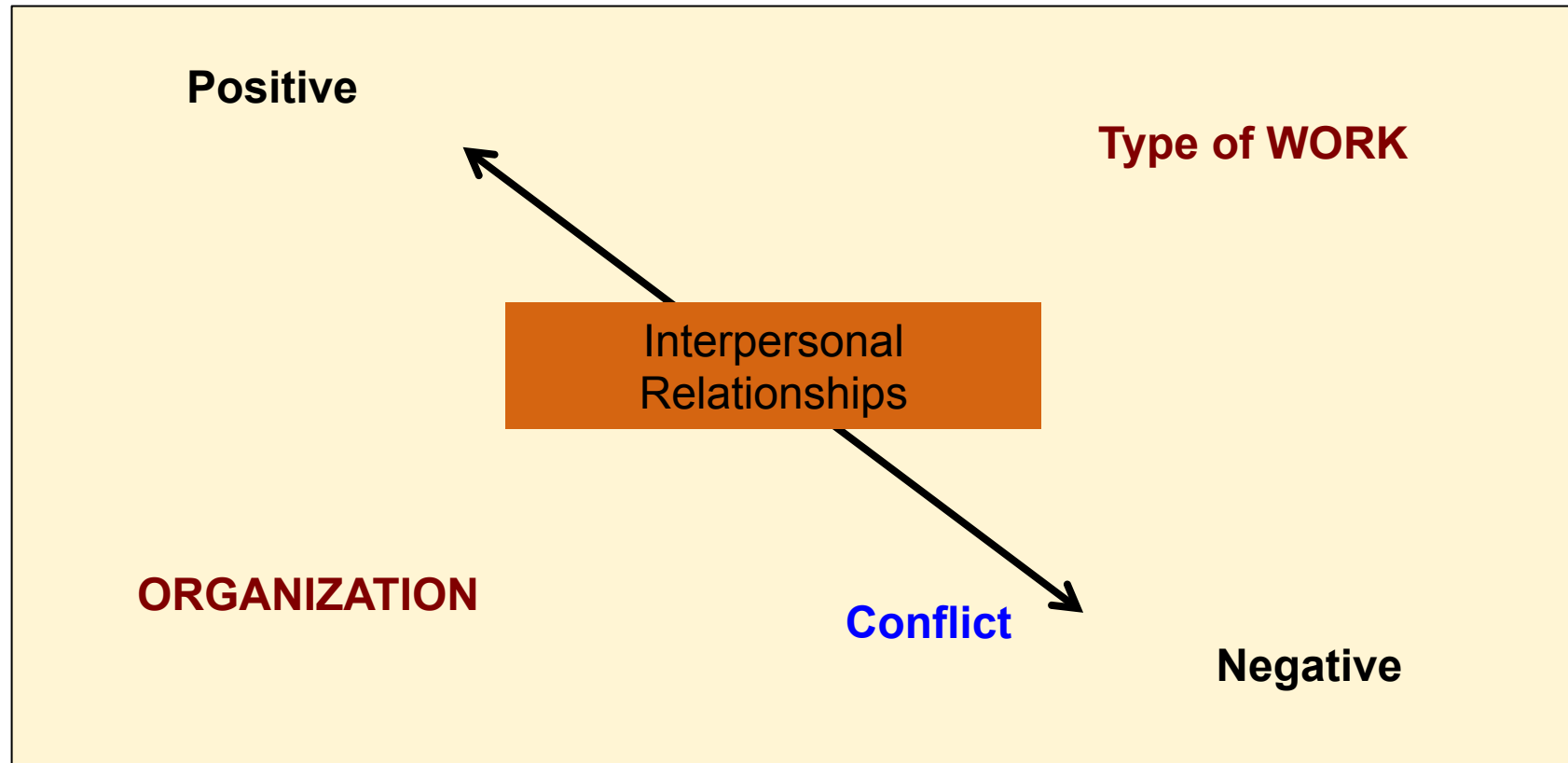
- To understand the importance of communication and how it works in business.
- To describe the process and components of communication.
- To explain the common forms of communication within organizations
- To identify the major barriers to communication
- To understand the importance of choosing the right medium to communicate
- To explain the meaning and importance of non-verbal communication
- To listen effectively

Introduction

Why is communication important?

And, why more so in business?

Introduction (cont.)



Fundamentals of communication

Is it appropriate to ask if a manager participates in the communication process within an organization?

Fundamentals of communication (cont.)

Managers invest 85% of their time in some kind of communication.

However, managers not only have to be good communicators but they also have to help their subordinates to be efficient communicators.

Fundamentals of communication (cont.)

You told me that I could do it whenever I got a chance, so how am I supposed to know what you are trying to say to me?

“We have a communication problem”



Every single communication somehow influences the organizational outcomes

Fundamentals of communication (cont.)

What is understood by communication?

“Communication is the process of sending and receiving messages – sometimes through spoken or written words and sometimes through nonverbal means such as facial expressions, gestures, and voice qualities.” (Ober, 2007, p.4)

“Communication is the process by which information and meaning gets transferred from a sender to a receiver” (Colquitt et al., 2013, p. 401)

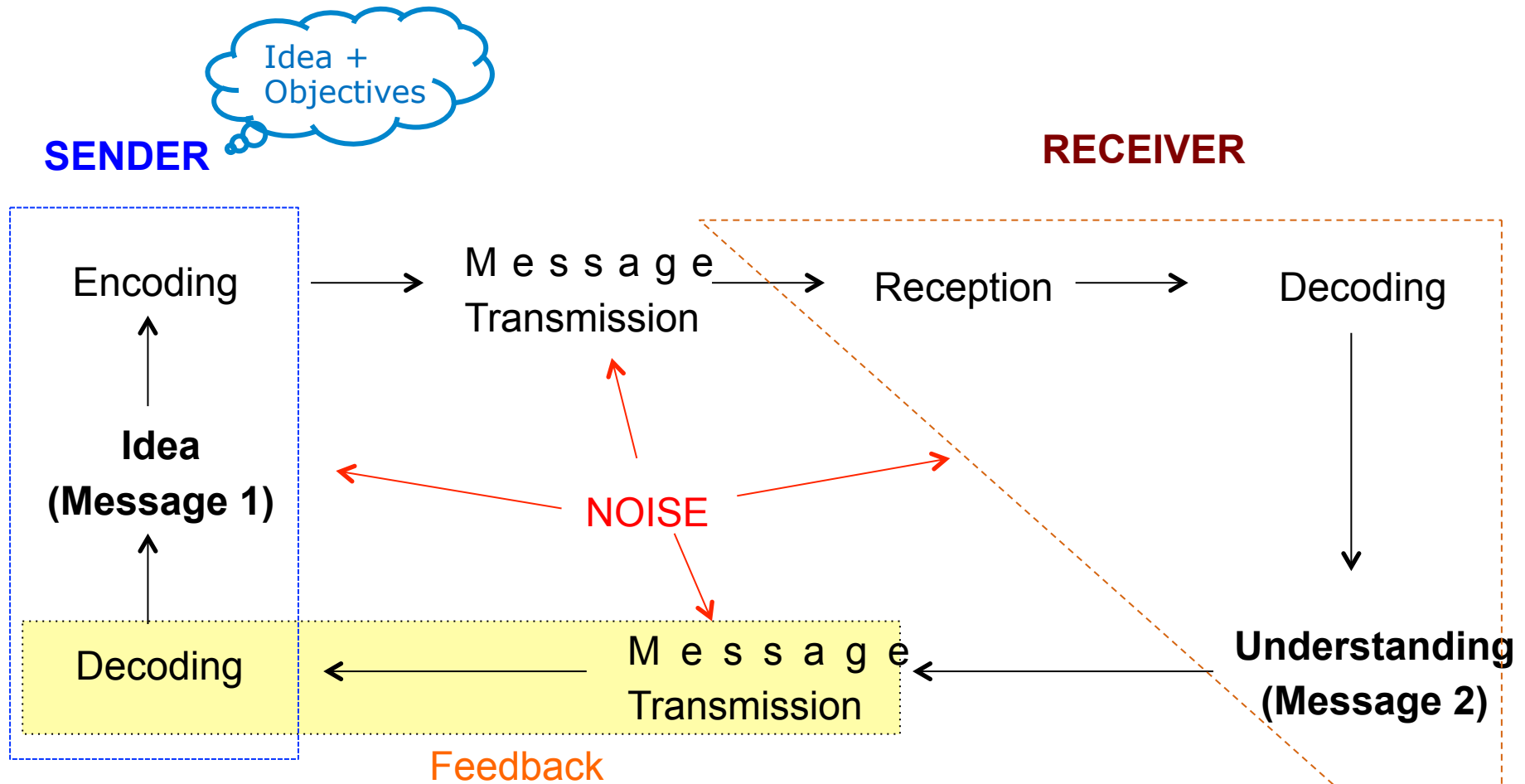
Fundamentals of communication (cont.)

What is understood by effective communication?

The process in which a message is received as close as possible to the original.

(Griffin, 2013)

The communication process



The communication process (cont.)

The process of communication has two stages:

- 1) Transmission:** information is shared
- 2) Feedback:** understanding is sought.

What are the main objectives of a communication process?

They are mainly three: That the receiver receives the message, interprets it correctly, and that it stimulates the receiver's action.

The communication process (cont.)

What is understood by NOISE in communication?

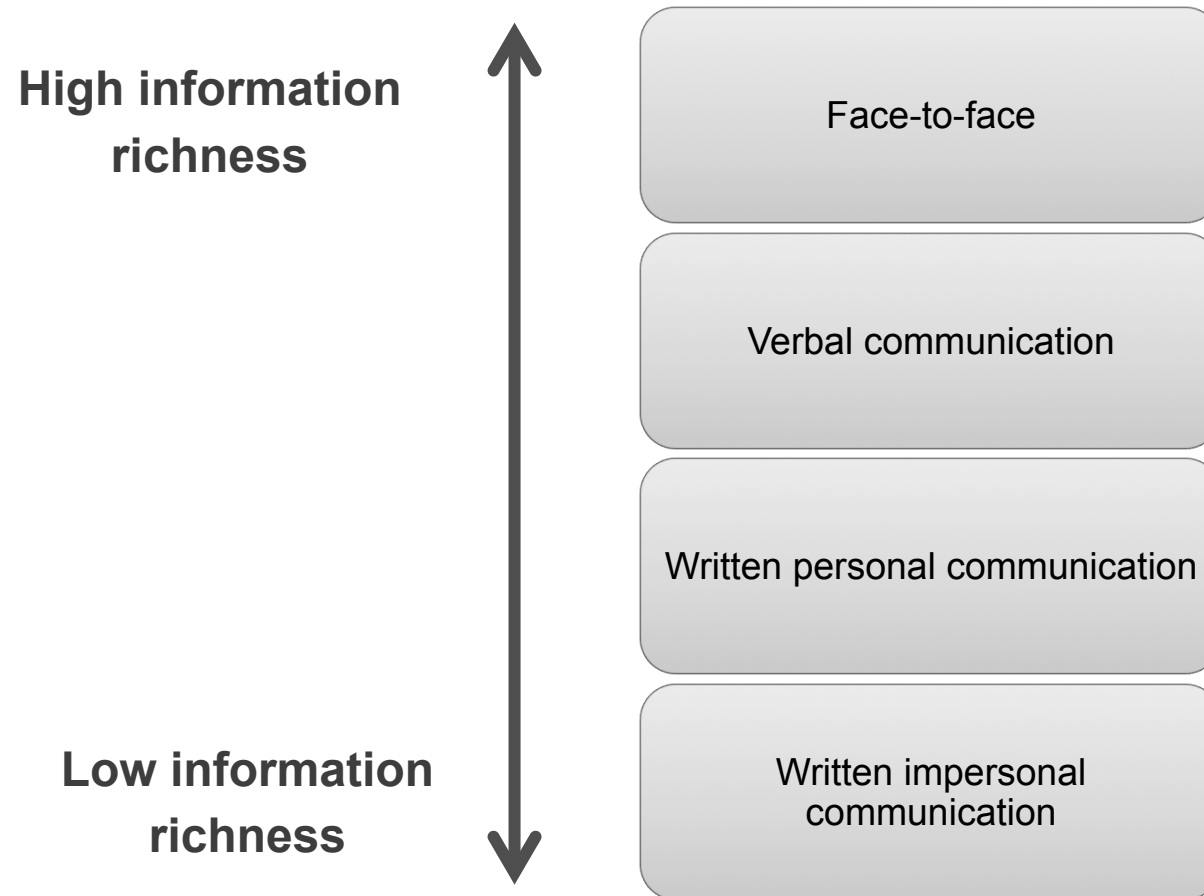
Anything that hinders the process of communication. Depending on how the message is being transmitted, noise can take on several different forms, for example: incoming calls, the crowd noise or the blaring music when trying to hold a conversation in a restaurant, etc.

The Channel

It is the delivery format of a message. In short, how do you send your message? There isn't a best channel; it always depends on the content of the message.

In order to choose the channel you should take into consideration: The richness level of information that is needed, time and the need to keep a record of the message.

The communication process (cont.)



The communication process (cont.)

What is your opinion about this sentence?

“E-mail is generally considered to be the most effective form of communication.”

The communication process (cont.)

What is understood by encoding?

The translation of the message into words (verbal communication) and/or facial expressions, body language and gestures (non-verbal communication).

The role of perception in communication

Perception is “an idea, a belief or an image you have as a result of how you see or understand something” (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary). It is subjective and it is influenced by one’s own personality, their values, attitudes, experiences and knowledge.

Barriers to communication

There might be a significant difference between what I want to say and what (Acosta, 2013):

- I really say
- The receiver hears
- The receiver understands

Between a sender and a receiver 50% of the information is lost. (Úrcula y Úrcula, 2012)

Barriers to communication (cont.)

Due to the environment (De Manuel y Martínez-Vilanova, 2000):

- Ambient noise
- Several interruptions (e.g., incoming calls)
- Physical environment

Barriers to communication (cont.)

Due to the sender (De Manuel y Martínez-Vilanova, 2000):

- Inappropriate use of vocabulary (slang, jargon, euphemisms)
- Ambiguity in the message
- Lack of ability
- Negative attitudes to themselves, to the receiver, to the topic or the context in which the communication is made.
- Lack of empathy
- Inadequate utilization of redundancies

Barriers to communication (cont.)

Due to the receiver (De Manuel y Martínez-Vilanova, 2000):

- Lack of attention to the message
- Psychological defense
- Prejudices and filters
- Lack of *feedback*
- Halo effect

Barriers to communication (cont.)

How do you efficiently use electronic channels of communication?

Effective communication

One of the main basic principles of the communication process is summarized by the acronym invented by Elmo Lewis (AIDA):

Attention

Interest

Desire

Action

*“Simplicity is the ultimate
sophistication.”*

Leonardo da Vinci

Another basic principle relies on the acronym **KISS** (Keep it simple & short).

Effective communication (cont.)

In order to be a great communicator it is compulsory to:

- 1) Know what you want to say, why and to whom
- 2) Have a clear idea about how to communicate (i.e., what channel to choose, How to structure the message)
- 3) Adapt the message to the receiver
- 4) Follow a logical order when communicating → to attract attention
- 5) Use empathy to create and maintain interest
- 6) Listen and observe → it is vital to have feedback on the process!
- 7) Make sure that the message is understood completely

Active listening

LISTENING involves much more than just HEARING

HEARING is a passive process → LISTENING requires effort

Active listening can be defined as the physical and mental effort of wanting to carefully listen to the whole message that the sender is given, trying to understand its correct meaning through verbal and non-verbal communication, and letting them know what we have understood

(De Manuel y Martínez-Vilanova, 2000; translation mine)

Active listening (cont.)

“Yet immediately after hearing a ten-minute oral presentation, the average person retains only 50 percent of the information. Forty-eight hours later, only 25 percent of what was heard can be recalled” (Ober, 2007, p. 54)

Active listening (cont.)

Why do you think poor listening happens?

Can you give some results from ineffective listening?

Active listening (cont.)

KEYS TO BETTER LISTENING:

1. Give the speaker your undivided attention
2. Stay open-minded (keep your emotions in check)
3. Avoid interrupting
4. Involve yourself in the communication (*internal paraphrasing of the speaker's comments*)

Source: Ober (2007)

Active listening (cont.)

BASIC RULES TO IMPROVE ACTIVE LISTENING:

1. To take the necessary time to listen
2. To create and establish a comfortable atmosphere
3. To accept the other person as they are
4. To concentrate and avoid distractions
5. To pre-prepare the topic (if possible)
6. To listen and to summarize
7. To understand the structure of the reasoning
8. To not anticipate conclusions
9. To listen with empathy
10. To question (make sure you have understood what you have been said)

Sources: De Manuel y Martínez-Vilanova (2000) & Ramon-Cortés (2011)

Active listening (cont.)

“Be selfish in your listening. Constantly ask yourself: How does this point affect me? How can I use this information to further my goals or to help me perform my job more effectively?” (Ober, 2007, p. 57)

Forms of communication

- WRITTEN COMMUNICATION**
- VERBAL COMMUNICATION**
- NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION**

Forms of communication (cont.)

a) WRITTEN COMMUNICATION:

A French manager wrote that if something is not written, it is not true (Koontz y Wehrich, 2013, p. 344)

PROS:

- It ensures the homogeneity of politics and procedures.
- It allows a record of the exchange of information
- It allows the sender to take time to write the message before sending it. It also allows the receiver to take time to read and answer it.
- Direct written communication (i.e., that is personalized in an e-mail or letter) tends to demand attention.

So, when do you use this form of communication?

Forms of communication (cont.)

Steps to an effective writing style (Ober, 2007):

- ❑ **Words:** Write clearly; Choose short, simple words; Write concisely; Choose positive language
- ❑ **Sentences:** Use a variety of sentence types; use the active and passive voice appropriately
- ❑ **Paragraphs:** Keep paragraphs unified and coherent; use parallel structure; Control paragraph length.
- ❑ **Tone:** Write confidently (but do not appear over-confident); use a courteous and sincere tone; Use appropriate emphasis and subordination; use non-discriminatory language; stress the 'you' attitude.

Forms of communication (cont.)

In written communication (Ober, 2007):

- ✓ **Be accurate:** "Accuracy is the most important attribute in business writing. It involves more than freedom from errors. (...) The accuracy of a message, then, depends on what is said, how it is said, and what is left unsaid." (p. 100)
- ✓ **Be complete:** "A message is complete when it contains all the information the reader needs to react appropriately – no more and no less. As a start, answer the five Ws: Tell the reader *who, what, when, where, and why.* " (p. 100)
- ✓ **Use familiar words:** Words that are familiar both to you and to your readers
- ✓ **Avoid dangling expressions:** "A dangling expression is any part of a sentence that does not logically connect to the rest of the sentence." (p. 101)
- ✓ **Avoid clichés, slang and redundancy**
- ✓ **Write concisely** → *Business people are busy people.* (p. 103)

Forms of communication (cont.)

Rewrite these sentences:

- Enclose please find an application form that you should return at your earliest convenience.
- Signing both copies of the lease is a necessary requirement.
- Ming explained the proposal to Lupe, but she was not happy with it.
- In view of the fact that the model failed twice during the time that we tested it, we are at this point in time searching for other options.
- This brochure, which is available free of charge, will answer your questions.
- Failure to follow the directions may cause the blender to malfunction.
- We cannot ship your merchandise until we receive your check.

Source: Ober (2007)

Forms of communication (cont.)

Read carefully the following text:

The finishing plant was the scene of a confrontation today when two ladies from the morning shift accused a foreman of sexual harassment. Marta Maria Valdez, a Hispanic inspector, and Margaret Sawyer, an assembly-line worker, accused Mr. Engerrand of making suggestive comments. Mr. Engerrand, who is 62 years old and an epileptic, denied the charges and said he thought the girls were trying to cheat the company with their demand for a cash award.

Source: Ober (2007, p. 118)

Are you able to identify anything “weird”?

Forms of communication (cont.)

b) VERBAL COMMUNICATION:

You can find it in: Face-to-face communication, group discussions, telephone calls, etc. It can be formal or informal, planned or accidental.

PROS:

- Quick and rich information exchange
- Immediate feedback
- You can enrich the exchange with non-verbal communication
- It is easy and appropriate to exchange 'delicate' information

CONS:

- It does not always save time (long meetings)
- It might not be accurate (there is not a record)

Forms of communication (cont.)

NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION



Unwritten and unspoken messages

*"The most important thing in communication is to hear what isn't being said" Peter Drucker
(cited in Ober, 2007, p. 50)*

Business communication

It relates to the task or the organization. It follows the chain of command



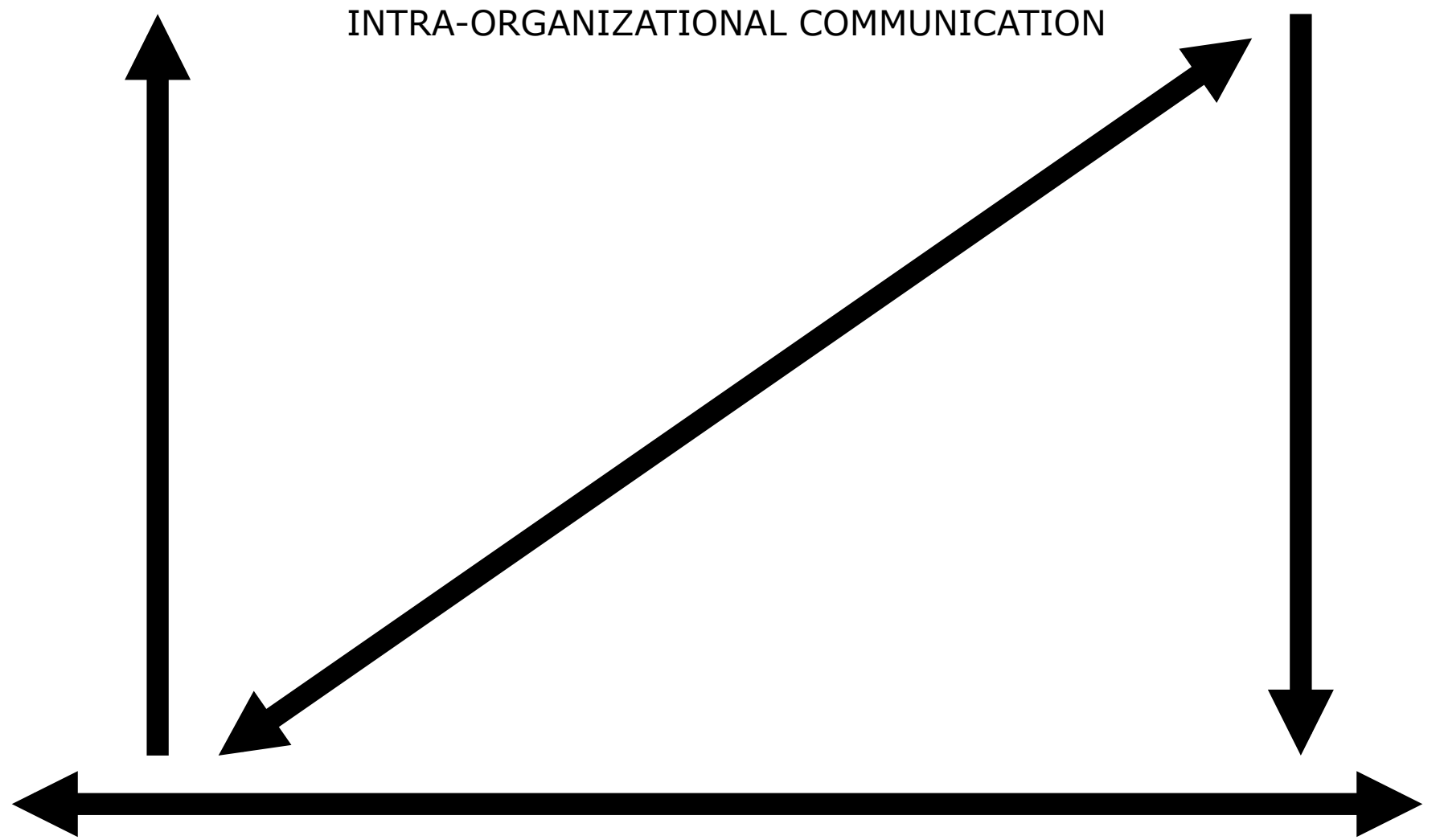
FORMAL vs. **INFORMAL** communication



It is not defined by the formal organizational structure.

Caution with rumors!

Organizational communication flow



Organizational communication flow (cont.)

TOP-DOWN COMMUNICATION

Information goes from top to bottom inside the organization.

Objective:

To send instructions, to inform employees about the functioning of the organization, about the activities or tasks and the objectives to achieve and coordinate.

How is it done?

Short meetings, training, individual interviews, procedure manuals, memos, information boards, etc.

Barriers:

Authoritative style, power conflicts, size of the organization



Organizational communication flow (cont.)

BOTTOM-UP COMMUNICATION

Information goes from the bottom to the top.

Objective:

It allows the managers to know what works and what doesn't; how things are going. It also allows managers to maintain contact with subordinates, understanding their opinions and their needs.

How is it done?

Periodic meetings, individual interviews, quality circles, questionnaires, forms and other documents.

Barriers:

Managers without time and listening skills, fear of communicating the information, personal biases (thinking something is not important), not knowing the official channel for communicating.



Organizational communication flow (cont.)

LATERAL COMMUNICATION

Within the same hierarchical level.

Objective:

It helps to coordinate and save time.

How is it done?

Working inter-departmental meetings, memos

Barriers:

Different technical language between people, power conflict within departments



Organizational communication flow (cont.)

DIAGONAL COMMUNICATION

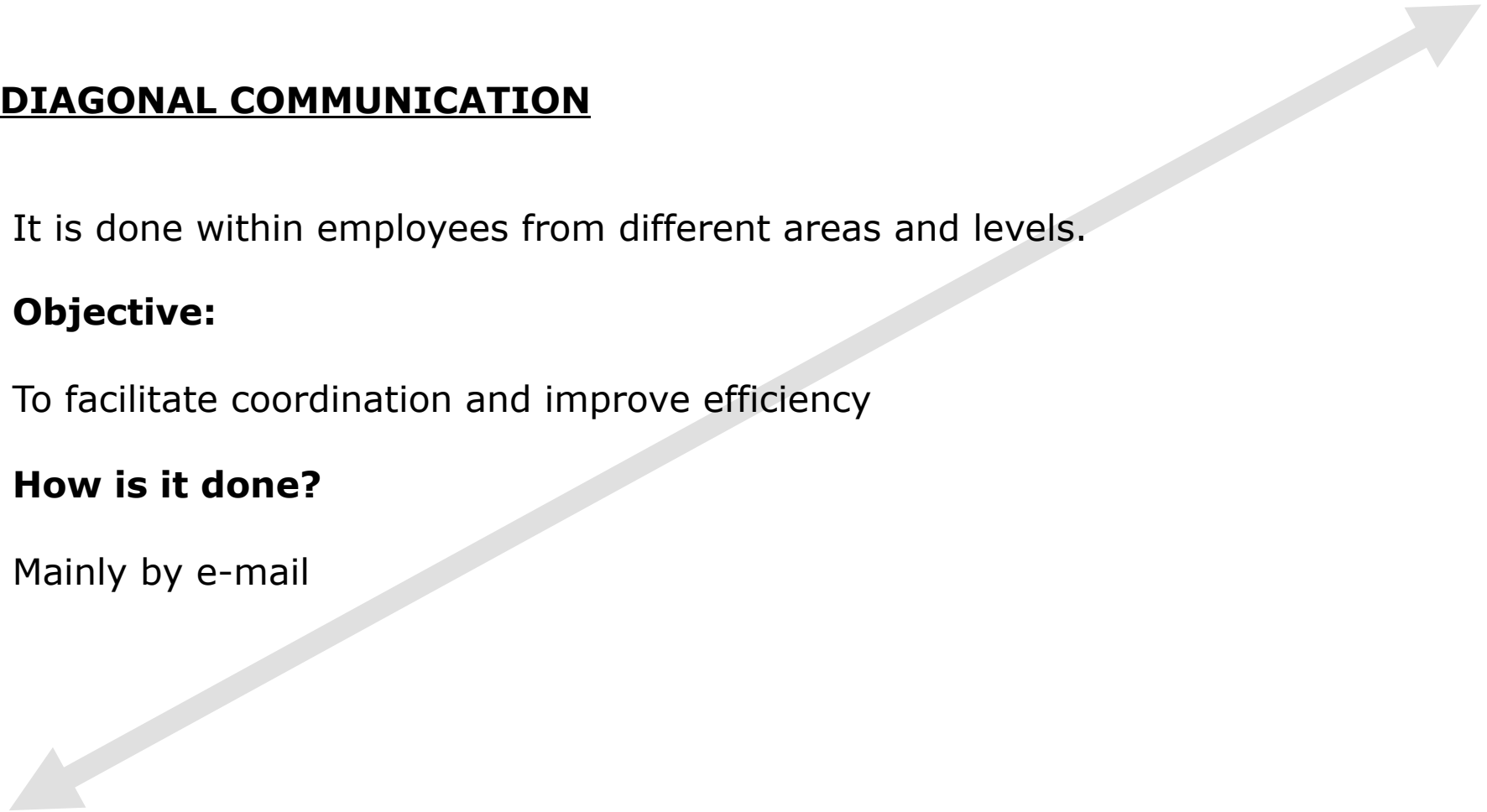
It is done within employees from different areas and levels.

Objective:

To facilitate coordination and improve efficiency

How is it done?

Mainly by e-mail

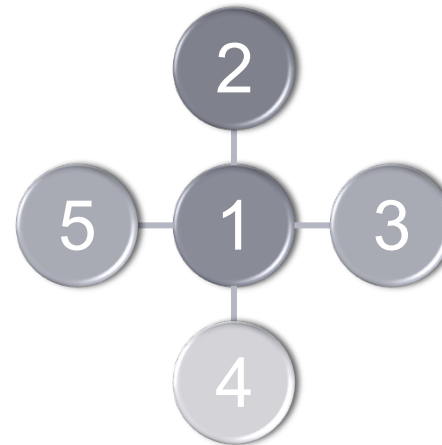


Communication network structures

Within groups we can find four common network structures:

- 1. WHEEL:** It is highly centralized since all the communication flows through a single member. There is often a leader/manager who makes final decisions.

Where can you find such a network?



Communication network structures (cont.)

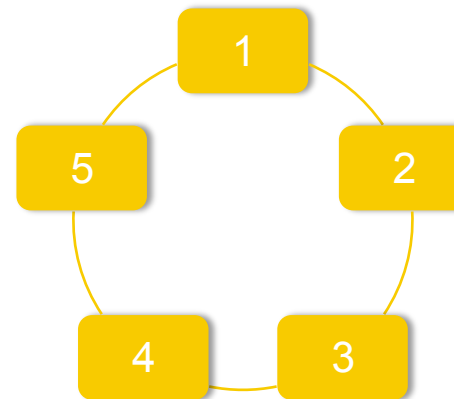
2. CHAIN: The flow of communication is well-defined and each member knows it.

Where can you find it?



3. CIRCLE: The members communicate among themselves following the criteria of proximity in experiences, beliefs, expertise, location, etc.

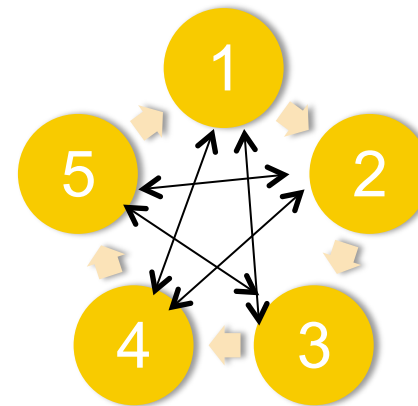
Where can you find it?



Communication network structures (cont.)

4. ALL CHANNEL: It is highly decentralized. Every member can communicate with every other member.

Where can you find such a network?



Communication network structures (cont.)

Why are network structures important to learn about?

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