Odisha State Open University, Sambalpur, Odisha

Established by an Act of Government of Odisha.

DIPLOMA IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT

DED-7
Business Communication and Ethics in Business

Block

1

Unit – 1

Effective Communication: An Introduction

Unit – 2

Use of Telephonic Interview

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Business Presentation

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DIPLOMA IN

ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT

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Unit-1

Introduction to Business Communication

Learning Objectives

After completion of the unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the meaning and definition of Communication.
- Describe the purpose of Communication.
- Understand the Communication situation.
- Explain the elements involved in the Communication Process.
- Understand the levels of Communication.
- Describe the Barriers to Effective Communication.

Structure

1.1   INTRODUCTION

The word "communication" is derived from the Latin word 'communicare' that means to impart, to participate or to share. It is a process of exchange of facts, ideas, opinions and as a means that individual or organization share meaning and

understanding with one another. In other words, it is a transmission of facts, ideas, opinion, feeling and attitudes. It is the ability of mankind to communicate across barriers and beyond boundaries that has ushered the progress of mankind. It is the ability of fostering speedy and effective communication around the world. Communication had a vital role to play in ensuring that people belonging to a particular country or a culture or linguistic group interact with and relate to people belonging to other countries or culture or linguistic group. Communication adds meaning to human life. It helps to build relationship and fosters love and understanding. It enriches our knowledge of the universe and makes living worthwhile.

1.2   ROLE OF COMMUNICATION IN BUSINESS

The term business communication is used for all messages that we send and receive for official purpose like running a business, managing an organization, conducting the formal affairs of a voluntary organization and so on. Business communication is marked by formality as against personal and social communication. The success of any business to a large extent depends on efficient and effective communication. It takes place among business entities, in market and market places, within organizations and between various group of employees, owners and employees, buyers and sellers, service providers and customers, sales persons and prospects.   All such communication impacts business. Done with care, such communication can promote business interests. Otherwise, it will portray the organization in poor light and may adversely affect the business interest.

Communication is the life blood of any organization and its main purpose is to effect change to influence action. Ability to work well in teams, to manage your subordinates and your relationship with seniors, customers and colleagues depends on your communication skill. In any organization the main problem is of maintaining effective communication process. The management problem generally results in poor communication. Serious mistakes are made because orders are misunderstood. The basic problem in communication is that the meaning which is actually understood may not be what the other intended to send. It must be realised that the speaker and the listener are two separate individuals having their own limitations and number of things may happen to distort the message that pass between them. When people within the organization communicate with each other, it is internal communication. They do so to work as a team and realise the common goals. It could be official or unofficial. Modes of internal communication include face-to-face and written communication. Memos, reports, office order, circular, fax, video conferencing, meeting etc. When people in the organization communicate with anyone outside the organization it is called external communication. These people may be clients or customers, dealers or distributors, media, government, general public etc.

1.3   DEFINITIONS

Communication may be defined as interchange of thought or information between two or more persons to bring about mutual understanding and desired action. It is the information exchange by words or symbols. It is the exchange of facts, ideas and viewpoints which bring about commonness of interest, purpose and efforts.

American Management Association defines, 'Communication is any behaviour that results in an exchange of meaning'.

Peter Little defines communication as, 'Communication is the process by which information is transmitted between individuals and/or organizations so that an understanding response result'.

Newman and Summer Jr. state that, 'Communication is an exchange of facts, ideas, opinions or emotions by two or more persons'.

According to Keith Davis, 'The process of passing the information and understanding from one person to another. It is essentially a bridge of meaning between the people. By using the bridge a person can safely cross the river of misunderstanding'.

Louis A. Allen defines, 'Communication is the sum total of all the things that a person does, when he wants to create an understanding in the mind of another. It involves a systematic and continuous process of telling, listening and understanding'.

Therefore, the main purpose of communication is to inform, or to bring around to a certain point of view or to elicit action.

1.4   TYPES OF COMMUNICATION

Let us now go through the various types of communication:

Verbal communication

Verbal communication is a type of communication where the information flows through verbal medium like words, speeches, presentations etc. In verbal communication the sender shares his/her thoughts in the form of words. In organizations, individuals communicate verbally among each other in the form of dialogues, speech, presentations, discussions to name a few. The tone of the speaker, the pitch and the quality of words play a crucial role in verbal communication. The speaker has to be loud and clear and the content has to be properly defined. Haphazard and unorganized thoughts only lead to confusions and misunderstandings among individuals. In verbal communication, an individual must understand the importance of words and how to put them across.

While speaking the pitch ought to be high and clear for everyone to understand and the content must be designed keeping the target audience in mind. In verbal communication it is the responsibility of the sender to cross check with the receiver whether he has downloaded the correct information or not and the sender must give the required response.

Sarah to ken - "I want a glass of water" is an example of verbal communication.

Non verbal communication

Imagine yourself in a situation, where you can't speak but have to communicate an urgent information to the other person or for that matter, you are sitting in an important meeting and you want to express your displeasure or pleasure to your colleague without uttering even a word. Here non verbal mode of communication comes into picture. Facial expressions, gestures, hand and hair movements, body postures all constitute non verbal communication. Any communication made between two people without words and simply through facial movements, gestures or hand movements is called as non verbal communication. In other words, it is a speechless communication where content is not put into words but simply expressed through expressions If one has a headache, one would put his hand on his forehead to communicate his discomfort - a form of non verbal communication. Non verbal communications are vital in offices, meetings and even in romantic chats.

Visual Communication

Before planning any outing or tour, Sandra always refers to the map of that place. Through the map, she tries to find out more about the place, the route to reach that place, hotels, shopping joints etc. The map is actually passing information about the place to Sandra or communicating with Sandra. This mode of communication is called visual communication. In visual communication, the recipient receives information from signboards, displays, hoardings, banners, maps etc. The sign board of Mc Donald's or KFC indicates eating joints - a form of visual communication. The sign board of "No Parking Zone" communicates to the individuals that any vehicle must not be parked in the vicinity - again a mode of visual communication. Vision plays a very important role in visual communication and it depends on the recipient how to interpret the message.

1.5   PURPOSE OF COMMUNICATION

1. **For instruction:** The instructive function unvarying and importantly deals with the
commanding nature. It is more or less of directive nature. Under this, the communicator
transmits with necessary directives and guidance to the next level, so as to enable them to
accomplish their particular tasks. In this, instructions basically flow from top to the lower
level.

2. **For integration:** It is a consolidated function under which integration of activities is
endeavoured. The integration function of communication mainly involves to bring about
inter-relationship among the various functions of the business organization. It helps in the unification of different management functions.

3**.   For information:** The purpose or function of communication in an organization is to

inform the individuals or group about the particular task or company policies and procedures etc. Top management informs policies to the lower level through the middle level. In turn, the lower level informs the top level the reaction through the middle level. Information can flow vertically, horizontally and diagonally across the organization. Being informed or informing others is the main purpose of communication.

4**. For evaluation:** Examination of activities to form an idea or judgement of the worth of task is achieved through communication. Communication is a tool to appraise the individual or team, their contribution to the organization. Evaluating one's own inputs or other's outputs or some ideological scheme demands an adequate and effective communication process.

5**. For direction:** Communication is necessary to issue directions by the top management or manager to the lower level. Employee can perform better when he/she is directed by his/her senior. Directing others may be communicated either orally or in writing. An order may be common order, request order or implied order.

6. **For teaching:** The importance of personal safety on the job has been greatly recognized. A complete communication process is required to teach and educate workers about personal safety on the jobs. This communication helps the workers to avert accidents, risk etc. And avoid cost, procedures etc.

7. **For influencing:** A complete communication process is necessary in influencing others or being influenced. The individual having potential to influence others can easily persuade others. It implies the provision of feedback which tells the effect of communication.

8**. For image building:** A business enterprise cannot isolate from the rest of the society. There is interrelationship and interdependence between the society and an enterprise operating in the society. Goodwill and confidence are necessarily created among the public. It can be done by the communication with different types of media, which has to project the image of the firm in the society. Through an effective external communication system, an enterprise has to inform the society about its goals, activities, progress and social responsibility.

9. **For employees' orientation:** When a new employee enters into the organization at that time he or she will be unknown to the organization programs, policies, culture etc.

Communication helps to make people acquainted with the co-employees, superior and with the policies, objectives, rules and regulations of the organization.
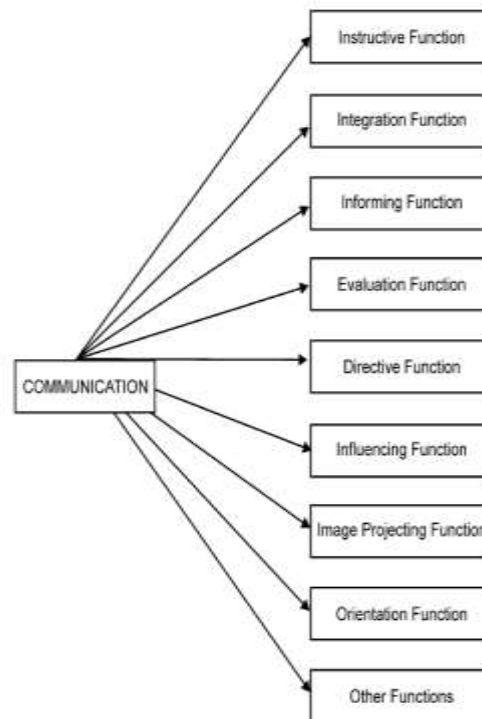

Fig. 1.1: Purpose of Communication

10. **Other:** Effective decision-making is possible when required and adequate information is supplied to the decision-maker. Effective communication helps the process of decision-making. In general, everyone in the organization has to provide with necessary information so as to enable to discharge tasks effectively and efficiently.

1.6 THE COMMUNICATION SITUATION

The communication situation is said to exist when
• There is a person (sender/transmitter) who wants to pass some information;
• There is another person (receiver) to whom the information is to be passed on;
• The receiver partly or wholly understands the message or information passed on to him;
• The receiver responds to the message or gives feedback.
These four components are essential for communication.

1.7 THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS / CYCLE

• The transmission of sender's ideas to the receiver and the receiver's feedback or reaction to the sender constitute the communication cycle. The process of communication begins when one person (the sender) wants to transmit a fact, idea, opinion or other information to someone else (the receiver).

- The next step is translating or converting the message into a language which reflects the idea. That is, the message must be encoded.
- The encoding process is influenced by content of the message, the familiarity of sender and receiver and other situation of factors.
- After the message has been encoded, it is transmitted through the appropriate channel or medium. Common channel in organization includes meetings, reports, memorandums, letters, e-mail, fax and telephone calls. When the message is received, it is decoded, by the receiver and gives feedback to the sender as the conformation about the particular message has been carefully understood or not.

Elements of Communication

The process of communication involves the following elements:

1. Sender or transmitter: The person who desires to convey the message is known as sender. Sender initiates the message and changes the behaviour of the receiver.

2. Message: It is a subject matter of any communication. It may involve any fact, idea, opinion or information. It must exist in the mind of the sender if communication is to take place.

3. Encoding: The communicator of the information organises his idea into series of symbols (words, signs, etc.) which, he feels will communicate to the intended receiver or receivers.

4. Communication channel: The sender has to select the channel for sending the information. Communication channel is the media through which the message passes. It is the link that connects the sender and the receiver.

5. Receiver: The person who receives the message is called receiver or receiver is the person to whom the particular message is sent by the transmitter. The communication process is incomplete without the existence of receiver of the message. It is a receiver who receives and tries to understand the message.
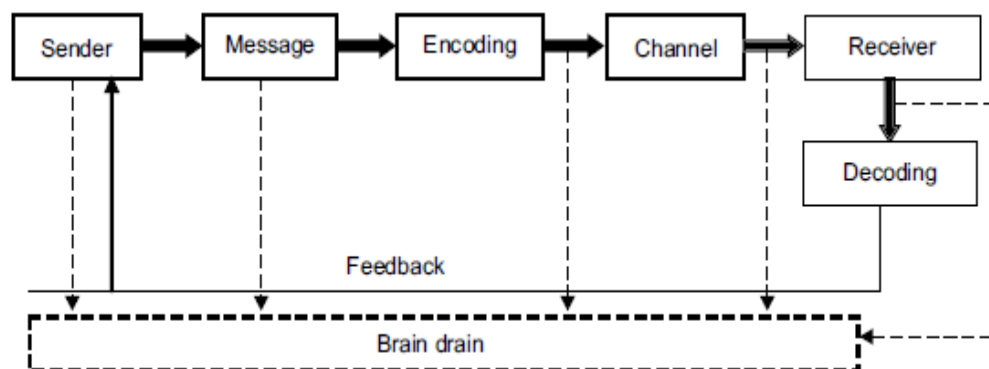
Fig. 1.2 The Communication Process

6. Decoding: Decoding is the process of interpretation of an encoded message into the understandable meaning. Decoding helps the receiver to drive meaning from the message.

7. Feedback: Communication is an exchange process. For the exchange to be complete the information must go back to whom from where it started (or sender), so that he can know the reaction of the receiver. The reaction or response of the receiver is known as feedback.

8. Brain drain: On whole process there is a possibility of misunderstandings at any level and is called brain drain. It may arise on sender side if they do not choose the adequate medium for delivery of message, by using default channel and it may also arise when receiver does not properly decode the message. In other words, we can say that it is breakdown of cycle at any level.

1.8 LEVELS OF COMMUNICATION

Communication can involve sending messages to both large and small audiences. Internal messages are intended for recipients within the organization. External messages are directed to recipients outside the organization. When considering the intended audience, communication can be described as taking place on five levels i.e. **intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, organizational, and public.**

Intrapersonal Communication- It is within oneself because it does not involve a separate sender and receiver, some do not consider intrapersonal communication to be true communication. Others, however, believe that intrapersonal communication when conceived of as the degree of our self-awareness is an important foundation of effective communication. Accurate perception of our self and an understanding of how others see us is the first building block of effective communication. Self-awareness is generally achieved through self reflection or what might be thought of as intrapersonal communication.

Interpersonal Communication- It is the communication that occurs between two people. Its goals are to accomplish the tasks and to help the participants to feel better about themselves and each other because of their interaction. Examples of interpersonal communication include that occurring between a supervisor and subordinate and that occurring between two co-workers.

Group Communication- It occurs among more than two people, generally in a small group. It's the goal of group communication to achieve greater output through the collaboration of several individuals than could be produced through

individual efforts. Examples of group communication include that occurring within a committee or within a work team.

Organizational Communication- It generally involves large groups working together in such a way as to accomplish complex, ambitious tasks. The goal of organizational communication is to provide adequate structure communication flow, and channels and media for communication to allow that to happen.

Public Communication- This type of communication is intended to help the organization to reach out to its public to achieve its external communication goals. Examples of public communication include advertisements, public relations, crisis management, and website communication about the company and its products and services. Some forms of public communication, such as advertisements and public relations, might be characterised as mass communication since they are often transmitted using media.

1.9 COMMUNICATION FLOW IN ORGANIZATIONS

Communication flows in a variety of ways in an organization. Some flows are planned and structured, others are not. Some communication flows can be formally depicted, whereas some defy description. The flow of communication within an organization occurs both formally and informally. The **formal network flow** often follows a company's formal organization chart, which is created by management to control individual and group behaviour and to achieve the organization's goals. The formal system is dictated by the cultural, technical, political and economic environment of the organization.

By contrast, the **informal network flow** develops as people interact within the formal communication system and certain behaviour patterns emerge, patterns that accommodate social and psychological needs. Because the informal network undergoes continual changes, it generally cannot be depicted accurately by graphic means.

FORMAL NETWORK FLOW

The direction in which communication flows formally within an organization may be downward, upward, horizontal or lateral, diagonal and external. Although the concept of flow seems simple, direction has meaning for those participating in the communication process.

In an organization, communication flows in 5 main directions-

1. Downward
2. Upward
3. Lateral
4. Diagonal
5. External

1. **Downward Flow of Communication:** Communication that flows from a higher level in an organization to a lower level is a downward communication. In other words, communication from superiors to subordinates in a chain of command is a downward communication. This communication flow is used by the managers to transmit work-related information to the employees at lower levels. Employees require this information for performing their jobs and for meeting the expectations of their managers. Downward communication is used by the managers for the following purposes –

   - Providing feedback on employees' performance.
   - Giving job instructions.
   - Providing a complete understanding of the employees' job as well as to communicate them how their job is related to other jobs in the organization.
   - Communicating the organization's mission and vision to the employees.
   - Highlighting the areas of attention.

   Organizational publications, circulars, letter to employees, group meetings etc are all   examples of downward communication. In order to have effective and error-free downward communication, managers must:

   - Specify communication objective.
   - Ensure that the message is accurate, specific and unambiguous.
   - Utilize the best communication technique to convey the message to the receiver in right form.

2. **Upward Flow of Communication:** Communication that flows to a higher level in an organization is called upward communication. It provides feedback on how well the organization is functioning. The subordinates use upward communication to convey their problems and performances to their superiors.

   The subordinates also use upward communication to tell how well they have understood the downward communication. It can also be used by the employees to share their views and ideas and to participate in the decision-making process.

   Upward communication leads to a more committed and loyal workforce in an organization because the employees are given a chance to raise and speak dissatisfaction issues to the higher levels. The managers get to know about the employees feelings towards their jobs, peers, supervisor and organization in general. Managers can thus accordingly take actions for improving things.

   Grievance Redressal System, Complaint and Suggestion Box, Job Satisfaction surveys etc all help in improving upward communication. Other examples of Upward Communication are -performance reports

made by low level management for reviewing by higher level management, employee attitude surveys, letters from employees, employee-manager discussions etc.

3. **Lateral / Horizontal Communication:** Communication that takes place at same levels of hierarchy in an organization is called lateral communication, i.e., communication between peers, between managers at same levels or between any horizontally equivalent organizational member. The advantages of horizontal communication are as follows:

   ✔ It is time saving.

   ✔ It facilitates co-ordination of the task.

   ✔ It facilitates co-operation among team members.

   ✔ It provides emotional and social assistance to the organizational members.

   ✔ It helps in solving various organizational problems.

   ✔ It is a means of information sharing.

   ✔ It can also be used for resolving conflicts of a department with other department or conflicts within a department.

4. **Diagonal Communication:** Communication that takes place between a manager and employees of other workgroups is called diagonal communication. It generally does not appear on organizational chart. For instance - To design a training module a training manager interacts with Operations personnel to enquire about the way they perform their task.

5. **External Communication:** Communication that takes place between a manager and external groups such as - suppliers, vendors, banks, financial institutes etc. For instance - To raise capital the Managing director would interact with the Bank Manager.

INFORMAL NETWORK FLOW (the GRAPEVINE)

The *grapevine*, often called then *rumour mill*, is perhaps the best – known part of the informal communication system. As people talk casually during coffee breaks and lunch periods, the focus usually shifts from topic to topic. One of the usual topics is work – job, company, supervisor, fellow employees. Even though the formal system has a definite pattern of

communication flow, the grapevine tends to emerge spontaneously and operates within all organizations.

1.10 IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION IN AN ORGANIZATION

Effective Communication is significant for managers in the organizations so as to perform the basic functions of management, i.e., Planning, Organizing, Leading and Controlling.

Communication helps managers to perform their jobs and responsibilities. Communication serves as a foundation for planning. All the essential information must be communicated to the managers who in-turn must communicate the plans so as to implement them. Organizing also requires effective communication with others about their job task. Similarly leaders as managers must communicate effectively with their subordinates so as to achieve the team goals. Controlling is not possible without written and oral communication.

Managers devote a great part of their time in communication. They generally devote approximately 6 hours per day in communicating. They spend great time on face to face or telephonic communication with their superiors, subordinates, colleagues, customers or suppliers. Managers also use Written Communication in form of letters, reports or memos wherever oral communication is not feasible.

Thus, we can say that "**effective communication is a building block of successful organizations**". In other words, communication acts as organizational blood.

 The importance of communication in an organization can be summarized as follows:

(i) Communication **promotes motivation** by informing and clarifying the employees about the task to be done, the manner they are performing the task, and how to improve their performance if it is not up to the mark.
(ii) Communication is a **source of information** to the organizational members for decision-making process as it helps identifying and assessing alternative course of actions.
(iii) Communication also plays a crucial role in **altering individual's attitudes**, i.e., a well informed individual will have better attitude than a less-informed individual. Organizational magazines, journals, meetings and various other forms of oral and written communication help in moulding employee's attitudes.
(iv) Communication also **helps in socializing**. In today's life the only presence of another individual fosters communication. It is also said that one cannot survive without communication.
(v) Communication also assists in **controlling process**. It helps controlling organizational member's behaviour in various ways. There are various levels of hierarchy and certain principles and guidelines that employees

must follow in an organization. They must comply with organizational policies, perform their job role efficiently and communicate any work problem and grievance to their superiors. Thus, communication helps in controlling function of management.

An effective and efficient communication system requires managerial proficiency in delivering and receiving messages. A manager must discover various barriers to communication, analyze the reasons for their occurrence and take preventive steps to avoid those barriers. Thus, the primary responsibility of a manager is to develop and maintain an effective communication system in the organization.

1.11 BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Communication is a process beginning with a sender who encodes the message and passes it through some channel to the receiver who decodes the message. Communication is fruitful if and only if the message sent by the sender is interpreted with same meaning by the receiver. If any kind of disturbance blocks any step of communication, the message will be destroyed. Due to such disturbances, managers in an organization face severe problems. Thus the managers must locate such barriers and take steps to get rid of them.

There are several barriers that affect the flow of communication in an organization. These barriers interrupt the flow of communication from the sender to the receiver, thus making communication ineffective. It is essential for managers to overcome these barriers. The main barriers of communication are summarized below.

Following are the main Communication Barriers / reasons for Communication Breakdown:

(i) Perceptual and Language Differences: Perception is generally how each individual interprets the world around him. All generally want to receive messages which are significant to them. But any message which is against their values is not accepted. A same event may be taken differently by different individuals. For example : A person is on leave for a month due to personal reasons (family member being critical). The HR Manager might be in confusion whether to retain that employee or not, the immediate manager might think of replacement because his teams productivity is being hampered, the family members might take him as an emotional support.

The linguistic differences also lead to communication breakdown. Same word may mean different to different individuals. For example: consider a word "value".

    a. What is the **value** of this Laptop?
    b. I **value** our relation?

What is the **value** of learning technical skills?

"**Value**" means different in different sentences. Communication breakdown occurs if there is wrong perception by the receiver.

(ii) Information Overload: Managers are surrounded with a pool of information. It is essential to control this information flow else the information is likely to be misinterpreted or forgotten or overlooked. As a result communication is less effective.

(iii)Inattentive: At times we just not listen, but only hear. For example a traveller may pay attention to one "NO PARKING" sign, but if such sign is put all over the city, he no longer listens to it. Thus, repetitive messages should be ignored for effective communication. Similarly if a superior is engrossed in his paper work and his subordinate explains him his problem, the superior may not get what he is saying and it leads to disappointment of subordinate.

(iv)Time Pressures: Often in organization the targets have to be achieved within a specified time period, the failure of which has adverse consequences. In a haste to meet deadlines, the formal channels of communication are shortened, or messages are partially given, i.e., not completely transferred. Thus sufficient time should be given for effective communication.

(v)Distraction/Noise: Communication is also affected a lot by noise or distractions. Physical distractions are also there such as, poor lightning, uncomfortable sitting, unhygienic room also affects communication in a meeting. Similarly use of loud speakers interferes with communication.

(vi)Emotions: Emotional state at a particular point of time also affects communication. If the receiver feels that communicator is angry he interprets that the information being sent is very bad. While he takes it differently if the communicator is happy and jovial (in that case the message is interpreted to be good and interesting).

(vii)Complexity in Organizational Structure: Greater the hierarchy in an organization (i.e. more the number of managerial levels), more is the chances of communication getting destroyed. Only the people at the top level can see the overall picture while the people at low level just have knowledge about their own area and a little knowledge about other areas.

(viii) Poor retention: Human memory cannot function beyond a limit. One cant always retain what is being told specially if he is not interested or not attentive. This leads to communication breakdown.

1.12OVERCOMING COMMUNICATION BARRIERS
There are a lot of communication barriers faced these days by all. The message intended by the sender is not understood by the receiver in the same terms and sense and thus communication breakdown occurs. It is essential to deal and cope up with these communication barriers so as to ensure smooth and effective communication.

As, in the previous section we have discussed the major barriers of communication. Let's talk about **how to overcome these barriers of communication**.

1. **Eliminating differences in perception:** The organization should ensure that it is recruiting right individuals on the job. It's the responsibility of the interviewer to ensure that the interviewee has command over the written and spoken language. There should be proper Induction program so that the policies of the company are clear to all the employees. There should be proper trainings conducted for required employees (for eg: Voice and Accent training).

2. **Use of Simple Language:** Use of simple and clear words should be emphasized. Use of ambiguous words and jargons should be avoided.

3. **Reduction and elimination of noise levels:** Noise is the main communication barrier which must be overcome on priority basis. It is essential to identify the source of noise and then eliminate that source.

4. **Active Listening:** Listen attentively and carefully. There is a difference between "listening" and "hearing". Active listening means hearing with proper understanding of the message that is heard. By asking questions the speaker can ensure whether his/her message is understood or not by the receiver in the same terms as intended by the speaker.

5. **Emotional State:** During communication one should make effective use of body language. He/she should not show their emotions while communication as the receiver might misinterpret the message being delivered. For example, if the conveyer of the message is in a bad mood then the receiver might think that the information being delivered is not good.

6. **Simple Organizational Structure:** The organizational structure should not be complex. The number of hierarchical levels should be optimum. There should be a ideal span of control within the organization. Simpler the organizational structure, more effective will be the communication.

7. **Avoid Information Overload:** The managers should know how to prioritize their work. They should not overload themselves with the work. They should spend quality time with their subordinates and should listen to their problems and feedbacks actively.

8. **Give Constructive Feedback:** Avoid giving negative feedback. The contents of the feedback might be negative, but it should be delivered constructively. Constructive feedback will lead to effective communication between the superior and subordinate.

9. **Proper Media Selection:** The managers should properly select the medium of communication. Simple messages should be conveyed orally, like: face to face interaction or meetings. Use of written means of communication should be encouraged for delivering complex messages. For significant messages reminders can be given by using written means of communication such as : Memos, Notices etc.

10. **Flexibility in meeting the targets:** For effective communication in an organization the managers should ensure that the individuals are meeting their targets timely without skipping the formal channels of communication. There should not be much pressure on employees to meet their targets.

1.13SUMMARY

Communication is neither the transmission of a message nor the message itself. It is the mutual exchange of understanding, originating with the receiver. Communication needs to be effective in business. Communication is the essence of management. The basic functions of management (Planning, Organizing, Staffing,Directing and Controlling) cannot be performed well without effective communication.

Business communication involves constant flow of information. Feedback is integral part of business communication. Organizations these days are very large and involve large number of people. There are various levels of hierarchy in an organization. Greater the number of levels, the more difficult is the job of managing the organization. Communication here plays a very important role in process of directing and controlling the people in the oragnization. Immediate feedback can be obtained and misunderstandings if any can be avoided. There should be effective communication between superiors and subordinated in an organization, between organization and society at large (for example between management and trade unions). It is essential for success and growth of an organization. Communication gaps should not occur in any organization.

Business Communication is goal oriented. The rules, regulations and policies of a company have to be communicated to people within and outside the organization. Business Communication is regulated by certain rules and norms. In early times, business communication was limited to paper-work, telephone calls etc. But now with advent of technology, we have cell phones, video conferencing, emails, satellite communication to support business communication. Effective business communication helps in building goodwill of an organization.

1.14KEY TERMS

(i) **Encoding** – the process of selecting and organizing the message.

(ii) **Decoding** - the process of interpreting the message.

(iii) **Feedback** – the response the receiver gives to the sender of the message.

(iv) **Organizational Communication** – communication concerned with the movement of information within the company structure.

(v) **Intrapersonal communication** – communication that occurs within oneself.

(vi) **Interpersonal communication** – communication that occurs between two people.

(vii) **Group communication** – communication that occurs among more than one people.

(viii) **Public communication** – communication intended to help the organization to reach out to its public to achieve its external communication goals.

(ix) **Formal network flow** – communication that often follows the company's formal organization chart.

(x) **Informal network flow** – flow of communication that develops as people interact within the formal communication system.

1.15 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. How do you define communication?

2. What is the role of communication in management of business?

3. What are the different purposes of communication? Briefly explain any five of them.

4. Discuss the different situations when communication exists.

5. "Communication is an exchange of facts, ideas, opinions and emotions by two or more

persons." Explain the statement and discuss the role of feedback in communication.

6. "Communication is the two way process." Explain.

7. Discuss the elements of communication process.

8. Give three examples of brain drain in communication process.

1.16 FURTHER READINGS

- Lehman, Dufrene, Sinha – Business Communication**:** An Innovative Approach to Learning and Teaching (Cengage Learning Pvt.Ltd.)

- Jeff Butterfield – Soft Skills for Everyone (Cengage Learning Pvt.Ltd.)

Unit-2

Telephonic Interview

Learning Objectives

After completion of this unit, you should be able to:

- Understand the meaning of telephonic interview.
- Know the advantages and disadvantages of telephonic interview.
- Know the methods to prepare for a telephonic interview.
- Understand the ways to succeed in a telephonic interview.
- Know how to deal with commonly asked telephonic interview questions.

Structure

2.1 INTRODUCTION

With the revolution of communication technology and mobile equipments, many activities are executed from remote location. Now is the time when we monitor and control various business activities and professional tasks by holding a mobile handset only.

This era of information and communication technology has also influenced the current job market which includes sending interview call letters by SMS, schedule a telephonic interview and even intimation of final result on a ten digit mobile number. Now the Human Resource (H.R.) Department of many organizations is short listing and calling the candidates by telephonic conversations. The time is left far behind when there was long wait for the interview call letter to be delivered by the postman. Now, almost every organization believes in screening

the candidates by telephonic interviews rather than sending sealed envelopes with postage stamps. There are many reasons due to which telephonic interviews are planned.

More and more employers are using telephone interviews as part of the hiring process. Phone
interviewing is an effective method for organizations to:
• Be able to interview candidates from a wider geographical area.
• Assess a candidate's interest in the organization and eliminate uninterested candidates from the search.
• Narrow a large candidate pool to a small group that will be invited for an in-person interview.
• Save time and travel expenses.

A phone interview will not generally get you a job; it is used as an intermediate step on the way to a face to-face interview.

2.2 DEFINITION

Telephone interviews are often conducted by employers in the initial interview round of the hiring process, this type of interview allows an employer to screen candidates on the candidates experience, qualifications, and salary expectations pertaining to the position and the company. The telephone interview saves the employers' time and eliminates candidates that are unlikely to meet the company's expectations. Employers tend to perform telephone interviews as a structured interview. The questions are custom tailored to meet the position in question. With the telephone interview there may not be direct contact between the employer and employee, however, the expectations are still there. Telephone interviews are scheduled and questions are generally prepared in advance, similar to the way other interviews are conducted. Another common reason a company looks to the telephone interview is that these interviews can be conducted on-the-fly. The interviewer does not have to assign company resources to the phone interview. It is a cost-effective method to short-list candidates for the position being interviewed for.

Reporters conduct a telephone interviews as part of investigative journalism or a live broadcast.

The telephone interview allows both interviewee and interviewer to be in a more relaxed state. The interviewer can use the relaxed state to better gauge the interviewee, and pick up on things that may be disguised during the more formal interview process.

2.3 ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

An increase in call centres and other-telephone based businesses has resulted in a larger percentage of companies using telephone interviews to review telephone manners and other skills of potential staff. However, telephone interviewing should never be a substitute for final face-to-face interviews – but they are a quick and easy method to identify good candidates and discount unsuitable applicants.

Telephone interviews are often conducted by employers who have regular and large intakes of staff – particularly graduate employers such as big accounting firms and large banks.

There are countless advantages about phone interviews; they are both quicker and more convenient for you and the interviewee rather than arranging a preliminary meeting face-to-face. As sales jobs commonly rely and require as much personality/telephone skills and manner as qualifications achieved and experience. Nevertheless, phone interviews can be difficult because the people involved cannot see each other and as a result the usual visual clues are absent.

Telephone interviews are especially common for sales related jobs, particularly – surprise, surprise telesales where verbal communication skills are paramount. However they are used by other employers for preliminary screening of candidates for a wide variety of jobs.

Telephone interviews can often be more beneficial for the employer than the applicant. Nonetheless, for a job applicant it is better to have a telephone interview rather that no interview at all. As in all methods of practice, there are advantages and disadvantages with telephone interviews.

ADVANTAGES

- **Cheap and Cheerful**

Evidently a phone call is easier and much less costly than an in-person interview – especially if travel is involved for you and the employee, where commonly candidates expect the employer to pay for the travel costs that have incurred for them to attend the interview.

If an applicant appears to fill the requirement but lives a long distance away, you can reduce your spending by telephone interviewing before spending a large amount of travel costs. This can be particularly relevant if the applicant is currently based in another country.

- **Stepping Stone**

A phone interview or screening session doesn't usually take the place of an in-person interview. It is merely a means of learning more about the candidate and allowing the candidate to learn more about the employer and position available before both parties commit to the time and expense of an in-person interview.

- **So Much In So Little Time**

A number of different people can be reached in a relatively short period of time enabling you to be able to efficiently thin out applicants for further interviews.

- **Question Time**

When screening candidates prior to an in-house interview there are a number of common phone interview questions that can be used. Phone interviews are also often used by specialist recruitment agencies acting on behalf of employers as the first step in the recruitment process "the preliminary telephone interviews".

- **Test the Unexpected**

Telephone interviews not only test the potential verbal communication skills and telephone technique but they test the potential employee's ability to cope with the unexpected (this refers to both the unexpected phone call itself and unexpected questions).

- **Long Distance "Relationships"**

Rather than discarding promising jobs to applicants who live a long distance away – employers can now use telephone interviews an an acceptable and informative method of making first contact.

- **Slimming Down Your Options**

Due to high levels of unemployment where employers are receiving vast amounts of job applications, telephone job interviews are becoming more the norm. It is often difficult to narrow the field down to a manageable and reasonable number through written applications alone. However, once this has happened the first step can often be a telephone interview where you as an employer are deciding whether or not you choose to look further into an application. This can work as a satisfactory and effective thinning out process.

DISADVANTAGES

- **Lack of Body Language**

The inability to read body language is a major disadvantage of not having a face to face interview. If you can see the interviewee, you can ascertain whether or not he/ she is interested in the role and the questions asked. With a telephone interview is it very hard to make a judgement on how attentive they are. You don't see them frown if you're disagreeing with a point they may have made. You also can't see them smile or in fact view any facial or body expressions... It really is a case of flying blind. The candidate can't see the interviewer face-to-face, and therefore their body language can't be analyzed. Here, the concept of seeing into their eyes and gesticulation is nowhere. In telephonic interviews, candidates cannot show the confidence in terms of greeting smile and sitting style.

- **Hello? Is anybody there?**

A major disadvantage of telephone interviewing is that the respondent could unilaterally terminate the telephone interview without any warning or explanation by hanging up the phone (this could be for what seems as no apparent reason?).

- **Visual Prompts**

It is very difficult to use visual prompts during telephone interviewing. However, in some cases these may be used for example by sending through the prompt materials prior to a pre-arranged interview time by couriers, email etc.

- **Is There Any Chemistry?**

Without face to face communication and interaction it is often hard to indicate if you and the candidate have chemistry that would possibly turn into a binding work relationship.

2.4 PREPARING FOR TELEPHONIC INTERVIEW

Just like an in-person interview, preparation is the key to a successful telephone interview. Most employers will call you to schedule a day and time prior to the actual phone interview. However, it never hurts to be prepared in case you receive a call out of the blue. If this happens and you feel unprepared, it is better to reschedule than to make a poor impression.

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

• **Develop your interviewing skills.** Prepare for the phone interview the same way as for a faceto-
face interview.
− Review the Career Services' online interviewing information.
− Practice your interview skills using InterviewStream.
− Schedule a mock interview with a Career Services.
• **Check your answering machine**. Be sure you record a professional message for your
answering machine.
• **Turn off call waiting.** Do not take any other calls while you are interviewing.
• **Alert others.** Let your roommates know that an interviewer will be calling. Ask that they allow you to answer the phone.
• **Find a quiet location.** Take the call in a quiet room and eliminate distracting background noise. Place a "Do Not Disturb" sign on your door. Turn off the speakerphone to eliminate echo sounds.
• **Take care of personal hygiene needs.** Use the bathroom prior to the scheduled call.
• **Get organized.** Set out all documents and information you might need, including:
− Current resume
− List of brief responses to anticipated questions
− List of points, such as specific skills and achievements, which you want to mention
− List of pertinent questions about the position or organization that you want to ask the interviewer
− Calendar with all of your scheduled commitments
− Notepad, pen, and calculator.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

• **Eliminate extraneous noise.** Don't rustle papers during the interview. Turn off music and the television. Don't eat, drink, or chew gum. Don't type on your computer.

• **Be professional.** Be courteous to support staff who may place the initial call. Refer to the interviewer as Mr., Mrs., or Ms. unless otherwise directed.

• **Confirm the interviewer's information.** If you don't already have it, be sure to ask for the
interviewer's exact title and the spelling of his/her name along with a phone number, e-mail
address, and street address.

• **Speak clearly and slowly.** The interviewer is only hearing your voice. Use good communication skills to leave a positive impression.

• **Smile when you speak.** It may sound silly, but smiling will help you to sound enthusiastic and friendlier.

• **Listen carefully.** The interviewer will notice if you are distracted. Don't do anything else while the interviewer is on the phone. Prove that you're paying attention by feeding back what the interviewer says.

• **Don't hesitate to ask for clarification.** Since this is not a face-to-face situation, you may need to ask, "Is this the kind of information you're seeking?" or "Have I sufficiently answered your question about my [skills or experience]?"

• **Tell the interviewer if you're interested.** Close the interview positively and reiterate your
interest in the position. Let the interviewer know that you are interested in an in-person interview to further discuss your qualifications for the position.

• **Ask about the next step in the process.** As the call winds to a close, ask about the next step in the interview process as well as the hiring timetable. Offer to send, fax, or e-mail any additional information or supporting documentation.

• **Say thanks.** Conclude the call by expressing your appreciation for the time spent with you.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

• **Write a thank-you letter.** Just because the interview was conducted by telephone doesn't let you off the hook when it comes to sending a thank-you note.

2.5 TIPS TO SUCCEED IN TELEPHONIC INTERVIEWS

Here are some tips which should be followed in the telephonic interviews so that the candidates can be called for the personal face-to-face interview or getting appointment letter in hands. Just as you would prepare yourself for the face-to-face/personal interview, devote some time for planning and preparing for such interviews.

Do not switch off your phone
The candidates should keep their mobile phone always ON because the phone call can ring anytime. The battery of mobile phone should be fully charged. In case of meeting or other official appointments, the phone may be placed in vibration or silent mode rather than switched-off. It leaves very bad impression on employer if

the phone of candidate is in switched-off mode or giving message that the number is out of service due to low balance.

Get the Environment right
Try to avoid conducting the interview in a busy, noisy environment or indeed in your car. A private office where you will not be disturbed is perfect. Too many telephone interviews are interrupted by questions from colleagues, or the barista behind the counter at Starbucks! Ensure you allow enough time for the interview and do not assume it will be a 'quick ten minutes.' **Use a landline for receiving the call.** Poor mobile phone reception is the single biggest reason why many telephone interviews fail to take place. While they are technological wonders, our mobile phones are surprisingly unreliable at the worst possible time when it comes to their most fundamental function; making and receiving calls.

Prepare
This is a fantastic opportunity to have your notes and CV in front of you during the interview. Make sure you summarise your notes focussing on key points to avoid scripted answers.

Sit in front of the mirror
This may seem a little odd but quite simply it will give you an indication of how you are coming across. Do you look animated? Is your head up? Perhaps most importantly are you smiling? If not then try to focus on doing so, this may translate in you feeling more confident and therefore sounding more positive! Alternatively you could try standing up and walking around. If you are more comfortable walking and talking then ensure you are in the right environment to do this. Many people feel they are more animated when upright and this allows for a greater level of focus.

Do not actively listen when asked questions
A common mistake to make, however actively listening in a telephone interview can disrupt flow as you will find the interviewer may stop talking. This can lead to a disjointed and awkward conversation.

Ask the interviewer to rephrase or repeat back the question
If you are slightly uncertain about the question either ask the interviewer to rephrase or indeed paraphrase this back. You should try to avoid doing this repeatedly but it is better to get your answer right first time.

Use regular pauses
Leave healthy pauses after every two or three sentences to allow the interviewer to either drill further down or confirm they have heard enough.

Vary your pace, pitch and tone

It is very difficult to convey energy and empathy over the phone so it is important that you vary your speech. The monotone interview is the bane of all interviewers!

Practice a CV run through

The structure of telephone interviews will often vary but a standard format will be CV based. If you are asked to run through your career history you should qualify how long this should last. Do they want a 30 second elevator pitch or a detailed 30 minute conversation? Either way, plan ahead!

Build rapport early on but avoid too many jokes

As with all interviews first impressions count. Good interviewers will try to break the ice early on. Reciprocate and avoid coming across as 'cold.'

Keep important documents ready

Keep yourself free atleast at the time of interview and make sure that that there is no background noises to disturb and hinder the interview process. You should be having the copy of your Resume (Professional Profile/CV) that was sent to the company. It will give you the information which information you have sent to the company. You should have a Pen and Paper to note the points. The candidate should keep a calculator and a calendar ready so that any schedule can be fixed or to perform some calculations.

Avoid rescheduling of the interview

If you want to change the interview time due to busy schedule, don't reschedule the interview again and again. It will give bad impression of non-seriousness to the interviewers. Try to reschedule the interview only once if unavoidable. You should not reschedule the interview because of not being prepared. Try to have all the certificates and testimonials with you so that you are ready to give any information on demand.

Respond within seconds rather than minutes

In telephonic interview, the candidate should respond to questions within 1 minute. In case you are thinking for the answers, the first response should be delivered within 10 seconds otherwise simply say sorry. Candidates should avoid lengthy responses because the interviewer expects short answers on phone rather than long stories.

Avoid answers in "YES, NO, YA" like words

The candidate should avoid answers in "Yes", "No" or "Ya" words. The response delivered by the candidate should be well explained so that it is understood by the interviewer. The candidate should keep the voice clear, conversant and non confusing.

Justify yourself

The candidate should be well prepared to justify his/her performance in last few years. It will leave a very good impression on the employer regarding your current status and performance evaluation. Moreover, there is an impression of being confident to the interviewer. The candidate should be able to describe the goals

and objectives of professional life. Here, the interviewee should not give more attention of salary and promotion.

Stay alone during the interview
Sometimes, the candidates take help of friends during the interview. It is not advisable. You should be alone while appearing for a telephonic interview rather than friends or kids around you. The candidate should thank the interviewer for spending the valuable time and considering you atleast for the telephonic interview. The candidates are not advised to smoke, chew gum, eat or drink anything when the interview is going on. It gives the caller a feeling that you are trying to steal some time before answering.

Deliver honest and true information
One of the important points the candidate should remember is not to give any manipulated or false information while answering the Tell Me about Yourself Interview question. Now days, the organizations are taking help of detective agencies to keep track of candidates' personal and professional background. Such checks have become very important and strict today. The employer may dismiss the person even after years of working, on the basis of some false information provided during the initial phase of interview.

Ask Questions
Like most interviews you will get a chance to ask questions. If an interviewer has a solid day of telephone interviews you will probably stand out more if you ask an insightful question about the business/role and more importantly about them.

2.6 COMMONLY ASKED TELEPHONIC INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND SUGGESTED ANSWERS

There is a series of common questions which are asked during a telephonic interview. These questions are generally asked in almost every interview. Following are the questions and suggested answers.

1. "TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF"

This is the first and very basic question which is asked everywhere the candidate joins or going to join. Actually, there are many flavours to answers this question, but it requires some basic components to be told to the interviewer.

Brief summary of Personal profile - It includes the name of candidate and the place where he/she belongs to. The profession of parents and family members can also be narrated by the candidate. In telephonic interviews, the candidate should avoid telling the hobbies like fishing, making friends etc.

Professional and Academic qualifications - The candidate is required to tell about educational qualifications along with the division and distinctions achieved. However, the marks in each degree, certificate course is not mandatory to tell. In

case, the marks or grade is asked, the candidate should have a copy of all the documents to avoid any mismatch in future.

Professional experience and Company profile – Here, the candidate should describe the professional experience with the name of organization worked with. There is no need to tell the exact salary until it is asked. The nature of job and company profile can be told to enable the employer know the current organization, where working.

2. WEAKNESSES AND STRENGTHS – This is another very common question which is asked in almost every interview. Therefore, it is advised to prepare the answer of this question very carefully. Many candidates tell their strength as weakness to attract the interviewer but the employer is not fool. Be honest while answering this question. The candidate may discuss one or two weaknesses like getting nervous in some situations, lacking in some skills, emotional, sensitive etc. Avoid telling weaknesses like short-tempered, sleeping, laziness and related terms. Moreover, the candidate should not boast on strengths. Strengths should be told in the honest and calm manner so that it marks a positive impact on professional capabilities. The candidate can point out the strengths like

- Positive Attitude with Hard Work
- Punctual and Determined
- Self-Confidence
- Ability to face the failures and recover with confidence
- Learn from Mistakes
- Quick Learner
- Full commitment to work
- Highly Energetic
- Willing to learn New Things
- Good Interpersonal Skills
- Well Organizer and Manager
- Good Helping Hand
- Team Player
- Communication Skills
- Problem –solving Ability

3. WHY DID YOU LEAVE THE PREVIOUS JOB?
This is one of the tough interview questions in which the candidate should answer in calm and honest way. While answering such question, the candidate should not blame their internal politics in ex colleagues or ex boss. It creates very negative idea about your professional approach. In this case, the candidate can give reasons including career growth, scope to explore the skills and learning environment. The candidates should avoid giving reason that the new organization was giving more salary. In such answer, the employer relates the loyalty of candidate with the salary and monetary benefits.

4. WHAT IS YOUR POSITION IN CURRENT ORGANIZATION?
Here, the candidate should not boast of his/her position and power in the organization. The candidate is expected to just give a general idea about work profile and experience in the organization.

5. WHEN YOU WILL BE ABLE TO JOIN THE ORGANIZATION?
Answer of this question should be ready with the candidate once he/she applies for the job. The candidate is advised to have an idea of joining the new organization keeping in view the schedule and appointments. If the candidate fumbles or gets confused to answer this question, the employer may think that the candidate is not sure whether to change the current job or not. So, the candidate should be clear about his/her decision. There is no need to give exact date and time, but the candidate should be able to give the basic idea of month of joining.

2.7 SUMMARY

Telephonic interviews are scheduled to determine whether the candidate is competent to face the personal interview or not. Basically, a telephonic interview is the first contact, the candidate establish with the company. Such interviews are often used for short listing the candidates in order to narrow the crowd of applicants who will be invited for face-to-face interviews. Moreover, telephonic interviews minimize the expenses involved in interviewing distant candidates. In many cases, candidates belong to remote area and cost of travelling and accommodation is to be reduced by conducting a telephonic interview to save too much time, money and cost. Obviously, in telephonic interviews, no time is spent in railway stations, bus stands, airports or on the highway. Also there is no expenditure on flights, hotels and meals. Candidate can appear in the telephonic interviews while sitting at their home or any other place of convenience.

As you are also searching for the jobs enthusiastically, so be prepared to attend a phone call which may be your initial step to move inside your new office. So, the candidate should always be prepared for a telephonic interview. Therefore, it is suggested not to switch-off the mobile phone because the first call of interviewer can arrive at any time or any occasions. Many candidates underestimate the importance of a telephone interview and talk in casual way. This is the biggest mistake because that is the first impression and interviewer may not call the candidate again. Some candidates believe that a telephone interview is just a formality and consider it a ceremony before a face-to-face meeting. But it is not true. So, candidates are advised to behave in a gentle and sincere manner while receiving the call.

Phone interviews can be tricky, especially since you aren't able to read your interviewers' nonverbal cues like facial expressions and body language during the session—a big difference from the typical interview. But if you prepare well for your phone interview, you won't need to read anyone's nonverbals to gauge your performance. You'll know for sure how you've done because you'll be invited to a face-to-face interview, where you'll have yet another opportunity to prove you're the best person for the job.

2.8 FIVE KEY ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

Competition in the job market is extremely fierce and companies want to recruit world-class candidates. These candidates must perform a world class phone interview. Such a phone interview embraces five key elements.

Be Yourself at Your Best

Do not try to be the person you think the interviewer wants you to be, instead, be the person you actually are. You don't want to get hired, only to find out that the interviewer thought he was hiring someone else. Be yourself. Just make sure to present the best version of yourself.

Prepare, Prepare, Prepare

All great accomplishments have their foundation in carefully thought out preparation. Phone interviews are a lot like open book tests- you can have all your information (resumes, cover letters, and so on) right in front of you. Be sure you are organized and that you have taken advantage of practice techniques to ensure success.

Listen, Think, Speak

Be sure to listen to what the interviewer has to say, and think before responding. Take a few seconds to understand the question, and then prepare a quality answer before simply blurting out something less intelligent.

Be Confident, Professional and Assertive

Exude confidence! This is your time to impress the interviewer and convince him you are an excellent candidate for the job. Be sure to speak professionally. Also, be assertive! After all, how can you get the job if you do not ask for it?

Be Brief, Be Bold, Be Done

Stay on point. Answer the interviewer's questions directly and with precision. Make yourself stand out from the rest of the applicant pool by giving impressive responses that display your unique talents. Also, you only get a few moments to tell the interviewer why you deserve this position, so don't drag out the interview. Instead, paint a succinct portrait of yourself that will leave a lasting impression.

2.9 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Describe the advantages and disadvantages of telephonic interview.

2. Discuss the tips to succeed in telephonic interview.

3. Elaborate the entire process for preparation of a telephonic interview.

2.10 FURTHER READINGS

- Paul J. Bailo – The Essential Phone Interview Handbook (The Career Press, Inc.)

Unit-3

Group Discussion

Learning Objectives

After completion of this unit, you should be able to:

- Understand the meaning of group discussion.
- Know the elements of a group discussion.
- Explain the purpose of a group discussion.
- Know the technique of leading the discussion.
- Understand the dos and don'ts of a group discussion.

Structure

3.1 Meaning of Group discussion and its types

3.2 Elements of an effective Group Discussion

3.3 Purpose of a Group Discussion

3.4 Who conducts a GD and reasons for conducting a GD

3.5 Common Process followed in a GD

3.6 Phases in a Group Discussion

3.7 Preparing for GD

3.8 Generic Tips to Succeed in a GD

3.9 Leader in a Group Discussion

3.10 Positive and Negative Task roles in a Group Discussion

3.11 Summary

3.12 Self Assessment Questions

3.13 Further Readings

3.1 MEANING

Discussions of any sort are supposed to help us develop a better perspective on issues by bringing out diverse view points. Whenever we exchange differing views on an issue,we get a clearer picture of the problem and are able to understand it. The understanding makes us better equipped to deal with the problem.This is precisely the main purpose of a discussion. The dictionary meaning of the word Group Discussion is to talk about a subject in detail. So,group discussion may refer to a communicative situation that allows its

participants to express views and opinions and share with other participants. It is a systematic oral exchange of information,views and opinions about a topic,issue,problem or situation among members of a group who share certain common objectives.

Group" is a collection of individuals who have regular contact and frequent interaction, mutual influence, common feeling of camaraderie, and who work together to achieve a common set of goals. "Discussion" is the process whereby two or more people exchange information or ideas in a face-to-face situation to achieve a goal. The goal, or end product, maybe increased knowledge, agreement leading to action, disagreement leading to competition or resolution or perhaps only a clearing of the air or a continuation of the status quo.

A Group Discussion or GD, as it is popularly known, judges the personality of a person. It assesses the behavioural traits in a person his or her leadership skills, social skills, team skills, problem solving skills and presence of mind.

If we analyse the two words Group and Discussion. Group means a number of individuals who may or may not have interacted before. Discussion means exchanging information on a certain topic and coming (or not coming) to a concrete conclusion.

Hence, we can say that Group Discussion is an invigorative discussion where a topic is analysed and discussed, and in the end, the members come to a fair conclusion. It involves team work, but at the same time, it portrays individual personalities.

Types of Group Discussions

1. **Topic – based discussion** – A candidate can be provided with a topic which is

   (a) *A controversy* – For example, the topic could be "Caste based reservation" or "China – Biggest threat to India" or "Which diet is better – Vegetarian or non – vegetarian", etc. In this type of discussion, a candidate is required to take a stand on the given topic and support his/her stand with suitable arguments and examples.

   (b) *A descriptive one* - For example, a candidate may be told to discuss "Indo – US Relations", "Poverty in India" or

"Causes of Inflation". In this kind of discussion, a candidate's knowledge of the subject plays an important part. Else, he/ she may be provided a plain fact and told to discuss it.

(c) *An abstract topic* – This type of discussion has gotten popular in the recent years. Topic can be anything under the sky, such as "Zero", "Black", "Gold", or a number or anything you can think of. A candidate's creativity comes into play here. A candidate is expected to say what he/ she thinks relevant about the topic.

2. A Case Study – Candidates may be given a real life situation or an imaginary case scenario, or even a dilemma. Then they will be asked to present their opinion on the given situation, or find a solution to a given problem (as a group or / and as an individual. Candidates may be instructed to speak one by one or all at once, or even both. Such variations hardly matter to candidates who are well prepared.

3.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF A SUCCESSFUL GROUP DISCUSSION

For any group discussion to be successful, achieving group goal is essential. Following characteristics are necessary:

Having a clear objective: The participants need to know the purpose of group discussion so that they can concentrate during the discussion and contribute to achieving the group goal. An effective GD typically begins with a purpose stated by the initiator.

Motivated Interaction: When there is a good level of motivation among the members, they learn to subordinate the personal interests to the group interest and the discussions are more fruitful.

Logical Presentation: Participants decide how they will organise the presentation of individual views, how an exchange of the views will take place, and how they will reach a group consensus. If the mode of interaction is not decided, few of the members in the group may dominate the discussion and thus will make the entire process meaningless.

Cordial Atmosphere: Development of a cooperative, friendly, and cordial atmosphere avoids the confrontation between the group members.

Effective Communication skills: The success of a GD depends on an effective use of communication techniques. Like any other oral communication, clear pronunciation, simple language, right pitch are the pre-requisites of a GD. Non-verbal communication has to be paid attention to since means like body language convey a lot in any communication.

Participation by all candidates: When all the members participate, the GD becomes effective. Members need to encourage each other in the GD.

Leadership Skills: Qualities like initiation, logical presentation, encouraging all the group members to participate, summarizing the discussion reflect the leadership qualities.

3.3 ELEMENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE GROUP DISCUSSION

An effective group discussion generally has a number of elements:

- All members of the group have a chance to speak, expressing their own ideas and feelings freely, and to pursue and finish out their thoughts.
- All members of the group can hear others' ideas and feelings stated openly.
- Group members can safely test out ideas that are not yet fully formed.
- Group members can receive and respond to respectful but honest and constructive feedback. Feedback could be positive, negative, or merely clarifying or correcting factual questions or errors, but is in all cases delivered respectfully.
- A variety of points of view are put forward and discussed.
- The discussion is not dominated by any one person.
- Arguments, while they may be spirited, are based on the content of ideas and opinions, not on personalities.
- Even in disagreement, there's an understanding that the group is working together to resolve a dispute, solve a problem, create a plan, make a decision, find principles all can agree on, or come to a conclusion from which it can move on to further discussion.

3.4 PURPOSE OF A GROUP DISCUSSION

Many group discussions have no specific purpose except the exchange of ideas and opinions. Ultimately, an effective group discussion is one in which many different ideas and viewpoints are heard and considered. This allows the group to accomplish its purpose if it has one, or to establish a basis either for ongoing discussion or for further contact and collaboration among its members.

There are many possible purposes for a group discussion, such as:

- Create a new situation – form a coalition, start an initiative, etc.
- Explore cooperative or collaborative arrangements among groups or organizations
- Discuss and/or analyze an issue, with no specific goal in mind but understanding
- Create a strategic plan – for an initiative, an advocacy campaign, an intervention, etc.
- Discuss policy and policy change
- Air concerns and differences among individuals or groups
- Hold public hearings on proposed laws or regulations, development, etc.
- Decide on an action
- Provide mutual support
- Solve a problem
- Resolve a conflict
- Plan your work or an event

3.5 WHO CONDUCTS A GD AND WHY IS IT CONDUCTED?

Who conducts a Group Discussion?

Group Discussion is conducted by B-schools, institutes and companies. In fact to get admission into B-schools and other management and engineering institutes, GD has become an essential prerequisite. As far as companies are concerned, it is totally at the discretion of the companies if they want GD as part of their interview process.

Why is a Group Discussion conducted?

While entrance exams test the candidates for their academics and knowledge of subjects, the GD will test one for their soft skills and their ability to cope with various situations.

Usually the institutes or companies conducting the GD know exactly what they want in their candidates. They are very clear about the specific traits that they want in their candidates. The Group Discussion helps them to analyze whether the candidates possess the required traits or not.

GD also serves as a mass-elimination tool. When there are many candidates applying for limited seats, the GD can act as a benchmark to select the best among the lot.

3.6 Common Process followed in a GD

(i)   The group usually consists of 6 to 12 members.

(ii) They are given a topic and a few minutes to prepare.

(iii) The duration of the GD will vary from institute to institute or organization to organization.

(iv) For each candidate an assessor/evaluator may be assigned. Usually, an assessor/evaluator assesses/evaluates two to three candidates.

3.7 PHASES IN A GROUP DISCUSSION

A group discussion can be categorically divided into three phases.

1. Initiation/Introduction

2. Body of the group discussion

3. Summarisation/Conclusion

Now, we will discuss the first and third phase.

INITIATION/ INTRODUCTION

Initiating a GD is a double-edged sword. When a candidate initiates, apart from grabbing an opportunity to speak, he also grabs the attention of examiners and fellow candidates. So, if a candidate who initiates is able to make a favourable first impression through his content and communication skills, it will help him sail through the GD.

On the other hand, if a candidate stammers, stutters or quotes wrong facts and figures, the damage done is irreparable. The candidate who initiates also has the onus of giving the GD the right perspective or framework. So, initiate only if you have in-depth knowledge about the topic at hand.

If, after initiating well, a candidate does not say much during the GD, it still gives the impression that he or she started the GD just for the sake of starting it, or to get those initial points earmarked for an initiator. There are different techniques to initiate a GD in order to make a remarkable first impression:

1. **Quotes**

An effective way of initiating a GD. If the topic is 'Should the censor board be abolished?' a quote like 'Hidden apples are always sweet', is apt to capture attention and convey more than what is actually said. For a topic like 'Customer is King,' one can quote Sam Walton's famous saying, "There is only one boss: The Customer. And he can fire everybody in the company from the Chairman down, simply by spending his money somewhere else."

2. Definition

One can start a GD by defining the topic or an important term in the topic. For example, if the topic is, 'Advertising is a diplomatic way of telling a lie,' one can initiate by defining advertising as 'Any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods or services through mass media such as newspapers, magazines, television or radio by an identified sponsor.' Similarly, for a topic like 'The Malthusian Economic Prophecy is no longer relevant', a candidate could simply start by explaining the definition of the prophecy.

3. Question

Asking a question at the start of a GD creates an impact. It does not signify asking a question to any of the candidates so as to hamper the flow, it implies asking a question and then answering it yourself. If a question is being asked to hamper the flow of a GD, insult a participant or to play devil's advocate, it should be discouraged. But, if a question is being asked to promote the flow of ideas, it is appreciated. If the GD topic is 'Should India go to war with Pakistan', for instance, you could start by asking, 'What does war bring to the people of a nation?'

4. Shocking statement

Initiating a GD with a shocking statement is the best way of grabbing immediate attention and putting forth your point. If the topic is 'Impact of population on the Indian economy,' for instance, it can be initiated with a statement like, 'Near the centre of the Indian capital stands a population clock that relentlessly ticks away. It tracks 33 births a minute, 2,000 an hour, 48,000 a day, which calculates to nearly 12 million every year. That is roughly the size of Australia. As a current political slogan puts it, nothing is impossible when 1 billion Indians work together.'

5. Facts figures and statistics

When a candidate decides to initiate a GD through facts, figure and statistics, he should quote them accurately. Approximation is allowed for macro level figures, but micro level figures need to be correct and accurate.

For instance, we can say that approximately 70 per cent of the Indian population stays in rural areas (macro figures, approximation allowed) but we cannot list 30

states of India instead of 28 (micro figures, no approximations). If a person ends up stating wrong facts, it works to his or her disadvantage.

6. **Short story**

This can be used for a GD topic like 'Attitude is everything.' The topic can be initiated with the help of a short story as follows: 'A child once asked a balloon vendor, who was selling helium gas-filled balloons, if a blue-coloured balloon would go up as high as a green-coloured one. The vendor told the child that it was not the colour of the balloon but what was inside it that made it go high'

7. **General statement**

This can put the GD into proper perspective. For example, if the topic is 'Should Sonia Gandhi be the prime minister of India?' one could start by putting it into perspective with, "Friends, before jumping to any conclusion, let us first find out what qualities a good prime minister should possess. We can then compare these with the qualities possessed by Sonia Gandhi, which will help us reach a conclusion in a more objective and effective manner.'

SUMMARIZATION TECHNIQUES

Most GDs are left without a conclusion, and it isn't even essential that a group reach one. Remember that a GD is about getting to know one's personality traits and it is the process, not the conclusion that reveals these traits. Even though not every GD is concluded, everyone is still summarised. While a conclusion represents a final stage, where the entire group decides in favour or against a topic, in the case of a summarisation a candidate summarises in a nutshell what the group has discussed. The following points should be kept in mind while summarising a discussion:

1. No new point should be taken up.

2. A person should not share his or her own viewpoint alone.

3. A summary should not dwell only on one side of the GD.

4. It should be brief and concise.

5. It should incorporate all the important points spoken.

If a candidate has been told by the examiner to summarise a GD, this means it has come to an end. It is not advisable to add anything once a GD has been summarised.

A simple framework for a summary can be, 'We had a healthy group discussion and, as a group, evaluated this topic from different perspectives. Some of my friends spoke in favour of the topic and the reasons they gave were (elaborate), while some good points against the topic were (elaborate). In all, we had a very good discussion with everyone participating enthusiastically.'

The initiation and summarisation techniques mentioned above will help you make an impact and succeed in a Group Discussion.

3.8 PREPARING FOR GD

- **Before the GD**
- **During the GD / Tips for cracking the GD**

BEFORE THE GROUP DISCUSSION

1. **Stock yourself with information**
2. **Work on your communication skills**
3. **Practice**

1. Stock yourself with information

No one knows what the topic of GD is going to be. Hence, it will be a good idea to keep yourself abreast with topics like:

Current Affairs

Current Affairs is something that you have to be thorough with. For this, read newspapers regularly and watch news on the television. Understand the recent crises that the world is reeling under, the latest developmental initiatives, the ties between various countries and the like.

Historical topics

Have a fair knowledge about the countrys history and also the history of other countries. The topics may not be specifically from this area, but having historical information will help you cite examples and make references whenever needed.

Sports, Arts & Literature

In these topics, try to have a decent idea about what is popular, who are the leaders in each area, the latest that has happened in these areas. If the topic for GD is from these areas, then you will be in control of the situation, or else you can definitely use the information to draw references.

Data crunching

Do familiarize yourself with important data. Throwing in some data if required in your GD will definitely create an impression among the assessors.

2. Work on your Communication Skills

Hone your communication skills as much as you can. Communication skills include both verbal and non-verbal communication. Verbal communication means the way a candidate speaks. It is very important for candidates to speak in good and correct English without the influence of mother tongue.

Apart from verbal communication, candidates should take utmost care of their non-verbal communication as well. Non verbal communication includes body language, posture of a candidate, hand movements, facial expression, eye contact, active listening skills etc.

3. Practice

As we all know "practice makes a man perfect" so it is vital for a candidate to practice as much as he/ she can. A candidate should take up random topics and practice in front of the mirror, practice with family, friends and relatives. Practice will definitely boost up a candidate's confidence level and he/ she would be able to perform well in the group discussion.

DURING THE GD / TIPS FOR CRACKING THE GD

Understanding the topic

When the topic is given, understand the topic carefully. If it is not clear initially or you have some doubt regarding the topic, ask immediately. Clarity of the topic is of utmost importance to ensure that you perform well in the GD.

Content

The candidates should be aware of what they are talking. Superficial talks are a big NO as the assessors will be easily able to see through and evaluate the candidate's knowledge. The candidates should choose points that convey the depth of knowledge they possess. The candidates should cite relevant examples if required to gain additional weightage.

Precise and sharp thoughts

As you are gathering thoughts, try to stick to precise and concise thoughts. Remember, when you are communicating, what is more important is what you are communicating rather than how much you are communicating. In a Group Discussion, it is always quality over quantity. Let your views be relevant and to the point. To a great extent, try to do some out-of-the-box thinking so that your view stands out from the rest.

Communicating skills

You may have excellent views on the topic, but are you able to communicate them in an effective manner is the question. Here, is where your communication skills will come to your rescue. Hone your communication skills as much as you can. Communication skills include both verbal and non-verbal communication. Verbal communication means the way a candidate speaks. It is very important for candidates to speak in good and correct English without the influence of mother tongue.
Apart from verbal communication, candidates should take utmost care of their non-verbal communication as well. Non verbal communication includes body language, posture of a candidate, hand movements, facial expression, eye contact, active listening skills etc.

  If you have good communication skills, well and good, or else you will have to work on developing the same. To develop communication skills, you can choose a topic, stand before the mirror and start talking about it. As you are talking, anticipate few questions from an imaginary audience and try replying them. Analyse what you are doing, try to spot flaws, if any, in your communication and then start working on them. This will help you come across as a confident person during the GD. On the day of the Group Discussion, your aim should be to collate your thoughts in a structured manner and put them across to the team and the assessors in an effective way.

Taking the initiative

Try to initiate the Group Discussion, if possible. By taking the initiative, you will be giving a structure to the discussion and defining the manner in which the discussion will progress. This will exhibit your quality as a person who can facilitate actions by breaking the ice. A little word of caution here, attempt being the lead only if you have a fair amount of knowledge about the topic and you know exactly what you are speaking. If you take the initiative of being the lead and somehow you are unable to pull it through, then it will backfire completely. So, act wisely.

Knowledge about the topic

When you are talking on the topic, choose your points in a manner that they convey the depth of knowledge that you possess. Superficial talk is going to be a strict no-no here as the assessors will be easily able to see through. Try to have abstract thoughts around the topic and also try to draw references to different

situations or incidents. Citing relevant examples will also help to a great extent.

Understanding dynamics in the group

In a group discussion, try to be in control of the discussion. This is easier said than done, because most of the group members would be trying to do the same. What you can do is follow the discussion keenly and try to pitch in wherever relevant. If you have some good points, try to put them forth and steer the discussion. Do not be aggressive. Do not force your points. If there is a disagreement on the points that you have made, try to counter them with even more valid points. This will not only exhibit your knowledge but also show that you are a good listener. Try to fuel the discussion whenever possible. Give everyone a chance to speak. If someone has not contributed, ask the person to speak up. This will showcase your ability as a team player.

Dress Code

Candidates should dress formally and be well groomed. Candidates should always have in their minds that they will never get a second chance to make a good impression. Candidates are advised to use simple accessories like simple jewelry, watches, ties, etc. Scents, perfumes and after shave lotion should be avoided. Precisely, the candidates should dress appropriately for the group discussion. Dress for success.

Logical conclusion

When the discussion is about to end, try to conclude it by taking in the points that everyone has made and coming to a decent conclusion. This will indicate your analytical skills and also the way you structure your thoughts.

3.8 GENERIC TIPS

* On the day of GD, dress in comfortable clothes clothes that are simply you
* Be confident but avoid being over confident
* Talk sense. Avoid superficial talk
* Listen carefully and speak only at the appropriate time
* Be very sure of what you are speaking
* Use easy-to-understand English
* Speak loudly and clearly
* Do not be deterred by other members aggressive or submissive behaviour
* Accommodate diverse view points
* Put forth your points without being aggressive
* Give due importance to other persons views. However, stick to the point you have made. Try to support it with more view points.
* Do not allow yourself to be diverted by other peoples points
* Do not be distracted. Your concentration should be solely on the discussion
* If you do not know something, do not speak

- Do not get excited or aggressive during the discussion. Try to maintain a balanced tone through out
- Try to contribute throughout the discussion
- Try to be the first and the last to speak
- Read as much as possible. Have good and sound knowledge on numerous topics. Watching documentaries on various topics will help here
- Improve your vocabulary. This does not mean that you use heavy and big words, but it means that you will be able to understand the topic better and contribute effectively
- Last but not the least; mentally visualize yourself as succeeding and you will succeed.

3.9   LEADER IN A GROUP DISCUSSION

Leadership is the most studied aspect of any group communication. It is important to point out that a group has only one authorized leader, other members play important leadership roles.

A boss overlooks and supervises his employees, but, a leader leads his team towards progress and growth.

Here are some tips which will help you to emerge as a leader in GD:

1. Appearance: Appearance and personality always influences the listeners and judges. One should be well-dressed and look impressive and be polite to everyone. You have to be inclusive in your behavior towards all the members of your team. And yes, the personality has to be pleasing over all – A smile on the face   does   the   trick!

2. Take Initiative: Taking initiative is an important quality of a leader. If you have understood the topic well and have something substantial to say, initiate the discussion. However, do not initiate the discussion for the sake of doing it and give fellow speakers also an opportunity to put across their views.

3. Openness to ideas: You have to remember that it is a discussion and different members are bound to have different views. You should be open to listen to them and accept them if they sound logical.

4. Direction oriented: A very important quality of a leader is that he/ she never loses the sight of his destination. And, this applies to the GDs as well.
It is very easy for the discussion to stray out. If you see that the discussion is distracting from its actual course, try to steer it back in the right direction. You can do this by politely reminding everyone that "we are getting a bit off track".

5. Patience: Do not get into an argument. Try to be patient and listen to other's point of view as well. If you disagree, you can counter them with your reasons when it is your chance to speak. If you see someone not letting the other speakers participate, politely ask them to let the other member speak.

6. Body language: The body language of a leader is always confident but at the

same time it does not put off his team members. He always looks approachable in interested in their growth. Same applies to the group discussions as well.

3.10 POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE TASK ROLES IN A GROUP DISCUSSION

Positive Task Roles in a GD

- Initiator – Starting a GD, giving definitions and suggesting and introducing new ideas.

- Information seeker – In a GD, gather and solicit information from others.

- Information giver – During GD share information and facts.

- Procedure facilitator – Lead a GD by keeping track of the discussion.

- Opinion seeker - Ask other participants of a GD for their opinion.

- Opinion giver – Give your opinion in a GD on the statement given by the other participant.

- Clarifier – Clarifying all the ideas and opinions discussed during a GD.

- Social Supporter – Giving support to ideas of all participants of a GD.

- Tension Reliever – Presenting and discussing the problem from a broad perspective.

- Energizer – Encouraging other participants to explore some new ideas during a GD.

- Compromiser – Creating harmony between different opinions by giving a compromising solution.

- Gatekeeper – Involving other participants in the GD by asking for their opinion

- Summarizer – Summarising or concluding a GD by including all important points discussed during a GD.

Negative Task Roles in a GD

- Disgruntled non-participant – Someone who doesn't contribute to the GD

- Attacker - Someone who aggressively disapproves opinion of other participants of a GD

- Dominator – Someone who takes control of the discussion and not letting others speak in a GD.

- Clown – Someone who does not take GD seriously and disrupts it through inappropriate humour.

3.11 SUMMARY

Group Discussion! Is a methodology or in a simple language you may call it an interview process or a group activity. It is used as one of the best tools to select the prospective candidates in a comparative perspective. GD may be used by an interviewer at an organization, colleges or even at different types of management competitions.

GD evaluation is done by the subject experts based on the discussions. A report will be prepared on analyzing the facts at the end of the discussion.

Some of the personality traits GD tries to gauge may include:

* Communication skills
* Interpersonal Skills
* Leadership Skills
* Motivational Skills
* Team Building Skills
* Analytical /Logical Skills
* Reasoning ability
* Different Thinking
* Initiative
* Assertiveness
* Flexibility
* Creativity

A GD is a methodology used by an organization to gauge whether the candidate has certain personality traits and/or skills that it desires in its members. In this methodology, the group of candidates is given a topic or a situation, given a few minutes to think about the same, and then asked to discuss the topic among themselves for 15-20 minutes. Freshersworld.com brings you an elaborate section for GD as you had ever seen anywhere else. It is a very useful tool to screen the candidates' potential as well as their skills.

Managers have to work in a team and get best results out of teamwork. That is the reason why management institutes include GD as a component of the selection procedure.

3.12 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the methods to prepare for a Group discussion.

2. What is meant by a group discussion? Discuss the characteristics and elements of a Group discussion.

3. Discuss the initiation or introduction phase of a Group discussion.

4. Explain the positive and negative task roles of a Group discussion.

5. Describe the ways a candidate can emerge as a leader in a Group discussion.

3.13 FURTHER READINGS

- Anand Ganguly – Group Discussions for Admissions & Jobs (Pustak Mahal)
- Nitin Sharma – Group Discussion (Unicorn Books)

Unit-4

Business Presentations

Learning Objectives

After completion of this unit, you should be able to:

- Understand the meaning of Presentation.
- Plan an Effective Presentation.
- Develop Presentation Content.
- Deliver a Successful Presentation.
- Build Rapport with the Audience.
- Manage Anxiety.
- Use Appropriate Visuals.
- Manage Questions & Answers.

Structure

4.1 Meaning

4.2 Planning Effective Presentation

4.3 Developing Presentation Content

4.4 Rehearsing a Presentation

4.5 Delivering a Presentation

4.6 Building Rapport

4.7 Managing Anxiety

4.8 Using Appropriate Visuals

4.9 Managing Questions and Answers

4.10 Technology@ Work- Presentation Software

4.11 Let's Sum-up

4.12 Self-Assessment Questions

4.13 Further Readings

4.1 MEANING OF BUSINESS PRESENTATION

A business presentation is an important means of obtaining and exchanging information for decision making and policy development. Because several people receive the message at the same time and the audience is able to provide immediate feedback for clarification, presentations can significantly reduce message distortion and misunderstanding.

Many of the presentations you give will be formal, with sufficient time allowed for planning and developing elaborate visual support. You may present information and recommendations to external audiences such as customers and clients whom you have never met or to an internal audience made up of co-workers and managers you know well. You can also expect to present some less formal presentations, often referred to as oral briefings. An oral briefing might entail a short update on a current project requested during a meeting without advance notice or a brief explanation in the hallway when your supervisor walks past. Sales representatives give oral briefings daily as they present short, informal pitches for new products and services.

Regardless of the formality of the presentation, the time given to prepare, the nature of the audience (friends or strangers), or the media used (live, distant, web, or DVD delivery on demand), your success depends on your ability to think on your feet and speak confidently as you address the concerns of the audience. Understanding the purpose you hope to achieve through your presentation and conceptualizing your audience will enable you to organize your content in a way the audience can understand and accept.

What makes a good business presentation? Bombarding your audience with information isn't it. Neither is boring them to death with charts and figures. And forget about reading every one of those 20 bullet points you've crammed into each PowerPoint slide (note: this is definitely a big NO). What really makes a good business presentation boils down to one thing: engaging your audience.

Granted, getting an audience involved and truly tuned in to a business presentation is easier said than done. Nonetheless, the quality of your presentation can mean the difference between persuading your audience and wasting their time.

Check out ahead of time where you will be presenting, find out about the setup, make sure you have tested all your AV. Move the chairs, if needed. Check the room temperature. Remember, hot rooms put people to sleep.

A good business presentation contains only the necessary information. It has one main point and everything is structured around that point. It doesn't rely heavily upon PowerPoint or slides filled with text, and it allows time for discussion and asking questions

Your audience will pick up quickly on the fact that you simply enjoy hearing yourself talk if your presentation goes on too long. You should also provide a takeaway. Even if it is a link to a website that gives a free report, if you leave the audience with something, you increase the value that you've provided.

Remember, when making a business presentation, PowerPoint is not *the* point. Your job is to present the information. If your audience can take away just as much by reading it, you are superfluous. Also, I'm sure there is a special room in hell for presenters who merely read their slides to the audience. They deserve it.

Use body language to connect with your audience. Dynamic presenters use their hands, facial expressions, and eyes to keep the audience engaged. If possible, use props and stage movement to keep the audience interested. — *Matt Reischer, chief information officer, Legal Marketing Pages Corp.*

The presenter should be the star, not his or her slides. You want to be a critical part of the presentation. Focus more on what you will say and how you will say it rather than on having the coolest slides. Not everything you say should be on your slides. Focus on your best insights and ideas, or the coolest thing about what it is you are trying to sell. No more than 3 sentences per slide. Present your best data, or no data, not all your data. — *Michal Ann Strahilevitz, Ph.D., professor of marketing, Golden Gate University*

The best way to improve a business presentation is to exceed audience expectations. Sometimes, less is more. The best presentations I have done to buyers for my company at Royce Leather have been presentations in which I used no technology at all. If using technology, the key is to utilize high definition images and short, less than 60 second videos to convey your point. — *Andrew Royce Bauer, CEO, Royce Leather*

4.2 PLANNING EFFECTIVE PRESENTATIONS

You need to carefully plan and prepare your oral presentation when asked to speak. Time invested in planning will pay off as you develop, rehearse, and finally deliver your speech. Regardless of your topic, audience, or forum the following guidelines will help you craft an effective presentation.

Keep the following guidelines in mind when you are asked to speak publicly

- **Refine your message**
  As you start planning your presentation, write your main idea in a piece of paper the size of a business card. If you can't fit your message in that space, it is too complicated. A good presentation includes a simple main theme that can be supported by several points or ideas. Know the purpose of the presentation so you can refine the message.

- **Anticipate your audience**

  As you begin your planning, carefully consider who your audience will be. Who are they? Why are they listening to you? How familiar are they with your topic? What will their interest level be? What should they take away from your presentation? Answer these questions before you begin, and keep the answers in mind as you develop and deliver your speech.

- **Ask what your manager wants**

  Your manager or meeting planner asked you to speak for a particular reason. Meet with them to identify what they want you to accomplish. Clarify the expectations of your speech or presentation, including detail such as the number and type of people in the audience, how long you should speak, and the scope of your content. If appropriate consider the other topics on the agenda to be sure your material fits with the rest of the program.

- **Budget enough planning time**

  Inexperienced speakers tend to underestimate the amount of time it takes to develop and rehearse a formal presentation. Professional speakers often budget 10 or more hours of preparation for one hour of actual delivery. A formal presentation to a large audience requires more time than a casual speech to a small group. However, you should start planning well in advance for any presentation you are giving.

- **Anticipate the extras**

  As you develop your speech, plan for the materials you will need to support your presentation. Don't assume that a projector, laptop, or microphone will be automatically be set up. Find out who is responsible for these and notify them of your needs in advance. Check on your support materials before the meeting starts and have a backup plan in case something falls through. Enlist the help of a colleague to distribute handouts, dim the lights and assist you as needed.

4.3 DEVELOPING PRESENTATION CONTENT

Unlike the President of any country or executives from major companies, who rely on professional speech writers to develop their presentations and press releases, you are your own speech writer and develop your own material. Fortunately, effective presentations follow a simple formula you can adapt to your situation. The following guidelines will help as you develop your ideas and refine them into a professional presentation.

Essential Elements

- **Include the three major parts of a speech**

Most well developed presentations include three main sections i.e. the introduction, the body, and conclusion. In the opening, start by catching your audience's attention and offer them a preview of your topic. In the body section, you should deliver your main message along with supporting ideas and information. The conclusion summarizes your main ideas.

- ➢ Introduction
  - ⦿ Catch the attention of the audience
  - ⦿ Ask question
  - ⦿ Tell humorous story
  - ⦿ Provide a startling fact
  - ⦿ Preview your topics
  - ⦿ Identify three main points
  - ⦿ Show slide with outline

- ➢ Body
  - ⦿ Main Message
  - ⦿ Organize logically, such as pro/ con or problem/ solution
  - ⦿ Supporting ideas
  - ⦿ Cite evidence as in a written report
  - ⦿ Use comparisons, statistics, and anecdotes

- ➢ Conclusion
  - ⦿ Recap the main ideas and theme
  - ⦿ Use language such as "in conclusion"
  - ⦿ Repeat memorable line

- **Show your organization to the audience**
  Give your audience simple map to follow so they can anticipate the format of your presentation. Doing so helps them understand what you are going to say next. Use a simple introduction and then conclude with ideas for developing the particular program. Outlining the organization lets people know what your topic is and how you will cover it.

- **Create a storyboard of your presentation**
  Most speakers change their presentation several times as they develop it. A storyboard is a planning tool that makes it easy to visualize your speech and edit it. Write each of your ideas on an index card and arrange them in order so you can quickly see your topics. To change the presentation you simply reorder the business cards.

- **Write for the ear**
  Most of the preparation will involve visual material. You will be reading and writing as you develop your speech. However, your audience will be listening to your presentation and absorbing most of your message as oral communication. Nearly everyone processes information they hear more slowly than images they see. Keep your language simple, direct, and easy to understand.

- **Include attention getters**
  It is difficult for an audience to stay attentive, especially if you are giving a presentation in a darkened room. Their attention will drift in and out as you are speaking. Help maintain their focus by including attention getting devices every three to four minutes in your presentation. Attention getters are different from your normal speaking and catch the attention of your audience, such as pictures, props, video clips, stories, and short activities for the audience to participate in.

4.4 REHEARSING A PRESENTATION

An interesting paradox about public speaking is that it takes lot of preparation to sound spontaneous. Effective speakers know that the more they practice their material, the more naturally they deliver the speech. When you master the content of the speech, you will feel more comfortable adjusting your rate of speech, adding pauses, and including suitable gestures and movements.

Essential elements of rehearsing a presentation

- **Practice as though you are delivering your speech**
  Reading your material quietly at your desk does have some value, but it can't take the place of active rehearsal. If you will be on your feet when you deliver your speech, stand up when you practice. Rehearse out loud as often as you can. Find a place where you can move, gesture and experiment.

- **Record yourself (audio)**
  Record yourself delivering your speech on a portable device, such as an MP3 or DVD player. Listen to this recording as often as you can. Review your delivery while driving, working out, or shopping to become more familiar with the material and it also helps you memorise key parts of your presentation.

- **Record yourself (video)**

  Record a video of yourself practicing your speech. Use a simple camcorder or a digital video recorder, which is a camera that records video in a format you can play on your computer or laptop. Recording yourself with a camera is a powerful rehearsal technique because it provides candid feedback. The camera records everything you do, good or bad, so you can review your facial expressions, gestures and nervous habits.

- **Ask someone to critique you**

  It is often hard to see the problems in your own presentation. Enlisting someone to critique your performance helps you to polish these rough spots. Have a trusted friend, colleague, or family member watch you rehearse your entire presentation. Try to deliver your speech as you would in front of an audience. Ask them to be honest and constructive with their feedback. In particular, have them rate your opening and conclusion because these are the most important parts of the presentation.

- **Use visualization**

  Visualization is the technique of forming a mental image or vision of yourself performing a task and can be a useful tool as you prepare a presentation. Imagine yourself delivering your presentation. Close your eyes and develop a mental picture of being introduced, speaking confidently and your audience applauding. Psychologists have found out that your brain interprets the visualizations as real events, which will help you to feel more comfortable when you make your speech.

- **Rehearse a dry run**

  If you can access the room where you will make your presentation, rehearse there before anyone else arrives. Go through your presentation and make sure everything is working properly. Walk around the speaking area, and sit in the seats. Seeing yourself from your audience's perspective helps you decide where you stand, move, and how loudly you need to speak.

4.5 DELIVERING A PRESENTATION

The moment of truth arrives when you finally stand to make your presentation. This is   where you reap the benefits of the time and effort that you put into careful planning and rehearsal. When you start your delivery, remember that your speech is partly a performance. The way you speak, move and interact with your audience influences how people react to what you say. Keep the basic principles of speech delivery in mind as you rehearse and deliver your presentation.

Essential Elements of Delivering a Presentation

- **Gesture appropriately**
  Your hands can help you communicate an idea if you use them appropriately. Most people use their hand in everyday conversation. Gestures help reinforce what you are saying and make you more visible when speaking to a large audience. When gesturing, let what you say trigger the action. For example, shrug your shoulders when you are asking a question, or extend your fingers when counting to add a visual dimension to your words.

- **Dress formally**
  You should dress formally and be well groomed. You should always have your minds that you will never get a second chance to make a good impression. You are advised to use simple accessories like simple jewelry, watches, ties, etc. Scents, perfumes and after shave lotion should be avoided. Precisely, you should dress appropriately for the presentation. Dress for success.

- **Use the power of pauses**
  Pausing occasionally during your presentation can dramatically increase the impact of your words. People pay more attention when the incoming information suddenly stops. You can use either short or long pauses.

- **Speak naturally – don't read your speech**
  Inexperienced speakers often write out their speeches and recite them to audience. Others copy their speech to power point slides and read the bullet points from the screen. Both approaches are painful for the audience and reflect poorly of the presenter. Instead, write notes on index cards that you can glance at occasionally. If you have properly rehearsed, a simple guideline should be enough to guide you.

- **Use a sound system or public address system**
  If people can't hear you, they won't understand your message. Using a microphone and sound system or the public address system, if one is available, makes it easier for everyone to understand what you are saying. Don't assume that your voice is loud enough for all to hear. People seated in the back of the room or who have hearing difficulties appreciate the added volume.

- **Walk as you talk**
  Move around as you speak, but not so much that you are distracting. Your movements and body language can evoke interest, reinforce the emotions of your stories and punctuate a change of pace or topic. If a lectern is

available, use it to hold your laptop, water bottle, and speaker's notes. Don't stand behind the lectern unless it has the only available microphone or the formality of your presentation requires it.

- **Have a backup plan**
  In case of power failures, equipment malfunctions, and other unforeseen problems, have a backup plan. Bring visuals and support materials that don't require the use of an electrical outlet. A second laptop, spare bulb for the projector, and a copy of your presentation on a USB drive can help you recover quickly if the unexpected happens.

4.6 BUILDING RAPPORT

The people in your audience pay more attention to you when you take steps to develop a sense of rapport with them. **Rapport** is a mutual trust, emotional similarity, and natural personal attraction. When you establish rapport with your audience, they become your allies, are more cooperative, and will be interested in what you have to say.

Essential elements

- **Interact before the meeting starts**
  If possible, mingle with people in the audience before the meeting begins. Some speakers stand by the door and greet people as they enter. This interaction helps you feel more comfortable with the audience and makes you more visible and familiar to them.

- **Follow the three second rule**
  Making eye contact with members of your audience helps you connect with people as a whole. Follow the three-second rule while making the eye contact. To do this, look directly at a single person and then maintain your gaze and speak for at least three seconds. When you pause to take a breath, look at someone else and begin the process again. Move your attention to different sides of the room so everyone feels involved. Avoid shifting your gaze while you are speaking.

- **Minimize the distance**
  When speaking, position yourself as close to the audience as you can. Distance between you is a barrier to interaction. Avoid using a riser or podium unless it is necessary for you to be seen. If you are speaking from a podium or stage, connect with the audience by frequently moving to face different people.

- **Illuminate your face**

  People in the audience want to see you as you speak. In particular, they want to see your face and will not develop a connection with you until they can see your eyes and sense your emotion. If you are not showing slides, make certain that all the lights are on. If you do need to dim the lights, try to stand away from the screen in a part of the room that is still lit. Some speakers arrange for a soft light to be set up that will illuminate their face in an otherwise dark room. Avoid talking to your audience from a dark part of the room.

- **Make your examples personal**

  When appropriate, use stories and examples involving you or someone else in the audience. If you are the subject of the example, be careful not to paint yourself as the hero or expert. Explaining how you struggled with a problem or poking fun at yourself in a self - deprecating way endears you to your audience. Sharing a story about someone in the group that others recognize and respect can be very powerful. Be sure to ask the person's permission before including them in your speech.

4.7 MANAGING ANXIETY

Performance anxiety, often referred to **stage fright**, is a psychological reaction to a person's fear of public embarrassment. People often feel stage fright when they are required to perform in front of an audience, especially if they are inexperienced public speakers. **Glossophobia** is the fear of public speaking and is the most common of all human phobias. Most stage fright actually arises while you are anticipating your performance. When you start to speak, much of the fear quickly goes away.

Essential Elements

- **Be well prepared**

  Performance anxiety is caused by our fear of making a mistake in front of other people. When you are unfamiliar with your material, you are more likely to be nervous. Careful preparation and practice helps to reduce your anxiety, though it cannot completely eliminate it. Keep in mind that nearly all public speakers experience anxiety, even the best ones.

- **Loosen up before you speak**

  When you start to feel anxious, your body tightens in response. This can impair your ability to move, gesture and speak. Exercise is an antidote to stress. Arrive early and take a brisk walk for at least five minutes. Stretch your legs, move your arms, and rotate your head and neck. Some speakers chew gum or yawn repeatedly to loosen their mouth and throat beforehand.

- **Remember to breathe**
  Many speakers forget to breathe when they start to speak. Take some deep breaths before you begin to oxygenate your body. Pause occasionally during your speech and take a deep breath or two. Not only will this add effect to the presentation, but it will calm your nerves and improve your energy level.

- **Keep some water handy**
  A dry mouth is a common symptom of stage fright. It also makes it difficult to speak which can lead to more anxiety. Keep a glass of water or water bottle handy when you present. Drink a small amount before you begin. Pause your speech to take a sip if necessary. Avoid drinking milk, caffeinated drinks, or alcohol. Tepid water or herbal tea is the preferred drinks of professional speakers.

- **Don't apologize**
  Never tell your audience you are nervous or apologize when you make a minor mistake. No one but you knows the script and few people will notice if you don't call attention to yourself. Try to act confident instead. Eventually, you will feel more confident as you get into the body of your presentation.

- **Remember the audience wants you to succeed**
  Performance anxiety is due in large part to a subconscious fear of how your audience will react to your presentation. Keep in mind that the people you are speaking to want you to succeed. They hope that you will do a good job and will overlook small mistakes that you make.

4.8 USING APPROPRIATE VISUALS

As you develop your speech, prepare visual aids that reinforce your major ideas, stimulate your audience and work well in the physical setting of your presentation. Psychologists and educator have found that people learn more readily and retain more information when learning is reinforced by visualization. Popular visual aids include flip charts, overhead transparencies, slides and video clips. If visual aids are poorly done, they distract from what you are saying. Well – designed visuals can significantly enhance your presentation.

Essential elements

- **Include one message per visual**
  Keep your visuals simple by limiting each to a single message. The dominant idea of each visual should be obvious to the audience immediately. If it takes someone five seconds to understand what a visual

is communicating, it is too complex. Pictures, graphs, and images should make up most of your visual content.

- **Let your audience read or listen (not both)**

  Visual aids should not provide reading material while you talk. Use them to illustrate or highlight the points that you are talking about. Avoid the phenomenon known as " Death by PowerPoint" where you display slide after slide of bullet points to your audience. Visuals should not be used as a script or a substitute for a well rehearsed delivery.

- **Keep the effects simple**

  Presentation graphics programs such as Microsoft PowerPoint and Apple Keynote include a variety of visual effects that you can use with the slides. The most common effects add visual interest to transitions (the animation between different slides) and builds (the animation used to display elements on a particular slide). Most of these are too involved and should be avoided. If you need to include effects, stick with quick fades and basic dissolves.

- **Manage your colours**

  Colour is effective for capturing attention and emphasizing important ideas, but you can overdo it. Don't use more than three colours as a visual. Try to use the same three colours throughout your presentation for consistency. Use colours to contrast, differentiate categories, separate data, or highlight a key point. Clearly contrast your background and foreground colours.

- **Use minimalist backgrounds**

  Don't let the background of your visuals become the foreground. Complex graphics or patterns often have areas where the background colour shifts between light and dark. These create a background without a uniform shade and makes contrasting text very difficult to read.

- **Proofread carefully**

  Displaying a visual with an obviously misspelled word can sink your presentation. An error makes people think you are am amateur and distracts the audience. People will focus on your mistake and stop listening to what you have to say. Proofread every visual carefully and have a trusted friend provide a second opinion.

4.9 MANAGING QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Your business presentation does not end when you finish what you have to say, you are expected to respond to from the audience. You can request questions from the audience during your presentation or in a period at the end of your presentation during a question and answer session. Handling these questions with authority is part of making a successful presentation; you should prepare for and rehearse as you do other parts of the session.

Essential elements

- **Establish the ground rules**
  Explain at which points during the presentation you will take questions and how participants will be recognized to speak. Make this clear at the beginning of your presentation if you want people to wait until you have concluded your remarks. Smaller groups expect you to take questions anytime during your speech.

- **Kick start the questions**
  It is awkward to invite questions and not have any asked. You can help start the process by asking your own questions. Start with a statement such as, "A question I am often asked is"..... Follow this with your question and answer.

- **Listen to the entire question**
  Wait for the audience member to finish asking the question before you begin your answer. The only exception is when it becomes necessary to interrupt a rambling question or lengthy statement. Instead of letting one person assume control of the session, break in tactfully to keep the entire audience involved. Acknowledge the question or statement and move to the next questioner.

- **Repeat each question**
  Look the questioner in the eye while they are speaking. Restate the question to make certain that you have understood it correctly. Repeating the question helps those in the audience who may not have heard it initially and gives you extra time to think about your response.

- **Answer to the entire audience**
  After you have restated the question, break eye contact with the questioner and turn towards the audience. Give your answer to the entire group. Avoid creating a two-person conversation that others in the audience will not feel a part of.

- **Don't answer if you don't know**
  Sometimes you don't know the answer to a particular question. In such cases, avoid trying to bluff or invent a response. Doing so will cost your credibility. Instead, acknowledge that it is a good question, indicate that you will look into it, and then follow up directly with the questioner.

4.10 TECHNOLOGY@ WORK – PRESENTATION SOFTWARE

You use presentation software to create and deliver electronic slide shows. Presentation software, Microsoft Office PowerPoint in particular, has become the standard way to make and give business presentations. Released in 1990, PowerPoint is easily the most well established of the presentation software tools. Infact, Microsoft estimates that more than 30 million PowerPoint presentations are given each day. You can also use other presentation software, some of which is designed for special circumstances.

Essential elements

- **Microsoft Office PowerPoint**
  Part of the Microsoft Office suite of programs, PowerPoint is widely used in business and education. Detractors say that it dictates the way you communicate by reducing ideas to short bullet points. However, the real culprits are ineffective communicators, not the software tool itself.

- **Adobe Flash**
  If you want to use sophisticated animation effects and import video, Adobe Flash is an excellent choice. However, Adobe Flash requires training and expertise to produce the effects you want. One advantage of using Adobe Flash is that you can easily publish a presentation online.

- **Google Docs**
  One of the applications available from Google Docs is called Presentations, a basic tool for creating slide shows. The strength of Presentations is not its features, which are more limited than PowerPoint's. Like other Google applications, Presentations is designed for online collaboration and sharing.

- **Apple Keynote**
  If you use a Macintosh computer, the tool of choice for presentations is Apple Keynote. One impressive feature is called Keynote Remote, which you can add to an iphone or ipod Touch so you can use it as a wireless

controller. You can then move around a room in which you are presenting, using your iphone or ipod touch to control slides and read your slide notes.

- **OpenOffice Impress**
  A free open source presentation tool, Open Office Impress contains some features for editing graphics not available in PowerPoint. For example, Impress provides tools for precisely positioning graphics, adjusting colour resolution, and creating and applying styles to graphics. It is also distributed under an open source license, which means it is available for download without charge.

4.11 LET'S SUM UP

In an age where listeners can obtain information through simple Internet research, keep your message simple, succinct and to the point. Avoid going off in different directions or over expanding on your presentation topics. The more clear and concise the message, the better you can deliver the message to the audience. Prepare to answer questions only after you have presented each topic or subsection. Allowing the audience to take control of a presentation usually results in the presenter going off topic. The presenter loses his audience's attention and focus.

Important Presentation tips

- Plan the presentation effectively
- Develop presentation content
- Rehearse and practice
- Communicate effectively
- Build rapport with audience
- Manage anxiety
- Use appropriate visuals
- Manage questions and answers session properly

4.12 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. What is meant by business presentation? Explain methods to deliver a successful presentation.

2. Describe the ways of developing presentation content.

3. Explain the ways to manage anxiety while delivering a presentation.

4.13 FURTHER READINGS

- Lehman, Dufrene, Sinha – Business Communication**:** An Innovative Approach to Learning and Teaching (Cengage Learning Pvt.Ltd.)

- Jeff Butterfield – Soft Skills for Everyone (Cengage Learning Pvt.Ltd.)