IMPORTANCE OF VERBAL COMMUNICATION

- Everything rises and falls on the effectiveness of communication. Communication has the ability to confuse, clarify, encourage, instruct or teach. Verbal communication is the beginning of the communication process, followed by nonverbal communication that validates or contradicts the verbal communication.

1. Informs
   - One of the primary purposes of verbal communication is to inform. Verbal communication is used daily to teach in the classroom or tell your spouse that you'll be home late from work. It's also used in business and technology to educate on a variety of topics from updates to new policies and procedures.
2. Clarifies

- **Verbal communication is used** to clarify when there is a misunderstanding or not enough information provided. This is typically seen in group communication and in large organizations where information can easily get lost in the channels or can be misunderstood when it's communicated. Verbal communication can also help clarify nonverbal communication. You may do something that isn't perceived correctly, and you're able to clarify what you really meant with verbal communication.

3. Corrects

- **When something isn't being done correctly** or is being done ineffectively, verbal communication is able to correct the wrong and make it right. This is also seen in public relations when a controversy or accusation arises within an organization.

4. Feedback

- **Verbal communication** is a medium that provides feedback. Feedback is essential in any relationship, family or organization to function properly. Feedback is the ability for individuals to give their verbal opinion and experience with the purpose of improving systems, policies and relationships.

5. Power of Influence

- **Verbal communication** has the power of influence. This is best demonstrated by the president of the United States. When he makes a speech, the entire world is watching, listening and responding to his verbal communication. On more common levels, the power of influence is seen between father and son, boss and employee and clergy to his congregation. What someone says can have a deep affect on his subordinates.
ORAL COMM AS A PROCESS

• **Communication** is an ongoing process involving an exchange of information and meanings between senders and receivers, both knowingly and unknowingly; you are simultaneously sending and receiving messages and also communicating internally.

• **The Importance** of Verbal Communication:

  1. **Influencing task performance** is important because it encourages employees to complete tasks that lead to meeting organizational goals.

  2. **Linking plans and actions** is done by connecting the “talking about” and “doing” stages within the organization.

  3. **Making effective decisions** is much more likely when relevant information is communicated clearly to all involved.

  4. **Enhancing effective working relationships** is done by helping people relate with others; communication enables them to resolve conflicts productively.

  5. **Sharing emotions** is done through verbal (and nonverbal) communication.

  6. **Fulfilling social need for belonging** is inherent in people; communication allows them to share their likes and dislikes with one another.

  7. **Providing training aids** to what employees are to do requires clear and complete communication.

  8. **Assisting in problem-solving** for work groups is accomplished through effective group communication.
• **Sharing and Transmitting Information** in a manner that you feel the receiver will understand is critical; transmission without understanding is not communication.

  a. **The Intended meaning of the message** should be the same as the perceived meaning. Culture and previous experience play a role in the way we attach meaning to words.

  b. **Transmission of information** is done knowingly and unknowingly; how something is said is as important as what is said. The receiver can become confused if the two don’t send the same message.

  c. **Response of the receiver** is called feedback; tells the sender a lot about the receipt of the message.

• **The Communication Process** includes a number of factors that interact with one another.

  a. **The speaker** is the source of the message; avoid communication problems as the message is planned, encoded, and spoken along with the nonverbals.

  b. **The message** is developed through the encoding process; avoid sources of misinterpretation, including multiple word meanings, semantics, and vagueness.

  c. **The channel** connects the speaker and the listener(s); different channels are available and the number of channels will vary.

  d. **The listener** is where the message is directed (the decoder), although others may also receive; effective listening is a practiced skill.
e. **Feedback** can come in the form of a nod, return message, email, or memo. Misunderstandings can occur if there is a delay in the feedback or the feedback received is not specific.

f. **Distractions in communication** serve as barriers, blocks, and create problems in communication. Distractions can be relative to time, external factors, internal factors, or semantics.

g. **The communication environment** may be relaxing or stressful; the context of the situation or personal moods can impact the environment.

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### Telephone Communication Techniques

- **You are the voice of the organization** every time you use the phone at work; the impression you relay is the impression the other person/organization has of you and yours.

1. **Applying Effective Speaking Skills** is important for effective communication:
   
a. **Projecting voice quality** at a moderate rate and volume with accurate enunciation affect the way you are perceived over the telephone. *Review the hints on pp. 96-97.*
   
b. **Answering incoming calls** quickly, identifying yourself, and attending to the caller demonstrates a professional manner.
   
c. **Taking telephone messages** and including all of the important details. *Review the tips and figure 4-2 on pp. 97-98.*
   
d. **Delivering messages** in a timely manner based on the urgency of the message.
e. Placing telephone calls accurately; be sure to use the appropriate methods for each type of call. Plan calls and voice-mail messages to make good use of time. Review the techniques on pp. 98-99 and the long-distance/time zone options on pp. 99-101.

f. Listening to voice-mail messages is very helpful; it can reduce or eliminate phone tag and keeps business moving along even when the receiver is not at his/her desk when you call. Be sure to check voice-mail regularly.

g. Techniques for using voice mail should be utilized. Review the list on pp. 101-102.

h. Techniques for Internet phones exist with computers and appropriate software. Long-distance may be accomplished at a lower rate, but some people block calls coming from computers.

2. Using Directories and the Internet to locate information has become very popular.

a. White and Yellow Pages provide information about listed telephone numbers. White pages provide an alphabetic listing; yellow pages classify sections of the phone book.

b. Telephoning procedures and emergency numbers are accessible in directories.

c. Government listings include federal, state, county, and local offices.

d. Locating information on the Internet is easy with sites like www.planetpages.com or www.yellowbook.com.
3. Other Telephoning Techniques allow usage tracking and permit special kinds of calls.

a. A computer long-distance log is used to analyze long-distance calls for accuracy and accountability of costs.

b. Conference calls allow three or more people to talk from different locations; they can also be referred to as audio conferences.

c. Transferred calls within the organization avoid the caller repeating a call to a new number. It is important that all employees know the transfer procedure on the telephone system.

d. Use of cellular phones to conduct business has increased greatly in recent years. Review the guidelines set forth on p. 104.

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GIVING AND RECEIVING PRAISE OR CRITICISM

- While the two are very different, they can both be positive motivators.

1. Communicating Praise is acknowledging the effective work of others.

a. Giving praise in a sincere manner publicly is important. Tell the person what was done to deserve it.

b. Receive praise with a thank you to show your appreciation.
2. **Communicating Criticism** has a negative image associated with it; but, if it is done right, it can enhance a person’s knowledge and skills.

   a. **Giving constructive criticism** starts with respect; sandwich the news between positive comments. Maintain self-esteem and motivation.

   b. **Receiving criticism** without becoming defensive is important. Try to understand the person’s perspective and try to understand it. Seeking advice from others may help you understand the criticism and make changes. Make changes in your behavior as needed.

THE EFFECTIVE LISTENER

- **Review a few statistics regarding listening:** 40% of the work day is spent listening; the average person listens at a 25% efficiency level.

1. **The Listening Process involves** sensing, seeing, and interpreting what is being communicated.

   a. **The listening sequence** allows the listener to become more involved in the process.
      - Receive the message
      - Perceive the message
      - Interpret the message
      - Remember the message
      - Evaluate the message
      - React to the message

   b. **Types of listening** include content listening, critical listening, and empathetic listening. The ultimate goal of effective listening is to apply all three types.
2. Problems in the Process can be costly
   for an organization; the first step to correcting communication problems is to recognize them.

   a. Paying attention is a big problem; the problems may be related to an attention span, attention wandering, and concentration on the speaker’s message.

   b. Understanding the information is key to effective communication. Problems may be in understanding the meaning or the difference between speaking and listening speeds.

   c. Remembering the information after the conversation is over is often difficult. Difficulties can be related to attention and understanding, short-term memory, and information recall.

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3. Behaviors That Inhibit Listening are habits that need to be changed.

   a. Calling the subject uninteresting makes paying attention very difficult.

   b. Judging delivery instead of content makes it difficult to pay attention.

   c. Jumping to conclusions makes the listener miss key points and possibly the main idea of the message.

   d. Listening for details, not the “big picture” is a backwards approach to listening.

   e. Taking excessive notes takes a lot of extra time and energy during the listening process.
f. Attentive listening shows respect. Review the tips on pp. 110-111.

g. Creating or tolerating distractions make concentration almost impossible.

h. Failing to listen to difficult material makes it even more difficult to understand.

4. Techniques for Improving Listening come from practice.

   a. Deciding to listen before a meeting clears your mind of outside thoughts.

   b. Getting rest and food allows for better concentration because you are not tired or hungry.

   c. Finding comfortable seating close to the speaker keeps your focus on the speaker and the message.
FACE-TO-FACE COMM IN WORKPLACE

1. **The first step is to have some** face-to-face communication! Email/chat has overwhelmed our workplace communication methods.
   - **By e-mail making** this form of communication much more easily misunderstood than face-to-face conversation.
   - **Over 90% of meaning** comes from something other than the words themselves — 55% comes from facial and body language and 38% comes from vocal inflection. So choose wisely. Meet face-to-face if there is conflict, if the issue is potentially sensitive, or if your real intent is to build relationships.

2. **Then, use that 90% well!** Be aware of both your body language and the body language of your conversation partner.
   - **Facial expressions** are universal, but body language, eye contact and intonation can be interpreted very differently across cultures.
   - **Are you conveying interest**, openness and attention?
   - **Your stance and the way** you move can help convey a sense of connection. The non-verbal actions can “fit” the words and reinforce the spoken message, or completely negate it.
   - **Are you saying “yes”** and shaking your head “no”?
2. **Remember the goal** is to express your ideas in a manner that will be understood. You intend one message.

- Is that the message received? Don’t assume. We all have filters and biases that influence interpretation.
- **Check out your own assumptions.** And clarify the message being received. Take responsibility for the message that is actually received.

### IMPROVING VERBAL COMM SKILLS

1. **Improve Your Vocabulary**

   - **One of the ways to improve** your oral communication skills is to enlarge your vocabulary and knowledge of words and their meanings.
   - **When you speak, use simple words** which can be clearly understood instead of using bombastic words. And phrase words in the positive instead of using negative words.

2. **Be a Good Listener**

   - **Remember that effective** verbal communication skills involve speaking and active listening. By listening with your ears, eyes and heart, you improve your understanding. People will pay more attention to what you want to say when you take the time to listen to them.
3. Tell or Narrate a Story

- **One of the ways to let others understand your message is by telling a story, reading a quote or telling a joke.** Verbal communication through story telling carries power because people are able to relate better. A joke usually helps people relax more and their minds are more opened to listen to you.

- **The way you deliver the story** can affect the thinking, emotions and behavior of the listeners. He is able to imagine the experience and will produce a response. A story narrated with eloquent can give hope to people who are in dire need for encouragement.

4. Ask the Right Questions

- **Questioning yourself or others with precise words allow for correct answers.** It will make a difference if you were to ask a "why" or a "how" question. A "Why" question gives you a lot of reasons, excuses, understandings and explanations while a "How" question set your brain thinking for a solution, useful information and a strategy.

- **By asking questions and wording them specifically, you will invite a positive debate and interaction that will benefit all involved.** You become a better listener and entice others to do the same. Unnecessary arguments are reduced when you are able to express yourself with great command of your language skills, through verbal communication.
5. Think and Prepare Before You Speak

- **Before speaking in public**, talking to your boss, spouse or children, think before you utter the words. Verbal abuse may happen if you express yourself without thinking and allow your emotions to take over.

- **Project your thoughts first** in your mind or in writing before speaking them out. This will enable you to prepare yourself with any objections that may arise. Thinking, preparing and imagining the most desirable outcome in your mind allow you to practice your presentation and getting them right.

6. Reduce Usage of Verbal Pauses

- **Have you ever listened to how** you speak? If you haven’t and are unaware, request someone to listen and provide you with the feedback. How many times did you stop your sentences and added an "ah", "um" or "well"? You can also record your verbal communication and listen back to your style of speaking.

- **Too many of these will irritate** your listeners or is perceived as uneasiness or uncertainty in what you are saying. In order to reduce the unnecessary verbal cues, listen to yourself and become aware of it. Then when you realize it coming, condition yourself to just a silent pause.
7. Avoid Careless Language

➢ **Use your words and phrases with care.**
Talk and write in ways that allow for accurate description of your experience, thoughts or ideas. Don’t expect people to assume and guess what you are trying to say.

➢ **Speak with specificity by avoiding words** like always, never, every or all. When you say to your spouse that he is always late when in fact he was late only twice, you are attracting an argument. If you are a parent, avoid comparing by making statements like, "You are worse than your sister". When you compare, you will create resentment and a rebellious attitude.