U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Office of Policy Development and Research

Communication Skills for Housing Managers
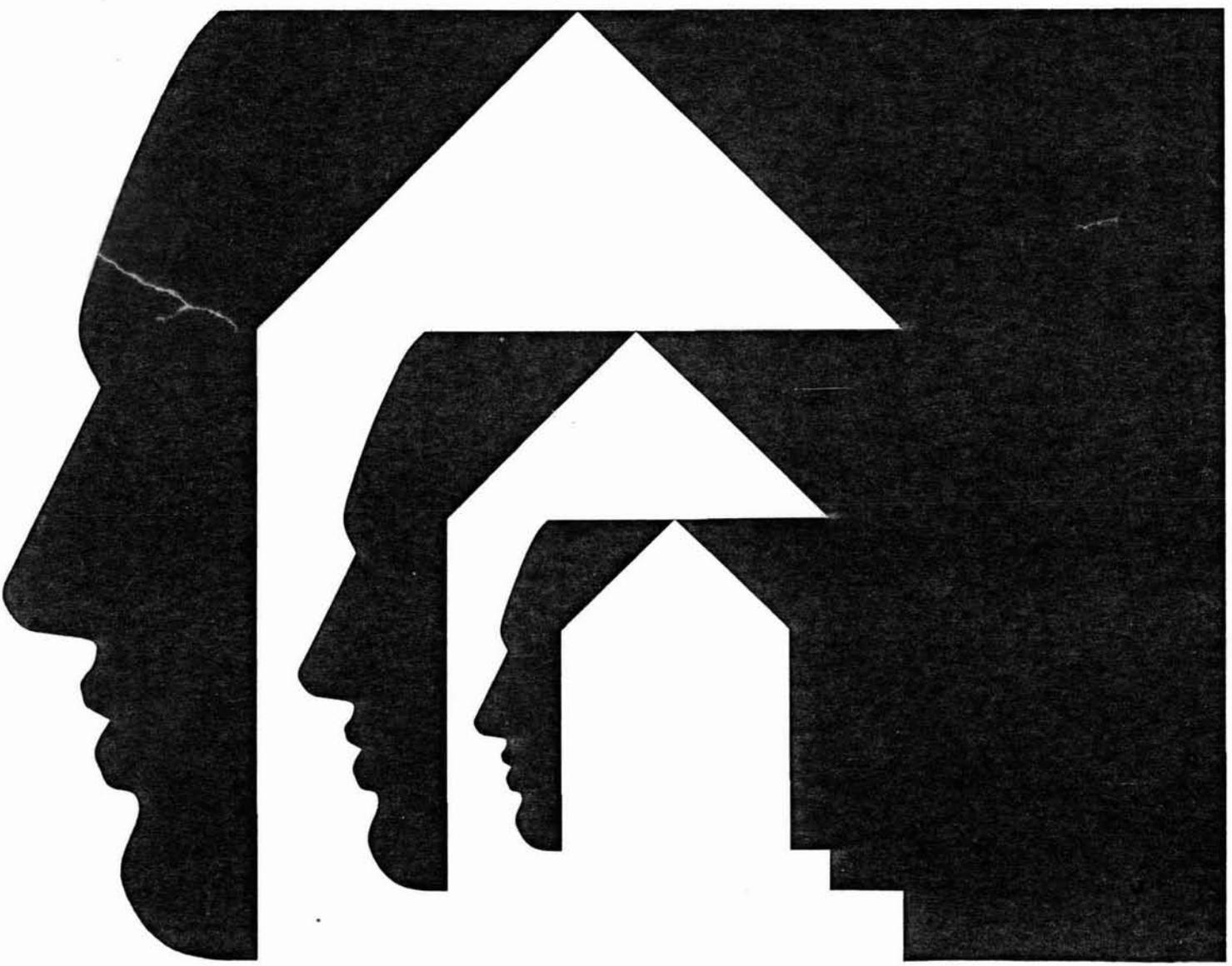
Instructor's Guide

Communication Skills for Housing Managers

Instructor's Guide
February, 1979

FOREWORD

        This instructor's guide is one of eighteen in a housing-management
curriculum developed by HUD in conjunction with Temple University.

        The guide reprints all the material in the participant's workbook,
but gives more detailed information where necessary and answers the
test questions.

        Our hope is that with your help, the workshops using this
curriculum will advance professionalism in the field of housing
management. The lack of professionalism -- that is, the lack of
uniform standards which allows people of varying knowledge and
abilities to manage HUD-assisted and privately financed housing --
has contributed to some serious problems: high default rates,
abandonments, and vandalism. To correct such problems is important.
We are glad to have you working with us.
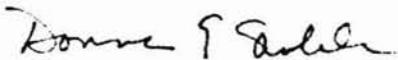
Donna E. Shalala   Lawrence B. Simons
Assistant Secretary for   Assistant Secretary for
    Policy Development and Research   Housing -- Federal Housing
                                         Commissioner

PREFACE

Each workbook in this series presents a number of learning objectives targetted to a selected area of management. Successful completion of the learning objectives presented in each workbook provides a series of building blocks to buttress the spectrum of skills required of a housing manager.

In preparing these workbooks, an attempt has been made to incorporate the range of knowledge that housing managers might be required to draw upon. Likewise, an attempt has been made to reflect the present state-of-the-art of housing management. Inevitably, whatever is captured in print reflects a body of knowledge and practice up to the point of publication. Therefore, the students and instructors making use of these workbooks will want to keep alert to new developments that should be integrated into the workbook material. Furthermore, like any attempt to codify knowledge in a particular field, the material presented in these workbooks is open to differences of interpretation and emphasis. We are aware that there may be some techniques and procedures described in these workbooks with which some experts in the field might disagree. The best test of such procedures and techniques will come when they are applied in the field by housing management practitioners. Through this process, the state-of-the-art will continue to be improved. Instructors in the future will undoubtedly want to incorporate such acknowledged improvements into their delivery of the workbook material.

One final point is worth mentioning. An initial impetus for these workbooks was the need to upgrade management skills in HUD-related housing. However, many of the principles presented should be viewed by students and instructors as applicable to multifamily housing management practices in the private sector.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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PROBLEM: Managers Should Improve Their Communication Skills

GOAL	LEARNING OBJECTIVES	CONTENT	METHODOLOGY	RESOURCES	EVALUATION OF KNOWLEDGE ACQUIRED	ANTICIPATED PRACTICE OUTCOMES	EVALUATION OF IMPROVEMENT IN SKILLS
1. To enable managers to communicate more effectively.	1. Participants will name four (4) qualities of a good listener.	1. Readiness to listen 2. Attitudes 3. Listening for non-verbal signals 4. Listening for feelings	1. Lecture/Guided Discussion 2. Group task on listening 3. Group task on communication	1. Workshop staff	1. Completion of post-test item 1.	1. Participants will examine a case study and make three (3) suggestions for improving a manager's listening skills.	1. Completion of skill-test item 1.
	2. Participants will define seven (7) elements of a communications model.	1. Information source 2. Encoder 3. Transmitter 4. Receiver 5. Decoder 6. Destination 7. Feedback			2. Completion of post-test item 2.	2. Participants will correctly assemble the elements of a communications model.	2. Completion of skill-test item 2.
	3. Participants will identify five (5) principles of good communications.	1. Clarifying ideas before communicating 2. Examining the true purpose of communicating 3. Considering the setting of communicating 4. Consulting in planning 5. Recognizing overtones of communication 6. Responding 7. Feedback 8. Future considerations 9. Support communication through actions			3. Completion of post-test item 3.	3. Participants will examine a case study and make five (5) suggestions for improving a manager's communication skills.	3. Completion of skill-test item 3.

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GOAL	LEARNING OBJECTIVES	CONTENT	METHODOLOGY	RESOURCES	EVALUATION OF KNOWLEDGE ACQUIRED	ANTICIPATED PRACTICE OUTCOMES	EVALUATION OF IMPROVEMENT IN SKILLS
	4. Participants will list two (2) responsi- bilities of managers with respect to feedback.	1. Providing feedback 2. Seeking feedback			4. Completion of post- test item 4.	4. Participants will examine a case study and make two (2) suggest- ions for im- proving a manager's handling of feedback.	4. Completion of skill- test item 4.

WORKSHOP GOAL:

TO ENABLE MANAGERS TO COMMUNICATE MORE EFFECTIVELY

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES	ANTICIPATED PRACTICE OUTCOMES
1. Participants will name four (4) qualities of a good listener.	1. Participants will examine a case study and make three (3) suggestions for improving a manager's listening skills.
2. Participants will define seven (7) elements of a model of communication.	2. Participants will correctly assemble the elements of a model of communication.
3. Participants will identify five (5) principles of good communication.	3. Participants will examine a case study and make five (5) suggestions for improving a manager's communication skills.
4. Participants will list two (2) responsibilities of managers with respect to feedback.	4. Participants will examine a case study and make two (2) suggestions for improving a manager's handling of feedback.

Content

The Importance of Listening

The sense of hearing has always played an important part in man's learning. Primitive man developed this sense extensively because his very existence depended upon accurate interpretation of nature's sounds. Man's own primitive sounds acquired meanings which his associates learned to listen for and to properly interpret. Man gradually developed a spoken language which was passed on to successive generations through the listening process.

Through thousands of years of the listening process, man advanced in his communicating techniques to the stage of symbolizing his sounds and their combinations as related to their meanings for him. Again, after long evolutionary periods of usage, permanently located people formed

written languages. The advent of the printing press multiplied a thousand-
fold man's dependence upon the written word, and reading supplanted to a
great measure his dependence on listening. In addition, the learning
process became centered upon the use of the printed word and the required
techniques to learn by reading.

Neglect of listening techniques has been the concern of not only
educators, but of leaders in the business and government world. In the
normal course of business, the average manager spends approximately three-
forths of his time conferring, listening or talking. White collar workers
receive a high percent of their salaries for listening and following through
on instructions. The most persuasive salesmen do not rely upon writing;
they talk and listen. Although we recognize its importance, many of us
do not listen at a very high level of efficiency.

Listening is a skill. It can be improved through training and practice,
just as reading, writing and speaking can. Managers should give serious
thought to improving their listening ability, since the ability to commu-
nicate with employees and with residents is of critical importance. Studies
of residents to determine the qualities of an ideal project manager have
shown that the ability and willingness to listen ranked very high in impor-
tance. The following material is designed to improve the listening process,
identify the values of good listening habits, and improve techniques of
listening.

Readiness to listen

People listen best when they listen intentionally. There are several
ways to improve listening techniques by increasing the readiness to listen.

1. Listening on request. On naval ships announcements over the public address system are always preceeded by "Now Hear This." This command is difficult to resist. The short interval of time between the command and the actual announcement allows the listener to prepare himself for listening attentively. Housing managers do not get such advance announcements from residents and employees, but the manager can prepare himself to listen to their messages by observing them as they prepare to speak.

2. Listening as the result of instruction. Everyone can recall working with a teacher or instructor who in the middle of a lesson would pause and say, "Now pay particular attention to this." Such warnings help the listener to be alerted for a particular message.

3. Listening with a purpose. When someone asks or tells a person to listen, he generally furnishes the listener with a reason for listening. Other purposes for listening arise as a result of the listener's emotional orientation and intellectual interests. Managers listen best when they have a purpose for listening in mind. A good manager always seeks to discover what the person wants him to hear and why he should be sure to listen to that person.

4. Listen actively. The mind is not an absorbing sponge. It functions best when one is actively asking questions, evaluating information and thinking about what one is listening to. People may hear with their ears, but they listen by actively using their minds.

Attitudes in listening

How one feels about the person talking to him has a great influence on his ability to listen to what that person is saying. One's feelings about

poor communications when no exchange took place or when the exchange did
not result in the sharing of meaning.

Researchers doubt that two or more individuals can ever completely
share an idea with all its many intellectual and emotional nuances. The
capacity of one to pass on an idea in its totality is not thought to exist.
However, although individuals may not be able to achieve perfection, they
can share an amazing amount of understanding about ideas if they are skilled
in the principles and techniques of communicating. As a preliminary to
building communicating skills, one must understand the communications pro-
cess. To help in achieving this understanding, a communications model has
been developed. Note that this model applies both to human and technical
forms of communication.

EXHIBIT A: COMMUNICATIONS MODEL

Channel
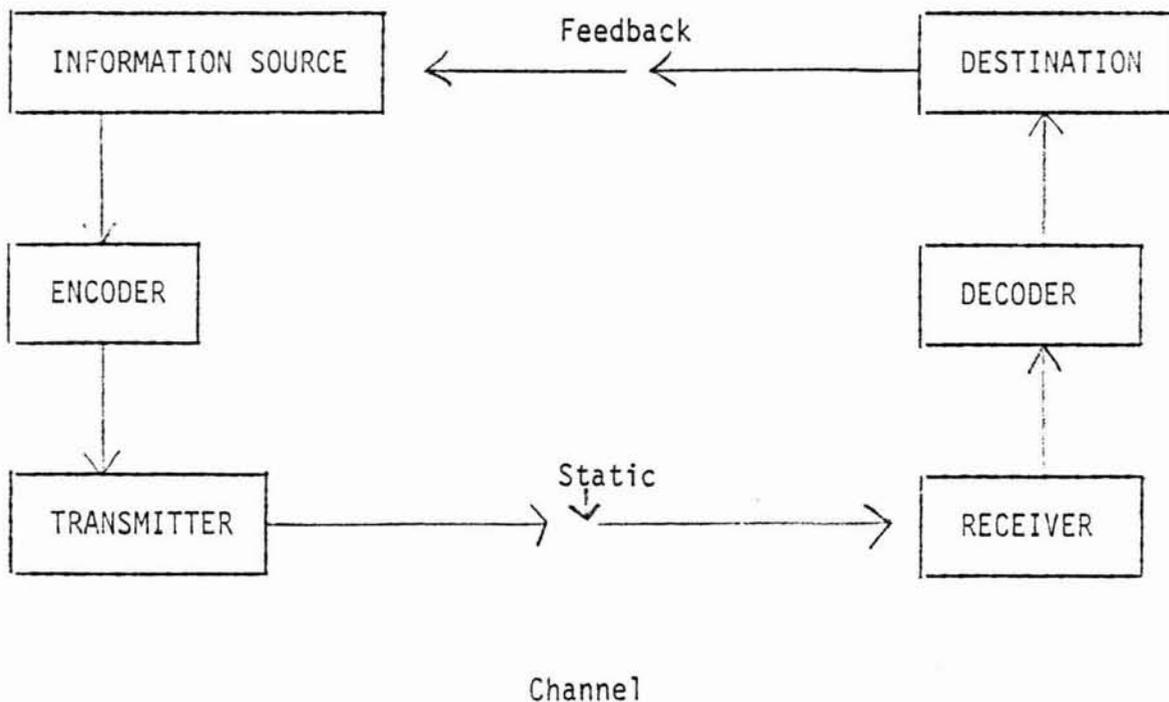
Definition of Terms

Information Source

The starting point of this model is the information source. The information source takes information and puts it into the form of a message. It must also decide what meaning is to be exchanged and what arrangements of information will most accurately convey this intended meaning.

Encoder

The message is fed to an encoder where it is transposed into signs and codes which are suitable for transmission. A sign is any physical event which is used to represent something else in the communication process. For example, human language (word symbols) is a set of signs. A code is an agreed upon transformation of one set of signs to another. For example, an alphabet, the morse code, and signal flag codes are all examples of codes.

Transmitter

A transmitter is any device that can project the encoded signals over a particular medium termed a channel. For example, a radio transmitter projects signals through the medium of radio waves of a particular frequency. A telephone projects electrical impulses over a particular wire.

In passing over a channel, signals may encounter interference or noise. Noise, such as static on a radio set, snow on a TV screen, or background noise on a telephone line, can weaken, distort, or completely block out signals. To compensate for the effects of noise, some systems make use of repetition (redundancy) and feedback procedures to assure that a complete message gets through.

Receiver

A receiver is a device that picks up and registers the encoded signal. To register a signal, the receiver must be in the proper state of readiness. It must be turned on and tuned to the same channel over which the signal is being transmitted, at the time the signal is being transmitted.

Decoder

The decoder takes the message passed on to it by the receiver and converts it from codes into signs. In order for the results to have any meaning the decoder must be matched to the encoder; in other words, it must have access to and utilize the same codes and signs as the encoder intended.

Destination

The destination is the device and location in which the decoded message is delivered. It implies a particular device at a specific location; for example, a radio message could be picked up and "read" by many destinations, yet not reach the intended destination.

Feedback

The information source has no way of determining whether its message reached the destination and was properly understood by the destination unless some provision is made for feedback. In some cases the information source gets feedback by observing the action of the destination. For example, two ships traveling together at sea can signal one another. One may signal the other to turn right and can get feedback by observing whether or not this action is taken. In most cases feedback occurs in the case of a return message. In effect, components of the models reverse roles. The destination becomes the information source and the information source becomes the

destination. Feedback is achieved by comparing the message returned from the destination with the message that was sent by the information source.

Applications to Human Communications

What can be learned from this model about the problems involved in human and social communications?

Many problems start right at the information source. Everyone can think of occasions when he began to communicate before he had a clear idea what it was he was trying to convey. On other occasions, he may have known in a general way that he was ready to convey them. It should be easy to see that if senders are confused about what they want to say and how they want to say it, the resulting message will seem equally, if not more, confused, to the intended receiver. One business organization expressed its concern over this type of communications problem by asking its managers to post the following sign prominently over their desks - "Make sure brain is engaged before using mouth."

At the encoding stage, a new set of problems is encountered. Signs and codes which accurately convey the intent of the message must be selected. For the most part, managers will be concerned with the effective use of words. The problems involved in selecting the right words to convey a particular meaning may appear simple, but are in fact extremely complex. The problem of encoding is frequently made difficult for the public housing project manager by the fact that residents may literally speak different languages from the one used by the project manager. The languages encountered will reflect the racial, ethnic, social, economic, and cultural differences of resident groups. Even within one family unit it is possible to find teenagers using words and phrases which have no meaning for the adult members of the family.

Other problems arise in transmitting a message. For example, if trans-
mitting by voice, speech may be unclear as a result of improper pronuncia-
tion or enunciation. If transmitting by writing, the writing may be illeg-
ible. Breakdowns in communications can occur because transmitting is not
loud enough for proper reception or because transmitting is too rapid to be
properly understood.

In human communications, a special set of transmitting problems is en-
countered. Whereas mechanical systems are designed to send a particular type
of message over a particular channel, humans are capable of sending many
types of messages over several channels, all at the same time. Problems can
be encountered when one unwittingly transmits conflicting messages. For
example, a person may be sending one message with his words but conveying a
contradictory message with his actions. Facial expressions, tone of voice,
and other physical gestures frequently can convey a much louder message than
the message a person is attempting to convey with his words.

Communications problems can also arise from failing to choose and utilize
the proper channels for transmitting signals. An example of this would be
sending a letter when a face to face conversation is required. Some messages
may require more than one channel to be effectively transmitted. A message
transmitted through both audio and visual channels is usually more effective
than a message transmitted by one or the other by themselves.

Failure to account for possible problems in the receiver can also cause
communications to break down. The sender must get the attention of the
receiver and see to it that it is turned on and tuned in before transmitting.
Unless the transmitter can get the intended receiver turned on and interested
in the message, he has little hope of communicating. Some people may be

turned off by the transmitter because of what he is as a person or because of some other factor such as a position he occupies, a title he holds, a uniform he wears, or a group to which he belongs. In such cases it may be better to choose another means of transmitting the message, such as another person, in the hope that the intended receiver will be better tuned-in and more receptive to this new source. A communicator must also note whether an intended receiver is properly placed to receive a message from a particular channel or medium. For example, a person must be placed close enough to hear and see an audio-visual message. The sender must also note whether the receiver is tired or alert, distracted or attentive.

The sender must also take into account the noise his signals will en-counter on their way to the receiver. If the signal, for example a voice signal, must compete against other physical noises, then the volume of the transmission must be sufficiently loud to overcome the noise. If the noise consists of other competing messages, such as might be encountered by a printed advertisement or in a situation where the intended receiver is watching a television program, the sender must put his message into a form that is unique or unusual enough to attract and hold the attention of the intended receiver.

After the information source or sender is able to successfully overcome these problems, the biggest problem in communications still lies ahead : decoding the message by the receiver. Complete idea sharing is rarely approached and never achieved because the intended receivers are unable to give the exact same interpretation and understanding to a message as was intended by its sender. This can result because the intended receiver is not sufficiently motivated to make the effort to understand the sender. It can

also occur because the sender was unwilling or unable to understand the intended receiver and to put his message in terms that would be acceptable to the receiver and easy for the receiver to understand. Studies and material on persuasive communications and motivations all stress the importance of attempting as accurately as possible to communicate from the other person's point of view. This means that a sender must try to understand the manner in which a receiver will decode his message and try to anticipate the manner in which the message will be interpreted.

Finally, many communications problems occur because of the failure to look for and make use of feedback information. In some cases, breakdowns occur because the feedback information which was available was not observed or interpreted properly. In other cases failures occur because the sender did not take steps to generate feedback information.

For example, in public housing it is common practice for project managers to orient residents to the responsibilities they will be undertaking when they sign their lease. It is assumed that because residents sign the lease and indicate that they understand and agree to the rules and regulations involved, that accurate communication has taken place. In many cases subsequent feedback indicates that the resident would have agreed to anything in order to obtain the apartment and did not necessarily understand or agree to the provisions involved.

This model can be used as a guide to improve the ability to communicate. It can be used as a checklist to help prepare, encode,and transmit messages properly. When feedback indicates that communications have not been adequate, it can be used as a checklist to help pinpoint accurately the location of the problem. This model clearly illustrates the complexities of the communications

process and stresses the fact that idea sharing requires the cooperation of both the sender and the receiver.

Sending Communications

As the highest ranking housing authority official present in a project, the manager is responsible for effectively sending many items of important information to employees and residents. He is constantly required to communicate plans, ideas, and data which people living and working in the project must understand and act upon. Below are some principles of communication that apply to sending information about management activities.

General Principles of Communication

1. All people employed in the development, particularly those in management positions, should know the value and importance of communications.

2. All people employed in the development must themselves be informed if they are to carry out their own responsibility for communication with residents.

3. Include planning for communications before actions are undertaken. For example, in changing a maintenance procedure it is not enough to write a new procedure to be followed by maintenance employees. The manager must plan to explain the change to affected employees and to explain the change to residents. Such planning should include what should be said, how it should be said, by whom it should be said, and when it should be said.

4. Determine who will be affected by an event and therefore who should be told about it. The manager should be able to put

himself in the shoes of others who are less informed and judge what each of these people will need and want to know.

The Timing of Communications

In some cases the effect of a message which has been skillfully phrased and skillfully delivered is lost because timing of the release of the information was unacceptable. Here are some elements of timing:

1. Timing should always be such that the person or persons affected hear the information before others who are not affected. For example, if management has taken an action with respect to a resident, the resident should always hear about that action from the manager before he hears about it from neighbors or project employees.

2. All persons on any level who receive information for transmittal must share responsibility for passing it on as uniformly as possible. For example, a project manager who is given the responsibility for informing his employees and residents about an action which will affect all employees and residents in the authority must attempt to coordinate his communications with those of other project managers. Failure to do so could result in employees and residents in his project receiving their information second-hand from employees or residents in other projects.

3. If it is decided to inform people about an event, the information should be sent as quickly as possible to avoid the effects of rumor, gossip and conjecture. For example, a decision to modernize a project which will result in the temporary or permanent relocation

of residents should be communicated promptly before residents have
an opportunity to fill in the missing information by guessing and
starting rumors about what is to happen.

Who Should Be Told?

If the information to be communicated affects more than one person, all
who are equally in need of the information must be told. People who are for-
gotten are likely to be resentful.

Who Should Tell?

Telling or informing is accepted best at the project level from the pro-
ject manager, provided the project manager is viewed as being in charge. The
closer the sender is to the intended receiver both in a physical and psycho-
logical sense, the better the chances that the communication will be well
received. Good communication practice should provide for using the same
channels for all communications whenever possible. For example, it would be
poor practice to have the executive director send communications which resi-
dents and employees would view as good news, while requiring project managers
to send communications which would be viewed as bad or upsetting news.

Where choice is possible in who should tell, information should be sent
by a person who is highly acceptable personally and who has a record for
telling things clearly, interestingly and acceptably to the listener. At the
same time, remember that residents and employees occasionally like to hear
from top officials.

What Should Be Communicated?

Tell people those facts most calculated to make them feel that they be-
long, that they are informed, so that they can fully identify themselves with
their jobs or with the project.

Tell those things that will make employees and residents have a feeling both of opportunity and security, that will remove wonderment, anxiety and aimless questions that make for confusion and indifference.

Select those things to tell that people will take pride in knowing, which will help satisfy their needs for attention, status, and feelings of importance.

It is good practice to let employees and residents know about those things which they will eventually learn for themselves. Do this to tell the facts constructively, truthfully and shaped to an intended purpose before they become distorted through lack of information.

How to Communicate

Success in communication depends upon gaining acceptance of what is said. Therefore, the manager as a sender must carefully plan not only what to tell but how to tell it so as to gain maximum acceptance. One of the best ways to gain acceptance is to give reasons - reasons that have meaning to those being informed.

When persuasion is needed, the spoken word can be more effective than the printed word. Speaking presents more opportunity to observe individual reactions and adapt a presentation to gain required ends.

If the details of the presentation are complex, or, if the facts are those which employees or residents may not wish to believe, the speaker will have to follow up by reviewing and retelling.

Keep channels of communication open both ways by inviting listener responses. Whenever possible, project managers should provide occasions for thorough discussions among residents and employees about important communications.

In planning to communicate, always try to use more than one medium. A meeting that is reinforced by a letter sent to a resident's home, or a poster placed on the project bulletin board, or some form of written notice is far more effective than an announcement that receives only one form of treatment.

Some Principles of Good Communication

In planning to send information to employees and residents, project managers should keep the following principles in mind:

1. Seek to clarify ideas before communication. The more systematically one analyzes the problem or idea to be communicated, the clearer it becomes. This is the first step toward effective communication. Many communications fail because of inadequate planning. Good planning must consider the goals and attitudes of those who will receive the communication and of those who will be affected by it.

2. Examine the true purpose of each communication. Identify the most important goal and then adapt language, tone, and total approach to serve that specific objective. Don't try to accomplish too much with one communication. The sharper the focus of the message, the greater its chances of success.

3. Consider the total physical and human setting whenever communicating. Meaning and intent are conveyed by more than words alone. Many other factors influence the overall impact of communications, and the manager must be sensitive to the total setting in which he communicates. Consider, for example, the sense of timing, the circumstances under which an announcement is made or a decision is rendered; the physical setting - - whether communication takes place in private, or otherwise; the social climate that pervades the climate within the development or within the office and sets the tone of communications; custom and past practice - - the degree to which the

communication conforms to, or departs from, the expectations of the listeners. Be constantly aware of the total setting in which communication takes place.

4. Consult with others, when appropriate, when planning communications. Frequently it is desirable or necessary to seek the participation of others in planning a communication or in developing the facts on which to base it. Consulting with key employees and key residents often helps to lend additional insight and objectivity to a message. More importantly, those who have helped plan a communication will be in a position to give it their active support.

5. Be mindful of the overtones as well as the basic content of the message. Tone of voice, expression, and apparent receptiveness to the responses of others all have tremendous impact on listeners. Frequently overlooked, these subtleties of communication often affect a listener's reaction to a message even more than its basic content. Similarly, choice of language - - particularly fine shades of meaning and emotion in words used - - predetermines in large part the reactions of listeners.

6. Take the opportunity, when it arises, to convey something of help or value to the receiver. Consideration of the other person's interests and needs, trying to look at the things from his point of view, will frequently point up opportunities to convey something of immediate benefit or of long range value to him. People are most responsive to the manager whose messages take their own interest into account.

7. Send follow-up messages to get feedback. The best efforts in communication may be wasted and one may never know whether or not he succeeded in expressing his true meaning and intent, if he does not follow-up to see how well he has put the message across. This can be done by asking questions, by encouraging the receiver to express his reactions, by follow-up contacts,

or by subsequent review of performance. Make certain that every important communication gets feedback so that complete understanding and appropriate action result.

8. Communicate for tomorrow as well as for today. Communications are aimed primarily at meeting the demands of an immediate situation. They must also be planned with the past in mind if they are to maintain consistency in the receiver's view. They must also be consistent with future interests and goals. For example, it is not always easy to communicate frankly with a resident on such matters as inappropriate behavior or the shortcomings of children. However, postponing disagreeable communications makes their transmission more difficult in the long run, and is actually unfair to the manager, to the residents, and to the authority.

9. Be sure actions support communications. In the final analysis, the most persuasive kind of communication is not what is said but what is done. When a manager's actions and attitudes contradict his words, people tend to discount what he has said. This means that managers must make sure that residents thoroughly understand their responsibilities and are able to carry them out and enforce policy fairly and impartially in practice as well as in words.

Feedback

Feedback is probably the least understood aspect of communications. Part of the reason for this lies in the fact that we tend to think of communications in terms of the more common and formalized methods of communicating.

Feedback is communication to a group or person regarding the effect that group's or that person's behavior has on another person. These effects may involve perceptions, feelings, or reactions. Feedback is not criticism. While criticism is evaluative, feedback is descriptive. Feedback provides the

individual with information he can use in performing his own evaluation. If the individual is not being evaluated, he is not as likely to react defensively. Other characteristics of useful and helpful feedback are:

1. It is specific rather than general. To be told that one is "dominating" will probably not be as useful as to be told "just now, when we were deciding the issue, you did not listen to what others said, and I felt I had to agree with your arguments or face attack from you."

2. It is focused on behavior rather than on the person. It is important that we refer to what a person does rather than to what we think or imagine he is. Thus, we might say that "you sat in a chair and watched others work this morning," rather than say that "you are lazy."

3. It takes into account the needs of the receiver of the feedback. Feedback can be destructive when it serves only the provider's own needs and fails to consider the needs of the person on the receiving end. Telling a person, for example, that he is "good for nothing" may satisfy one's own need to express anger or frustration or to hit back. Such information, however, is of no use to the other person and can be destructive.

4. It is directed towards behavior which the receiver can do something about. Frustration is only increased with the mention of some shortcoming over which he has no control or a physical characteristic about which he can do nothing.

5. It is solicited, rather than imposed. Feedback is most helpful when the receiver himself has asked the kind of question that those observing him can answer.

6. It involves sharing ideas and information rather than giving advice. By sharing ideas and information, one leaves a person free to decide for himself, in accordance with his own goals and needs. When one gives advice, he tells another what to do, and to some degree takes away the other's freedom to decide for himself. In giving advice, the provider runs the risk that in rejecting the advice, the receiver may also reject other useful parts of the feedback.

7. It is well timed. In general, feedback is most useful at the earliest opportunity after the given behavior (depending, of course, on the person's readiness to hear it, and the amount of support available from others). The reception and use of feed-back involves many possible emotional reactions. Excellent feed-back presented at an inappropriate time may do more harm than good.

8. It involves the amount of information the receiver can use rather than the amount one would like to give. To overload a person with feedback is to reduce the possibility that he may use what he receives effectively. When one gives more than can be used by the person at a given time, he is probably satisfying some need of his own rather than trying to help the other person.

9. It concerns what is said or done or how it is said or done, not why. The why takes us from the observable to the inferred and involves assumptions regarding the person's motive or intent. Telling a person what his motivations or intentions are more often than not tends to anger the person and contributes to a climate of suspicion and distrust. It is always dangerous to assume that we know why a

person says or does something or what he really means or what
he is really trying to do. For example, if a person's behavior
is hurting us, appropriate feedback would be to say "you are
hurting me" rather than to say "you are trying to hurt me."

10. It is checked to insure clear communication. One way of doing
this is to try to have the receiver rephrase the feedback he has
received to see if it corresponds with what the sender has in mind.

Managers have two principal responsibilities with respect to feedback:

1. They must accept responsibility for providing prompt and helpful
feedback to the people for whom they are responsible and to whom
they are responsible. This includes recognizing that failure to
give direct feedback is in itself a form of negative feedback. For
example, if an employee or resident is doing something which is
incorrect, without feedback he can assume that his behavior is
appropriate.

2. They must assume responsibility for obtaining as much useful in-
formation about their own acts and behavior as is possible. Getting
such information gives managers the opportunity to 1) increase their
self-awareness, 2) determine the consequences of their behavior, and
3) change or modify their behavior if desired.

In order to get feedback a manager needs to encourage and support
those who try to provide it. Good feedback requires frankness, which is often
avoided because it is difficult or unpleasant. If a manager wants others
to be frank with him, he has to make it safe and comfortable for them.
Being a manager and holding the power to hire, fire and/or evict people

makes frankness extremely risky for employees and residents. Managers should convince them that it is safe to be frank by accepting any feedback they offer gracefully, by not becoming defensive or hostile because of it, by showing acceptance and appreciation for feedback, and by attempting to make use of the feedback in some manner. In this way a climate of trust and confidence and of mutual acceptance and support can be built in which frankness will be an acceptable and valued behavior.

Methodology

1. The material on listening, the communications model, communicating, and feedback should be presented in an informal lecture, with periods for questions and answers.

2. After the lecture on communication, participants should be asked to complete Task 1-A.

3. After the lecture on feedback, participants should be asked to complete Task 1-B.

Resources

1. Workshop staff should conduct the informal lectures and the group tasks.

INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE - TASK 1-A

RUMOR CLINIC:
A COMMUNICATIONS EXPERIMENT

Goal

To illustrate distortions which may occur in transmission of infor-
mation from an original source through several individuals to a final
destination.

Group Size

Unlimited. There should be a minimum of eight participants.

Time Required

Thirty minutes.

Materials

I. Copies of the rumor-clinic observation form for process observers.

II. Newsprint and a felt-tipped marker.

Physical Setting

I. A meeting room. All observers are seated facing an area where the
rumor clinic is staged.

II. A separate room in which volunteers can be isolated.

Process

I. The facilitator asks for six volunteers. (The rest of the group
remains to act as process observers.)

II. Five of the six volunteers are asked to go into the isolation room.
One remains in the meeting room with the facilitator and the observers.

III. The facilitator distributes rumor-clinic observation forms to the
observers, who are to take notes on the proceedings.

IV. He then reads the "accident report" on the observation form to the volunteer, who may not take notes on what he hears.

V. The facilitator asks a volunteer in the isolation room to return.

VI. The first volunteer repeats to the second what he heard from the facilitator. It is important that each volunteer transmit the message in his own way without help.

VII. A third volunteer returns, and the second repeats what he heard from the first.

VIII. The process is repeated until all volunteers but the sixth have had the message transmitted to them.

IX. Then the sixth volunteer returns to the room. He is told that he is to assume the role of policeman. The fifth participant repeats the message to the policeman. Afterwards, the policeman writes the message on newsprint so the group can read it.

X. The facilitator then posts the original message (previously prepared on newsprint) so it can be compared with the policeman's version.

XI. Observers are asked to report their notes. Volunteers then discuss their experience. The facilitator leads a discussion with the entire group on implications of the Rumor Clinic.

Variations

I. The succession of messages can be recorded (either audio or video) for replay during the processing.

II. The message can be rewritten to be more pertinent to the particular group.

III. A brief silent film, "Fidelity of Report," can be used as the message. (See '72 Annual, page 246, for a reference.)

IV. The entire group can be used as conveyors of messages. (No observers are used.) Groups of six are formed, and five persons from each group are sent to the isolation room. The facilitator reads the message to the remaining participants. One member from each group is brought back into the meeting room at the same time to receive the message. The final members simultaneously write the message for all to see.

RUMOR-CLINIC OBSERVATION FORM

Accident Report: "I cannot wait to report this accident to the police. I must get to the hospital as soon as possible."

"The delivery truck, heading south, was turning right at the intersection when the sports car, heading north, attempted to turn left. When they saw that they were turning into the same lane, they both honked their horns but continued to turn without slowing down. In fact, the sports car seemed to be accelerating just before the crash."

Volunteer	Additions	Deletions	Distortions
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6 (Policeman)			

Listening and Feedback Exercise

Objectives: 1. To enable participants to experience how it feels to devote their entire attention to listening.

2. To enable participants to experience how it feels to have someone's individual attention.

3. To enable participants to practice giving and receiving feedback.

Method: 1. Divide the group into threes (#1s, #2s, and #3s).

2. Have #1s talk to #2s for five minutes about the events that led up to their being in their present occupation.

3. Instruct #2s that they are to listen to the #1s for the purpose of feeding back to #1s everything they said, word for word.

4. Instruct #3s to observe the #1s and #2s and comment on their performance after #2 has finished giving his or her feedback to #1.

5. Rotate the roles so that everyone talks, listens, and observes.

6. Have members discuss their experience. Relate points they bring out to the material on listening, communicating, and giving feedback.

POST-TEST

POST TEST: WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. *Indicate whether the following items should or should not be done when listening.*

	Should Be Done	Should Not Be Done
a. Listen on request b. Show the person he is accepted c. Ask questions as soon as they arise d. Give good advice e. Listen actively f. Interpret words for the person g. Disapprove honestly h. Listen for non-verbal signals i. Argue positions that are correct j. Joke about errors k. Listen according to instructions l. Listen when asked m. Listen for feelings n. Hold questions until the person is finished o. Give no advice		

2. *Below is a model of the communications process. Match the items beneath it with their definitions:*
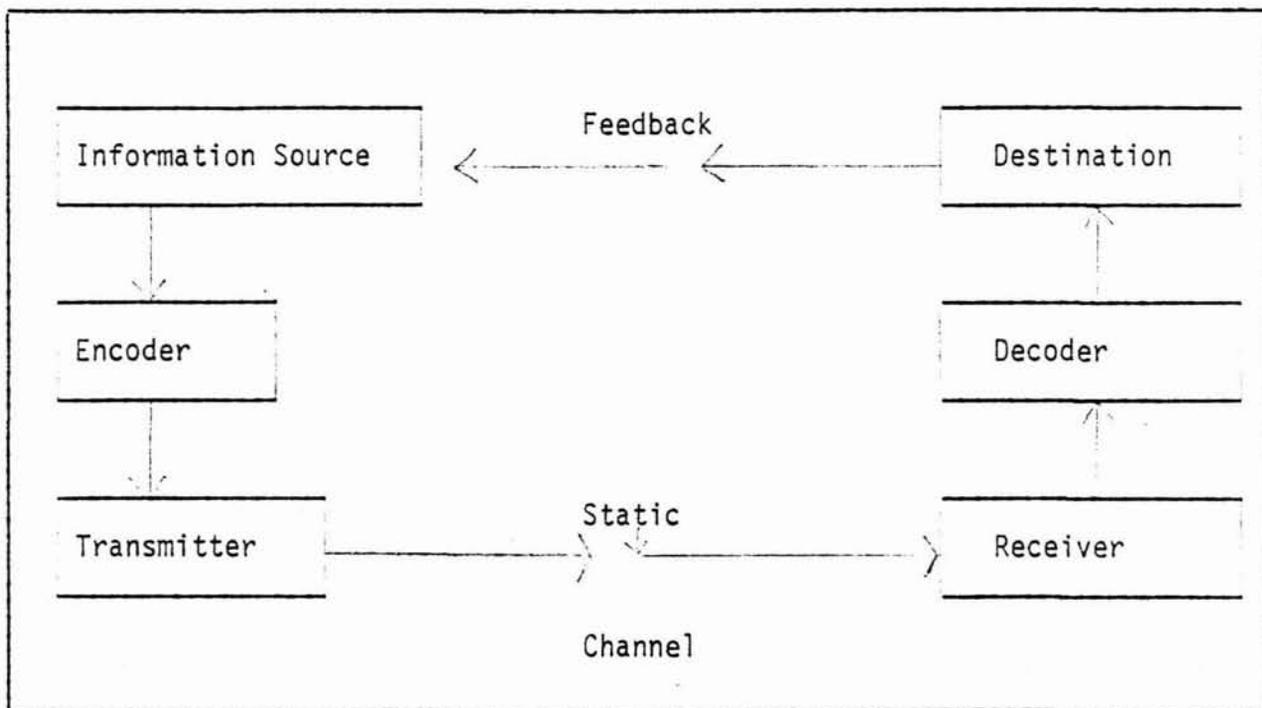
_____ Information Source

_____ Decoder

_____ Receiver

_____ Feedback

_____ Encoder

_____ Transmitter

_____ Destination

a. Where information is transposed into signs and codes suitable for transmission.

b. Decides on what meaning is to be exchanged and on what arrangements of information will most accurately convey the intended meaning.

c. The device which projects the encoded signals over a medium or channel.

d. Picks up and registers the encoded signal.

e. Reconverts messages from codes back into signs.

f. Where decoded information is delivered.

g. Reversal of roles of the components.

3. Answer True (T) or False (F) to the following questions.

_____ a. All people employed in a development must recognize the value and importance of communications.

_____ b. Persons who are affected by information should hear it before others who are not affected.

_____ c. Avoid telling bad news to residents; this is the basis for malicious rumors.

_____ d. Even if residents or employees will eventually learn of unpleasant news, keep it from them as long as possible.

_____ e. Success in communication depends on gaining acceptance of what is said.

_____ f. The broader the focus of a message, the greater chance it will have of being communicated to many different people.

_____ g. Clarify ideas before communicating.

_____ h. Communications need not necessarily be followed by supportive actions.

_____ i. Communications must be planned with reference to the past to insure consistency in the receiver's view.

4. List the two responsibilities of managers with respect to feedback.

(a) _____

_____

_____

(b) _____

_____

_____

ANSWERS TO POST-TEST:

1. Participants were asked to indicate whether the following items should or should not be done when listening.

	Should Be Done	Should Not Be Done
a. Listen on request	X	
b. Show the person he is accepted	X	
c. Ask questions as soon as they arise		X
d. Give good advice		X
e. Listen actively	X	
f. Interpret words for the person		X
g. Disapprove honestly		X
h. Listen for non-verbal signals	X	
i. Argue positions that are correct		X
j. Joke about errors		X
k. Listen according to instructions	X	
l. Listen when asked	X	
m. Listen for feelings	X	
n. Hold questions until the person is finished	X	
o. Give no advice	X	

2. b, e, d, g, a, c, f

3. a. True
   b. True
   c. False   Rumors arise through <u>lack of</u> information.
   d. False   This leads to eventual distortion and mistrust.
   e. True
   f. False   The sharper the message, the less room for distortion.
   g. True
   h. False   When actions and attitudes contradict words, people discount the communication.
   i. True
   j. False   People are most responsive when messages concern their personal welfare.

4. a. To provide prompt and helpful feedback to the people for whom they are responsible and to whom they are responsible.

   b. To obtain as much useful information about their own acts and behavior as possible.

SKILL TEST

SKILL TEST: CAN YOU APPLY WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED TO WORK SITUATIONS?

1. *Read the following case study:*

Mrs. Smith came to the management service office to see Mr. Jones, the housing manager. Mr. Jones was reading a maintenance report and asked Mrs. Smith to have a seat until he was through. After ten minutes, Mr. Jones asked Mrs. Smith if there was anything he could do to help her. He didn't seem to notice how tense she was. Mrs. Smith answered that she needed help managing her oldest daughter. Recently, the girl's grades in school had begun to fall and she was in trouble with the truant officer. Mr. Jones asked how old she was. Mrs. Smith paused a moment and answered "sixteen." She stated that the girl also had a steady boyfriend and that she was afraid she might get pregnant. She asked Mr. Jones for advice on what to do. She indicated that she was very upset and nervous lately.

Mr. Jones pointed out to Mrs. Smith that it was silly to get so upset over such a minor problem. He pointed out that many girls her daughter's age had "steady" boyfriends and that nothing came of such relationships. He reassured her that all she needed to do was put her daughter on the pill and make her stay in to study for two or three hours every evening. If her daughter's grades did not improve, then Mrs. Smith should cut her allowance.

Does Mr. Jones need to improve his listening skills? How?

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. *Develop a model of the communications process. Be sure it contains the following elements:* ENCODER, STATIC, FEEDBACK, DESTINATION, CHANNEL, TRANSMITTER, INFORMATION SOURCE, DECODER, AND RECEIVER
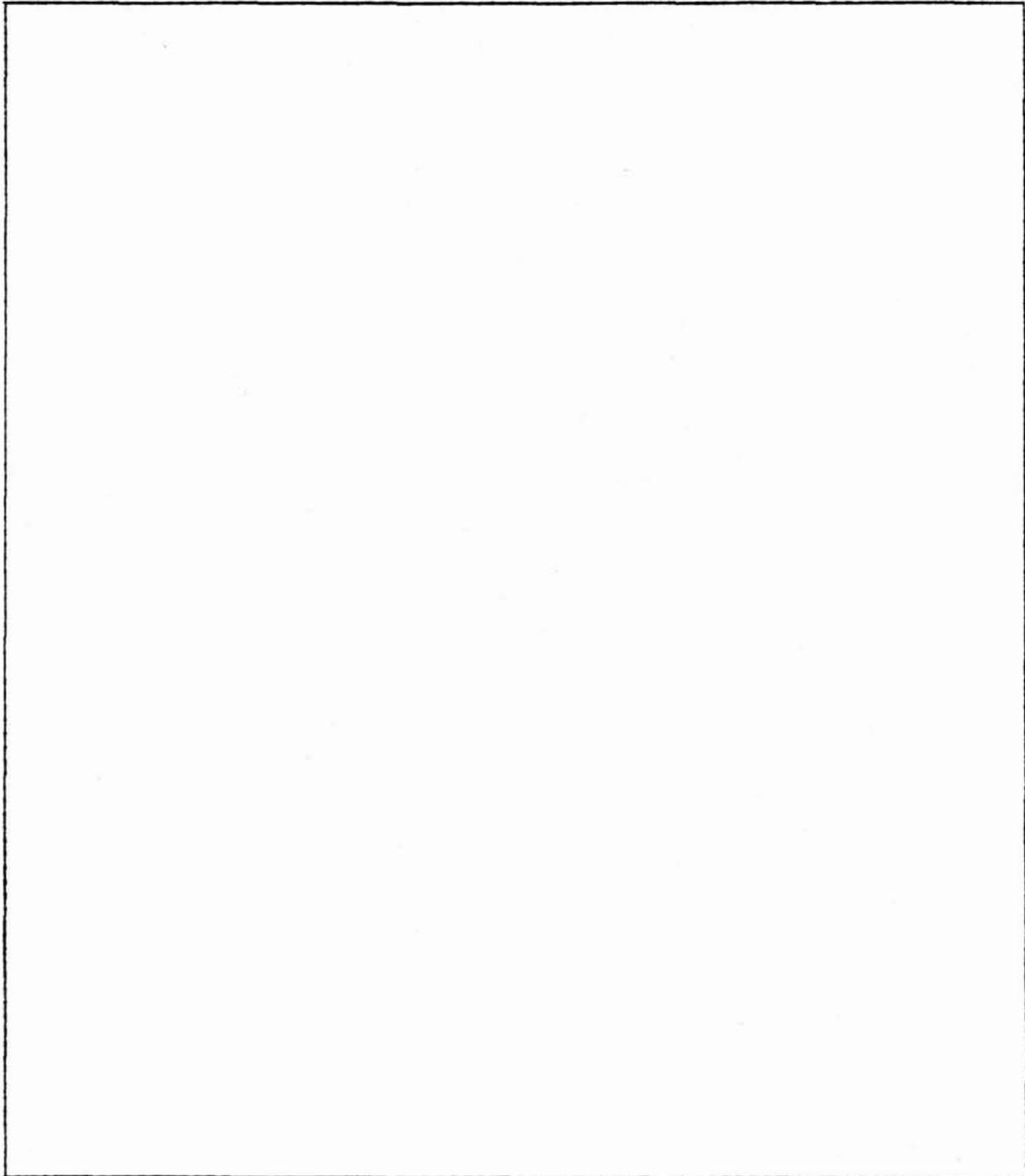
3-4. *Read the following case study:*

Mr. Jones scheduled a staff meeting for Friday afternoon at 4:45 to review personnel policies with the office staff. He had noticed that many workers were coming in late or overstaying their lunch breaks. Mr. Jones had intended to prepare his remarks beforehand; but having been called to a luncheon meeting, he didn't have time to do so. He arrived at the meeting a little late, and addressed the staff off-the-cuff.

He told the staff that he had noticed lately that attendance patterns were somewhat hit or miss. He reminded them that working hours were from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. with forty-five minutes for lunch. He added that he was going to start asking staff to sign time sheets again, and that this time he was going to stick with such a policy.

Noting that the room was hot and crowded, and that it was 5:05, Mr. Jones ended the meeting, wishing everyone a good weekend.

How would you improve Mr. Jones communication (and feedback) skills?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

ANSWERS TO SKILL TEST:

1. Mr. Jones:

    (a) Should have talked with Mrs. Smith immediately.
    (b) Should have probed for information needed to clarify Mrs. Smith's problem - What was her relationship like with her daughter? Was the daughter's father living at home? If so, what was their relationship like? Did the daughter have any plans for her education?
    (c) Should have helped Mrs. Smith deal with her feelings.
    (d) Should not have given direct advice.
    (e) Should have listened for non-verbal signals - Mrs. Smith's tenseness.
    (f) Should have avoided asking questions before Mrs. Smith was through.
    (g) Should not have interpreted what Mrs. Smith meant by "steady" without seeking feedback.
    (h) Should not have belittled her concern.

2. A Sample Communications Model

Information Source	← Feedback	Destination
Encoder		Decoder
Transmitter	Static →	Receiver

Channel
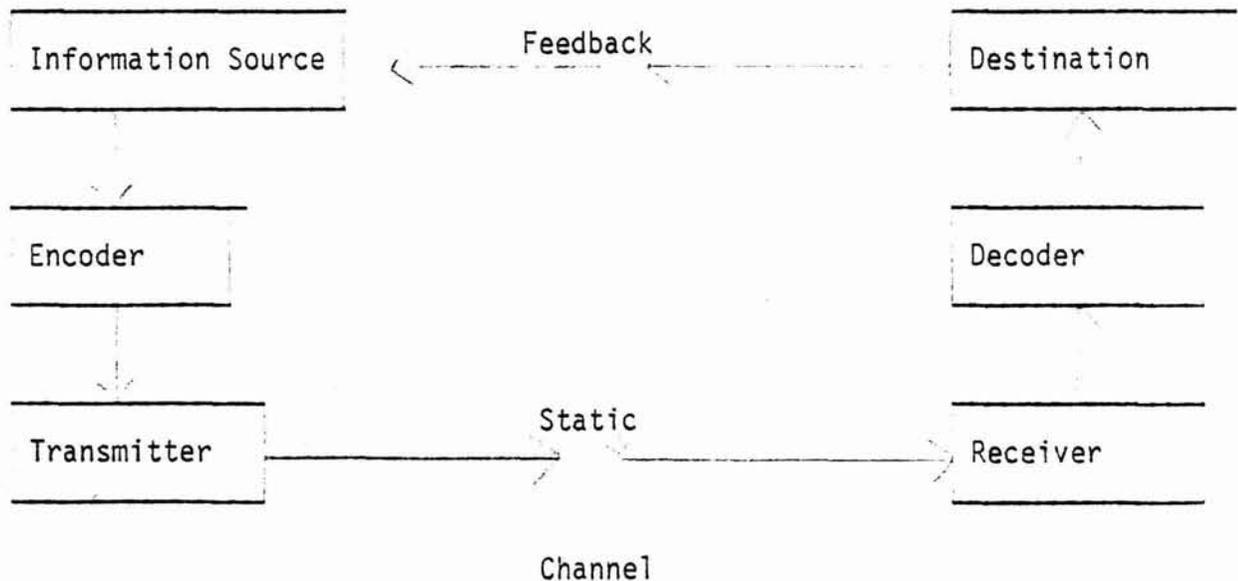
3-4. Mr. Jones:

    (a) Should have been sure to clarify his thoughts before communicating.

    (b) Should have focused his message more sharply. Stating merely that "attendance is somewhat hit or miss" is too vague.

    (c) Should hold meetings in roomy, well-ventilated rooms.

    (d) Should not hold meetings right before quitting time on Fridays.

    (e) Should support his words with actions. Staff probably left the meeting thinking that this new storm would blow over shortly and that they then could stop signing time sheets again.

    (f) Should have improved his handling of feedback by asking for reactions to his new policy and by asking staff if they understood the new policy.

OPTIONAL GROUP EXERCISES

THE GIFT OF HAPPINESS: EXPERIENCING POSITIVE FEEDBACK

Goals

 I. To promote a climate of trust, self-worth, and positive rein-
forcement within a small group.

 II. To experience giving and receiving positive feedback in a non-
threatening way.

Group Size

Six to ten participants who have had some experience together as
a group.

Time Required

Approximately five minutes per participant and about thirty minutes
for processing.

Materials

Pencils and paper.

Physical Setting

Tables or desk chairs (if not available, use lapboards or other
solid writing surfaces). Participants should be located around the
room so that a sense of privacy is preserved while writing.

Process

 I. The facilitator distributes pencils and paper. Each participant
receives enough paper to write a message to each other member
of the group.

 II. The facilitator makes a statement such as the following: "It is
often possible to enjoy a small gift more than a large one. Yet,
we sometimes become so concerned about not being able to do great
things for each other that we neglect to do the little things that
can also be very meaningful. In the following experience we will
all be giving a small gift of happiness to each person in this
group."

III. The facilitator then invites each participant to write on a slip of paper a message to each other member of the group. The messages are intended to make that person feel positive about himself.

IV. The facilitator recommends several possible approaches to giving positive feedback so that participants can find appropriate means of expression even for individuals whom they do not know well or do not feel close to. He may tell the participants to:

1. Try to be specific. Say, "I like the way you smile at everyone when you arrive," rather than, "I like your attitude."

2. Write a special message to fit each person rather than a comment that could apply to several persons.

3. Include every participant, even if you are not too well acquainted with them. Choose whatever it is about the person that you respond to most positively.

4. Try telling each person what you have observed as his real strength or notable success in the group, why you would like to know him better, or why you are glad to be in the group with him.

5. Make your message personal. Use the other person's name, state your message in the first person, and use such terms as "I like," or "I feel."

6. Tell each person what it is about him that makes you a little happier. (The facilitator may wish to distribute or post such guidelines.)

V. Participants are encouraged to sign their messages, but they are given the option of leaving them unsigned.

VI. After each message is finished, the facilitator asks the participants to fold it once and place the name of the recipient on the outside. He asks them to distribute their messages to a place designated by each participant as his "mailbox."

VII. When all messages have been delivered, the facilitator invites participants to share the feedback that was most meaningful to them, to clarify any ambiguous messages, and to express the feelings they have experienced during the process.

Variations

    I. Participants may be permitted to send messages only to those persons toward whom they have significant positive feelings.

    II. The content can be changed to negative feedback. One alternative is to have two phases, one positive and the other negative. The order of the phases can be reversed.

    III. Participants can be focused on one at a time. The other members can write messages to an individual while he is predicting what feedback he will receive.

    IV. The process can be generalized to include almost any content. Examples: "What I can't say to you is ...," "You are the (superlative adjective) person in this group," "I want you to ...," "I rank you _____ in closeness to me in this group because . . . ."

    V. Actual gifts may be exchanged as symbolic feedback. Participants can be instructed to bring to the session a personal gift that is significant to them. They may also be asked to leave the meeting to find symbolic gifts, such as flowers, stones, leaves, books, pictures, etc.

NOTES ON THE USE OF "THE GIFT OF HAPPINESS":

LISTENING TRIADS: BUILDING COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS

Goals

    I. To develop skills in active listening.

    II. To study barriers to effective listening.

Group Size

    Unlimited number of triads.

Time Required

    Approximately forty-five minutes.

Materials

    I. Listening Triads Topics for Discussion Sheet for each participant.

    II. Listening Triads Questions for Discussion Sheet for each participant.

Physical Setting

    Room large enough for triads to be seated apart to avoid noise interference.

Process

    I. The facilitator briefly discusses the goals of the activity.

    II. Triads are formed.

    III. Participants in each triad identify themselves as A, B, or C.

    IV. The facilitator distributes copies of the topics for discussion.

    V. The following instructions are given by the facilitator:

        1. Participant A is the first speaker and chooses the topic to be discussed from those listed.

2. Participant B is the first listener.

3. Participant C is the first referee.

4. The topic chosen is to be discussed by the speaker. It is important that he be sensitive to the capacity of the listener. They can establish nonverbal cues for pacing the discussion.

5. The listener must summarize in his own words and without notes.

6. If the summary is thought to be incorrect, both the speaker and the referee are free to interrupt and correct any misunderstanding.

7. The referee is to make certain that the listener does not omit, distort, add to, respond to, or interpret what the speaker has said.

8. The total process of speaking and summarizing shall take seven minutes in each round.

VI. Round 1 is begun. The facilitator stops the process after seven minutes in each round.

VII. Participant B then becomes the speaker, participant C the listener, and participant A the referee. The new speaker chooses his topic and begins. Round 2 should also take seven minutes.

VIII. Then C becomes the speaker, A the listener, and B the referee. After seven minutes, the discussion in Round 3 ends.

IX. The facilitator distributes copies of the Listening Triads Questions for Discussion Sheet, and triads discuss their process. Then generalizations about barriers to effective listening are elicited from the entire group.

Variations

I. Topics for discussion may be generated within the group. The facilitator may ask, "What are some topics about which there is likely to be disagreement within this group?" Suggestions are posted for use in the exercise.

II. Participant expectations about the training event can be discussed within the listening triads format.

III. Instead of only one speaker during each of the three rounds, there can be two speakers. Each must paraphrase what he hears before he responds. (The role of referee rotates from round to round.)

IV. Instead of telling the speaker what is heard, the listener can report what he remembers to the referee, with the speaker free to interrupt.

V. A fourth round can be added, in which each of the participants speaks about and listens to another topic. This three-way conversation is a practice session for using what is learned in the earlier rounds.

VI. Whenever two participants do not seem to be speaking and/or listening effectively to each other, the facilitator may referee or ask the entire group to referee.

VII. During Round 1, the listener can be instructed to "parrot" the speaker, repeating word-for-word. In the second round the listener paraphrases, and in the third round the listener reflects the feelings being expressed by the speaker. A final round incorporates all three listening modes.

NOTES ON THE USE OF "LISTENING TRIADS":

LISTENING TRIADS TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION SHEET

Each speaker chooses <u>one</u> topic.

1. Capital punishment

2. Prison reform

3. Drug use and abuse

4. Women's liberation

5. Foreign policy

6. Ecology

7. The new morality

8. Interracial marriage

9. Premarital and extramarital sex

10. Cohabitation

11. All-volunteer army

12. Political reform

13. Divorce

14. Homosexuality

15. The open classroom

16. The profit motive

LISTENING TRIADS QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION SHEET

1. What difficulties did you experience in each of the roles - - speaker, listener, and referee?

2. What barriers to effective listening emerged during the exercise?

3. What did you learn about the effectiveness of your self-expression?

4. What applications might you make of this paraphrasing technique?

BEHAVIOR DESCRIPTION TRIADS: READING BODY LANGUAGE

Goals

    I. To practice describing nonverbal behavior objectively, without interpretation.

    II. To study the body language messages that accompany verbalization.

    III. To alert group members to the variety of signals they use to communicate.

Group Size

    Unlimited number of triads.

Time Required

    Approximately fifteen minutes.

Physical Setting

    A room large enough to permit triads to work separately, without distraction.

Process

    I. The facilitator briefly discusses the goals of the activity.

    II. Triads are formed.

    III. Participants in each triad identify themselves as A, B, or C.

    IV. Round 1. Participants A and B stand facing each other. For two minutes A describes all of the nonverbal behavior of B. (The facilitator may demonstrate by rapidly describing the body language of another person.) Participant C acts as a referee to insure that A is nonevaluative and noninterpretive in his description. The triad then discusses Round 1. Feelings, interpretations, and other observations may emerge.

    V. Round 2. The process is repeated, with B describing C's behavior and A acting as referee. Then they discuss the experience.

    VI. Round 3. The process is repeated again, with C describing A and with B acting as referee. Then they discuss the experience.

VII. Triads link up with one or two other triads to process the exercise. During this phase of the meeting, participants should observe all messages emitted, both verbal and nonverbal.

Variations

I. Participants can be instructed to add their interpretations to their observations.

II. Participants can focus on symbols, instead of nonverbal behavior. They may describe (and interpret) clothes, hair, jewelry, etc.

III. A two-person interchange can be videotaped for replay before an audience, which can read the body language of the participants. The sound can be turned off during the replay.

NOTES ON THE USE OF "BEHAVIOR DESCRIPTION TRIADS":

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION INVENTORY

Being an effective communicator seems to be based on five interpersonal components: (1) an adequate self-concept, the single most important factor affecting people's communication with others; (2) the ability to be a good listener, a skill which has received little attention until recently; (3) the skill of expressing one's thoughts and ideas clearly—which many people find difficult to do; (4) being able to cope with one's emotions, particularly angry feelings, and expressing them in a constructive way; and (5) the willingness to disclose oneself to others truthfully and freely. Such self-disclosure is necessary for satisfactory interpersonal relationships. (See the "Self-Disclosure Questionnaire" by Sidney M. Jourard in this section of the *Annual*.)

In recent years, several research techniques and devices have been developed in a number of areas involving the study of interpersonal communication: marriage counseling, parent-child counseling, group therapy, and small-group communication.

The "Interpersonal Communication Inventory" (ICI) is applicable generally to social interaction in a wide variety of situations. It is an attempt to measure general tendencies in interpersonal communication and it may be used as a counseling tool, as a teaching device, as a supplement to an interview, by management, or for further research.

A 54-item scale measures the process of communication as an element of social interaction; it is not intended to measure content but to identify patterns, characteristics, and styles of communication.

The items included were drawn from a review of the literature in the field and from the author's counseling experience and his work on related communication scales.

The instrument is probably best suited for individuals of high school age or older. It can be adapted to either sex and any marital status.

Items in the ICI are designed to sample the dimensions of self-concept, listening, clarity of expression, difficulties in coping with angry feelings, and self-disclosure.

This instrument is closely linked to Dr. Myron R. Chartier's article, "Five Components Contributing to Effective Interpersonal Communications," which appears in the Lecturettes section of this *Annual*. The lecturette discusses and develops aspects of the "Interpersonal Communication Inventory."

Engaged in on-going research, the author would like to collaborate with others using the ICI. He has also developed a guide to the ICI which may be obtained from him upon request.

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Bienvenu, M. J., Sr. Parent-adolescent communication and self-esteem. *Journal of Home Economics*, 1970, 62, 344-345. (b)

Bienvenu, M. J., Sr. An interpersonal communication inventory. *The Journal of Communication*, 1971, 21 (4), 381-388.

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION INVENTORY
Millard J. Bienvenu, Sr.

This inventory offers you an opportunity to make an objective study of the degree and patterns of communication in your interpersonal relationships. It will enable you to better understand how you present and use yourself in communicating with persons in your daily contacts and activities. You will find it both interesting and helpful to make this study.

Directions

- The questions refer to persons *other than your family members or relatives.*

- Please answer each question as quickly as you can according to the way you feel *at the moment* (not the way you usually feel or felt last week).

- Please do not consult anyone while completing this inventory. You may discuss it with someone after you have completed it. Remember that the value of this form will be lost if you change *any* answer during or after this discussion.

- Honest answers are very necessary. Please be as frank as possible, since your answers are confidential.

- Use the following examples for practice. Put a check ($\checkmark$) in *one* of the three blanks on the right to show how the question applies to your situation.

	Yes (usually)	No (seldom)	Some-times
Is it easy for you to express your views to others?			
Do others listen to your point of view?			

- The **Yes** column is to be used when the question can be answered as happening *most of the time* or usually. The **No** column is to be used when the question can be answered as *seldom* or *never*.

  The **Sometimes** column should be marked when you definitely cannot answer **Yes** or **No**. *Use this column as little as possible.*

- Read each question carefully. If you cannot give the exact answer to a question, answer the best you can but be sure to answer each one. There are no right or wrong answers. Answer according to the way *you* feel *at the present time*. Remember, do not refer to family members in answering the questions.

	Yes (usually)	No (seldom)	Some-times
1. Do your words come out the way you would like them to in conversation?			
2. When you are asked a question that is not clear, do you ask the person to explain what he means?			
3. When you are trying to explain something, do other persons have a tendency to put words in your mouth?			

	Yes (usually)	No (seldom)	Some-times
4. Do you merely assume the other person knows what you are trying to say without your explaining what you really mean?	_____	_____	_____
5. Do you ever ask the other person to tell you how he feels about the point you may be trying to make?	_____	_____	_____
6. Is it difficult for you to talk with other people?	_____	_____	_____
7. In conversation, do you talk about things which are of interest to both you and the other person?	_____	_____	_____
8. Do you find it difficult to express your ideas when they differ from those around you?	_____	_____	_____
9. In conversation, do you try to put yourself in the other person's shoes?	_____	_____	_____
10. In conversation, do you have a tendency to do more talking than the other person?	_____	_____	_____
11. Are you aware of how your tone of voice may affect others?	_____	_____	_____
12. Do you refrain from saying something that you know will only hurt others or make matters worse?	_____	_____	_____
13. Is it difficult to accept constructive criticism from others?	_____	_____	_____
14. When someone has hurt your feelings, do you discuss this with him?	_____	_____	_____
15. Do you later apologize to someone whose feelings *you* may have hurt?	_____	_____	_____
16. Does it upset you a *great deal* when someone disagrees with you?	_____	_____	_____
17. Do you find it difficult to think clearly when you are angry with someone?	_____	_____	_____
18. Do you fail to disagree with others because you are afraid they will get angry?	_____	_____	_____
19. When a problem arises between you and another person, can you discuss it without getting angry?	_____	_____	_____
20. Are you satisfied with the way you settle your differences with others?	_____	_____	_____
21. Do you pout and sulk for a long time when someone upsets you?	_____	_____	_____
22. Do you become very uneasy when someone pays you a compliment?	_____	_____	_____

	Yes (usually)	No (seldom)	Some- times
23. Generally, are you able to trust other individuals?			
24. Do you find it difficult to compliment and praise others?			
25. Do you deliberately try to conceal your faults from others?			
26. Do you help others to understand you by saying how you think, feel, and believe?			
27. Is it difficult for you to confide in people?			
28. Do you have a tendency to change the subject when your feelings enter into a discussion?			
29. In conversation, do you let the other person finish talking before reacting to what he says?			
30. Do you find yourself not paying attention while in conversation with others?			
31. Do you ever try to listen for meaning when someone is talking?			
32. Do others seem to be listening when you are talking?			
33. In a discussion is it difficult for you to see things from the other person's point of view?			
34. Do you pretend you are listening to others when actually you are not?			
35. In conversation, can you tell the difference between what a person is saying and what he may be feeling?			
36. While speaking, are you aware of how others are reacting to what you are saying?			
37. Do you feel that other people wish you were a different kind of person?			
38. Do other people understand your feelings?			
39. Do others remark that you always seem to think you are right?			
40. Do you admit that you are wrong when you know that you are wrong about something?			

Total Score

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION INVENTORY
SCORING KEY AND NORMS

Instructions: Look at how you responded to each item in the ICI. In front of the item write the appropriate weight from the table on this page. For example, if you answered "Yes" to item 1, you would find below that you get three points; write the number 3 in front of item 1 in the inventory and proceed to score item 2. When you have finished scoring each of the forty items, add up your total score. You may wish to compare your score to the norms listed below.

	Yes	No	Sometimes		Yes	No	Sometimes
1.	3	0	2	21.	0	3	1
2.	3	0	2	22.	0	3	1
3.	0	3	1	23.	3	0	2
4.	0	3	1	24.	0	3	1
5.	3	0	2	25.	0	3	1
6.	0	3	1	26.	3	0	2
7.	3	0	2	27.	0	3	1
8.	0	3	1	28.	0	3	1
9.	3	0	2	29.	3	0	2
10.	0	3	1	30.	0	3	1
11.	3	0	2	31.	3	0	2
12.	3	0	2	32.	3	0	2
13.	0	3	1	33.	0	3	1
14.	3	0	2	34.	0	3	1
15.	3	0	2	35.	3	0	2
16.	0	3	1	36.	3	0	2
17.	0	3	1	37.	0	3	1
18.	0	3	1	38.	3	0	2
19.	3	0	2	39.	0	3	1
20.	3	0	2	40.	3	0	2

Means and Standard Deviations for the ICI

Age Groups	Males	Females
17-21	Mean 81.79 S.D. 21.56 N. 53	Mean 81.48 S.D. 20.06 N. 80
22-25	Mean 86.03 S.D. 14.74 N. 38	Mean 94.46 S.D. 11.58 N. 26
26 and up	Mean 90.73 S.D. 19.50 N. 56	Mean 86.93 S.D. 15.94 N. 45
All Age Groups by Sex	Mean 86.39 S.D. 19.46 N. 147	Mean 85.34 S.D. 18.22 N. 151

All Age Groups:
Males and Females
Combined

Mean 85.93
S.D. 19.05
N. 298

GIVING FEEDBACK: AN INTERPERSONAL SKILL

Philip G. Hanson

The process of giving and asking for feedback is probably the most important dimension of laboratory education. It is through feedback that we can learn to "see ourselves as others see us." This, of course, is not an easy task. Effectively giving and receiving feedback implies certain key ingredients: caring, trusting, acceptance, openness, and a concern for the needs of others. Thus, how evaluative, judgmental, or helpful feedback is may finally depend on the personal philosophy of the individuals involved. Nevertheless, giving feedback is a *skill* that can be learned and developed and for which certain useful guidelines exist.

The term "feedback" was borrowed from rocket engineering by Kurt Lewin, a founder of laboratory education. A rocket sent into space contains a mechanism that sends signals back to Earth. On Earth, a steering apparatus receives these signals, makes adjustments if the rocket is off target, and corrects its course. The group can be seen as such a steering mechanism, sending signals when group members are off target in terms of the goals they have set for themselves. These signals—feedback—can then be used by an individual to correct his course. For example, a person's goal may be to become more aware of himself and to learn how his behavior affects others. Information from the group can help him to ascertain whether he is moving toward this goal. If he reacts to criticisms of his behavior by getting angry, leaving the room, or otherwise acting defensively, he will not reach his goal. Group members may help him by saying, "George, every time we give you feedback, you do something that keeps us from giving you further information. If you continue this kind of behavior, you will not reach your goal." If George responds to

the "steering" of the group by adjusting his direction, he can again move toward his target. Feedback, then, is a technique that helps members of a group achieve their goals. It is also a means of comparing one's own perceptions of his behavior with others' perceptions.

Giving feedback is a verbal or nonverbal process through which an individual lets others know his perceptions and feelings about *their* behavior. When *soliciting* feedback, an individual is asking for others' perceptions and feelings about *his* behavior. Most people give and receive feedback daily without being aware of doing so. One purpose of laboratory training is to increase the awareness of this process so that it can be engaged in intentionally rather than unconsciously.

INFORMATION-EXCHANGE PROCESS

Between two people, the process of exchange goes something like this: Person A's *intention* is to act in relation to person B, who sees only person A's *behavior*. Between his intention and his behavior comes an encoding process that person A uses to make his behavior congruent with his intentions. Person B perceives person A's behavior, interprets it (a decoding process), and intends to respond. Between person B's intention and his responding behavior an encoding process also occurs. Person A then perceives person B's responding behavior and interprets it. However, if either person's process is ineffective, the receiver may respond in a manner that will confuse the sender. Although the feedback process can help an individual discover whether his behavior is congruent with his intentions, the process focuses on *behavior* rather than on *intentions*. An individual's intentions are private; unless he explains them, other people can only conjecture

what those intentions are. One of the most confusing aspects of communication is that people tend to give feedback about other people's *intentions*, rather than their *behavior*. Causing further confusion is the fact that many people perceive behavior as being negatively intended, when in fact it is not. It is often difficult to see that the sender's intentions may not be what they are perceived to be.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR FEEDBACK

In many feedback exchanges, the question of ownership frequently arises: How much responsibility should the giver assume for his behavior and the receiver for his response? If person A behaves so that he evokes a negative response (feedback) from person B, how much ownership should each assume for his part of the interaction? Some people are willing to assume more than their share of the responsibility for another person's responses, while others refuse to own any responsibility for their behavior.

For example, an individual may be habitually late for group meetings and may receive feedback concerning members' negative reactions to this behavior. His response is to point out to the group members their lack of tolerance for individual differences. He says that they are limiting his freedom and that they seem to be investing too much responsibility in him for the group's effectiveness. He states that he wants to be involved in the group, but he does not understand why they need him to be on time.

This situation presents a value dilemma to the group; his observations are accurate, but his behavior is provocative. One clarification of this dilemma is to point out that, while an individual owns only his behavior, the reactions of others inevitably affect him. To the extent that he cares about the others or his relationship with them, he must consider their responses.

Concern for the needs of others as well as one's own is a critical dimension in the exchange of feedback. Ownership or responsibility for one's behavior and the consequences of that behavior overlap between the giver and receiver of feedback. The problem lies in reaching some mutual agreement concerning where one person's responsibility ends and the other's begins.

GUIDELINES FOR USING FEEDBACK

It is possible to minimize a person's defensiveness in receiving feedback and to maximize his ability to use it for his personal growth. Regardless of how accurate feedback may be, if a person cannot accept the information because he is defensive, then feedback is useless. Feedback must be given so that the person receiving it can *hear* it in the most objective and least distorted way possible, *understand* it, and choose to *use* it or *not use* it.

The following guidelines are listed as if they were bipolar, with the second term in each dimension describing the more effective method of giving feedback. For example, in one group George, intending to compliment Marie, says to her, "I wish I could be more selfish, like you." Marie might respond, "Why, you insensitive boor, what do you mean by saying I'm selfish?" George might then get defensive and retaliate, and both people would become involved in the game of "who-can-hurt-whom-the-most." Instead, Marie might give George feedback by stating her position in another way. That is, she could say, "When you said, 'I wish I could be more selfish, like you,' I felt angry and degraded." This second method of giving feedback contains positive elements that the first does not.

Indirect vs. Direct Expression of Feelings

When Marie stated that George was an insensitive boor, she was expressing her feelings indirectly. That statement might imply that she was feeling angry or irritated, but one could not be certain. On the other hand, Marie expressed her feelings directly when she said, "I felt angry and degraded." She committed herself, and there was no need to guess her feelings. If Tom says to Andy, "I like you," he is expressing his feelings directly, risking rejection. However, if he says, "You are a likeable person," the risk is less. Indirect expression of feelings is safer because it is ambiguous. Andy might guess that Tom likes him, but Tom can always deny it. If Andy rejects Tom by saying, "I am happy to hear that I am likeable, but I do not like you," Tom can counter, "You are a likeable person, but *I* do not like you." Indirect expression of feelings offers an escape from commitment.

"You are driving too fast" is an indirect expression of feelings. "I am anxious because you are driving too fast" is a direct expression of feelings. Indirect statements often begin with "I feel that . . ." and finish with a perception or opinion, for example, "I feel that you are angry." This is an indirect expression or perception and does not state what "I" is feeling. Instead, "I am anxious because you look angry" expresses the speaker's feelings directly and also states a perception. People frequently assume that they are expressing their feelings directly when they state opinions and perceptions starting with "I feel that . . . ," but they are not.

Interpretation vs. Description of Behavior

In the original example in which Marie said to George, "When you said, 'I wish I could be more selfish, like you,' I felt angry and degraded," Marie was describing the behavior to which she was reacting. She was not attributing a motive to George's behavior, such as "You are hostile," or "You do not like me." When one attributes a motive to a person's behavior one is interpreting that person's *intention*. Since his intention is private and available only to him, interpretation of his behavior is highly questionable. In addition, one person's interpretations probably arise from a theory of personality that may not be shared by the other person. For example, if William is fidgeting in his chair and shuffling his feet, and Walter says, "You are anxious," Walter is interpreting William's behavior. Walter's theory of personality states that when a person fidgets in his chair and shuffles his feet, he is manifesting anxiety. Such a theory interposed between two people may create a distance between them or act as a barrier to understanding. If, instead, Walter *describes* William's behavior, William may interpret his own behavior by saying, "I need to go to the bathroom."

In any event, interpreting another person's behavior or ascribing motives to it tends to put that person on the defensive and makes him spend his energies on either explaining his behavior or defending himself. It deprives him of the opportunity to interpret or make sense of his own behavior and, at the same time, makes him dependent on the interpreter. The feedback, regardless of how much insight it contains, cannot be used.

Evaluative vs. Nonevaluative Feedback

Effective feedback to George was not accomplished by calling him names such as "insensitive boor" or, in other words, evaluating him as a person. When giving feedback, one must respond not to the personal worth of the person but to his *behavior*. When someone is told that he is "stupid" or "insensitive," it is extremely difficult for him to respond objectively. He may sometimes *act* stupidly or *behave* in an insensitive way, but that does not mean that he is a stupid or insensitive person. Evaluating a person casts one in the role of a judge and places that person in the role of being judged. In addition, a frame of reference or set of values is imposed that may not be applicable to, or shared by, other people. That is, the person making the evaluation assumes that he can distinguish between a "good" person and a "bad" person or between "right" and "wrong," and that if the receiver of the feedback does not exemplify these values, the sender will be unhappy with him.

Response to Evaluative Feedback

It is difficult for anyone to respond to evaluative feedback because it usually offends his feelings of worth and self-esteem. These are core concepts about ourselves that cannot be changed readily by feedback, nor can they be easily interpreted in terms of actual behavior. It is difficult, for example, to point out to an individual the specific behaviors that manifest low self-esteem. If a person is given feedback that he is "stupid," he may not know what *behaviors* to change. It is the person's observable behavior and not his self-esteem that must be responded to when giving feedback.

An additional problem with evaluative feedback is that it often engenders defensiveness. When this occurs, the feedback is not likely to be useful.

General vs. Specific Feedback

When Marie responded to George by saying, "When you said, 'I wish I could be more selfish,

like you,' I felt angry and degraded," she was describing a *specific* behavior. If she had said, "You are hostile," she would have been giving feedback in *general* terms; George might not have known to which behavior she was reacting. The term "hostile" does not specify *what* evoked a response in Marie. If George wanted to change he would not know what behavior to change. However, when the sender is specific, the receiver knows to what behavior the sender is responding, which he can then change or modify. Feedback expressed in general terms, such as "You are a warm person," does not allow the receiver to know what specific behavior is perceived as warm. He cannot expand or build on this feedback until he knows which behavior evoked the response "warm."

Pressure to Change vs. Freedom of Choice to Change

When Marie told George that she felt angry and degraded by George's statement, she did not tell him he had to change his behavior. If she or the feedback were important to George, however, he would probably change anyway; if these were not important to him, he might decide not to change. A person should have the freedom to use feedback in any meaningful way without being required to change. When the giver of feedback tells a person to change, he is assuming that he knows the correct standards for right and wrong or good and bad behavior and that the receiver needs to adopt those standards for his own good (or to save the sender the trouble of changing). Imposing standards on another person and expecting him to conform arouses resistance and resentment. The sender assumes that his standards are superior. A major problem in marriages arises when spouses tell each other that they must change their behaviors and attitudes to conform with one or the other partner's expectations and demands. These pressures to change can be very direct or very subtle, creating a competitive, win-lose relationship.

Expression of Disappointment as Feedback

Sometimes feedback reflects the sender's disappointment that the receiver did not meet his expectations and hopes. For example, a group leader may be disappointed that a member did not actualize his potential impact on the group, or a professor may be disappointed in a student's lack of achievement. These situations represent a dilemma. An important part of the sender's feedback is his own feelings, whether they are disappointment or satisfaction; if he withholds these feelings and/or perceptions, he may give the receiver a false impression. If, however, he expresses his disappointment, the receiver may experience this feedback as an indication of personal failure instead of as an incentive to change.

Persistent Behavior

Frequently the complaint is heard that a group member persists in a behavior that others find irritating, despite the feedback he receives. Group members exclaim, "What are we supposed to do? He won't change!" The most the members can do is to continue to confront the offender with their feelings. While he has the freedom not to change, he will also have to accept the consequences of his decision, i.e., other people's continuing irritation at his behavior and their probable punitive reactions. He cannot reasonably expect other group members both to feel positive toward him and to accept the behavior they find irritating. The only person an individual can change is himself. As a by-product of his change, other people may change in relationship to him. As the individual changes, others will have to adjust their behavior to his. No one should be forced to change. Such pressure may produce superficial conformity, but also underlying resentment and anger.

Delayed vs. Immediate Timing

To be most effective, feedback should, whenever possible, be given immediately after the event. In the initial example of the exchange between George and Marie, if Marie had waited until the next day to give feedback, George might have responded with "I don't remember saying that," or if Marie had asked the other group members later they might have responded with only a vague recollection; the event had not been significant to them, although it had been to Marie.

When feedback is given immediately after the event, the event is fresh in everyone's mind. It is like a mirror of the person's behavior, reflected to him through feedback. Other group members can also contribute their observations about the interaction. There is often, however, a tendency to delay feedback. A person may fear losing control of his feelings, fear hurting the other person's feelings, or fear exposing himself to other people's criticisms. Nevertheless, although the "here-and-now" transactions of group life can often be most threatening, they can also be most exciting and growth producing.

Planned Feedback

An exception to this guideline is the periodic feedback session, planned to keep communication channels open. Staff members in work units or departments may have weekly feedback meetings, or a specific time may be set aside for structured or unstructured feedback sessions in one- or two-week workshops. In these scheduled sessions, participants may cover events occurring since the last session or may work with material generated during their current meeting. For this process to be effective, however, the decision to have these feedback sessions should be reached through a consensus of the participants.

External vs. Group-Shared Feedback

When feedback is given immediately after the event, it is usually group shared, so that other members can look at the interaction as it occurs. For example, if group members had reacted to George's statement ("I wish I could be more selfish, like you") by saying, "If I were in your shoes, Marie, I wouldn't have felt degraded" or "I did not perceive it as degrading," then Marie would have had to look at her behavior and its appropriateness. If, on the other hand, group members had supported Marie's feelings and perceptions (consensual validation), her feedback would have had more potency.

Events that occur outside the group ("there-and-then") may be known to only one or two group members and, consequently, cannot be reacted to or discussed meaningfully by other participants. In addition, other group members may

feel left out during these discussions. For example, when a group member is discussing an argument he had with his wife, the most assistance group members can provide is to attempt to perceive from his behavior in the group what occurred in that interaction and to share these conjectures with him. Since, in describing the event, the group member's perception is colored by his own bias and emotional involvement, group members may receive a distorted picture of the argument and may not be able to discriminate between fact and fiction. If the argument had occurred in the group, however, group members could have been helpful since they would have shared the event. Then, if the involved group member had begun describing his perceptions of what happened, other group members could have commented on or shared their perceptions of the interaction.

Use of There-and-Then

In other words, events within the group can be processed by all group members who witness the interaction; they can share their perceptions and feelings about what occurred. This does not mean that group members cannot get *some* value from describing events external to the group and receiving comments from other members. What happens frequently, however, is that the group member describes these events in such a way as to elicit support or confirmation of his own perceptions rather than objective evaluation. Yet this relation of there-and-then events to the here-and-now can often be extremely productive as back-home "bridges." It can also be productive when some members have had long-term relationships with one another. It is important, at these times, to recognize both the necessity and the difficulty of involving other group members in the discussion.

Consistent Perceptions

Shared perceptions of what happens in here-and-now events is one of the primary values of a group. "Group shared" also implies that, ideally, each member has to participate. Frequently a person gets feedback from *one* member in the group and assumes that the rest of the group feels

the same. This is not always a correct assumption. Feedback from only one person may present a very private or distorted picture because that person's perceptions of the event may differ from other group members'. When everyone's reactions are given, however, the receiver has a much better view of his behavior. If the group members are consistent in their perception of the receiver, and this disagrees with the receiver's view of himself, then he needs to look more closely at the validity of his self-perceptions. Frequently the fact that people perceive an individual's behavior differently is useful information in itself. Part of each group member's responsibility is to ask for feedback from members who are not responding so that the receiver will know how everyone sees his behavior. The receiver may have to be somewhat aggressive and persistent in seeking this information. Group members may tend to say "me, too" when their feedback is being given by someone else. When *all* the data have been obtained, the receiver is in a better position to make a more effective decision regarding his use of the feedback.

Imposed vs. Solicited Feedback

In most exchanges, feedback is usually imposed. People give feedback whether it is solicited or not and whether the person is prepared to receive it or not. In addition, the sender's need to give feedback may be much greater than the individual's need to receive it. This is particularly true when the sender is upset about something concerning the potential recipient. In many situations, it is legitimate to impose feedback, particularly when a norm exists for giving as well as for soliciting feedback, or in order to induce a norm of spontaneity. However, feedback is usually more helpful when the person solicits it. Asking for feedback may indicate that the receiver is prepared to listen and wants to know how others perceive his behavior.

In asking for feedback, however, it is important to follow some of the same guidelines as for giving feedback. For example, a person should be specific about the subject on which he wants feedback. The individual who says to the group,

"I would like the group to tell me what they think about me" may receive more feedback than he planned. In addition, the request is so general that the group members may be uncertain about where to begin or which behaviors are relevant to the request. In these cases, other group members can help the receiver by asking such questions as "Can you be more specific?" or "About what do you want feedback?" Feedback is a reciprocal process; both senders and receivers can help each other in soliciting and in giving it. Sometimes it is also important to provide feedback on how a person is giving feedback. If a receiver is upset, hurt, or angry, other group members can say to the sender, "Look how you told him that; I would be angry, too" or "What other way could you have given him the same information without evaluating him or degrading him?" It is desirable to give feedback so that the receiver can preserve his self-esteem.

Many people want to know how their behavior is being perceived by others, but they fear the consequences of asking for such information. How easily a person will ask for feedback is related to the amount of trust in the interpersonal relationship. However, people fear that the receiver will use their feedback (particularly negative feedback) to reinforce his negative feelings about himself. Again, it is sometimes difficult for a person to separate his behavior from his feelings of self-worth.

Unmodifiable vs. Modifiable Behavior

To be effective, feedback should be aimed at behavior that is relatively easy to change. Many individuals' behaviors are habitual and could be described as a personal style developed through years of behaving and responding in certain ways. Feedback on this kind of behavior often is frustrating because the behavior can be very difficult to change.

Feedback on behaviors that are difficult to change may often make the person self-conscious and anxious about his behavior. For example, if the wife of a chain smoker gives him feedback (using all of the appropriate guidelines) about his smoking behavior, it would still be very difficult for him to change. Chain-smoking is a behavior

determined by often-unknown causes. The individual may smoke to reduce his tension level; continuous feedback on his smoking behavior may only increase his tension. Consequently, he smokes more to reduce that tension.

Occasionally, in giving feedback, one must determine whether the behavior represents an individual's life style or results from some unknown personality factors. Sometimes it may be helpful first to ask the receiver whether he perceives his behavior as modifiable. Many behaviors can be easily changed through feedback and the person's conscious desire to change his behavior in order to produce a more effective interpersonal style.

Motivation to Hurt vs. Motivation to Help

It is assumed that the primary motivation of membership in growth groups is to help oneself and others to grow. When an individual is angry, however, his motivation may be to hurt the other person. Frequently, the conflict turns into win-lose strategies in which the goal of the interaction is to degrade the other person. It is difficult when one is angry to consider that the needs of the other person are as important as one's own. Angry feedback may be useless, even when the information is potentially helpful, because the receiver may need to reject the feedback in order to protect his integrity.

Coping with Anger

There are several ways to cope with anger. One is to engage in a verbal or physical attack that frequently increases in intensity. Another method to deal with anger is to suppress it. One consequence of this strategy, however, is that the individual builds internal pressure to the point that he can lose control of his behavior. A third—

and better—method is to talk about personal feelings of anger without assigning responsibility for them to the other person. Focusing on personal feelings may frequently encourage other group members to help the individual. In this way the anger dissipates without either viciousness or suppression. Anger and conflict are not themselves "bad." Angry feelings are as legitimate as any other feelings. Conflict can be a growth-producing phenomenon. It is the manner in which conflict or angry feelings are handled that can have negative consequences. Only through surfacing and resolving conflicts can people develop competence and confidence in dealing with these feelings and situations. Part of the benefit derived from growth groups is learning to express anger or to resolve conflicts in constructive, problem-solving ways.

CONCLUSION

The process of giving feedback obviously would be hampered if one attempted to consider *all* of the above guidelines. Some are needed more frequently than others: i.e., feedback should be descriptive, nonevaluative, specific, and should embody freedom of choice. These guidelines can also be used diagnostically. For example, when the person receiving feedback reacts defensively, some of the guidelines have probably been violated. Group members can ask the receiver how he heard the feedback and help the giver assess how he gave it.

Giving feedback effectively may depend on an individual's values and basic philosophy about himself, about his relationships with others, and about other people in general. Certain guidelines, however, can be learned and are valuable in helping people give and receive effective and useful feedback.

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GIVING FEEDBACK: A CHECK LIST

Rating scales for some of the feedback guidelines in "Giving Feedback: An Interpersonal Skill" are listed below. For each item, draw a circle around the number on each scale that best characterizes your feedback style. Concrete examples for each item are helpful.

1. *Indirect Expression of Feeling.* Not describing your own emotional state, e.g., "You are a very likeable person."   1   2   3   4   5   *Direct Expression of Feeling.* "Owning" your own feelings by describing your emotional state, e.g., "I like you very much."

2. *Attributive Feedback.* Ascribing motives to behavior, e.g., "You are angry with me."   1   2   3   4   5   *Descriptive Feedback.* Observing and describing the behavior to which you are reacting, e.g., "You are frowning and your hands are clenched in a fist."

3. *Evaluative Feedback.* Passing judgment on another person's behavior or imposing "standards," e.g., "You *shouldn't* be so angry."   1   2   3   4   5   *Nonevaluative Feedback.* Commenting on behavior without judging its worth or value, e.g., "Your anger is as legitimate a feeling as any other."

4. *General Feedback.* Stating broad reactions and not indicating specific behaviors, e.g., "You're pretty touchy today."   1   2   3   4   5   *Specific Feedback.* Pointing out the specific actions to which you are reacting, e.g., "When you frowned, I felt anxious."

5. *Pressure to Change.* Implying that people are not behaving according to your standards, e.g., "Don't call me 'Sonny'!"   1   2   3   4   5   *Freedom of Choice to Change.* Allowing others to decide whether they want to change their behavior, e.g., "When you called me 'Sonny' I felt put down."

6. *Delayed Feedback.* Postponing feedback to others' behavior until later, e.g., "I was really hurt yesterday when you ignored me."   1   2   3   4   5   *Immediate Feedback.* Responding immediately after the event, e.g., "I'm feeling hurt because you're not responding to me."

7. *External Feedback.* Focusing attention on events *outside* the group, e.g., "My friends see me as being very supportive."   1   2   3   4   5   *Group-Shared Feedback.* Focusing attention on events that occur *in* the group, e.g., "Does this group see me as being very supportive?"

Share your ratings with your group and solicit feedback from group members as to how they would rate your feedback style. On the basis of your own ratings and the feedback you received from other group members, check those items on which you want to work and on which you want continuing feedback from the group. Giving feedback effectively is a skill that can be developed.

CLARITY OF EXPRESSION IN INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

Myron R. Chartier

"Why can't people get things straight?" is a question often asked when communication breaks down. Since many factors contribute to a lack of clarity in communication, no easy answers are available.

FAULTY ASSUMPTIONS

Misunderstandings between persons can occur because of faulty assumptions people make about communication. Two such faulty assumptions are (1) *"you"* always know what *"I"* mean and (2) *"I"* should always know what *"you"* mean. The premise seems to be that since people live or work together, they are or should be able to read each other's minds. Some people believe that since they are transparent to themselves, they are transparent to others as well. "Since I exist, you should understand me," they seem to be saying. Persons who make this assumption often presume that they communicate clearly if they simply say what they please. In fact, they often leave the persons listening to them confused and guessing about the message being communicated. Misunderstanding is common because clarity of communication does not happen.

A third assumption often made is that communication happens naturally, like walking across a room. The communication process, however, is complex, and achieving a correspondence between messages sent and messages received is difficult. Some people ascribe to a "conveyor belt" theory of communication—meaning moves from one head to another with 100-percent accuracy. The shortcoming of a "conveyor belt" theory of communication, however, is that it suggests that meanings are inherent in the words used or messages sent. However, the meaning one person has is never identical to that which another person has because meanings are in people's minds, not in the words they use. Total accuracy in communication would require that two persons have an identical history of shared experiences. Only then could they perceive exactly the same meaning for a given message. Given the reality of different life experiences, this is impossible.

A DEFINITION OF CLARITY

"Getting things straight" is a difficult communication task; yet people must communicate clearly with each other in order to receive information to accomplish the mundane tasks of life and to experience the depths of dialogue with another person.

Fortunately, absolute clarity is unnecessary; *effective communication is accomplished when the amount of clarity or accuracy achieved is sufficient for handling each situation adequately.* According to information theorists, the purpose of communication is to reduce uncertainty. Total accuracy in communication would lead to an absence of uncertainty. However, uncertainty can never be totally eliminated. Accurate or clear communication, then, is designed to reduce uncertainty in a given situation to a point where necessary understanding can occur.

Certain practical principles and guidelines for reducing uncertainty and increasing the accuracy and clarity in interpersonal communication can be suggested. To achieve greater clarity in

speaking, the individual should have the desire to do so and want to understand the communication process more completely. The communicator can try to analyze and shape his message according to the following factors: sending and receiving, the communication context, encoding a message, and communication channels. Of course, the degree of clarity achieved in a given situation is likely to result from the combined effects of several of these factors. Since communication is a process, the factors being considered are interrelated, making it difficult to differentiate one from another.

SENDING AND RECEIVING

Several principles and guidelines are observable in any attempt to send a clear message from one person to another. These guidelines can be seen in terms of pictures, attitudes, skills, and the frame of reference.

Pictures

A person needs to have a clear picture of what he hopes to communicate to another individual. The preacher needs a proposition to help him know what he is trying to accomplish with a sermon. The teacher needs instructional objectives to help him know what he wants his pupils to learn. The administrator needs both short- and long-range objectives to help him plan organizational goals and interpret them to his colleagues. Well-stated goals or objectives aid the effective communicator in developing a clear picture of what he wants to say.

This first guideline is particularly valid when dealing with complex, ambiguous, or vague topics. If a topic or idea is unclear to the person sending the message, its lack of clarity is likely to be magnified by the person trying to understand it. Although there are times when a person may find interpersonal communication helpful in clarifying the pictures in his own head, it is imperative that the communicator first be clear about his ideas before he attempts to convince or influence others, give data, or share feelings.

Attitudes

Accuracy in communication varies with the attitudes of the communicators toward their topic. If a person's attitudes are very positive or very negative, the resulting communication tends to be less accurate. Indeed, persons often organize data according to their biases.

Communication clarity is also influenced by the attitudes of the communicators toward each other. It seems reasonable that communication between people who respect or love each other would be more accurate. However, research indicates that accuracy is inversely correlated with either positive or negative attitudes that the communicators hold toward each other. Thus, an analysis of the extent of one's positive or negative attitudes toward the topic and toward the listener is important for clarity and accuracy of communication.

Communication Skills

Clarity of communication is also influenced by the extent to which those listening and those sending are aware of their communication skills. It is possible to evaluate the assumptions one holds about his ability to communicate messages. Persons with careless speech communication habits are often convinced that they are successful communicators because they are able to open their mouths and utter a stream of words. Actual skills in interpersonal communication, however, are quite different. An accurate assessment of one's own communication weaknesses and strengths is important. Often, strengths can be maximized and weaknesses improved. One person may have

a sparkling personality that aids him in communication. Another may have a way with words. Yet another may be able to communicate in such a way that others feel he understands them.

The communicator should also try to assess the listening skills of the person receiving the message. Good "hearing" is not necessarily good "listening." As listening is an active rather than a passive process, people's poor listening habits often take the form of daydreaming, defensiveness, inattention, etc.

Psychological Frame of Reference

Because communication is a function of shared or common meanings, meaning does not occur simply because words are spoken. Words have no meaning in and of themselves. Meaning is what people attribute to words; meanings lie within the experiences and feelings of persons. Thus meanings are within people.

Each person is unique. What he is has been determined by his individual experiences and choices in or with his family, friends, school, church, and culture. Each person has his own set of perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. This uniqueness has a profound impact upon the success or failure of communication.

It is impossible to know what another person is sensing or feeling. Because a listener can only guess about the communicator's meaning, it is essential that the person speaking avoid basing his communication on unexamined assumptions about that person.

To assess what he is communicating, the sending person needs to know the psychological frame of reference of the person receiving the message. How does the listener see, feel, and act with respect to others and the world? The psychological frame of reference of a child is quite different from that of an adult. Persons from Maine see life differently than do people from California. Some people prefer to quench their thirst with Pepsi-Cola rather than 7-Up; others choose Dr. Pepper. Some people like Henry Kissinger; others intensely dislike him.

People respond quite differently to the words they hear. One person may react warmly to the words "Jesus saves," while another person may become angry and hostile, and yet another may be indifferent and display no strong sentiment. Indeed, what is clear and rational to one person may seem vague and ridiculous to someone else.

A person can increase the clarity of his communication by constantly trying to place himself inside the psychological framework of the other person. He must try to see the communicative situation from the listener's point of view. If the person communicating understands the other person, he can make his communication more relevant to this person's self-understanding and needs.

COMMUNICATION CONTEXT

A second set of factors affecting the clarity of communication is the context in which communication occurs. Is the setting an office, someone's home, or the golf course? Communicating with a professor in his office is altogether different from communicating with a friend at the bowling alley. The rules in the two situations are distinctly different.

The context of communication is important in determining the amount of accuracy needed or possible between persons in a given situation. How much clarity can be achieved is somewhat determined by the persons' communication skills, the number of communication channels available to the person sending, how much repetition he can incorporate into his message, and the nature of the relationship between the persons communicating. Attempting to communicate with a person in another room presents more difficulties for the clarification process than does speaking face-to-face. In short, the speaker needs to develop a realistic expectation for the degree of clarity obtainable in a given context.

ENCODING A MESSAGE

In order to make ideas clear, an individual must encode his message in order to reduce the amount of uncertainty the other person experiences in hearing that communication. Encoding is the process of translating ideas into a message appropriate for delivery. Once ideas are encoded into messages, they become the potential information that can reduce ambiguity in the other person's mind and produce a clearer picture. There are seven principles for increasing the accuracy and clarity of the messages persons use to communicate.

1. Principle of Relevance

Make the message relevant in the terms of the listening party. The most difficult task related to encoding a message is to assemble it in such a way that the words used accurately reflect the picture one intends and, at the same time, fall within the other person's psychological frame of reference. If a listener is to comprehend the sender's message, he must be able to relate the information he is receiving to what he already knows. Therefore, it is important that the message be presented in a context that says to the listener, "This is important and significant for you." This can be done by using the words of the listening person rather than one's own to encode a message. Such a strategy in communication requires adaptability and flexibility in communication behavior, so that, whether speaking to a child, a teenager, an adult, or persons from different cultural and subcultural backgrounds, the communicator employs appropriate behaviors for sending a clear message.

Just as the encoding of a message should be relevant to the person to whom one is speaking, so should it be appropriate to the situation or the context. The content of a conversation in the privacy of a home is not necessarily appropriate for a discussion at a church committee meeting. Even if the topic were the same in both situations, the message would very likely be encoded quite differently.

2. Principle of Simplicity

Reduce ideas to the simplest possible terms. The communicator should employ as few words as possible to communicate his ideas to a listener. Simplicity of language and economy of words are helpful in facilitating clarity of communication. Generally, the simpler the words, the more likely they are to be understood. However, simplicity really relates to the experience of the person receiving the message. What is simple to one person is complex to another. Theological material that is easily understood by the student of theology may seem quite complicated when presented to the layman in a Sunday morning sermon. The effective communicator calculates the extent to which material must be simplified if it is to be understood by those listening, and he uses the principle of simplicity to make sending messages more successful.

3. Principle of Definition

Define before developing, explain before amplifying. Even simple terms can be unclear. Where would a person go, for example, if someone said, "I'll meet you at the side of the building"? Terms more complicated than "side" increase the need for definition and explanation. The use of jargon also creates problems of clarity for those not acquainted with the words. Unfamiliarity with jargon may cause a person to become confused and frustrated in his efforts to understand. He may even stop trying. Unfamiliar or exceptional terms or concepts need to be defined and explained before they are used to make the communicator's message as clear as possible.

4. Principle of Structure

Organize a message into a series of successive stages. Texts on public speaking emphasize the importance of making apparent the order or structure of a message. A well-organized speech, it is said, will increase the audience's understanding. However, there is little research evidence to support such a contention, especially in regard to face-to-face dialogue. Indeed, most people will structure the message in accordance with their own patterns of thinking even as they listen, regardless of how well a message is organized.

What is important is the clarity of thought and the expression of individual parts. In interpersonal communication it is probably best to develop one idea at a time. A message can be "packaged" into a series of stages, with one stage completed before the next is introduced.

Furthermore, the communicator can help the person listening by not overloading him with information. When persons are asked to comprehend too much, they tend to forget or become confused. By developing one idea at a time and taking one step at a time, the person speaking can facilitate accuracy in communication.

5. Principle of Repetition

Repeat the key concepts of the message. The principle of repetition is important. Very important. The words "very important" were repetitive. They repeated the idea of the second sentence in a slightly different manner in order to make the concept clearer. Repetition is particularly important in oral communication, where words are spoken only once. Obviously a communicator should not repeat everything he says since it would bore the listener. However, the person speaking needs to use enough repetition to ensure clear reception of his ideas. Some possible strategies: (a) repeating key ideas, (b) restating difficult ideas, (c) recycling ideas wherever feedback indicates they are weak or misunderstood, and (d) using examples, synonyms, analogies, or periodic summaries. In short, a person should use intentional repetition in his attempts to achieve clarity.

6. Principle of Comparison and Contrast

Relate new ideas to old ideas; associate the unknown with the known. The principle of comparison and contrast is essential to the achievement of clear communication, as understanding comes most often through association—the perception of similarities and differences among objects, events, and people. A person can understand a new, unknown idea more clearly if he is able to relate it to an old, known one.

Discriminating between those elements that rightfully belong to an idea and those that do not will help a listener understand a concept. Comparison helps individuals to identify the similarities in two or more ideas. Contrast helps to point out the differences in two or more ideas. When accurate discriminations occur, clarity in communication emerges: the sharper the discrimination, the greater the clarity.

Helpful devices for presenting comparisons and contrasts include the use of models, metaphors, analogies, and explanations.

7. Principle of Emphasis

Focus on the essential and vital aspects of the communication. Since the transitory nature of interpersonal communication makes it highly susceptible to loss of information, attention should be given to the essential and vital aspects of a message. Communication goals and key points should be sharply focused so as not to submerge the message in details and make it vague, ambiguous, and blurred. The impact of the significant points of a communication can be heightened by speaking louder, using a different tone of voice, pausing, or using various other techniques to captivate the listener. *Reinforcing and underscoring ideas help in developing such impact.* For example: *this last principle is an important one—remember it and use it.*

Communication strategies based on these principles for developing or sending a message will result in a more accurate correspondence of ideas between persons.

COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Once a message is constructed for sending to another person, it must be sent through a communication channel. Several factors related to communication channels affect clarification in the speaking-listening process. Four of these are discussed here.

Channels Available

An important aspect of communication that affects accuracy and clarity is the number of channels available for sending a message. For example, in a letter only one channel—the written word—is in use. Face-to-face interaction, however, utilizes several channels, e.g., body tension, facial expressions, eye contact, hand and body movements, relative positions of each person, vocal sounds accompanying a verbal message, etc.

To communicate clearly, a person should be aware of the various channels available to him and utilize as many of them as possible. When messages are sent through more than one channel, repetition is increased. As repetition increases, uncertainty is reduced, and the chances for clarity are increased. It is important, however, that whenever multichannel communication occurs, the messages be consistent across all channels or the results will be confusing for the listener.

Feedback

An awareness and use of feedback is important to the communicator. Feedback, which is a term from cybernetic theory, is an essential element in any control process. This phenomenon can be observed in the operation of a self-adjusting camera in which a built-in light meter measures the amount of illumination in the environment and automatically adjusts the camera accordingly. In a comparable manner, feedback can be used to correct and adjust meanings and thus increase communication clarity. A person sending a message should elicit feedback following his communication attempts in order to determine whether the picture received was the one transmitted. On the basis of this feedback, the next step in the communication process can be taken. The following conversation between Joe and Sally is an example of feedback as purposive correction:

Joe: "Feedback is a process of correcting inaccuracy in communication."
Sally: "Do you mean that feedback is simply a process of correcting errors?"
Joe: "Not exactly, although that is a part of what I mean. Feedback is a way of being sure that what I say to you is adequately perceived by you."
Sally: "Now you're really getting complicated. What does 'adequately perceived' mean?"
Joe: "Well, I think 'adequately perceived' means that you understand the idea as I would like for you to understand it."
Sally: "Oh, then you mean that feedback is a device for checking whether or not I got the idea you wanted me to get."
Joe: "Exactly."
Sally: "Do you think I used feedback effectively?"
Joe: "Well, how do you feel about it?"

In the same way that communication clarity can be increased by using a variety of available channels, a number of feedback channels can also be an aid to accuracy.

Noise

Communication accuracy is affected by "noise," a term frequently used to refer to any disturbance that interferes with the sending of a message. Although noise may occur in almost any aspect of the

communication process, such interference appears often as an obstruction in the channel between two interacting persons. The interfering noise may be other people talking, the whir of a vacuum cleaner, or the sound of a lawn mower coming through an open window. The greater the noise, the more difficult it becomes to communicate clearly. For this reason it is important for the communicator to find ways of eliminating or reducing sources of distracting noise.

Speed and Pacing

Clarity of communication is related to how much information a channel can carry and a listener can receive at one time. Because the oral channel requires those listening to depend heavily on their memories for comprehension, it is less effective than other channels for handling large amounts of verbal information. Effective lecturers know that it is the rare audience that can absorb more than one or two new ideas. In contrast, the written channel can carry much more verbal information, as it allows individuals to reconsider the material. Therefore, the speed of oral communication must be determined by the listening persons' rate of comprehension. The communicator should pace his message according to the information-processing capacities of the channel and the hearers.

A SUMMARY OF GUIDELINES FOR CLEAR INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

A person wishing to achieve greater clarity in his interpersonal communication should find the following guidelines helpful.

The communicator seeking to improve his communication clarity should:

1. Have a clear picture of what he wants the other person to understand.
2. Analyze the nature and magnitude of his attitudes toward both the topic and the person with whom he is communicating.
3. Assess his own communication skills and those of the person listening.
4. Seek to identify himself with the psychological frame of reference of the person receiving his ideas.
5. Develop a realistic expectation for the degree of clarity obtainable in a given context.
6. Make the message relevant to the person listening by using that person's language and terms.
7. State his ideas in the simplest possible terms.
8. Define before developing and explain before amplifying.
9. Develop one idea at a time, take one step at a time.
10. Use appropriate repetition.
11. Compare and contrast ideas by associating the unknown with the known.
12. Determine which ideas need special emphasis.
13. Use as many channels as necessary for clarity.
14. Watch for and elicit corrective feedback in a variety of channels.
15. Eliminate or reduce noise if it is interfering.
16. Pace his communication according to the information-processing capacities of the channel and the person listening.

. . . .

"I know you believe that you understand what you think I said, but I am not sure that you realize that what you heard is not what I meant."

. . . .

What is clear to you is clear to you and not necessarily to anyone else.

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