PHOENIX RESEARCH INSTITUTE

BUSINESS STUDIES

Communication

UNIT 11.0 PRINCIPLES AND PROCESS OF COMMUNICATION (5%)

11.1 Nature and purpose of communication
11.2 Communication skills
11.3 Communication process strategies
11.4 Steps to effective communication
11.5 Barriers to effective communication
11.6 Formal Versus Informal communication
11.7 Electronic communication

UNIT 12.0 ORAL COMMUNICATION (5%)

12.1 Effective listening skills
12.2 Effective questioning skills
12.3 Note taking skills
12.4 Effective public presentations and speaking skills
12.5 Preparing for meetings, seminars, conferences and interviews
12.6 Interviewing as a communication tool

UNIT 13.0 WRITTEN COMMUNICATION (10%)

13.1 Types of written communication
13.2 Drafting methods
13.3 Types of reports
13.4 Characteristics of good report writing
13.5 Report writing
13.6 Letter writing
13.7 Public sector written communication
  13.7.1 Internal minutes and Memos
  13.7.2 Cabinet Memorandum

13.7.3 Ministry Circulars

13.8 Effective Curriculum Vitae

13.9 Differences between peer-to-peer communications and those from staff to managers and managers to staff.

UNIT 14.0 VISUAL COMMUNICATION (5%)

14.1 Principles of Visual Communication

14.2 Basic components of Visual Communication

14.3 Design visual aids to advertise corporate identity and design

STRUCTURE OF EXAMINATION PAPER

The examination paper shall be Three-hours long comprising two sections i.e. Sections A and B.

Candidates shall be required to attempt THREE **(3)** questions out of FIVE (5) from Section A and TWO **(2)** questions out of THREE (3) from Section B. Each question shall carry 20 marks.

9 Principles and the process of communications

Overview

Communication is a particularly human attribute that is responsible for the special mutuality that exists among human beings. However, if taken for granted, communication can disrupt the tranquillity being experienced. The accountant communication is more that the human attribute, it is more of the blood life for the business enterprise. Taking it that the organisation involves commercial, technical, security, accounting, financial and management activities, the accountant's role in the enterprise would be bizarre with poor understanding of communication.

Learning Outcomes/Objectives

By the end of this unit, we should be able to:

i) Identify the major aspects of communication

ii) Apply the various modes (medium) of communication available;

iii) Define our intended audiences and Route our communication correctly so as to get the best results;

iv) Evaluate proactively the potential barriers to a particular communication event with a view of taming them before they strike.

Element1. The Nature and Purpose of Communication

1. **What Is Communication – a Definition?**

   Many people who rightly avoid getting entangled in intellectual disputes prefer describing communication to defining it. This is because an attempt to define communication ends in a description of it.

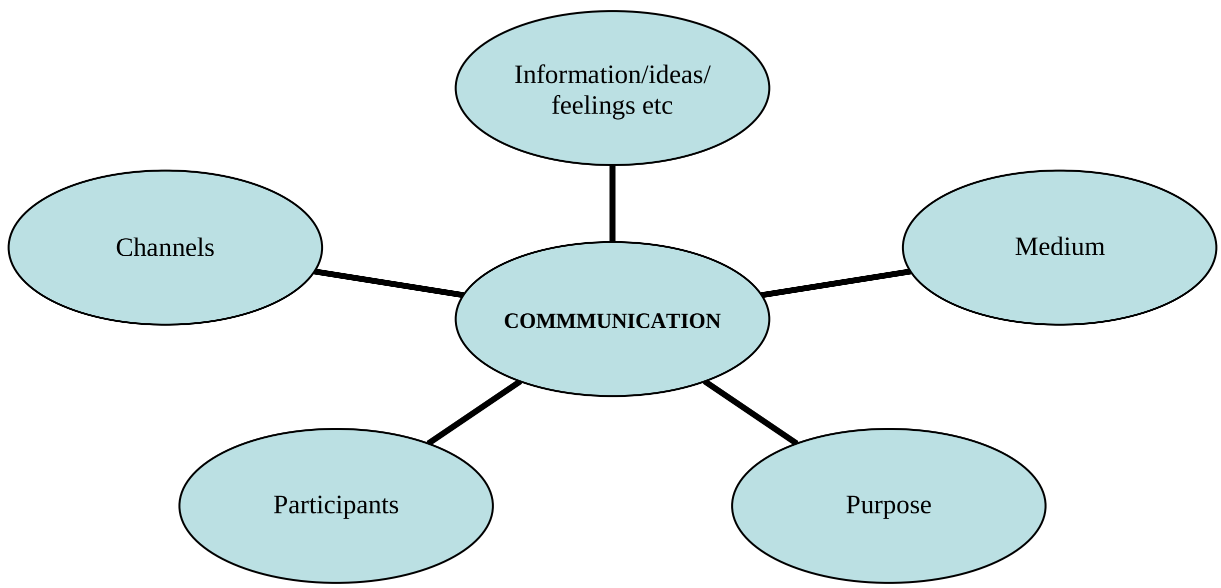
   Those who feel communication is something definable usually fall short of recognising it as a two way process by claiming that it '… is the transmission of …' while others say it '… is the transmission or exchange of …' thereby purporting that 'transmission' means the same as 'exchange,' which is not exactly the case.

The process approach which this module adopts gives freedom to explore communication as a way of doing something rather than a something. However, we will acknowledge that communication is the process of exchanging information, ideas feelings, emotions, beliefs, values and other human possessions between two parties. As a definition this is clearly in adequate because it leaves out various elements that exchange complete. That is why in order to discuss communication more comprehensive, we will proceed by describing what the process entails.

2. Ingredients for Communication

In order for communication to take place, the following ought to be present:

Figure 11.1



a) Participants Roles and Functions

There should at least be two parties one playing the role of sender and the other that of audience. Their respective functions are in Table 11.1 below:

Table 11.1

Sender	Audience
• Feels the need to communicate	• Recognises the self as the target audience for the particular event
• Collects or gathers information	• Receives the message
• Composes the massage	• Interprets the message
• Identifies and defines the audience	• Acknowledges receipt of message
• Chooses the medium and channels	• Accepts/rejects message
• Transmits the message	
• Monitors impact of the message	

b) Information/feelings/ideas etc

These are what kick start the communication. Usually one who has special information, feelings, ideas, or emotions would like to share them with another person or people, thereby giving the need to engage in communication.

Information may be described by:

i. *Subject:*

✓ *Organisational*: - concerning the whole organisation e.g. the conditions of service;

✓ *Technical/Operational*: - concerning performance of a particular task, e.g. salary scale for working out salaries

✓ *Personal*: - concerning an individual employee, e.g. letter of promotion for an employee.

ii. *Security*

✓ *Confidential*: - that with restricted circulation. It may be organisational, or technical or personal;

✓ *Non confidential*: - that which every employee and client may need to know;

iii. *Time frame*

✓ Current: - that which is fresh and relates to the present;
✓ Semi current:- information referring to the immediate past and may be relevant over a period including the immediate future.

- ✓ Archival/non current.- no longer of immediate use but providing part of the organisation's history/legacy. It helps explain some policy

Note that any piece of information can meet all the criteria. For example organisational information can be confidential, or open as well as current or semi current or non current.

c) Purpose

There are many reasons people engage in communication for. Look around you and think of any one of the many instances you have had to initiate communication. What was the motive for that? Most likely what you may have wanted to fulfil would fit into the following range:

i) To share information, thereby reduce the information/knowledge gap that existed between you and your audience whether real or perceived – the *informative purpose*;

ii) To get the other person/people to do something for you – the *instructional* or *persuasive purpose*;

iii) To create the sense of being appreciated as a close ally or member of the family, thus the *integrative role*. This is responsible for creating unity, harmony and social stability;

iv) To see to it that the other person is contributing correctly to activities hence the *regulatory* or *control* function of communication.

d) Medium and Channels

Quite often, the two terms are used so loosely that they begin to appear interchangeable. However, in this module we wish to maintain a distinction in what they are and what role they play in communication. Medium will be taken to refer to the method used in a given communication event while, Channel will refer to the route the message will follow to get to the ultimate audience. Details are given below, under Element 1.4 and 1.5, respectively.

3. The Context of Communication

Communication takes place in a setting which is characterised by a host of factors. The various factors will determine the direction as well as outcome of the communication. Whereas the ingredients of communication (Element 1.2) form part of the context, two others which we label a *types* and *levels* of communication will be considered here.

a) Types of Communication

Focus is on the number of people in the audience, opportunity for audience to share stage with sender, contact methods. These influence communication in their own way. The types in this regard are:

i) Intrapersonal Communication:

This is the internal thought process where the two parties involved in the communication event are both within the same person. The two are the conscious and sub conscious segments of a person's brain. Its main characteristics are:

- ✓ Takes place *twenty four hours a day* – deliberate thoughts as found in planning or involuntary in the subconscious when the individual entertains ideas some of which are out of this world. However, in the subconscious everything is possible. Look at how many times you have found yourself attending meetings with high profile personalities in your dreams;

- ✓ May be *in writing*, e.g. diary entries, work plans; or *vocal* as in people talking to themselves or 'thinking aloud', or *physical* seen when people stop in mid step when they remember something which compels them to change direction, etc

- ✓ Much as the type manifests itself in written, vocal or physical ways, other *people have no access* to the ideas, feelings or whatever is going on in the communicator's mind;

- ✓ The quality of intrapersonal communication is seen through the quality of pronouncements or utterances and decisions made, actions taken, and interpersonal relations achieved. To reveal these the individual comes out of himself and begins to interact with others.

ii) Interpersonal Communication (also called Dyadic Communication)

The individual comes out of the inner self to interact with the people around. In this situation, the sender and audience:

- ✓ Deal with each other on a one on one basis;

- ✓ Are in direct contact with each other;
- ✓ Share the stage equally ie each is able to talk as much as the other;
- ✓ Both are able to seek or provide clarification;
- ✓ Find it easy to negotiate meaning, i.e. they can bargain to arrive at a shared interpretation;
- ✓ Reach out to each other orally or in writing, etc

Interpersonal communication is directly responsible for interpersonal relationships that people create, uphold and enjoy.

iii) Small Group Communication

- ✓ One person is addressing a small group at a time;
- ✓ May be orally (as in committee meetings) or in writing (as in office memos);
- ✓ Enables people to make collective resolutions on matters of corporate or technical nature;
- ✓ Some members of the small group audience may begin to hide behind other members;
- ✓ Decisions from small group communication are more of majority based (and may suffer politics of group interaction), etc.

iv) Public Communication

- ✓ One person addressing a crowd;
- ✓ There is direct contact between sender and audience;
- ✓ May be oral as at rallies and other public addresses, or in writing as in standard letters or circulars;
- ✓ In the oral set up, audience participation is restricted to vocal and/or physical through applause/jeering;

- ✓ In such cases, the speaker is faced with the challenge to read the mood or atmosphere closely so that he/she adjusts the message or tone accordingly;
- ✓ In the written set up, individuals in the audience are not necessarily required to respond let alone reply;
- ✓ Chances of providing and seeking clarification on the part of the sender and audience, respectively is are extremely slim;
- ✓ It is therefore quite risky to make mistakes in this type of communication.

v) *Mass Communication*

- ✓ The individual deals with a perceived but unconfirmed audience, i.e.;
- ✓ The sender has an idea of who the message is meant for but cannot ensure that only those or all who qualify for the message receive it;
- ✓ The participants are separated in space and /or time, as;
- ✓ The contact is through the media – print or electronic;
- ✓ The sender has no idea who the real audience of the message are and therefore cannot tell immediately how the message is received;
- ✓ It is extremely dangerous to make mistakes as the media such as newspapers, radio and television have potential to reach out to many more people than the intended audience;
- ✓ Feedback is usually delayed and can be overwhelming.

> The need to understand types of communication lies in the need for the message to be as neutral as possible the wider the audience because negotiating meaning becomes more challenging with the increasing number of the audience.

b) Levels of Communication

The focus under this is the relationship between participants and the message on the one hand and that between the participants themselves. Of course it is in the business context determined by the degree of formality. The options include:

i) Formal Communication

This is the level where:

- ✓ Interaction is officious and conventional (procedural);
- ✓ The outcome is binding and actionable;
- ✓ Produces record of the interaction;
- ✓ May be slow in getting things done due to procedure;
- ✓ May be oral as in meetings and mostly in all written forms in the office;
- ✓ Common in upward channels of communication where appointment has to be made with the superior by the subordinate and reveals marks of etiquette.

ii) Informal Communication

Here, the interaction is:

- ✓ Less officious hence less procedural as it takes place in a relaxed environment;
- ✓ Usually takes place anywhere any time;
- ✓ Gets things done faster as protocol is set aside;
- ✓ A sign of healthy staff relationships and is therefore encouraged in most organisations;
- ✓ Common in downward channels where superiors encourage subordinates to feel free with them as well a in team action groups;

- ✓ Usually the starting point for many business contracts a people discuss more freely with mutual trust for each other in a casual atmosphere;

- ✓ Formalised to materialise into binding contracts by producing records of agreements entered into under informal settings;

iii) The Grape Vine

The grape vine is a complex phenomenon with more potential for destruction yet with a positive side. For a better appreciation of the grape vine let us discuss it in terms of its characteristics, consequences, causes and ways of managing it:

Table 11.2 Profile of the Grape Vine

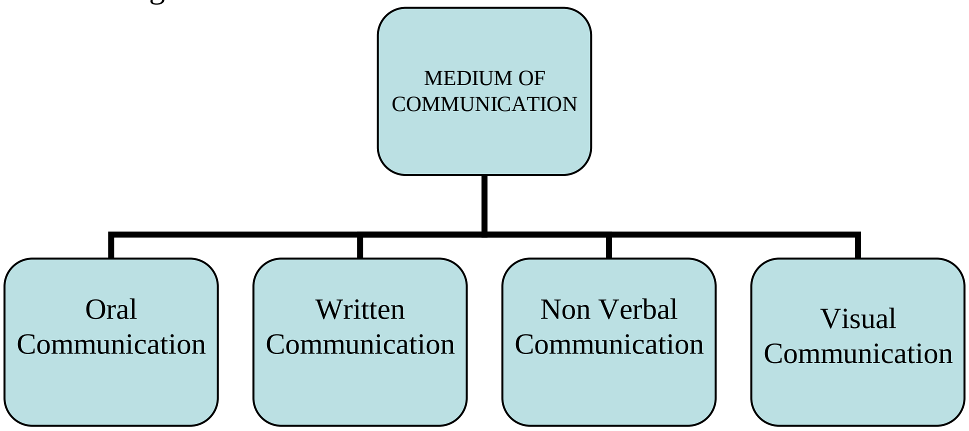
Characteristics	Consequences/Effects	Causes	Managing the GV
✓ illegally accessed information ✓ usually incomplete information ✓ unqualified audience ✓ information treated as special (classified or privileged) ✓ spiced when retold ✓ spreads very fast ✓ roots of not easy to trace	♦ constrains relationships ♦ consumes a lot of production time ♦ spoils quality of work ♦ creates instability ♦ misguides concentration	♦ poor flow of information ♦ too many confidentials ♦ poor processing of information ♦ curiosity & interest in life around us ♦ desire to be at centre of things ♦	✓ Smooth flow of information ✓ Improve interpersonal relations ✓ Mind your own business ✓ Discourage rumour mongers by promising to confirm with subject ✓ Think of the negative effect of the grape vine before indulging in it

NB Rumour mongering is of human nature and cannot be eradicated completely without inflicting fatal results on humanity. However, instead of being negative it can be converted to the advantage of management intelligence whereby employees' feelings on a proposed change can be accessed through the speedy grapevine.

4. Medium

As seen above, medium refers to the method used to communicate in the particular event. The various options of medium are in figure 11.2 below. However, choice of medium depends on a number of factors such as the nature of the message and audience. However, each one of the options is given more detailed coverage in latter Units.

Figure 11.2



5. Channels

As highlighted earlier, the term Channels of communication here is used to denote direction the communication takes. The direction or route is based on the relationship that exists between the sender and the audience as follows

a) Internal Channels

This is the direction taken when communication is among workmates. Usual internal channels may be summarized as follows:

Table 11.3

CHANNELS		AUDIENCE	PURPOSE
Vertical	Upwards	Superiors	✓ To request ✓ Seek permission ✓ Report, etc
	Downwards	Subordinates	✓ To instruct ✓ Consult ✓ Persuade, etc
Horizontal	Lateral	Colleagues	✓ To consult ✓ To advise ✓ Update, etc
Diagonal	Upwards	Colleagues to superiors (one’s seniors who are not in the direct line of command)	✓ To request ✓ Seek permission ✓ Report, etc
	Downwards	Colleagues to subordinates (one’s juniors who are not accountable to him)	✓ To instruct ✓ Consult ✓ Persuade, etc

6. Purpose

Element 2 Communication Skills

Communication skills are basically those skills which enhance/promote effective and efficient communication. To achieve efficient and effective communication, one needs to have both grounding in theoretical knowledge and the technical application i.e. the actual practice. Before we look at communication as a skills based process let us look at skills as competence on the one hand, and skill as performance on the other.

1. **Skill as Competence**

   Competence is associated with the knowledge on a subject that enables one to understand it (subject) in detail and hence be able to do it well. Infant the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines competence as "the ability to do something well."

2. **Skill as Performance**

   Performance looks at the process of doing something. It may be taken to the application or implementation of a particular skill or skills to achieve desired or predetermined goal.

3. **Communication as a Skill Based Process**

   As a process, communication demands both competence and performance. Performance is perhaps the most demanded of the two since one is expected, in fact required to communicate flawlessly. However, for us to communicate flawlessly, we need to possess an average level of understanding communication.

Element 3 Communication Process and Strategies

1. **Key Stages in the Communication Cycle**

   The communication process comprises clear stages which when followed well would ensure smooth communication. Various models have been advanced by different people all of whom, however, share the basic two way nature of communication. One such model that is most satisfactory is presented by Elizabeth Kenrick et al in their book *Longman Guide to Examinations: Business Communication.* The model captures the essential elements of the complete communication cycle (Figure 11.3).

Figure 11.3

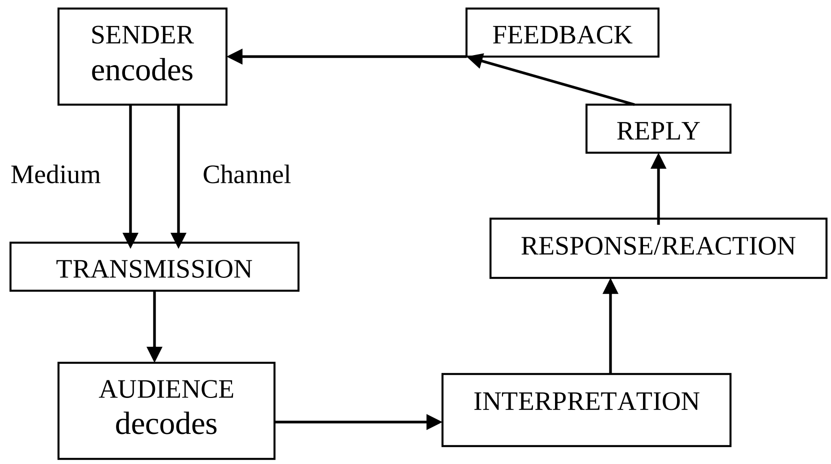


Figure 11.3 might spark controversy especially that it attempts to separate concepts that have all along been taken to be one and the same. Two sets of such are presented here. However, the distinction between *medium* and *channel* has been clarified in earlier sections. What might be the difference between *reaction or response*, *reply* and *feedback*, if any? May be there is no distinction as all refer to ways the audience acknowledge having received the message. It is more a question of at what stage does each one of them come in and what form it takes. Let us consider this scenario:

> Your colleague in one corner of your open plan office calls your name out and asks you to pass over to him the tax index table. Without pausing in your work or looking up you tell him that is fine. However, five minutes pass and your colleague walks over to pick up the tax index

There was complete communication in this short episode. However, of the three ways of acknowledging receipt of message, one clearly took place whereas the one was totally absent and the other was implied. Study the table below and try to identify the three – reaction/response, reply and feedback.

Table 11.4

Acknowledgement	Explanation
Response/reaction	The physical or vocal action confirming that the message has been heard and understood. One never really thinks about this as it is *reflex*. It is not planned.
Reply	This is the *planned* answer you give to someone who speaks or writes to you. This might mean what you really feel or may be for public relations only i.e. to maintain good or bad relations without really hurting or deliberately hurting feelings of the other person. This is what the audience declare in the answer they give.
Feedback	This is the acknowledgement which reflects whether the purpose of the message has been accepted hence followed/acted upon or it has been rejected and therefore ignored. This means then that feedback will always be there because it can be positive (accepted and worked on) or negative (rejected and ignored). Also, it is for the sender to look out for the feedback rather than for the audience to declare it.

Element 4 Barriers to Effective Communication

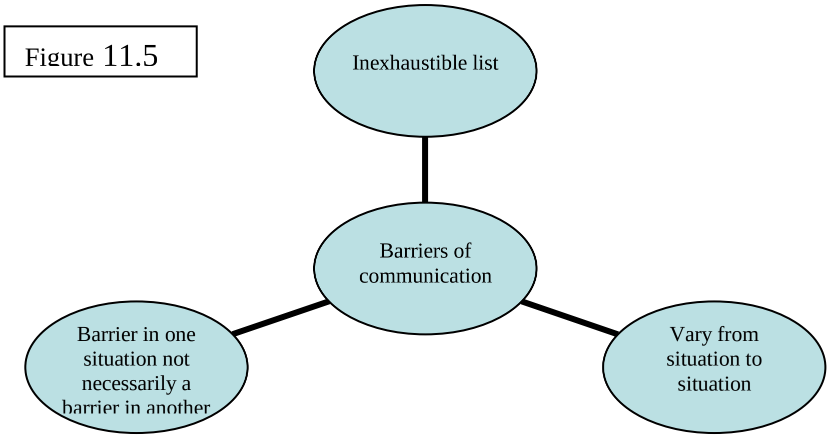
1. What is a Communication Barrier?

   A barrier of communication may be defined as anything that disrupts smooth communication. It is the scapegoat or excuse for uncompleted work or misunderstandings.

2. Nature of Barriers of Communication

   Consider the several occasions when communication breakdown has been the excuse for failure to have certain things done, or having wrong things happening. Can you build up an exhaustive list of causes of the communication breakdown?

Figure 11.5



3. Handling Barriers (Barrier Analysis)

Given that Figure 11.5 is true, attempting to list down standard barriers of communication is not only unnecessary but can also be a fruitless effort. It will therefore be more beneficial to work out more profitable approaches which receive universal application and are practical. One such approach is the three factor analysis encompassing People, the Environment and the Message itself – the PEM model of analysing causes of communication breakdown.

a) People

In many ways, communication breakdown is as a result of the human factor. Notwithstanding psychological interpretation of personality, we can look at some specific aspects of the human being with a direct influence on the success of communication. Have you thought about MASK?

Aspect	Influences
Moods	Moods are a very temporary state of the mind. They turn on and off. A good atmosphere can be instantly spoilt by a silly remark from one of the participants in the communication. Moods are closely associated with the self concept. They tend to distort an individual's perception of things either in the extreme positive or negative sense to make one blind to the truth or seriousness of the issue at hand.
Attitudes	Attitudes are sustained moods ie moods which have an established pattern thereby becoming more regular as a feature of one's state of mind. Attitudes develop from recurrent experience and like moods can make one blind to the true meaning of what is going on.

	Examples of attitudes include prejudice, stereotype, jealousy, envy, to mention a few.
Skills	Skills relate to the ability to do something. Communication is about competence and performance. The sender needs the ability to design a message suitable to the well defined audience, choose the right medium and channels, transmit correctly and accurately assess the impact of the message so as to make relevant follow-ups. The audience on the other hand needs skill in interpreting, acknowledging and applying the received message, as well as seeking or providing appropriate clarification when necessary.
Knowledge	Knowledge of the subject matter relates to correctness and accuracy of the material in the message. The audience is usually trusting of the sender and will take what is said for the truth. Poor knowledge on the part of the sender will usually mislead the audience resulting in wrong things being done or the right things not being done.

b) The Environment

The environment works on the people's moods to either turn them on or off. Such aspects of the environment as physical noise, technical noise, furniture, lighting, air conditioning and distance (both proximity and proxemics), have potential to spoil the communication process if not supportive or conducive.

c) Message

Once released, the message becomes an entity of its own quality independent of the sender. In order for the audience to interpret it correctly the message must be:

i) **Clear** i.e. neither ambiguous nor vague
ii) **Complete**: - providing information to answer the Who, What, When, Where, Why and How questions;
iii) **Concise** – despite being so complete, the message should be as brief and to the point as possible. People have a tendency to see supporting information like examples more easily than the actual point thereby swaying the direction or focus of the communication elsewhere;
iv) **Concrete** – being specific of quantities, time, values, etc. For example, instead of "The meeting will be in the morning", better say "The meeting is at 10.00 hours".

v) **Courteous** – the audience need to be taken into consideration in terms of their capabilities, interests, dignity/pride, etc. Anything that might injure the feelings of the audience would lead to the message being ignored or taken differently. Things like information overload or indeed inadequacy will overburden them or dilute their interpretation capacity, respectively. Even when one has made a mistake, correcting such a person positively would inspire them into feeling grateful that you corrected the mistake what people would mean by "…telling your friend to go hell in such a way that he looks forward to the trip".

vi) **Correct** – the Audience are always willing to believe what one stands up to tell them such that if what they are told is not correct, they will all be misled. One should therefore strive to verify facts before passing them on to the audience.

Element 5 Steps to Effective Communication

1. Benefits of Effective Communication

Benefits which accrue to the individual and organisation with good communication practices are many. The table below highlights some of the benefits arising from effective communication:

Benefits to the Individual	Benefits to the Organisation
✓ Improved knowledge levels ✓ Improved performance ✓ Healthy interpersonal relations ✓	✓ Customer satisfaction ✓ Increased sales ✓ Higher turn over ✓ Good will from customers ✓ Good public image ✓ Improved business opportunities

2. Proactive Approach to Barrier Analysis

The proactive approach to the barriers of communication is perhaps the most practical way of keeping the causes of communication breakdown under control. The cornerstone for this approach lies in the individual's attitude toward what ever they undertake to do, which will oscillate between the *serious* and the *casual*.

The casual attitude encourages one to take everything lightly to such an extent that no serious thought on what might lead to communication breakdown will be considered. This is usually associated with the liaises fair management style in which "fate is left to take care of itself". Usually this is more of a reactive approach.

On the other hand, the serious attitude towards work takes deliberate measures to ensure that every situation is previewed closely even critically so that all likely sources of trouble are identified and corrective action taken. In this way one does not wait for communication to break down first before taking action. Thus, by being proactive through evaluating a coming communication event for likely sources of breakdown, we achieve efficiency and effectiveness.

3. The *KISS* and *PASS* Models

i) *KISS* refers to Keep It Short and Simple. Effectively this principle requires the communicator to keep his message within reasonable length determined by necessity of detail presented. Although people are always willing to listen to a speaker or read whatever is sent to them, the length of the message could have less inspiring effects.

Similarly, a message that is too complicated to comprehend will be resented by the audience. To avoid being to complex, one should adopt a language that is ordinary, common and familiar to the audience. A text which needs a dictionary to be understood will certainly be unpopular. Refer to the following section for more on suitable language.

ii) *PASS*

For communication to be successful and effective, serious consideration of the purpose, audience, structure and style of the communication must be made:

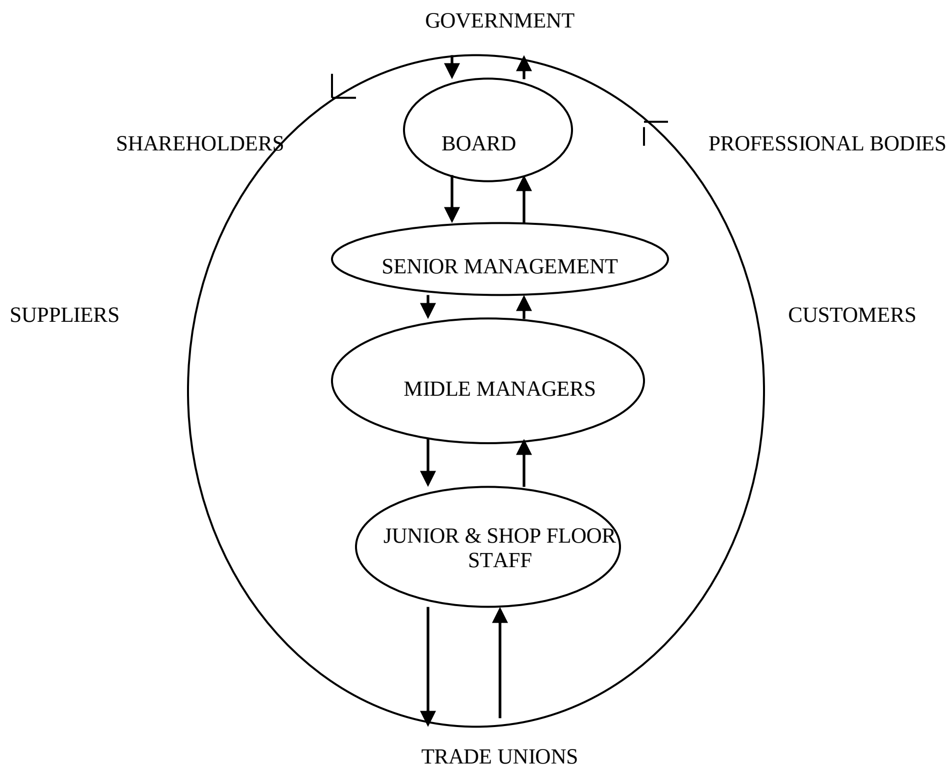
i) **Purpose**: What is the communication meant to achieve – is it to inform, advice, request, soothe, hurt, or what? All effort and detail will be directed towards achieving the set purpose which acts as the motive for the communication. The sender must therefore be clear of the purpose so as to be relevant;

ii) **Audience**: Who is the intended audience of the message? The various methods of analysing the target audience of the communication should be applied so that one can achieve the six Cs discussed above. The audience may be:

♦ **Internal** – the middle set in figure 11.6 (also refer to Element 1.5 above);

♦ **External** – as clients to the organisation being suppliers or consumers of the goods or services the organisation offers or those who monitor quality or standards

Figure 11.6 Full spectrum of Audience in terms of relationship with sender



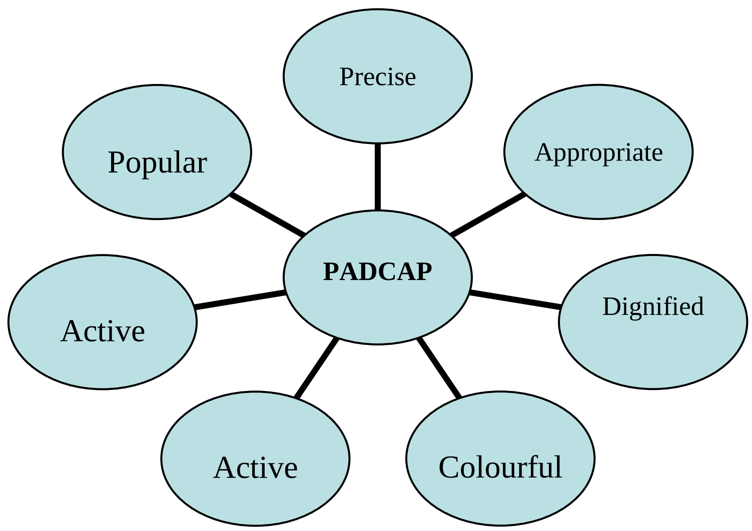
♦ The audience may also be considered in other terms such as:

- ✓ Age:- children, teenagers, adults, elderly people;
- ✓ Size: – how many (one, two, small group or crowd)
- ✓ Gender composition:- male/female
- ✓ Professional levels
- ✓ Social standing
- ✓ Personal or corporate

iii) **Structure**: a suitable form or design must be adopted to most effectively and efficiently deliver the message. This is in line with the level, purpose and audience of the communication. When dealing with a corporate client, for example, a letter would be used to document formal arrangement. The sender must therefore think about the safest way to present their material to ensure effectiveness. We shall deal with the various structures in succeeding sections.

iv) **Style**: the language employed will vary from situation to situation and from individual to individual. However, style in this case refers to the use of language. The sender has to find a language that is made of words which meet the PADCAP profile:

Figure 11.7



4. The 10 Commandments Model

Another model towards effective communication is that looking at the sender's attitude in the whole communication event. The sender's attitude must be that which emphasizes the "you" rather than the "I". In this regard he sender must:

i) Seek to clarify his/her idea before communicating;

ii) Examine the true purpose of each communication;

iii) Consider the total physical environmental and human setting whenever communicating;

iv) Be aware, while communicating, of overtones as well as the basic content of the message;

v) Take the opportunity, when it arises, to convey something of help or value to the recipient;

vi) Follow up the communications;

vii) Be sure actions support the communications;

viii) Seek to not only to be understood, but to understand;

ix) Be a good listener.

Element 6 Electronic Communication

1. Focus

Our main focus in the area of electronic media is to explore the various options of transmission available to communication beside the conventional face to face and paper based options. These are the options pertaining to oral and written communication, respectively. This is the communication between people who are separated in time and/or space.

2. Options for Oral

Electronic oral communication centres on the use of the phone system which has experienced great improvement over time. People in for away locations from one another are able to converse just like in face to face settings. Distance has been compromised.

Major developments in the phone system have brought about:

a) The telephone

The Switchboard allows several offices (extensions) to be connected to the same line in the building or premises. Thus people do not have to leave their offices to talk to their colleagues. The switchboard itself has improved from the Private Manual Box Exchange (PMBX) to the Private Automatic Box Exchange (PABX).

i) The PMBX

- ✓ The switchboard operator routes all calls – incoming or internal from extension to extension;
- ✓ Only one conversation is allowed to take place at a time.

ii) The PABX

- ✓ Operator deals with incoming calls only;
- ✓ Extensions automatically connect one another;
- ✓ Many conversations are allowed to take place at the same time;
- ✓ Operator can alert or even interrupt extension engaged in conversation when an incoming call comes.

b) The Intelligent Handset

The telephone handset has been further developed to include facilities such as:

i) *Answering*:

- ✓ phone can be programmed to provide information that might be helpful the caller when the person being called is not in the office;
- ✓ the caller is not totally frustrated at not finding the person being called.

ii) *Voice Recording*:

- ✓ Allows the caller who does not find the person being called to leave a message on the hand set;
- ✓ Allows the person being called to access the message left by the caller, which could have otherwise been missed.

c) The Radio

The radio is popular among security personnel. However, it is a loud speaking facility which allows other people to hear the full conversation

d) The codeless phone

This allows one to converse with customers within a radius of say fifty metres from the desk where the receiver is. It means then that one does not have to be in the office to talk on the phone as long as he/she is within the premises.

The codeless is common and popular in plants or warehouses where the supervisor is expected to be different work points all the time.

e) Pagers

This facility was (and might still be) commonly used by people on call. These are people whose services are required twenty four hours, like doctors, site engineers. It is an alarm system which prompts the person that they are needed and should either quickly get to the office/site or to the nearest phone to obtain full details of the emergency.

f) The Cell (mobile) Phone

The mobile phone has replaced the paging machines as well as the telephone in many instances. Among other advantages:

- ✓ Allows all round access (twenty four hour and anywhere);
- ✓ Allows full conversation;
- ✓ Provides for voice message when out of coverage area or the phone is switched off.

The main challenges of oral electronic communication in addition to those of oral communication in general (see Unit 12) centre on:

a) **Associated costs**:- procuring and maintaining the electronic devices, time based billing ie the longer you take on the phone, the more you pay

b) **Distance**:- being separated from the audience, the sender may not really present the "right" message in the little time he/she has on the phone.

3. Options for Written

Electronic communication in writing evolves around two major concepts – soft copy and hard copy. The hard copy is a print out of the soft copy.

a) The computer and the mobile phone.

List down some of the advantages of using the computer and the mobile phone in written electronic communication.

Did you include the following in your list?

- ✓ The sender has the opportunity to view and edit his message before transmitting it;
- ✓ The same message can be transmitted in a fraction of a moment;
- ✓ The same message can be transmitted to a number of recipients at the same time at the click of a button;
- ✓ The message can be stored and retrieved easily.

b) The Fax Machine:

The fax is one of the developments of the telephone. It allows transmission of any form of paper based information to anywhere in an instant.

10 Oral communication

OVERVIEW

Oral communication is perhaps the commonest medium of communication ever known. It is illiterate – one does not need to go to school in order to be able to use oral communication; it is usually option one before written; it can be formal; is usually informal; is face to face or on the phone; applies under all types – intrapersonal, interpersonal, public and mass. Oral communication depends on the two major skills – Listening and Speaking. The various circumstances under which oral communication takes place will be explored in this Unit. However, people in offices turn out to be more productive when they spend more time interacting orally than we do in writing:

> Oral communication is the life blood of our personal and business lives. We do it so naturally and frequently that there is a danger in taking it for granted. (Shirley Taylor 1999:17)

It is for this reason that this unit focuses primarily on the two key skills (listening and speaking) and their attendant challenges.

LEARNING OUTCOMES/OBJECTIVES

Element 1 Effective Listening Skills

We should perhaps begin with listening skills because they are receptive – they enhance our chances of accessing more knowledge, experience and wisdom. After all we are expected to receive more information from other people than we give out – consider the myth of two ears as compared to only one mouth!

In fact it is held that people at work spend about 80% of their time communicating and approximately 60% of this time is spent listening to what others say.

1. Circumstances and Value of Effective Listening

a) Oral Communication Events

In most cases the situations challenging us to listen effectively are brief yet with long lasting implications. The oral communication events usually fit into the picture in figure 12.1. The listed characteristics pause various challenges on the listener, hence the need for us to look at the specific barriers affecting effective listening.

Listening is active, whereas hearing is passive.

b) Effective Listening, among other things:

i) Produces better relationships and better understanding among parties communicating;

ii) Provides information i.e. elevates levels of knowledge in people;

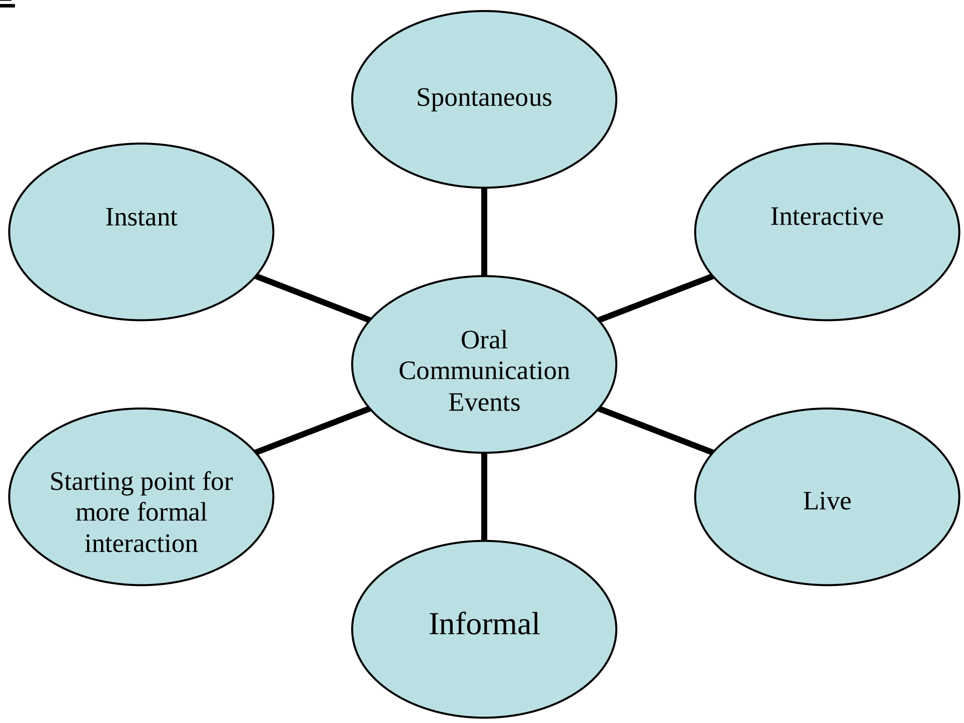
iii) Stimulates new ideas

iv) Motivates others to improve their listening

c) Poor Listening results in:

i) misunderstandings, especially if the message is to be relayed or conveyed to others;
ii) individuals missing appointments or failing to grasp salient issues in a conversation;
iii) fatal outcomes, in emergencies, and can undermine the whole essence or development of a business or enterprise

Figure 12.1



2. Key barriers of Effective Listening

Table 12.1

Key Barrier	Nature of the Barrier
a) Human Capacity	There is a discrepancy between the human capacity to listen as compared to the capacity for speaking. Speech is slower than listening perhaps because it is more physical. Due to this the listener's mind has the tendency to wander away from the listening event, during which he/she might miss some critical points;
b) Distracters	Since most listening events are live, chances of distracters like noise, third parties (other human beings), objects and events, are high thereby pausing threats to the successfulness of the oral communication. This is a particularly difficult barrier especially that the eyes and ears are so stubborn when they see or hear what they are not supposed to, drawing them away is practically impossible. However, remember that *distracters compete four your attention;*
c) Distinguishing main points from supporting detail	As seen somewhere above, the tendency to emphasise examples or other supporting information at the expense of the main point is high. The listener is therefore tempted to neglect the main issue at times because the example given is easier to understand.
d) Retention	Common because: i) We receive (hear) a lot of information at any given time; ii) Because we are rarely attach practical application and relevance what we receive. iii) When we fail to back up our listening with record of what we received

3. Achieving effective listening

a) Involves

i) Active listening which requires understanding of the message and the ability to make effective judgments on what has been said;

ii) Listening to what is actually said, not what you would you like to hear or what you expect to hear.

b) Is characterised by:

i) Positive body language

ii) Attentive body pose

iii) Summarising during various stages of a conservation to ensure all parties share the same meaning.

c) May be classified into

i) *Attentive listening* – for important or highly relevant information.

ii) *Empathetic listening* – to adjust oneself to the speakers levels is feelings, emotions and attitude.

iii) *Casual listening* – for pleasure where we may respond in a light hearted manner using figurative expressions as a mean of enjoying the language used.

d) A good listener

i) Listens to facts and remembers key words.

ii) Listens for feelings, interprets the speaker's point of view, observes his non verbal communications and listens to what is not said (filling in)

iii) Does not allow own emotions and prejudices to determine value of what is being said.

iv) May *paraphrase* speaker's message to confirm correct interpretation.

v) Is *willing* to listen;

vi) Has a genuine and *positive interest*.

vii) An active listener has the *positive attitude*.

viii) Is *prepared* for the event. When one does not put himself in the right frame of mind listening will fail;

ix) Does *not interrupt* the speaker any how i.e. allow the speaker to finish saying what they have to say before coming in with questions or other contributions

x) *Familiarises* him/her with the subject of discussion. This is particularly important because when you are familiar with the topic it will be easy to follow the speaker through his/her message.

xi) *Keeps the speaker in sight* so that you receive both the verbal and nonverbal message – the nonverbal comes through body language which the listener must access. (It is not possible to establish and keep eye contact because the speaker's gaze sweeps through the entire audience not just the one listener;

xii) *Distinguishes main points from supporting detail* because not all that is said weighs the same. Some detail is to make the main point clearer;

xiii) *Does not allow your existing knowledge about the subject or the speaker interfere* with your listening. Previous or old knowledge can influence your interpretation of the message;

xiv) *Seeks clarification when appropriate* i.e. the speaker may use the pause as signal for questions, or may directly invite the questions;

xv) *Makes note of salient points*.

Element 2 Effective Questioning Skills

1. Circumstances and Value of Efficient Questions

Questions are a way of seeking information from other people. This means that there is an information gap in one that hey would like to fill up.

The information sought through questions may be for use in specific situations such as performing a particular task or decision making on a particular matter,

Questions may be asked as one off or in a scheduled manner as during an interview. At times they may be asked as part of a casual conversation.

2. Possible interpretation of Well Meant Questions

Questions may not always be understood in the same manner. Quite often the question can be misinterpreted by the audience, depending on the circumstances. For example, one would consider some question as being sarcasm. The real problem is in fact the defensive stance adopted by the people being asked. To a large extent, past experience, timing the questions and relationships between the participants in the communication as well as the message or topic of enquiry. At times questions are posed as a way of suggesting something.

3. Types of Questions

Two major approaches can be applied in analysing or classifying questions:

Table 12.2

Class 1	Class 2
a) **Closed Questions** – direct, Yes/No answer questions or one word answer questions, e.g. "*Where do you live?"* or *"Do you know how to work in Microsoft Excel?"*	a) **Identification Questions** – help name the point of enquiry e.g. "*What is the formula do you use to work out personal tax?"* or *"Who is responsible for Accounts Payable?"*
b) **Open Ended** – have no specific answer, let alone a short one. They leave it to the respondent to give out whatever detail they may have, e.g. *"How can we protect client information?"*	b) **Location Questions** – these place the item of enquiry in time and /or space, e.g. i) *In **space** "Where are the invoices kept?* "or ii) *In **time** "When do we do the banking?*"
c) **Leading questions** – drive the respondent in some direction so that they may confirm the assumption or hypothesis, e.g. *"You are the one working on the MD's case, aren't you?"*	c) **Justification Questions** – providing reasons for the point of enquiry, e.g. *"Why are our expenses in excess of the revenue?"*
d) **Follow up questions** – used to elicit information from reluctant or uncooperative respondents. They normally take a slightly different direction from the one adopted at the beginning.	d) **Outlining Questions** – help provide appearance or design or composition of the point of enquiry, e.g. *"How do you go about creating the customer data base?"*
e) **Loaded questions** – seeking more detail than a single item of enquiry, asking about many things within one question	

We will revisit the topic in 12.6 (Interviewing as a communication tool) below.

Element 3 Note making/Note Taking

1. The Difference between Note Making and Note Taking

Is there a real distinction between note making and note taking? Many writers on the subject seem to use the two interchangeably. Others suggest that Note making is when you jot down brief notes from a written source while they associate note taking with oral sources. However, here we want to take the two a step further by looking at what the terms Not Making and Note Taking allude to:

a) Note Making

- ✓ Making notes from whatever the source (written or oral)
- ✓ Constructing something new from the original source – may be shorter than the source but usually containing all key information from the source.

b) Note Taking

- ✓ Writing down notes that have been given as in dictation, or copying down a text that has been given for the purpose.

In this text we shall use ***Note Making*** to denote the activity that makes the effective listener retain the core of the message received whether from an oral source or a written one.

2. Barriers to Efficient Note Making

Note making especially from an oral source is hampered by two major problems – speech speed visa vis Writing Speed and Interpretation.

a) Speed Discrepancy

This is the discrepancy between the speed at which the speaker speaks and the pace at which notes may be written. Writing is more physically involving than speaking and is therefore naturally slower. Besides, to come up with good notes one has to think and judge as well as write in such a way that he/she is not left far behind by the speaker.

b) Interpretation

Interpretation refers to making the right decision on meaning from the received text. Not everything uttered is the substance of the message. The listener (as well as reader in making notes from written sources) only retains what contributes to the message and not everything.

3. Improving Note Making

4. a) Overcoming the Speech Speed/Writing Speed Variance

i) *Thinking ahead of the speaker*: - predict what the speaker is likely to cover in the next part of the presentation. This is possible when the listener is familiar with the topic of discussion;

ii) *Develop a "Short hand"*: - by short hand we mean a form of compressed writing where the outcome notes are shorter than the original text. This entails:

- ✓ Using *abbreviations* – writing short forms of words so as to avoid worrying about correct spelling, which can really slow you;

- ✓ Using *acronyms* – shortening long titles into word sounding expressions made up of key letters or sound segments of the full title, such as ZICA, ZAMIM, NIPA, UNESCO. Note that these are different from abbreviated forms like *GRZ* for the Government of the Republic of Zambia, *WHO* for the World Health Organisation which are not pronounced as single words;

- ✓ Using symbols – using some form of graphics to reflect meaning units i.e. relationships between various words to give an idea;

- ✓ Using *bullet points* – writing short forms of main points/ideas without using full sentences. Full sentences will slow you down as you worry about correct grammar;

- ✓ Using numbered *outlines* – presenting the text by way of using numbered and headed sections and bulleted points. This is what you do when you write an essay plan or report outline.

NOTE

- Abbreviations and symbols can be *personal* or *standard*. Personal are those that only you the user would understand while standard ones are those with universal meaning, such as scientific and mathematical symbols
- Outlines require accurate interpretation.

iii) Overcoming Interpretation

The solution to accurate interpretation lies in *understanding patterns of scientific thought*! Thought comprises components which can be scientifically analysed, such that if the listener is able to recognise segments, accurate meaning would be discerned. The components are:

Table 12.3

Component	Basic Part	Explanation
1. ***Information Structure*** – equated to the sentence the shortest of which is made up of two words e.g. "Jesus wept"	♦ ***naming* part** e.g. "Jesus" ♦ **telling part** e.g. "wept"	♦ identifies the subject of the idea ♦ says something about the subject
2. ***Point Development*** – similar to the paragraph in written communication	♦ **Theme statement** also called the Topic Sentence ♦ **Supporting Detail**	♦ An assertion or claim which provokes question of completeness – who, what, where, when, why, How? ♦ Details which provide answers to the questions raised in the theme statement
3. ***Textual Organisation*** – the way a message is organised, whether spoken or written	♦ ***Title*** ♦ ***Introduction***	♦ A very brief statement that throws light on what the text/message is all about (the subject). It must provide very smooth continuity to "I am talking about …." It provides a smooth opening of the text ♦ Gives the speaker's or writer's purpose of the communication, may refer to any previous communication on the matter, and it will indicate the scope of coverage for this text/indicates what the text will cover or include. All in all, the introduction brings the audience to the same level as the

		speaker/writer;
	♦ ***Details/body***	♦ Takes the audience through the contents step by step, developing each point as completely as possible in line with "point development as above;
	♦ ***Conclusion***	♦ Reviews the contents of the text by highlighting the key issues raised in the text, in a more matter of fact way thereby confirming or rejecting the applicability/correctness or accuracy of the ideas covered. It may advise on the way forward or "What next?" or advise on how best the ideas given can be applied or be of benefit to the audience. Ultimately, it provides a smooth end to the text.

ACTIVITY

It should be noted that paying attention to the opening part will allow the audience to apply prediction and outline formats.

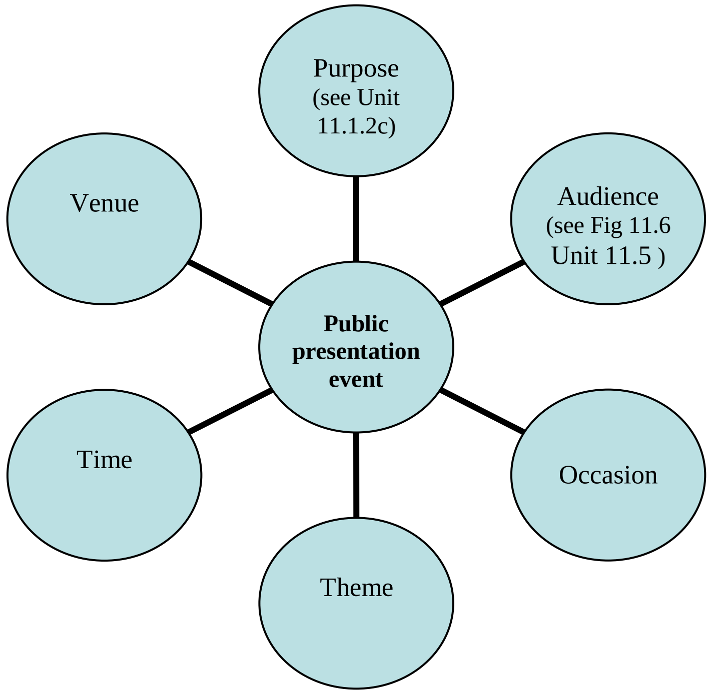
Element 4 Effective Public Presentations and Speaking

There are many occasions that demand of the accounting person to make public presentations to different audiences – internal and/or external. Public presentations and speaking are therefore an integral part of the accountant's job. Whatever the occasion(s), public presentations are about speaking skills.

1. Circumstances/the Context of Public Presentations

   Elements of the context of public presentation events may be described in terms of the following:

Figure12.1



The first two elements of the context in the diagram have been adequately explained in the parts of this text highlighted. The others are given in table 12 below.

Table 12.4

Element of Context	**Explanation**
a) *Occasion*	What is the setting of the event – briefing, reporting, business meeting, consultative meeting, product launch, etc? This helps set the mood/atmosphere to follow.
b) Theme/focus	Theme provides a point of focus for the event. At least each event/occasion has a point of focus if not theme. This is usually in line with the purpose and helps maintain relevance.
c) *Time*	Two aspects of time will apply in the circumstances of public presentations: i) *Duration* of the presentation or talk ii) *Period* of the day Both aspects are significant to the presenter as they have some influence on his/her performance. Duration guides in length/amount of information of the presentation while period of the day holds some explanation to audience performance
d) *Venue*	Where the presentation takes place will influence the performance, mood and attitude of both the audience and the presenter.

2. Challenges of Public Speaking

All occasions requiring one to speak to others as individuals or representative groups present the speaker with a number of challenges arising from the whole context of the event. The key challenges arise from:

a) **Audience input** – this is usually restricted to physical and/or vocal (nonverbal behaviour) the larger the group one is addressing. In fact number itself becomes a challenge because one has to touch everyone in the group with his/her special message;

b) **Interpreting non verbal signals** – since audience input is limited to nonverbal performance, interpreting the signals may not be that simple. The non verbal signals to watch out for relate to:

   i) *Voice* – various aspects of the voice would signal different messages. Such vocal variety as *pitch* (volume), *tone*, *intonation*, and *accent* as well as *silence* (absence of voice) all emphasise something whenever they occur.

   ii) *Appearance* – one's looks can be interpreted to mean different things. The *physical build*, *wardrobe* (dress and make up) and *grooming* (tidiness, hair styles, the step, mannerisms, etc) suggest something about the audience which you must pay attention to. Primarily, it reveals a lot about the nature of your audience.

   iii) *Body Language* – *touch* (hand shakes, pats, hugs), *facial expressions*, *gesture* (hand, arm movements, etc), *posture*, *pacing* up and down, etc all constitute body language that the speaker must observe closely. These come from deep down and would reflect one's true feelings, emotions, towards something, such that if followed, they would enable the speaker to adjust his performance so as to address the concerns reflecting through the body language.

   iv) *Space* – the use of space also signals something of the person's moods, attitudes, and feelings towards what is being said or the speaker. Being too close suggests friendliness while keeping a distance may suggest some reservations.

c) **Holding the audience** – this is perhaps the most delicate challenge facing the speaker. The audience want both your verbal and nonverbal messages, i.e. both *what* you say and *how* you say it matters to your audience.

i) *Content* of your presentation is what might draw your audience to you initially. The way this is organised will hold them further;

ii) *Articulation* will contribute to audience satisfaction and keeping them will be more guaranteed. Your voice coupled with fluency and command of the language – pronunciation, stress, rhythm and pace, clarity, etc will help keep your audience.

iii) *Strategy* – your approach to the whole presentation would probably be the pivot for holding your audience. This relates to presentation variation and audience interface ie what goes with your spoken word and how much do you involve your audience?

3. Dealing with the Challenges

A good speaker is one who makes listening easy for his/her audience. To successfully deal with the various challenges:

a) Plan your presentation

i) Set your *objective*(s) clear – what is the desired outcome;
ii) *Research* your subject, audience and venue thoroughly;
iii) Identify the *key points* in your presentation;
iv) *Arrange your points* into a desired sequence so as to achieve impact;
v) Decide and design suitable *audio* and/or *visual aids* to use;
vi) Prepare the *presentation outline* as reading word for word may not only be unnecessary but boring for your audience also;
vii) Rehearse your presentation so as to master the major stages.

b) Face your audience

i) *Arrive early* and take note of the arrangements and identify items/objects that you may use to your advantage;

ii) Mount your presentation aids if any and test them to ensure they are in perfect operating order;

iii) Give your self enough physical space to manoeuvre and move about if you will deliver your presentation from a standing position;

iv) *Be yourself* – take a position that allows your audience to see you and you them;

v) Keep your audience *under your gaze* as this shows how confident you are and how much interest in them you have, otherwise you might lose them once they realise you are not watching them;

c) Make your presentation

i) Speak with confidence

ii) Use a tone, pace and voice level that are suitable for the subject, purpose, audience and venue;

iii) Stick to your plan:

- ✓ Give a powerful opening where you gain audience attention; establish credibility, state your purpose and steer up audience interest in you and your presentation;
- ✓ Ensure each point you give contains a statement of fact, supporting material and a logical ending;
- ✓ Ensure smooth transition between points;
- ✓ End with a memorable pronouncement after reviewing of key ideas or arguments and linking these to your opening purpose. You may even call audience to action!
- ✓ Use a language befitting of the event – the PADCAP way.

d) Engage your audience

There are various ways of engaging your audience so that they can be part of the presentation:

i) Keep them in your gaze as a sign of interest in them

ii) Invite them to supply examples from their own environment

iii) Pause rhetorical questions which keep them thinking along

iv) Use your vocal variety effectively

e) Use your presentation aids effectively

Introduce your audio visual aids appropriately where they are relevant and enhance understanding.

REMEMBER
Your presentation is meant to be understood by the audience the first time!

Element 5 Preparing for Meetings, Seminars, Conferences and Interviews

Meetings, Seminars, conferences and interviews are some of the special activities that the accounting technician may be required to organise, for the employer and employees. A good understanding of each one of the events will assist in appreciating the necessary steps towards their arrangement.

1. Meetings

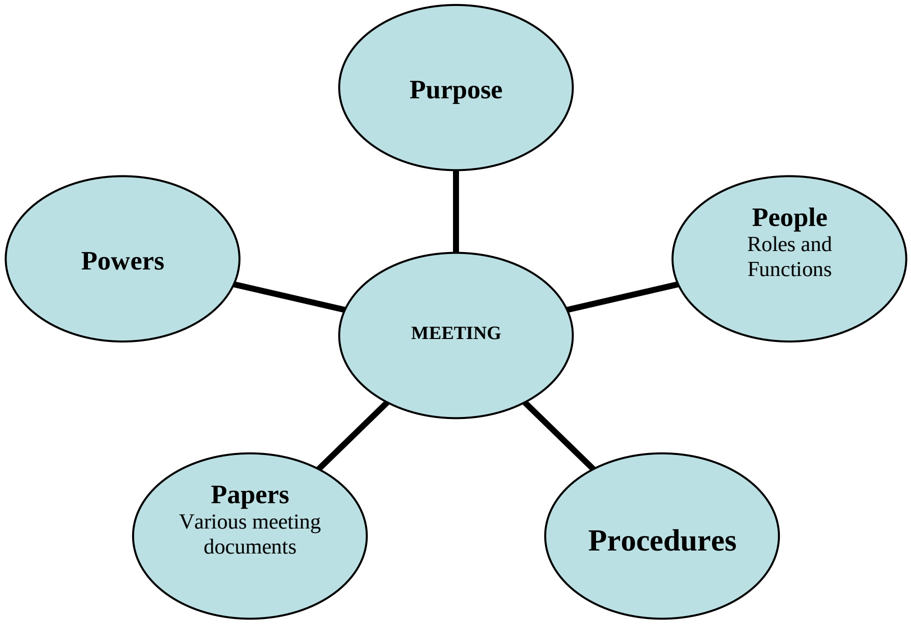
a) Definition

Let us consider a meeting as ***"a formal conversation".*** In this definition both the words '*formal'* and '*conversation'* provide the basis of the special nature of meetings in the business organization.

b) Characteristics

A meeting is characterized by the 5 Ps

Figure 12.2



i) *Purpose*: what is the main function of the meeting?

ii) *People*: what are the roles and functions of the people attending a meeting – Chairman/chairperson; Secretary or Member (hence conversation, at least three people). The personality of the people attending the meeting will determine the flow of business of the meeting. However, the Chairman/person is generally responsible for maintaining order and discipline in the meeting;

iii) *Procedures*: rules and practices governing the structure and conduct of the meeting. These determine the formality of the conversation. Procedures vary from meeting to meeting and the Chairman/person ensures that they are enforced during the meeting;

iv) *Papers*: these are the documents which are associated with meetings such as the Notice, Agenda, Minutes and other reports or correspondence that pertain to the business of the meeting;

v) *Powers*: what can the meeting do or how far can it go in implementing/enforcing its resolutions? Some meetings have the capacity to direct implementation of resolutions while others are just a recommending forum;

c) Organisation

Organisation of meetings can be considered in three stages – *before*, *during*, and *after* the meeting. Organising meetings is usually the duty of the Secretary in conjunction with the Chairman/person. Some of the specific things expected of the Secretary in preparation for (before) a meeting include:

i. Determining the specific *purpose* of the proposed meeting which may be to:

- ✓ Instruct (command meeting)
- ✓ Advise (advisory meeting)
- ✓ Brainstorm – generating ideas or solutions to a problem (brainstorming meeting)
- ✓ Consult (consultative meeting)
- ✓ Corporate plan (planning meeting)
- ✓ Negotiate (negotiation meeting)
- ✓ Club members' meeting (general meeting),
- ✓ Provide dialogue between members
- ✓ Monitoring and evaluating performance
- ✓ Making policy and other decisions, etc.

ii. Determining the *people* to attend the meeting and inviting them;

Determining who is to attend the meeting is quite important in organising meetings. Are these going to be workmates (internal), clients (outsiders), combination of workmates and outsiders, regular members (e.g. of a committee) or proxies and guests or a combination? Is it Board members or Shareholders?

Method of invitation will depend on who the people to attend the meeting are.

- ✓ Workmates ⟶ memorandum or display notice (poster)

- ✓ Clients ⟶ letter or card

Depending on the nature of the meeting, notice should be adequate in line with the organisation's standing orders or at least one week for committee meetings, at least two months for general meetings.

The less formal meetings and calendared meetings, however, notice may take other forms such as word of mouth by phone or in person, informal notes like the complimentary slip.

The notice must clearly indicate:

- ✓ The type of meeting – Annual general meeting, Ordinary meeting, Standing committee meeting, occasional advisory committee meeting, or *ad hoc* meeting;
- ✓ People involved (whose meeting);
- ✓ Venue, time and date of the meeting;
- ✓ Focus of the meeting (may refer to the agenda);
- ✓ Any additional information deemed necessary.

iii. *Preparing the venue;*

Preparation of the venue depends on type of meeting, how many people are to attend the meeting, size of the room, presentation aids and anticipated duration of the meeting. Preparations will include:

- ✓ Seating arrangement;
- ✓ Positioning of presentation aids;
- ✓ Taking attendance;
- ✓ Refreshments if any;

iv. *Budgeting for the meeting*

Every meeting should go with a budget which provides for refreshments, stationery, and any other expenses that may be necessary from situation to situation.

d) Roles and Functions

Fill in the table below by writing down at least three functions of each of the three roles you may play in a meeting:

<u>Table 12.5</u>

	Chairman/person	**Secretary**	**Member**
Before			
During			
After			

2. Seminar and Conference

> Seminars and Conferences are skills and knowledge sharing and imparting occasions where people of a trade or occupation meet experts who present papers on various aspects of their areas of trade/specialisation. They may be considered as training sessions.

(a) Role of the organiser

i) *Planning*: identifying all requirements for the seminar such as stationery, presentation aids, catering, transport, secretarial services, equipment, funding/budget, etc:

ii) Identifying and inviting *participants*

iii) Identifying and inviting *resource persons* or speakers;

iv) Choosing the *venue*;

v) Designing a *programme* indicating day, time, event/topic, discussion/event leader or speaker for the whole duration of the seminar/conference.

vi) Prepare certificates of attendance to be issued to all the participants at the end of the conference or seminar;

vii) Ensuring that the programme is followed as closely as possible all the duration of the event.

The organiser must always ensure that the programme is followed and that there are enough people to assist in the running up and down during the seminar/conference so that there is nothing lacking.

b) Follow up activities

i) *Evaluation*: - the seminar/conference will need to be evaluated by the participants

ii) *Draw* an action plan from the resolutions made;

iii) *Prepare* reports and other documents on which people might base their next actions;

iv) *Monitor* implementation of the action plan tasks, etc.

3. Interview

a) Nature of an interview

The interview can be defined as “a structured conversation”, ie it is oral. The major function of an interview is to gather information from people by talking to them. The information thus collected may be used to direct decision making and guide actions. Details of the areas of application of interviews are in Element 6 below. However, its key characteristics are summarised in table 12. 6:

Table 12.6

Characteristic	Explanation
♦ Interviewer	✓ Seeks information by asking specific questions ✓ Knows exactly what information is required ✓ Stirs the interview in a particular direction to elicit the information being sought
♦ Interviewee	✓ Provides information to the interviewer ✓ Does not know the exact information sought in advance ✓ Feels intimidated because the direction of the interview is determined by the interviewer
♦ Structure	✓ Arrangement and flow of questions from beginning to the end; ✓ Opens with establishing rapport, explaining purpose ✓ Beginning with friendly low key questions building into sequence of increasingly more specific questions ending up with invitation to the interviewee to ask any questions; ✓ The structure of the interview will vary according to the specific purpose(s)
♦ Balance	✓ Who does how much talking depends on the purpose of the interview but it is important to allocate adequate time for each participant to air their views.
♦ Atmosphere	✓ The character of the room – arrangement of furniture and props; ✓ Number and even ender of people interviewing, ✓ Appearance of the interviewee All contribute to the atmosphere of the interview
♦ Procedure/manner	The purpose will determine the way in which the interview is conducted: ✓ Standardised – following a predictable sequence of questions based on a questionnaire ✓ ✓ Individualised – interviewer uses wide range of questions designed to lead to an in depth exploration of the problem; ✓ Stress – interviewer deliberately aggressive and unpredictable in order to test interviewee.

b) Role of the organiser

The organiser of interviews operates on the two stage process:

i) *Preparation*:

- ✓ Identify the particular objectives;
- ✓ Gather and organise relevant information thus being conversant with the subject area of the interview;
- ✓ Gather and consider information about the person to be interviewed so as to help develop general lines of questioning;
- ✓ Arrange and set the venue i.e. notification, reception arrangements and establishing an environment that will be supportive of the objectives;
- ✓ Run through what you as the interviewer are going to say;
- ✓ Determine type of interview – one on one or panel?

ii) *Conduct*

Conduct the interview as a four part event on the WASP model:

- ✓ *Welcome*: put the interviewee at ease, explain the purpose of the interview, explain any special restrictions and/or privileges;
- ✓ *Ask*: use questions prepared in advance based on the objectives of the interview and circumstances of the interviewee;
- ✓ *Supply*: provide full and honest responses to interviewee's questions – back up assertions with examples and be reasonably concise (interviewer should only do 20 – 30% talking;
- ✓ *Parting*: end the interaction on a positive note – summarise the conclusions and identify when, what and how any action arising from the interview will be communicated.

c) Follow up activities

i) Prepare the report on the proceedings during the interview;

ii) Write appropriate correspondence to formally communicate specific recommendations arising from the interviews.

Element 6 Interviewing as a Communication tool

Interviews play a very important role in the business organisation. It is the most effective interactive method of collecting information from different quarters of the organisations. In the process of collecting information, the interviewer creates confidence in the interviewee by demonstrating how important he/she holds the interviewee by talking to them. In this regard, interviews create the sense of unity and recognition among the staff.

Specific areas where interviews play a significant role are:

1. Selection

These are the interviews on whose basis job applicants are hired. The way applicants (and hence new employees) feel about the organisation will be influenced by the way their selection interviews are conducted.

The interviewer's main goals are to determine the applicant's suitability for the job, to give him the correct picture of the job as well as to create and maintain the good will of the organisation. He will therefore include the following topics:

a) Work experience, emphasising jobs recently held;

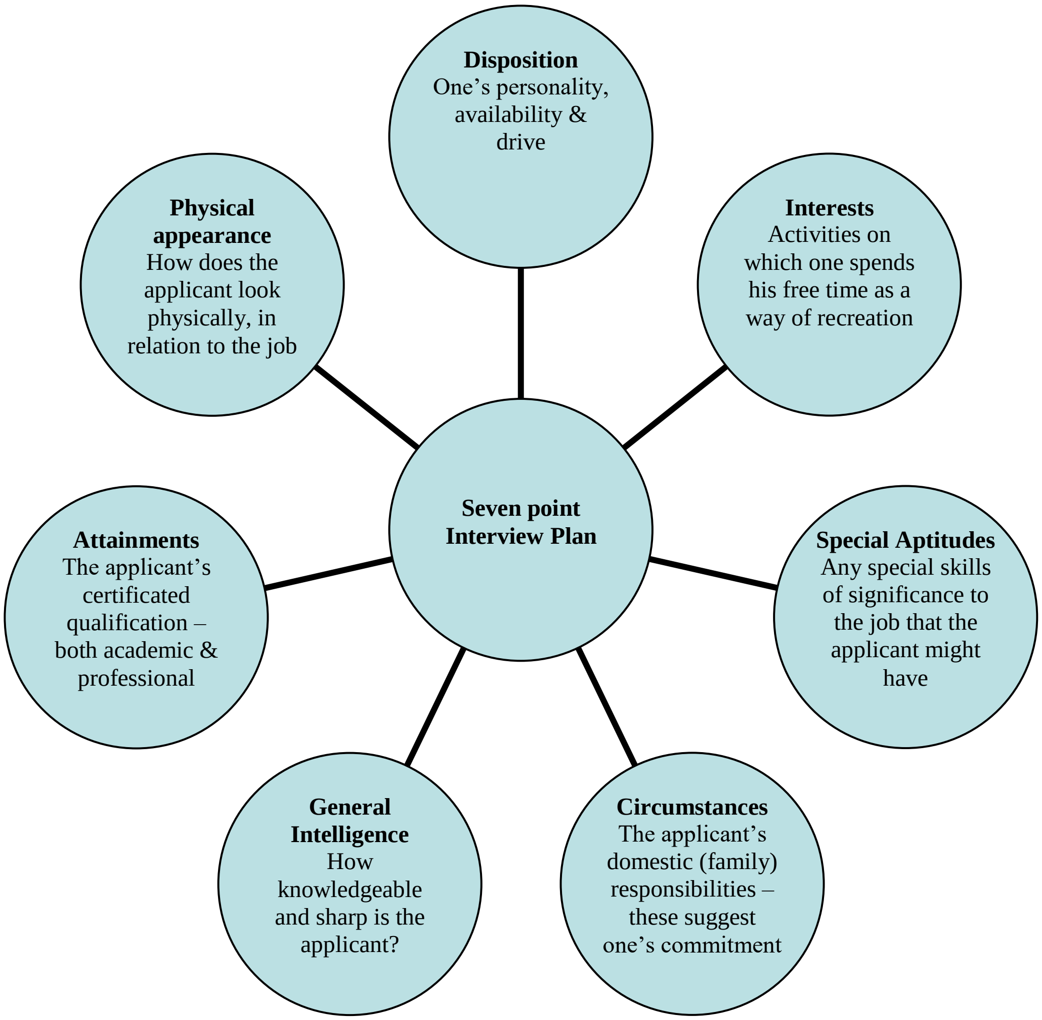
b) Educational background, including both formal and informal training.

c) Outside interests, especially those that might affect the individual's job performance.

d) Physical characteristics, if such factors are important for the job

The seven point interview plan is a useful guide to conducting selection interviews. The interviewers explore the applicant's key areas as they would each contribute in one way or the other to accurate assessment of the candidate:

Figure 12.3 The **DISCGAP** Interview Plan



2. Orientation

To acquaint new employees with their jobs and with the range of duties involved. It also looks at the organisation so that the new employee may fit into the new environment well.

The interview if well conducted will provide the new employee with a desire to learn and be a good member of the organisation.

3. Performance Appraisal

Conducted on the employee by the employee's immediate supervisor to measure the employee's performance of the job.

The interview is strongly evaluative in nature and may provide merit to pay awards of the employee. It identifies employee's achievements during the period under review, failures which might have been experienced, their causes and possible remedies. In the process, the interview identifies the employee's potential, training and development needs, job- person mismatch, etc.

The performance appraisal interview should be conducted periodically so that it serves as a powerful instrument for monitoring performance standards and creating the organisation culture.

However, both appraiser and appraisee need to be adequately briefed on the exercise. The interview has come as a good replacement for the Annual Confidential Report Forms that used to be filled with little input from the employee.

4. Disciplinary

The interview is conducted when an employee has errored in his conduct or his performance to the extent that they require disciplinary action.

The interview seeks to establish what offence was committed, the circumstances under which it was committed, whether or not it could have been avoided, the costs of repairing the damage, and perhaps the most suitable disciplinary action to be handed down.

The interview allows the employee the opportunity to objectively look at his case with his superiors.

5. Grievance

This interview is conducted ideally by the employee's supervisor who recognises the existence of a grievance in his subordinate.

During the interview, the complaint is identified, causes highlighted and remedies explored.

6. Counselling

This interview is corrected in nature and may be conducted by a panel or individual interested with the behavioural aspect of the personnel (a councillor). It is often conducted when recurrent deviant conduct is detected in an employee.

The interview seeks to identify, among other things, the unbecoming deviant conduct, what cause it, its effects and why it becomes necessary to change.

7. **Exit**

This interview is conducted whenever an employee leaves employment due to dismissal or resignation. It may be conducted by the employee's immediate supervisor or one responsible for the human resource of the organisation.

a) Dismissal: explain backgrounds of dismissal and assure employee that the dismissal is in the interest of both the employee and the organization and that it is not the end of the world.

b) Resignation: determine reasons for the resignation and give encouragement to employee in their new endeavours.

Whatever the case, the interview sets out to establish improvements in the job on order to maximise staff retention.

11 Written communication

OVERVIEW

Written communication may take many forms. It occupies a very special position in the organisation due to the several characteristics visa vis oral communication.

It often works as a confirmation or endorsement of oral commitments, it has a permanency and contractual status, as evidence of previous transaction/agreement, provides a history of an activity and provides back up proof. Written texts make information easily available to an unlimited audience as it can be reproduced.

Written communication allows us time to plan our message or indeed study the message closely to make out the desired interpretation.

Once written down, words are themselves pinned down, selected, representative, deliberate, permanent and important in their own right.

LEARNING OUTCOMES/OBJECTIVES

By the end of the unit, we should be able to

a) Plan the written communication effectively;

b) Choose the appropriate form of written communication in the given situation;

c) Send precise texts closely edited and proof read.

Element 1 Types of Written Communication

Written communication in offices can be discussed in terms of informal and formal levels. There are many instances when writing in the office can be informal.

1. **Informal written communication**

Table 13.1 below summarises the common types of written communication:

Table 13.1

Level	Type	Explanation/example
Informal	Intrapersonal	✓ Diary Entries ✓ Work plans ✓ "Things to do" ✓ Prompters, etc
	Interpersonal	✓ Informal notes e.g. on complimentary slip ✓ "While you were away" messages etc

2. **Formal written communication**

Unit 11.6 above outlines major characteristics of formal communication. However, all written communication in offices (even that which we have described as informal) should be treated with some degree of formality i.e.

a) Structure should be in accordance to the type of document chosen

b) The language should meet the PADCAP model

c) There should be no short forms like *can't*, don't, *won't* or abbreviations, except acronyms (ZICA, ZAMIM, UNZA, NIPA) and abbreviations like GRZ, UNDP, EU, etc.

d) It should be free of colloquialisms such as false starts, slang, etc.

Element 2 Drafting Methods and Techniques

1. Planning the Formal Writing

a) The formal written message requires serious planning because

- ✓ It will be the official stand on an issue;
- ✓ It will be the basis for action
- ✓ It will remain on record for ever
- ✓ It will be circulated to many and
- ✓ It will always remain the same such that
- ✓ Its contents will be interpreted in the same way all the time.

b) The planning should look at **PASS**

Table 13.2

Focus	**Content**
i) Purpose	✓ What exactly is the purpose of the current effort – is it to advise, to inform, to regulate/control/correct, to instruct/request/persuade, or what? ✓ Understand or define the problem/subject in order to identify the purpose easily
ii) Audience	✓ Who are you addressing yourself to – is it the end user/implementer or channel, is it someone within the organisation or a client, is it one or more people, etc?
iii) Structure	✓ What is the best format to use on the subject – a memo, letter, report, or what? ✓ Organise the material you have on the subject logically so that it may serve the purpose.
iv) Style	✓ Being formal, the formal message lacks the direct non verbal message. However, through your language, non verbal undertones, tone, attitudes, emotions and other non verbal elements will surface so as to give your message its full meaning.

2. Sources of and Collecting Information

Table 13.3

Category	Source	Characteristics	Methods of collection
Primary	People	✓ Always there ✓ Stay in organisation limited ✓ Can change statements e.g. can deny having said anything ✓ Limited memory ✓ Affected by emotion, attitudes and other personality aspects	♦ Interviews ♦ Questionnaires ♦ Observation ♦ Focus groups or panel discussion groups (e.g. committees) ♦ Experimentation.
Secondary	Files	✓ Storage place for various documents e.g. invoices, quotations, orders, memos, letters, reports, minutes of meetings, etc ✓ An invaluable history of operations and transactions ✓ Permanent since written ✓ Vulnerable to physical damage	♦ Desk or library study

		✓ Demands systematic maintenance.	
	Books	✓ Permanent record of transactions e.g. books of prime entry ✓ Permanent source of theories, standards, etc e.g. text books and manuals	♦ Desk or library study

3. Note Making

As seen above note making is necessary at all stages and levels of one's work. The skills explored will apply here, too.

Expand notes within 24 hours of writing them

However, considering that the notes are jotted in a short hand, chances are that the abbreviations, symbols and other graphical methods will be confusing to notes maker if they are not revised or revisited within a short period after writing them. This short period would be within 24 hours of writing the notes.

4. Verifying and Validating Information

In view of the fact that people see things differently, it is likely that the information gathered whether from primary or secondary sources may not be the only perspective on the topic of interest.

It is therefore important that the gathered information is *verified* through double checking facts with other related views and *validated* to determine the truth of it.

5. Organising the material:

The collected information, in line with the analysis should be ordered into a sequence that makes sense and gives a smooth or logical flow. Most of this information will make the body of the text but will help make the introduction and point to areas further which needs research/ investigations.

a) The Introduction

This entails writing the document following the appropriate format/ layout. The introduction should clearly state the purpose, background and scope of coverage.

b) The Details

This section is designed to explain the purpose tying it up with the background to the points under scope. Each point will be developed in full so as to reveal the essence of writing.

c) The Conclusion

The conclusion highlights of the key outstanding issues thus confirming the official position (at least according to the writer). Expected action or the way forward or recommendations or suggestions will float there. This will create a smooth ending to the piece.

6. Drafting

Drafting entails developing the ideas into the complete message according to the document to be produced. The major tasks here involve

a) **Expanding** the ideas into Complete Words full and well structured sentences well coordinated, coherent texts,

b) Choosing the Correct **Format** – memo, letter, report and other minutes

7. Proof Reading and Editing

a) Proofreading involves ensuring that the draft document is free of error of expression and those of coverage. When an error free document is sent, the audience will not spend valuable time correcting it. Areas like spelling, grammar and meaning are sorted out to achieve rhetorical effectiveness through choice of words that are precise, appropriate, dignified, colourful, active, and popular (in common usage) i.e. the PADCAP model of diction.

b) Editing ensures that the report is:

i) Complete i.e. covers all areas of concern with appropriate detail (answering the 5 Ws and 1 H);

ii) Coherent i.e. all parts are held together in harmony;

iii) Thoroughly researched and contains no unverified or invalidated information.

8. Organisational Models

Writing may be organised according to how you anticipate the audience to react to the message. The audience may react either favourably or unfavourably, hence the direct or the indirect approach to organising the text, respectively.

Table 13.4

Direct Approach	**Indirect Approach**
Applicable when: ✓ You expect the audience to consider the message favourably or in a neutral way; ✓ The information is considered easily understandable. Open with the main idea, or best news, followed by all necessary explanatory details in one or several paragraphs as the situation might dictate. The ending is with an appropriate friendly paragraph. It is also called the Deductive approach. This is common when you are offering the audience some relief or something of direct, if not immediate benefit to the audience.	Applicable when: ✓ You expect the audience to react unfavourably /negatively to your message, or ✓ You feel the information is somewhat complicated and may not be easily grasped. Open with some relevant pleasant, neutral, or reader beneficial statement (a buffer) before introducing the main idea which is unpleasant. The explanation which precedes the main point is intended to arouse interest and show the inevitability of the negative point. The ending should be equally well calculated so as to appeal to the sympathy of the audience and win acceptance. Bad news and persuasive messages use this approach. Words and tone used should be that which will influence the audience into the desired direction.

Element 3 Reports and Report Writing *(containing 13.3, 4 & 5 of Syllabus)*

1. Background

a) Definition

Consider the two views below:

Organised, factual and objective information brought by a person who has experiences or accumulated it to a person or persons who need it, want it or are entitled to it. (Weisman 1996:138)	A communication of information and advice from someone who has collected and studied the facts to someone who needs to be informed …. (Kenrick, 1997:93)

Both views, though by different people agree that a report must have information, which contains facts that has to be passed from one person to another or others. This information is acquired and analysed (studied) and presented in a systematic way.

The foregoing is true of reports at any level in the organisation.

b) User Expectations

The report is always written for someone else who ought to have some use for it. The user is confident that what the writer will give is useful and correct. The common expectations include:

Table 13.5

Expectation	Details
i) Informational	✓ Monitoring information in circulation ✓ Disseminating received information among team members ✓ Being the contact person on behalf of the team (spokesman or spokesperson)
ii) Interpersonal	✓ Being figurehead ✓ Being leader ✓ Acting as the liaison/contact with outside world
iii) Decisional	✓ Entrepreneurial ✓ Resource management ✓ Negotiation ✓ Conflict handling

2. Types of Reports

a) Form Based Reports

Quite often, information is passed on by way of filling in forms. Form based reports are an appropriate way of submitting reports on

i) High frequency operations like receiving cash, making payments by cheque, etc

ii) One off complex happenings, like accidents;

The idea is to come up with a standard way of seeking and receiving information from those reporting. Forms also make reporting and interpreting reports easy.

Information for form based reports may be collected by:

i) *Direct questions*: - e.g. what is your name?

ii) *Instructions*: - e.g. Write your name

iii) *Labels*: - e.g. Name.

Ways of seeking/guidelines for supplying and cues for interpreting information i.e. Questions, Instructions and Labels do reflect the type of audience/people who are expected to supply the information. For example young respondents would be more comfortable with questions rather than labels while the semi literates would find both questions and instructions friendlier than labels.

However, when designing forms, ensure that enough space for providing answers is provided and that the purpose of the form is clearly defined. Also, ensure that no other form exists for the same purpose.

No two or more forms should exist for the same purpose

b) Narrative Reports

These are the reports that the one reporting designs in line with the nature of the task and the material at hand. They generally fall into two categories

Table 13.6

Informal Report	Formal Report
✓ Based on a simple and single subject	✓ Based on a long and complex matter
✓ Relies on the writer as the main source of information using observation and secondary data collection methods	✓ The writer uses extensive investigation/data collection methods – interviews, questionnaires, observations, experiments, discussion groups/panels and/or desk study
✓ Intended to be read in one sitting i.e. short	✓ Is much longer and not intended to be read in one sitting
✓ May take memo or letter format	✓ Presented in outline form with numbered and headed sections
✓ May be slightly longer than the memo or letter	✓ Can be read in parts according to the section the reader is interested in at any given time
✓ Methods of collecting data for the	

report may be used as the main indicator that the required report is the informal one.	✓ May take the short formal (schematic) format or the long (book format) ✓ Usually the report following an investigative assignment.

3. The Process of Writing the Report

Like all formal writing, report writing can be better done when certain steps are followed judiciously. The key steps are those in the preparatory stage since planning is the key to effectiveness.

a) Interpreting the situation

This involves understanding the environment surrounding the report, such as:

i) Guidelines calling for the report;

ii) Instructions outlining the extent and limitations – scope of coverage;

iii) The information needed:

- ✓ Primary/Secondary;
- ✓ Organisational, Technical (operational), Personal,
- ✓ Confidential, Non confidential;
- ✓ Current, semi current, archival.

iv) User expectations – the various users expect information for various purposes and at various levels. Of the users, we may consider management interest in the submitted reports in line with their role in the running of the organisation:

NB *A good job here results in well designed "Terms of References" or "Introduction" to the report*

b) Sourcing and Collecting information

This involves:

i) Identifying and classifying sources of information into:

- ✓ Primary – people; events
- ✓ Secondary – records (files and books)

ii) Develop tools and instruments for collecting the needed data as:

- ✓ Primary – interviews, questionnaires, focus/discussion groups, experiments and observations (participating);
- ✓ Desk/library study

iii) Apply the data collection tools and instruments on the identified sources relying on skills in:

- ✓ Reading
- ✓ Listening and
- ✓ Note making

c) Data Analysis

This entails processing the collected raw information into meaning units and manageable clusters. This can be achieved through:

i) *Classification*: grouping information according to some criteria;

ii) *Comparison*: establishing similarities between sets of information gathered;

iii) *Contrast*: highlighting key variations or differences between sets of information collected;

iv) *Implication/import*: establishing long term implications of the indicators in the collected data to form a basis for proactive steps to avert disaster;

v) *Cause – effect* relationships: establish the causality of certain things on the others;

vi) *Taxonomy* and other *relationships* in the information – how can the information be further broken down to its lowest meaningful clusters?

vii) *Action orientation*, etc – put those findings which inspire action on their own so that they may be easy to test.

d) Organising the Information

The collected information, in line with the analysis should be ordered into a sequence that makes sense and gives a smooth or logical flow. Most of this information will make the body of the report but will help design the introduction and point to areas for further research/investigation.

Bearing in mind the purpose of your communication, you may organise your test using the Direct or indirect approach.

e) Drafting the Report

This entails writing the report following the appropriate format/layout. The points will be expanded and presented in full form consistent with the three phase design of the **Introduction** – stating the purpose, background and scope of coverage; f**acts**/**details** – information processed and analysed as collected from the source independent of the writer's opinion; **Conclusion** – highlights of the key or outstanding issues contained on the facts as well as the writer's opinion/judgement on issues thereby confirming or refuting claims inherent in the information collected from the respective sources. The way forward or recommendations or suggestions are floated here.

It is advisable to pass on the draft to someone else to help identify shortcomings of the report. If no one is available, the writer should put it away for some time before beginning to proofread and edit it for the purpose of achieving objectivity.

f) Proofreading and Editing

You must read your draft objectively from the view point of your intended audience. Make sure that the text meets all the principles of good writing in content as well as the mechanics of writing.

Read paragraph by paragraph to ensure continuity of ideas and check every sentence, word, figure and punctuation mark to ensure the smooth flow and presentation of the message.

You may consider passing on your draft to colleagues for an independent opinion on content and mechanics.

g) The Camera Ready Copy

Effective proofreading and editing produces the camera ready copy which can be circulated or disseminated as may be appropriate – to a live audience or using a covering minute (memo) to relevant offices.

4. Layout of the Report

Information in a well laid out report will fall under the following sections

a) Heading/title

This gives the gist of the report high lighting the focus of reporting.

b) Introduction

i) Terms of Reference

Outlining the essence of the report – who asked for it & how? what did he/she say must be done & when? Whether recommendations were asked for or not, etc

ii) Procedures

Indicating what methods were used to collect information and why. The procedures will also reflect what kind of information was collected from which source using what methods.

c) Facts/findings

This presents the information which was sourced. The information may be grouped under separate categories. The writer of the report should not bring out his/her opinion on the information presented here. It must be raw information as it was collected but processed and analysed

d) Conclusion

i) Conclusions

Passes judgement on whether the information gathered is true or false, right or wrong and so on. This is where the report writer's opinion on the information comes out.

ii) Recommendations

Presents any suggestions as to how the situation can be improved upon. This section inspires action and would be considered central in the discussion of the report.

NB **The *informal* report may use the section headings while the short *formal (schematic)* report must use the five italicised section headings numbered 1 – 5, respectively.**

On the other hand the long report which assumes the book format will have additional sections or parts: the title page, table of contents, executive summary/abstract, table of contents, list of tables/pictures etc, chapters 1, 2, …, appendices, etc

Element 4 Office Correspondence

1. Major Characteristics of The Memorandum and the Letter

Table 13.7

The Memo	***The Letter***
✓ For internal use only, ✓ Less formal yet formal in its own right ✓ Sent in any direction within the organisation, i.e. up, down, horizontal, diagonal (refer to channels of communication) ✓ Can thus be written by any employee at any level within the organisation ✓ Can be sent to an individual or group or all staff ✓ Used on non personal information i.e. for organisational and/or technical information ✓ Always sent to a third party ✓ Serves a wide and flexible range of purposes – to report, inform, alert/caution, a covering minute, etc	✓ Used in all external correspondence; ✓ May be used internally on personal matters like promotion, transfer, discipline, etc; ✓ Written between the client and the Chief Executive (e.g. Managing Director, Permanent Secretary etc) or the proxy (official representative); ✓ Written between the employee and the Human Resources Manager or the proxy; ✓ Very formal written communication; ✓ Serves a variety of functions in the various areas of business (see below); ✓ May be but rarely sent to third person except in disputes; ✓ Usually sent to individuals but can be sent to several recipients as a standard (circular) letter; ✓ Most organisations use headed paper for letters.

2. Parts and Layout of the Memo and the Letter

a) The Memo

Plate 13.1 (**Insert authentic memo, eg from ZICA**) *i. Parts of the memo explained*

<u>Table 13.8</u>

a) Name of the organisation: -	✓ Indicates which organisation the memo is internal to. Some sources propose that this part can be left out but it is important. However, a number of organisations use specially designed memo headed paper
b) Document identity: -	✓ Reminds the users that this document is for internal circulation only
c) Destination: -	✓ Shows the title/designation not so much the name of the recipient of the memo since the memo is on non personal issues;
d) Origin: -	✓ Shows the title/designation of the author of the memo;
e) Reference: -	✓ The filing code top facilitate record keeping in the organisation. May not always be used;
f) Date: -	✓ Shows the date on which the memo was written. Important as it helps determine how current the information is;
g) Subject line: -	✓ Gives the title of the message. This needs not be flagged off/signalled by the word "*subject*" as the practice used to be n the past.
h) Message: -	✓ This is the substance of the memo which falls into three parts not necessarily paragraphs, i.e. introduction, details (body) and the conclusion.
i) Signature block: -	✓ Shows the signature and name of the author. Note that the title is already reflected under origin. The signature is important in order to declare authenticity of the document otherwise anyone in the organisation can purport to write in the name of someone else.
j) Circulation checklist: -	✓ Shows all the third parties to whom the memo has been copied to. It is important for everyone who receives a memo to know who else has received a copy of the same document
k) Enclosure indication: -	✓ Indicates something has been sent along with this memo. Details of the enclosures will be contained in the message

b) The Letter

Plate 13.2 (**Insert authentic letter, eg from ZICA**)

ii. Parts of the Letter explained

Table 13.9

i) Letterhead	✓ The sender's contact details including the name (and logo) of the organisation, postal contact, physical contact, electronic (phone numbers, email addresses, websites, etc). note that the sender's name and/or title should not appear at this point
ii) Reference	✓ Filing code as in the memo. However, there is provision for "Your ref …." (the recipient's filing code) & "Our ref …." (the sender's filing code);
iii) Date	✓ Shows how current the letter is. Should be written in full, eg 21 June 2007;
iv) Inside Address	✓ The recipient's name/title and the applicable contact details. This is what appears on the envelope;
v) Salutation	✓ Draws reader's attention to the fact that the message is about to begin. It also reflects a friendly relationship or at least some good will;
vi) Subject Line	✓ Gives the title of the message. It is more easily constructed by completing the expression: "*I am writing regarding . . .* ."

	What comes after regarding and smoothly completes the statement will make a very good subject line. We should note that a good heading is brief and throws light to the contents/purpose of the letter..
vii) Message	✓ The details on the heading opening with the introduction, then the details and ending with the *prayer* – an earnest appeal by the sender for action from the recipient;
viii) Complementary Close	✓ Signals the end of the message. It reflects good relations with the recipient or good will and wishes. It matches with the salutation – no salutation, no complimentary close;
ix) Signature Block	✓ Contains the signature, name and designation of the author. There is no designation if one is not writing in an official position;
x) Circulation checklist	✓ Where applicable it reflects details of third parties to whom a copy of the same letter has been sent;
xi) Enclosure indication	✓ Where the letter is a covering minute – introducing another document, say a report, another letter, quotation, invoice, cheque, etc, this par indicates that there is some enclosure to the letter.

c) Special Notes on the Letter

i) Influences some parts have on others

The opening line of the Inside Address determines the form the Salutation takes. This in turn influences the complementary close.

Table 13.10

Inside Address	Salutation	Complementary Close	When applicable
1. by **Name** e.g. ***Dr L Musonda*** Zambia Institute of Management PO Box 31735 Lusaka **OR** ***Ms E Chilwalo*** Zambia Institute of Management PO Box 31735 Lusaka	✓ Dear *Dr Musonda* OR ✓ Dear *Ms Chilwalo*	✓ Yours *sincerely*	When the contact person is known, especially in inter organisational correspondence
2. by **Title** ***The Director*** Zambia Institute of Management PO Box 31735 Lusaka	✓ Dear *sir* OR ✓ Dear *Madam* (Dear sir/madam is not only unnecessary	✓ Yours *faithfully*	When the gender of the contact person is not known (external) or as appropriate when the gender of the contact is

	but cumbersome and outdated)		known (internal)
3. by **Organisation** ***Zambia Institute of Management*** PO Box 31735 Lusaka	✓ Dear *Messrs ZAMIM* Or ✓ Dear *Mmes ZAMIM*	✓ Yours *faithfully*	When no contact person is known whether by title or name

ii) Extensions of some parts

Some parts of the letter take additional features depending on the situation of the letter. Some of the parts with extensions are as below:

- ✓ The *inside address:* this experiences two major extensions

Table 13.11

ufs (under flying seal of) e.g. The Registrar Zambia Institute of Management PO Box 31735 Lusaka ufs *The Principal* *ZAMIM* *Lusaka*	Used in internal letters where the letter must follow the official channels of communication, i.e. following the line of command. A letter addressed to the Human Resources Manager should pass through the employee's supervisor so that the supervisor may append his/her opinion on the matter. In this situation, the employee will for example put two copies of the letter in the same envelope addressed to the immediate supervisor and the supervisor will endorse both copies and prepare a covering minute containing his comments on the subject then forward the one copy to the Human Resources Manager. In the example, the letter is addressed to the registrar but to pass through the Principal.
Attention line, e.g. The Director Zambia Institute of Management PO Box 31735 Lusaka *Attention: Mr Siakavuba*	The contact person (one handling the case in the organisation) is known but the letter is addressed to the chief in line with the requirement that letters between client and the organisation be addressed to the Chief executive of the company. The attention line means that the letter will be received by the person to whose attention it is marked, i.e. Mr Siakavuba in the example. Also, the address on the envelope will include the attention line.

- ✓ *Signature Block*: - may experience extensions based on the availability of the author

- ***for/***Managing Director is used when the MDs proxy is writing the letter. The proxy will append his/her signature, name and designation. The convention indicates that the author is writing using delegated authority, not as the chief executive officer. This is the person who will be intentioned to when the reply is sent.
- *pp* is used when the author of the letter is not available to sign the letter in person. In this era of technology, the superior may dictate a letter over the phone and the letter is to be dispatched at once. The subordinate (the secretary, for example, will sign but the author's name and designation will feature. To declare that the signature is not for the designated author, the abbreviation *pp* is used to denote *per proxy*.
- *Signed* is used when the original signature cannot be accessed, neither can the signature be retrieved. This is least likely but a letter of the pre computer popularity period of tremendous influence can be retyped verbatim, and instead of the signature, the word *signed* will be used.

3. Style and Presentation

The term Style in correspondence relates to three major elements – expression, punctuation and display.

a) Expression

Since the letter and the memo are both office documents, they must be presented in formal expression devoid of all colloquialisms – see above.

b) Punctuation

Consideration of punctuation evolves around two options, one of which is associated with the modern practice while the other belongs to the old school of writing – open punctuation and the punctuated, respectively. The punctuation option shows itself more in the cases of the addresses, initials, dates, etc.

Table 13.12

<table>
<tr><th>Open Punctuation</th><th>Punctuated</th></tr>
<tr><td>The Education Secretary
Zambia Institute of Chartered Accountants (ZICA)
PO Box
LUSAKA

21 June 2007</td><td>The Education Secretary,
Zambia Institute of Chartered Accountants (Z.I.C.A.),
P. O. Box 32005,
LUSAKA.
21st June, 2007.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">The main variations relate to

i) the absence of commas in the address and date (open punctuation) and their presence in the punctuated);
ii) the absence of the periods (full stop) in the initials – ZICA, PO Box and the date, and their use in the punctuated. Note the mandatory space after each period, thus taking more space for each entry;
iii) absence of the ordinal number system in the date – 21 June under open punctuation, as contrasted to the 21st June in the punctuated.

Beware of the general tendency to adhere to old methods. The world is dynamic!</td></tr>
</table>

c) Display

The major contenders in this aspect of style are the blocked and semi blocked styles. The semi blocked style is a compromise between the blocked and the indented style. Note the particular differences in the positioning of the various parts of the memo and letter. The models given above are in the blocked style. Here we shall illustrate the semi blocked and the indented.

<table>
<tr><th>Semi Blocked</th><th>Indented</th></tr>
<tr><td>
Letterhead
Date
Reference
Inside Address
Salutation
Subject Line
Message (blocked)
Complementary close
Signature
Name
Designation
cc
encl
</td><td>
Letterhead
Date
Reference
Inside Address
Salutation
<u>THE INDENTED STYLE</u>
All the paragraphs of the Message are indented thereby creating problems of determining how wide the indentation should be.
At times the indentation would be wider than usual.
Also centring can be a problem, especially when one is writing the letter by hand.
Generally, the indented style does not give the most impressive appearance. That is why the blocked style is being popularized.
Complementary close
Signature
Name
designation
cc
encl
</td></tr>
</table>

Element 5 Other Forms of Office Writing

1. Minutes

a) Purpose

Minutes have two major purposes – as a **record** of a meeting that was held, and as a **report** on the meeting that was held.

b) Types and Layout

Table 13.13

i) Reports of meetings	This format extracts and summarises main conclusions of a meeting and why. The type is mainly used to report results of meeting or conference proceedings in one organisation to participants or other organisations that may be interested. The report may also be sent to the press especially after newsworthy meetings or conferences.
ii) Narrative Minutes	These minutes present decisions and votes as well as a summary of discussions leading to those decisions and votes. They are more detailed and could be a source document on issues pertaining to the meeting. Other types of minutes can be derived from these. The meeting Secretary is usually required to produce narrative minutes while any other member can produce other types. Examination questions usually ask candidates to discuss or even illustrate narrative minutes.
iii) Resolution Minutes	These are a summary of the meeting showing the resolution of a meeting not how these were reached. The type usually takes the format of a list. The resolutions can be extracted from narrative minutes
iv) Action Minutes	This is a summary of the meeting which highlights any jobs or assignments that were handed out at a meeting. The minutes take the form of a table with columns covering the tasks, who should perform the tasks and by which date the tasks should be completed – on the lines of *Action Plans*. These can be extracted from the resolution minutes bearing in mind that not every resolution informs action.

c) Layout and Contents of Narrative Minutes

These are modelled on the agenda of the meeting. However, since the agenda was projective and minutes are reflective, there is much more detail in the minutes than in the agenda. A template of Narrative minutes would look like this:

Plate 13.3

Heading e.g.

MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON …

ATTENDANCE

Present – names of members present beginning with that of the Chairperson and ending with the Secretary;

Apologies – names of all those who were not able to attend the meeting but had sent word to that effect;

In Attendance – names of those people present at the meeting of which they are not regular members. Such people as the *ex officio* (those who by virtue of their positions are free to attend the meeting) or *guests* – invited to either clarify a certain technical mater or receive the technical clarification;

Absent – names of those who missed the meeting without any apologies.

1. APOLOGIES:

Gives summary description of how the chair went about opening the meeting – calling the meeting to order (time for this must be shown), announcing apologies and introducing the "in attendance", outlining procedures governing that particular meeting, adopting the agenda,, declaring the meeting open.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Indicates how the minutes were corrected and confirmed. Note that minutes are circulated ahead of a meeting and are taken as read by the time of the meeting. All those present take part in correcting the minutes while only those who were present at that meeting whose minutes are being looked at take part in their adoption. For this reason, names of those who propose and second the adoption should be reflected.

Minutes are only signed after receiving approval or adoption by the meeting!

3. MATTERS ARISING

Here any issues that were left unresolved at the last meeting will be raised, clarified and closed.

4. MAIN BUSINESS

Presents summary of each new item that was tabled, discussed and resolved (by vote). The length of this section depends on how many such new business was presented.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A summary of any business that was relevant to the meeting but was not on the initial agenda is presented. Such are the items which end up being carried forward because most members may not have any details to justify responsible discussion.

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

This section describes how the Chairperson closed the meeting after highlighting key aspects of the meeting, thanking the members for their participation and advising on what to do with the deliberations – broadcast them or keep them classified until further notice.

Chairman's Name & Signature | Secretary's name & Signature

2. Briefs

a) Purpose and Usage

These are notes prepared for another person to follow or implement. They are commonly used during hand over or when a job is to be completed by someone else

b) Special Characteristics

Special feature is that Briefs are written in bullet point form. The bullet would be numbered for ease of reference!

3. Notices

a) Purpose

The main functions of the Notices are:

i) To give details of something such as an event (*announce*)

ii) To *invite* people to the function/event

b) Contents

A good notice is supposed to produce a good attendance to the function – be it a meeting or otherwise. It must therefore provide information that will make it possible for the audience to take the appropriate action:

i) details of the event

- ✓ *what event* – so that the affected can attend;
- ✓ *date* of event – “on”
- ✓ *venue* – “in/at”
- ✓ *time* – “at”

ii) *author* – who is announcing and inviting in case of query;

iii) *date* of the notice – to help determine how current the announcement is so that people can attach necessary attention;

c) Types and Layout

Table 13.14

Type	Features
i) Display	✓ Meant for posting on the notice board and other public places eg windows, walls and tree trunks; ✓ Should standout among other materials so as to be easily spotted out; ✓ Suitable for open events as opposed to closed group events; ✓ An aspect of mass communication (see Unit 11.3a, v) ✓ Should have capacity to attract *attention*, stimulate *interest*, provoke a *desire* and produce *action* – the AIDA model of sll publicity materials, etc
ii) Personalised	✓ Sent to specific people; ✓ Suitable for closed groups; ✓ Rarely mounted on public display for a like notice boards; ✓ Is a form of interpersonal communication (see Unit 11.3a, ii); ✓ May take the forms of a card (when target audience are many but known eg all share holders (invited to AGM),the informal note, a memo, letter, etc.

Element 6 Public Sector Written Communication

Public sector organisations usually have an elaborate reporting system and stakeholder structure and are consequently very formal in their operations. The organisations may be found as Civil Service (Central and Local Government) and Public Limited Companies as well as societies and Cooperatives. Written communication here is critical as it is the basis for all managerial activity. Needs for information are perhaps greater than in the private sector where the employees deals directly on daily basis with the owners of the business. .

1. Internal Minutes/Memo

a) Characteristics of Public Sector Organisations

b) Informational Needs in Public Sector Organisations

2. Cabinet Memo

3. Ministry Circulars

Highlight/emphasise elaborate extensions

Element 7 Effective Curriculum Vitae and Application Forms

1. Purpose

Both the Curriculum Vitae (CV) and the Employment form are self portrayal documents which are used in job procurement (application). They give the potential employer a brief but factual summary of the job seeker's relevant life – private and public as may be relevant to the job.

The documents give particulars of the applicants' events in their lives in some chronological order. The more modern practice, however, is to start with the latest and move backwards to the earliest. However, the CV is designed by the applicant while the Application Form is by the employer. In fact, the two are essentially the same except that the latter is the CV modelled to the particular organisation's requirements and specifications.

2. Major Features and Parts

One's life is complex, however short it may look. The individual has to select from the many events those that will sell them most effectively.

The CV and Application Form are therefore structured to guide both the supplier and the user of the required information. They are generally broken into clear sections seeking specific detail.

PERSONAL DETILS/BIODATA Name: Sex Year of Birth Place of Birth Marital Status Contact Details
EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND Period Institution Qualification
WORK EXPERIENCE Period Institution Job Title
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION *Give details of other skills and capabilities not included elsewhere. Things such as your job challenges, what aspects of job you specialise in, workshops and conferences attended,*
INTERESTS *Your pass time interests. The employer would like to engage a human being not a work machine. A human being accumulates pressure from work and should have somewhere to dissipate that pressure through.*
REFEREES *Contact details for at least two and up to three people drawn from educational, employment and other activities like church, clubs, etc. Consult them to seek their approval to vouch for you*.

12 Visual communication

OVERVIEW

Based on the old theory that when I hear, I forget, but when I see I remember, Visual Communication occupies a very prominent role in communication in the business world.

LEARNING OUTCOMES/OBJECTIVES

From this Unit we should be able to

- ✓ Apply visual communication as a better option of medium in various complex situations.
- ✓ Design various visual communication instruments fit for use in given situations

Element 1 Principles of Visual Communication

1. Special Attributes of Visual Communication

a) *Independent of language* – i.e. you do not need any language to understand a diagram;

b) *Appeals to sight* thus it is easily noticed;

c) It stays longer in the mind thereby *enhancing memory* (when I hear, I forget, when I see, I remember!);

d) It can be *easily interpreted* as the audience can approach it from any direction;

e) When used well it helps *keep the text short*;

f) It takes burden of creating vivid verbal picture off the sender by appealing to the mind of the audience to fill up any gaps – it speaks volumes more than words can! (No amount of words can fill a basket);

g) Very useful when dealing with complex information, such as objects/people, processes, places, statistical data as well as safety information;

2. Types of Visuals

a) Objects/people

Pictures will make it easier to introduce an object or person to another. Imagine the effectiveness of mail selling using full colour brochures and even leaflets, fliers or handbills.

Sketches may also be used to achieve the same effect.

b) Processes

Flow charts are perhaps the most effective means of showing the various stages of a process or operation. Consider the various spider diagrams and the communication cycle used in this text. They show the concepts more explicitly.

c) Places

Directing people to certain localities is most effectively done using maps and such other drawings than verbal descriptions. Imagine giving directions to your clients for your new premises you have relocated to within the same vicinity.

d) Statistical Data

Most of the work in offices centres on statistical material of one form or the other. The most frequently used forms of presenting statistical data include lists, tables, graphs, charts, pictograms, scatter graphs, the Gantt chart, histogram, etc. These may be better defined or explained in the subjects where they are core concepts, such as papers T3 and T4 – Business Mathematics and Statistics, and Economics, respectively.

i) *Lists*:- vertically arranged and numbered collection of items, names of clients, transactions, etc

ii) Tables:- quantified or qualified raw data arranged in headed fields (columns) and records (rows) which may be numbered. For example financial highlights from the Zambian Breweries plc Annual Reports for 2007 were presented as follows:

Table 14.1

K million	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Group turnover	318, 572	386, 294	451, 465	479, 847	516, 371
Opening profit	33, 686	41, 810	61, 403	75, 096	69, 526
Profit before taxation	28, 595	33, 053	56, 758	69, 042	63, 713
Profit after taxation	15, 165	20, 023	33, 394	40, 690	44, 259
Total assets	239, 034	254, 255	305, 644	354, 983	381, 401
Current liabilities	89, 409	98, 519	133, 955	166, 463	151, 153
Shareholder's interest	149, 625	148, 197	157, 661	174, 327	190, 103

iii) Graphs: - interpreted data to reflect progression or a trend in the behaviour or trend of some activity. For example a graph can be drawn on the group turn over pattern over the period 2003 to 2007.

iv) Charts: - these mainly show comparison of the performance or characteristics of items or products over a given period. Charts belong to two major types – the bar chart in three major classifications – the simple, compound/multiple and the stacked/cumulative; and the pie chart based on values of the circle apportioned proportionate to the quantities of the items being displayed.

v) Pictogram

vi) Histogram

vii) Gantt chart

viii) Scatter graph

e) Safety Information

Safety may be taken to be in the production area (plant/workshop/factory) or on the road.

i) *Plant/factory Safety*: - various safety signs like of danger, operating equipment, directions, location of some facilities, etc;

ii) *Road Safety*: - the various road signs.

3. Challenges in Designing Visual Communication

The visual displays should be:

a) *Relevant to the text*: -should be used to explain particular complex concept in the message;

b) *Readable*: - should not be clustered or crowded or congested;

c) Adequately labelled;

d) Signalled at appropriate point in text;

They work equally well with both oral and written communication. Before looking

Element 2 Basic Components of Visual Communication

a) a heading/title;

b) labelled parts

c) a key to explain parts/shadings to avoid clustering;

Element 3 Visual Aids for Corporate Identity

1. The Logo

2. Corporate Colour

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