

Fidelity of Communication

By

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Abstract:

There are many communication barriers, however the most important communication barrier is distortion in communication. In the article an attempt has been made to refresh us on the communication process in brief and how communication gets distorted due to flaws in the communication process. It also explains what the angle of distortion means and its role to identify the degree of distortion.

Keywords: Communication process, Distortion in Communication, Angle of Distortion etc.

Communication

Communication has become one of the basic functions of managers in any organisation and its importance cannot be overlooked. It is not only necessary for managerial effectiveness but also important for interpersonal intra-team and organisational effectiveness.

Kartz Business School of University of Pittsburgh's wanted to identify the critical and promising attributes required in candidates for getting jobs in the organisations. They conducted a survey of employees with sample size of more than 50000 across various organisation. Their research findings cited, communications skills as the most decisive attributes for getting jobs in the organisation. Communication is important in personal life as well as to deal with one's family friends and social circle. However, the communication must be effective, efficient, free from distortion and must result in producing the desired end result for which it was intended and initiated. When the communication initiated does not convey the same meaning to the receiver, what the originator had in his mind naturally the end result will not be the same, what the originator wanted to achieve through the receiver. This mismatch in the meaning between the originator and receiver is termed as distortion in communication.

Communication Process

To understand distortion in communication, it will be good to revisit the basic Communication process. Communication Act is the basic unit of the Communication. It can be defined as the transmission, through medium or media of a goal-oriented message from source to and its reception by target.

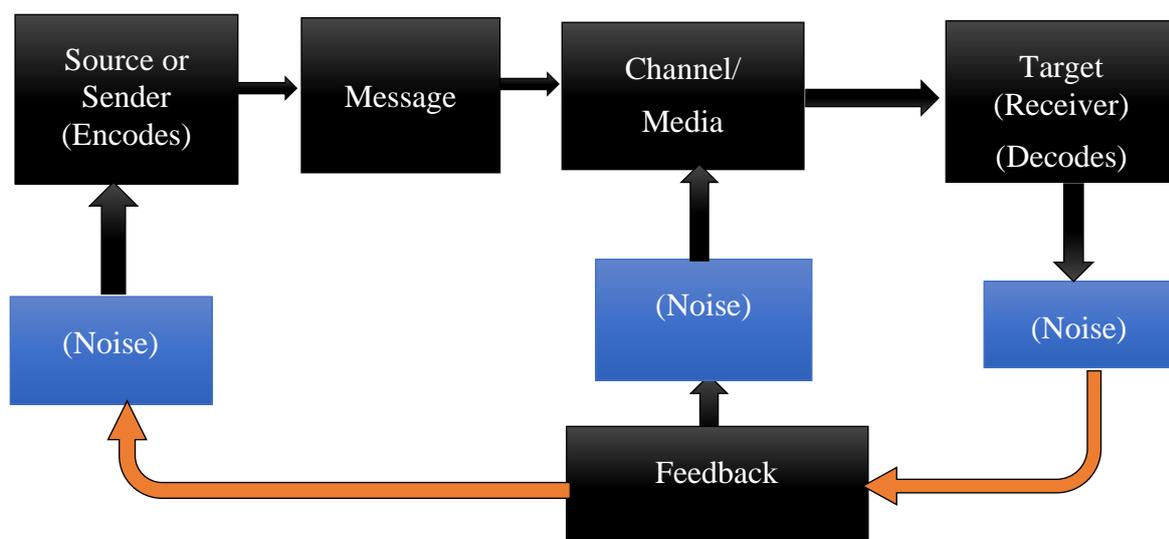


Figure 1: Communication Process

Source

Source of communication contributes to its effectiveness. His maturity and level understanding of the subject on which communication is based plays an important role. His skill on generating the correct and compact message (Proper coding understandable by the target) is also very important aspect of communication process. If he is not good at encoding and transmission, then he introduces unwanted noise in the message.

Message

Message can be three types, some information, a feeling, or a request for action. Communication of ideas, knowledge is communication of Information. Communication of concern, reactions, pleasant or unpleasant feelings, attitudes and likes dislikes relates to communication of feeling. A message relating orders or requests to do certain things is communication of request for action.

Target

If the target is receptive then communication is more likely to be effective. It may therefore be useful to assess the target 's readiness and receptivity and then take necessary action to ensure basic minimum level of these before initiating message.

Encoding

It is a process of transmitting a piece of information in to a form that can be sent through available means of media/channel and correctly understood by the receiver.

Decoding

Decoding is the process of interpreting the information or the message received correctly or converting the received message into the actual transmitted message. (No distortion).

Noise

Noise are barrier to communication which may weaken the or destroy the message sent. Noise also influences the interpretation of the message by the receiver. It gets introduced at every stage right from source to media/channel or at receiver end. And also, during feedback loop of communication.

Medium

Media can be defined in various manner. It can be verbal/non-verbal communication. Even silence may be eloquent and communicate a message. Verbal communication may include

written or oral communication. Apart from this mode of communication like electronic, telephone, digital media, Print Media etc. also form part of communication process.

Fidelity of Communication

In communication the transmitted message and received message are two separate entities. There is no guarantee that the received message may be same as transmitted message. If these two messages are not same, then it gives rise to distortion.

When there is absence of distortion in message is called fidelity. There are higher chances that the person receives his/her messages with minimum possibility of misunderstanding. If the gap between what a person wants to communicate & what person wants to understand is large, the effectiveness of the person who is sending the communication is low.

CHECK LIST

Sender → Message: We must Complete the task by EOD → Receiver → Message: We must complete the task by EOM.

EOD = End of Day

EOM = End of Month

Result in missing the deadline of the work.

Message_{Sender} ≠ **Message**_{Receiver}

The definition of communication emphasises that the sent message is different from the message which is received. There may be 2 situations:

- **Message**_{Sent} = **Message**_{Received}
- **Message**_{Sent} ≠ **Message**_{Received}

The extent to which they differ will indicate the distortion in communication.

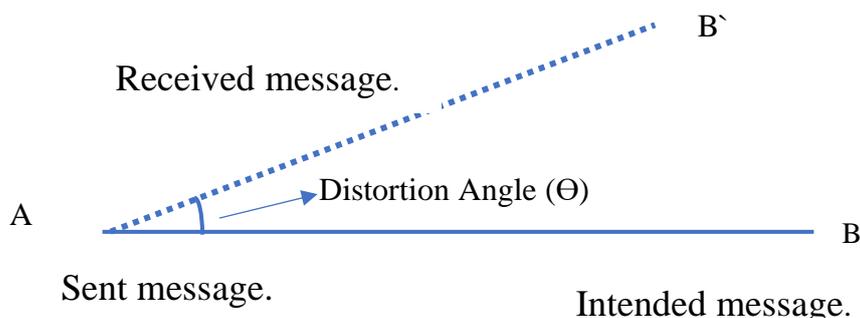


Figure 2: Distortion Angle of Communication.

The line AB indicates Sent message. A being the sender and B being the receiver. However, the AB` is the actual message received. The Angle BAB` is the Angle of Distortion.

There are numerous factors which contribute to causing distortion in communication process. The source of sender has his/her own background – values, motivation, style etc. The message gets filtered through these before getting transmitted.

For example – Decoder's decoding may get influenced by any of these background factors. On the other hand, the receivers also have his or her psychological filters, through which the message gets passed before getting final interpretation. Distortion can happen either during the encoding of message or can happen during decoding of message.

By following certain steps this problem of communication fidelity can be solved. The problem of Communication fidelity can be resolved by helping people involved (source or sender & target or receiver) to understand each-other diverse backgrounds.

One of the finest techniques to reduce distortion in communication is to ask the target to encode the received message (put it in his or her words) and check back with the source whether the message received (as decoded by the target) is the one h/she sent. This type of exercise will help in understanding the factors causing distortion and will lead us to find ways to understand how we reduce it.

Bibliography

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