

Communication Skills of a Trainer: Challenges and Way-forward

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Abstract

Trainer is the most important element in a training situation. Very few people are born as a trainer, and most of them who wish to be a good trainer require training for him, to prepare himself to be a ready-man. As a result, those few who are born trainers benefit from training and their effectiveness is enhanced. The trainer who is enthusiastic, energetic and genuinely interested in both the subject and getting his or her message across will evoke the greatest response from the trainees (FAO, 2012). The trainer who lacks interest in training, who has little or no enthusiasm for the subject of the training and who merely goes through the motions of training is a failure. Such a trainer wastes not only his or her own time but also that of the trainees. Communication requires a sender, a message, and a recipient, although the receiver need not be present or aware of the sender's intent to communicate at the time of communication; thus communication can occur across vast distances in time and space. Communication requires that the communicating parties share an area of communicative commonality (Kadam & Others, 2018). The communication process is complete once the receiver has understood the message of the sender.

Key Words: Communication, Transmitter, Message, Receiver, Pedagogy and Andragogy, Barriers, Body-Language, Feedback, The 7Cs

1. Introduction

Training is a process whereby people acquire capabilities to aid in the achievement of organizational goals (Mathis and Jackson, 2007). Training is a process of teaching new employees the basic skills to perform their jobs (Dessler, 2019). Successful training is that which produces the desired result lies almost entirely in the hands of the trainer. In the trainer's hands lies the heavy responsibility for ensuring that the trainees achieve the maximum possible from the training. The communication in a successful training program shows with orally and physically.

A measure of the success of training is the relationship that develops between trainer and trainees. In a sound, productive training situation there is a mutual respect and trust between them, with the trainer taking care to ensure that even the weakest trainee performs to the highest possible level, and the trainees feeling a desire within them to achieve. In this situation the trainer is the motivator, and the trainees are the motivated.

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2. Objectives

The main objective of this article is to address the basic elements necessary for the effective preparation, implementation and evaluation of training, with the aim of that training being “to get the message across”.

The special objectives are

- (i) to achieve that intended to provide guidance to trainers in the skills of conveying their message successfully and transferring related information;
- (ii) to familiarize the participants with the elementary principles of successful communication of information and to enhance awareness of the factors that interferes with its effectiveness; and
- (iii) to assist the trainers to identify and become acquainted with the essential elements of getting the message across and becoming an effective communicator.

3. Conception of Effective Communication

Communication (from Latin “communis”, meaning to share) is the activity of conveying information through the exchange of thoughts, messages, or information, as by speech, visuals, signals, writing, or behavior. Communication requires a sender, a message, and a recipient, although the receiver need not be present or aware of the sender’s intent to communicate at the time of communication; thus communication can occur across vast distances in time and space. Communication requires that the communicating parties share an area of communicative commonality (Bogdanov 2012). The communication process is complete once the receiver has understood the message of the sender.

Many types of communications can be cited, such as: Non-verbal communication, Oral communication, Business communication, Written communication and its historical development, Effective communication etc. Successful communication depends on the message being received by the receiver intact and interpreted by the receiver to have the same meaning as when transmitted. Communication specialists compare the way people communicate to the way a radio transmission takes place. That is to say --

***Transmitter (Speaker/writer) ® Message ® Receiver (Listener/reader)**

a) Three types of transmission are identified:

- Spoken
- Written
- Gesture

b) Transmission is in code:

- Spoken language
- Written language
- Gestures / sometimes referred to as “body language”

4. Pedagogy and Andragogy (Science of Teaching)

Pedagogy is the study of teaching Methods and how teachers deliver curriculum; including the strategies teachers use, the theories they apply and how they assess students' learning (Shah, 2025).

Andragogy (Knowledge, the theory of adult learning) attempts to explain why adults learn differently than other types of learners. Adults learn differently than young people. But more importantly, their reasons for learning are very different.

Learning is a means to an end, not an end in itself. Adults often seek-out learning opportunities to cope with life changes. They usually want to learn something that they can use to better their position or make a change for the better. They are not always interested in knowledge for their own sake.

4.1 Techniques for Teaching Adults

- Use problem-oriented instruction; case studies, simulations, problem solving, groups make the instruction relevant to their situation.
- Instruction should be about work-oriented memorization of content.
- Instructors need to put their egos aside and not be afraid to have ideas and instruction challenged. Don't be afraid to give up control.
- Make the environment comfortable and leave time for breaks.
- Trainers should use open-ended questions to bring out the vast experiences of the adult learners.

5. The Importance of Oral Communication

As a trainer much of your effectiveness is measured by your ability to speak with clarity and conviction in getting your messages across.

Men and women in training positions are expected to be highly competent at presenting ideas, giving directions and explaining procedures. In fact, this quality of being an effective communicator is generally considered to be an essential element of the effective trainer's skills.

Communicating clearly – “getting your message across” - is not an inherited ability; people are not born with it. It is a learned skill developed through planning and practice.

6. Consciously Input the Message

The trainers should study the training methodology carefully prior to conducting any session. But it is not meant to be used that methodology as a 'Recipe Book'. The trainers should use their experience and creativity, and adapt the ideas provided in this suitably to match the contexts, levels of the trainees and their needs, within the framework. The trainers should plan each session by themselves with the help of the methods (Kumar, 2000). The trainers are also expected to read and collect additional material in planning some of the sessions.

For examples, Trainers can use of several training methods:

- a) Demonstration by the trainer with observation and imitation by the trainee
- b) Discussion and debate
- c) Discussion with groups
- d) Lecture presentation
- e) Problem solving and experimentation
- f) Role-playing
- g) Research
- h) Singing
- i) Games
- j) Electronic media such as TV, video and film

7. Suggestions for Presentation

The trainer should attempt to elicit from the trainees their experiences with transmission, interference and ways of avoiding interference, which are well within the purview of trainee experience. Trainees should be asked to tell the course participants about good communicators and poor communicators they have known, describing why they are memorable. The reasons they give should be related to the types of interference and ways in which interference was or could have been avoided (Husain, 2002).

Such a discussion invariably brings out other indirectly related aspects of spoken communication, which provide points of reference when subjects in later modules are being dealt with.

8. Barriers and Interference to Effective Communication

Many barriers we can see creates disturbances, like; Physical barriers, System design, Attitudinal barriers, Ambiguity of words/phrases, Individual linguistic ability, Physiological barriers, Presentation of information and various types noises etc. Frequently the message suffers from interference. That is, something interferes with the message between its transmission and reception and distorts it. The followings are some types of interference:

a) Weak transmission

- Speaking too softly
- Speaking in a flat voice (monotone) without inflection
- Not speaking in a direct line with the receiver
- Insufficient volume of transmission to prevail over competing transmissions and localized noise (static)

b) Garbled transmission

The transmitter (speaker) often scrambles the contents of the message so that the facts it contains are not in logical order and often appear unrelated.

c) Wrong language

The transmitter may use words, terms and expressions unknown to the receiver.

d) Pitching message at the wrong level

The speaker may transmit information in a context beyond the experience of the receiver (this may involve the use of wrong language). This is sometimes called “transmitting or talking over the receiver’s head”. Examples are - teaching food control procedures to people who have no experience in food safety or food processing or transmitting detailed and profound scientific messages to a receiver without a scientific background.

e) Receiver not receiving

- Receiver turned off (gone to sleep!)
- Tuned into another transmitter
- Transmission too weak
- Strength of receiver diminished (lack of interest - boredom)
- Receiver distracted by a competing focus of interest (an attractive person walks by)
- Receiver fatigued

f) Competing transmissions

The receiver may be unable to select between transmissions (too many people talking at once).

g) Overloading the message

The receiver does not possess the capacity to retain all of the information contained in the message. This frequently leads to receiver confusion/fatigue and anxiety.

9. Ways of Avoiding Interference

As a trainer it is essential that you get your message across-otherwise your effort to train will be wasted. The trainer’s have to capacity to avoid the Interference in a training session like as follows:

- Speak up and out
- Speak slowly and deliberately
- Use language that the receiver understands
- Do not talk over the receiver’s head
- Ensure you have the attention of the receiver
- Only transmit your message in suitable surroundings where there is no, or little, competition
- Make the message succinct (as few words as possible) and transmit it in the simplest terms
- Plan the message in logical order

10. Communication Hazard

a) Nervousness, forgetfulness and losing track

At one time or another all trainers (transmitters) experience these problems. Two ways to prevent these difficulties are:

- i) Use notes
- ii) Rehearse the presentation of your message

Speakers familiar with their message seldom, if ever, suffer from severe interference.

b) Letting the audience gets to you - becoming defensive

Do not get defensive when a trainee asks a question or makes a statement that is or appears to be a criticism of or an attack on you. As a trainer and communicator you must retain your objectivity. To become defensive and subjective quickly signals to the listeners that you are not sure of yourself or your facts and they may assume that what you are saying is unreliable. This can lead to loss of your credibility.

c) Criticism of your Presentation

Look upon critical statements or questions as a form of feedback. The information in them can tell you whether you are on the right track. However difficult it might be, handle yourself pleasantly and diplomatically, using responses such as:

- 1) I'm glad you brought that up. It's an interesting question
- 2) Perhaps you could explain that a little more before we have a look at it
- 3) I can understand how you feel about the matter, but try and look at it this way
- 4) I understand your concerns. Let's try to come up with some alternatives
- 5) I can see that the matter is of great concern to you. Let's discuss it personally at the coffee break.

10.1 Respond of Reactions

It is important that your trainees see you as somebody who is honest with them. A good part of this quality of openness is reflected in the way you respond to people when they question your statements, instructions or opinions. Listeners question speakers because they have not received (not understood) the message, or because it is unclear, or because the details are vague. Generally, they are not challenging the speaker as a person; they are simply seeking clarification. In answering questions, make sure you understand the question. If you do not understand the question, ask the questioner to repeat it. If you still do not understand it, start questioning the questioner.

11. Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communication involves the information, ideas, and feelings being exchanged verbally or non-verbally between two or more people. Face-to-face communication often involves hearing, seeing, and feeling body language, facial expressions, and gestures (Terra 2014).

In other terms, interpersonal communication is exchanging information, meaning, feelings, and opinions between two or more people via verbal and non-verbal means. Although we

mentioned “face-to-face” communication previously, today’s technology compels us to expand its definition to include media such as phone calls and online messaging.

11.1 Types of Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communications divided into four distinct types.

- a) Verbal
- b) Listening
- c) The Written Word
- d) Non-Verbal

11.2 How to Build Interpersonal Communication Skills

Building interpersonal communication skills can help you improve your relationships, increase your ability to collaborate effectively with others, and enhance your overall success in life. Here are some tips to help you develop them:

- a. Practice Active Listening
- b. Use Clear and Concise Language
- c. Master Nonverbal Communication
- d. Show Empathy
- e. Build Rapport
- f. Be Open to Feedback

12. Instruction Summery

To be a successful communicator you have to -

- Use your voice effectively
- Know your subject
- Use ICT to present your session
- Know what you want to say
- Prepare your message carefully
- Arrange your points logically
- Display interest and enthusiasm
- Sound convincing and sincere

13. Tips may be followed by the Trainers

- a) Start on time
- b) Read the introduction of each session before conducting
- c) Note the important points
- d) Tell those at the beginning of each session
- e) State the objectives of every session
- f) Tell and use variety of strategies in conducting the session
- g) Honour the expertise of the group

- h) Maintain equity (e.g. male/female) during group formation
- i) Ensure that everyone can see and hear
- j) Focus on your own strengths
- k) Relieve stress
- l) Supply essential reading material to take home
- m) Request feedback
- n) Finish on time

14. The 7C's of Communication

We must consider 7C's of communication

- Clear
- Concise
- Concrete
- Correct
- Coherent
- Complete
- Courteous

15. Conclusion

Listeners will probably not be able to remember everything you have said, especially if you have presented several ideas. A short, simple restatement of the essential messages helps the listeners to remember and respond (FAO, 2012). You must find out whether you got your message across. Checking this may also introduce you to views of your listeners that were not apparent to you or reveal misunderstandings that need to be quickly corrected. In addition, checking often helps listeners feel involved: they are being consulted.

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