

Types of communication

There are five types of communication:

Written- letters, memoranda, reports, notices

Oral- telephone, face-to-face, meetings

Visual- charts, tables, posters, advertisements

Electronic- facsimile, computer, e-mail, pager

Non- verbal- body language.

It is the information that dictates which method is used depending upon:

- The nature of the information- is it long or short? Is it confidential?
- The speed with which it needs to be sent- does it need to be there today?
- Whether it is best in written or oral form- would a telephone call be best?
- The cost- would the cost be too much?

Written Communication

Written communication uses words, numbers and images.

Letters

A formal method of communication, which is usually external. It is possible to set out detailed instructions, confirm arrangements or pass on information. Letters can also be used internally

Advantages:

- Letters can provide a permanent record for future reference.
- Accurate, clear messages can be sent.

Disadvantages:

- They can be less personal.
- There is no immediate feedback.

Memoranda

Memoranda are usually brief and used internally. They are sent through internal electric mail systems (e-mail).

Advantages

- They are short and to the point
- They can provide a permanent record for future reference.

Disadvantages

- There is no immediate feedback
- If many e-mails are received, there is the possibility that some are missed and the receiver can suffer from information overload.

Reports

Reports are usually the result of some research or investigation. They are formal and structured and can deal with such things as health and safety, future plans or installation of new computers. They usually help people make decisions.

Advantages

- Reports can be copied and circulated to many people.
- Reports usually deal with complicated matters, which are the best dealt with in writing rather than by other methods.

Disadvantages

- They can be complicated.
- The language can be too difficult for some people to understand.

Notices

Notices are frequently used internally to communicate to employees within the organisation. They can be used to inform employees of forthcoming social events, job vacancies or fire drill procedures .

Advantages

- They are cheap to produce.
- They can be seen by a large number of people.

Disadvantages

- Notices can be torn down or damaged.
- There is no guarantee that everyone will read the notice .

Oral communication

Oral communication is communication via the spoken word. No record is usually kept.

Telephone

The telephone is a form of electronic communication, which provides fast communication within an organisation and with others outside the organisation. People can be contacted on mobile phones in case of an emergency or urgency.

Advantages

- Information will be quickly received.
- Two way communications can be provided

Disadvantages

- Verbal messages can sometimes be misunderstood.
- There is no written record of the conversation.

Face to Face

Face to face usually occurs during a meeting which could be with one person or with lots of people. Face to face also happens in a chat or conversation.

Advantages

- Feedback can be received or given
- Problems will be quickly sorted out

Disadvantages

- In meetings you can't tell if people are listening or not
- When you give a message you don't know if people have understood it.

Visual communication

Charts, tables, pictures, maps, diagrams and photographs can be used by an organisation to attract people's attention. Visual communication gives impact and usually simplifies it.

Charts and diagrams

Charts and diagrams can be included in reports to show numerical data as it will be easier to understand than technical data which is complicated.

Tables

Tables are ways to present information. They present clear information and are simple to produce. Tables are easy to understand.

Films and videos

Films and videos are used to give information about the organisation. They also tell about the organisation's services and products which can be used in training or staff or health and safety.

Advertisements

These can be used to provide information about the organisations products or services or persuade the customer to buy the company's product.

Advantages

- Videos and films can show actual situations.
- Information will be seen as more appealing and interesting

Disadvantages

- There is no feedback
- The message isn't usually received or understood

Electronic communication

Facsimile (fax) machine

This is a way of sending black and white printed materials or images between two organisations. The information is electronically sent between two fax machines using the telephone lines. The distance between the two organisations and the length of time it takes to transmit the message will determine of how much it will cost.

A fax has to contain certain information so that the fax receiver knows how many pages have been sent and know where it has come from. The first page is called a fax header.

Advantages

- It is easy to send messages
- The message can be sent quickly

Disadvantages

- The fax machine can miss sheets
- The message is not confidential

Electronic mail (e-mail)

Electronic mail involves sending data, messages, graphics and files to users of another computer network. Each person has an e-mail address. Messages can be word-processed beforehand. Users then log-on and the message are sent quickly.

Advantages

- A printout can be made of messages
- Frequent contact can be made between users

Disadvantages

- Users need a modem and a computer
- Connections can sometimes be lost

Video conferencing

Video conferencing involves using computer links and closed circuit television, allowing people to hear and see each other.

Advantages

- Saves people travelling long distances for meetings.
- Savings are made in terms of time and cost

Disadvantages

- The hardware required is still expensive
- Connection or system could fail

Pagers

A pager is a device that is carried by the owner and enables him or her to be contacted in cases of urgency or an emergency or merely to pass on messages.

Advantages

- Not expensive to buy
- No extra rental charges

Disadvantages

- No oral communication can take place
- There is a charge for each message sent

Non-verbal communication

Sometimes information is exchanged without speaking or writing. If no words are used, the communication is non-verbal, or body language is used. An expression or gesture, such as a frown, nod or smile, can indicate agreement or disagreement with a decision. Sometimes non-verbal messages can be misinterpreted and people can get the wrong message.