

PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

■ 1. Introduction

To create effective communication, certain basic principles must be applied. These principles provide guidelines for composing effective written or oral messages. These principles are the foundation stones of effective communication. Generally, these principles are called "Seven Cs". These are completeness, conciseness, consideration, courtesy, clarity, concreteness and correctness. Before discussing the principles of effective communication, it is desirable to understand the prerequisites of successful effective communication.

■ 2. Prerequisites of Successful Effective Communication

Following are the pre-conditions of a successful effective communication:

(i) **Perception** : The sender of the communication should be able to predict how his message will be received. He anticipates the reaction of the receiver and shapes the message accordingly. He reads the response of the receiver correctly and constantly adjusts to remove any misunderstanding.

(ii) **Precision** : The contents of the message are exact for both the sender and the receiver.

(iii) **Credibility**: The message of the sender is believable. The receiver has a faith in the substance of the message. He trusts the information transmitted by the sender. The receiver also has a faith in the intentions of the sender.

(iv) **Control:** The sender transmits the message in such a form that it is able to make the reaction of the receiver in his favour. Depending on the purpose of the sender, he can make the receiver change his mind or take action.

(v) **Congeniality:** The sender maintains friendly pleasant relations with the receiver regardless of whether he agrees with him or not. A good communicator commands the respect and goodwill of the receiver. The sender is willing to work with the receiver despite some differences of opinion.

■ 3. Principles of Effective Communication

The principles of effective communication can be presented in the form of following Seven Cs :

SEVEN C'S OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

<input type="checkbox"/>	1st C	Completeness
<input type="checkbox"/>	2nd C	Conciseness
<input type="checkbox"/>	3rd C	Consideration
<input type="checkbox"/>	4th C	Concreteness
<input type="checkbox"/>	5th C	Clarity
<input type="checkbox"/>	6th C	Courtesy
<input type="checkbox"/>	7th C	Correctness

■ (1) Completeness

The first principle of effective communications is that the business message must be complete. A business message is considered as complete when it contains all the facts the receiver needs for the feedback. The completeness requires inclusion of the following three elements in the business message:

(i) **Inclusion of all Necessary Information:** A complete communication includes all the necessary information required by the receiver for complete understanding. A complete message answers the five W questions—and another essential such as how. The five 'W' questions are—Who, What, When, Where and Why. For example, to order some goods, make clear *what* you want, *when* you need it, to *whom* and *where* it is to be sent, and *how* payment will be made.

(ii) **Inclusion of answers to all questions:** A complete business message includes answers to all possible questions stated and implied. Do not omit anything whenever you are answering an inquiry about your product.

(iii) **Inclusion of something extra, when desirable:** A complete letter includes something more than the answers to customer's specific questions, since the customers may not know what they need or their questions may be inadequate.

■ (2) Conciseness

Another principle of effective communication is conciseness. Conciseness means *saying something in the fewest possible words without sacrificing the other qualities of effective communications*. Communication should be brief. A concise communication saves time and expense for both sender and the receiver. The principle of conciseness states that the following three conditions are to be satisfied to achieve the goal of conciseness.

(1) Eliminate Wordy Expressions : Some of the guidelines to be followed to write wordy expressions in a concise manner without changing the meaning are :

- (i) Use single words instead of phrases
- (ii) Omit unnecessary details
- (iii) Omit 'which' and 'that' clauses whenever possible
- (iv) Limit use of passive voice.

Following examples may clarify the above points:

Wordy : Due to the fact that

Concise : Because (Single word)

(ii) **Include only Relevant Material:** An effective concise message should omit irrelevant statements, long introductions, unnecessary explanations, excessive adjectives and prepositions.

(iii) **Avoid all Needless Repetition:** Words and sentences should not be repeated in the communication.

A concise communication saves time and expense for both sender and the receiver.

■ (3) Consideration

The third principle of effective communication is consideration. Consideration means *"transmitting the message with the receiver in mind."* The communication must be courteous. It should focus on—'you' attitude instead of 'I' and 'we'. For example:

We-Attitude : We are delighted to announce that we will be extending our hours to make shopping more convenient.

You-Attitude : You will be able to shop evenings with the extended hours.

A communication should show interest in the receiver. The receivers will be more likely to do what you suggest if you show that benefits are worth the price that they have to pay.

Another way to show consideration is to emphasize positive pleasant facts. Use positive words like *benefit, help, generous, loyal, pleasure, thankful, thoughtful*. In fact, consideration is a result of integrity and honesty.

■ (4) Concreteness

The fourth principle of effective communication is concreteness. Concreteness means “using specific definite and vivid information.” An effective communication should not be vague and general. Use specific facts and figures to make the message more concrete.

An effective communication should use direct, explicit and generally dictionary based words. For example, in a personal folder, the term ‘female’ should be used for job description rather than feminine or maiden.

■ (5) Clarity

Another important principle of effective communication is clarity. The term clarity refers to “the understanding of the matter effortlessly.” Clarity in communication can be achieved in two ways:

(i) **By choosing concrete, precise and familiar language:** The use of precise language implies the choice of the right word to convey the message. On the other hand, using familiar language means choosing the words familiar to the audience and appropriate to the situation. Familiar words are part of daily conversation and therefore, could be understood clearly and easily. The use of short words instead of long words imparts more clarity to the message. For example, use the familiar word *after* in lieu of *subsequent*, and *home* in lieu of *domicile*.

Avoid using technical terms and business jargon or complex words while communicating with the persons who are not familiar with those technical terms.

(ii) **Use effective sentences and paragraphs :** In the words of Murphy, “At the core of clarity is the sentence. Grammatical statement, when clearly expressed, moves thoughts within a paragraph. Important characteristics to consider are length, unity, coherence and emphasis. Generally short sentences make the expression more clear. Unity in the sentence means conveying.” Convey only one main idea. For example; ‘I like Ramayana but Tajmahal is in Agra’ is not a unified sentence. Coherence means that the

words are correctly arranged in the sentence. It helps expressing the intended meaning clearly.

■ (6) Courtesy

The basic principle of effective business communication is courtesy. The term **courtesy** implies *“politeness that grows out of respect and concern for others.”* It is not merely politeness with mechanical insertions of “please” and “thank you,” although when applied socially these accepted manners do convey courtesy.

For instance, the message *“I cannot follow anything written in this letter.”* is discourteous. A courteous message should read: *“It is my ignorance that I could not understand this letter properly.”*

Courtesy demands that the message should be respectful, thoughtful and appreciative. Avoid questionable humour. When using names treat each gender with respect. Courtesy requires equal treatment of the people regardless of gender and race.

■ (7) Correctness

The last of the Seven C’s is correctness. The term correctness of the communication does not simply mean proper grammar, punctuation and spelling. It is used in a wider sense.

Correctness means that the facts and figures presented in the communication should be accurate. Accuracy requires that checking and double checking to ensure that figures, facts and words used are correct. The language used in communication should also be correct. Business writing should be informal. It should not be formal or scholarly. It should be sent at the proper time. Correct communication depends upon authentic facts, date and detail.

We may conclude that an effective business communication must satisfy all the seven C’s. Some authors have also suggested that besides above mentioned seven C’s, an effective communication should also satisfy **Four S’s—Shortness, Simplicity, Strength and Sincerity**. However, it may be pointed out that seven C’s are all comprehensive and include the so called four S’s also.

To Sum Up

We can sum up the principles of effective communication with the following words of Murphy, Hildbrandt and Thomas : **“Knowing the seven C’s, and using them, will help you become a better communicator; the principles for these seven criteria for good communication are core principles of effective communication.”**

Be *complete* in giving your message to the receiver with all the necessary information. One way to remember this suggestion is to think of the five *W's* : *who, what, when, where, and why.*

Apply the second *C, conciseness*, by eliminating wordy expressions, including only relevant material and avoiding unnecessary repetition. Consistently ask this question : Which word, sentence or paragraph may be eliminated without sacrificing the relevant material ?

Prepare your messages with the audience in mind. *Consideration* means putting yourself in their place. Focus on "You" in place of "I" or "We." Stress the positive sense in your messages.

Insert specific, definite, and vivid words to make your messages *concrete*, the fourth *C* principle. Use specific facts and figures; put action in your verbs; and choose vivid, image-building words.

Think of *clarity* by using words that are familiar to the message receiver. Additionally, use sentences that average 17 to 20 words, contain one main idea, are coherent and give emphasis to main ideas more often in the beginning of a sentence.

Respect your message receiver. The sixth *C* principle, *courtesy*, means being tactful, thoughtful, and appreciative.

This last of the seven *C's* focuses on authenticity of facts, correctness in grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Additionally, it lays stress on correctness of figures, facts, and words.

QUESTIONS

Very Short Questions with their Answers

1. Explain the term conciseness.

Ans. Conciseness means saying something in the fewest possible words without sacrificing the other qualities of effective communications.

2. What does the term courtesy implies?

Ans. The term courtesy implies, politeness that grows out of respect and concerns for others.

3. Give two benefits, if the messages are complete.

Ans. First, complete messages are more likely to bring the desired result without the expense of additional message. Second, they can do a better job of building goodwill.

4. What is the meaning of term correctness, as applied to business messages?

Ans. (1) Use the right level of languages.

(2) Check accuracy of figures, facts and words.

(3) Maintain acceptable writing mechanics.

Short Answer Type Questions

1. What is an effective communication? Explain the prerequisites of an effective communication. (M.D.U. 2005)
2. State the main principles of an effective communication. (H.P.U. 2004, 2008)
3. Write a note on the importance of clarity and correctness in an effective communication.
4. What do you mean by effective communication? Explain the importance of effective communication in business.

Long Answer Type Questions

1. What is an Effective Communication? Discuss the general principles of effective communication. (M.D.U. 2004, H.P.U. 2005, K.U. 2005)
Or
What is effective communication? What are the principles of effective communication?
Or (K.U. 2005)
Explain principles of effective communication (7 c's). (K.U. 2007, 2008)
 2. Explain seven C's of an effective communication. (H.P.U. 2006)
 3. "In an effective communication, conciseness and completeness are as important as courtesy and clarity". Discuss. (M.D.U. 2003)
 4. Define Business Communication. What are the Principles of Effective Communication? (K.U. 2003)
 5. What is effective communication? Write essential elements and importance of effective communication. (M.D.U. 2007)
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