



Unit - 1

Elements of Communication

Staff Training Solutions

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Define the essential pieces of communication
- ✓ Customize these essential pieces for your company

Unit 1

Elements of Communication

Key Communication Components

What Communication Is All About

Communications of any kind is a two-way street, with all parties involved alternating between absorbing information and sharing analysis or new information. Communication arises because someone – me, you, the person calling you – needs or wants something.

Business communications is like a multi-lane highway because:

- There are many audiences all travelling at different speeds to and from your company in search of varied destinations
- Multi-tasking, alertness, and frequent decision-making are required
- Maintenance is necessary, as is periodic redesign and expansion
- Opportunities are lost or destinations are missed if one is unaware, unprepared, or plodding along without a map
- Smooth flow means happy customers; roadblocks, detours, and confusing signals cost money, patience, and market share

Good communication, whether between a married couple or within a multinational corporation, takes place with these attributes:

- Knowing your audience
- Meeting their information needs
- Maintaining respect for audience and self

What are some specific ways that communications in your business is like a multi-lane highway?

Pre-Assignment Review

How does your company demonstrate the attributes of good communication?

Knowing your audience

Meeting their information needs



Maintaining respect for audience and self

The Building Blocks

Business and Marketing Strategy

Your Mission, Vision, and Values

Every strategy for your company (including marketing, communications, expansion, and succession) should begin with your company's mission, vision, and values. These are the defining and uniting statements of who you are, what you do, and why you do it. Using these statements as guides for planning and development ensures that all strategies, operations, and content used to promote and build your company are consistent and working together rather than in isolation.

If your company does not have statements of mission, vision, and values, strategic planning workshops can help. You can also review the mission, vision, and values of other companies for suggestions. You may even want to plan a session with your staff or management team to develop mission, vision, and values statements as part of your ongoing communications planning.

Consider your mission, vision, and value statements. How do your existing communications relate to these statements?

Components of Your Marketing Plan

Once your overall business strategy is in place, plans for specific areas can be developed. The marketing plan, which ties into communications, is one of these plans. A marketing plan includes the following:

- Mission, vision, and values
- Target audience(s)
- Products and/or services
- Goals
- Task list and accountabilities
- Resources

Consider the following when creating your marketing plan:

- How do we make money? Where does our revenue come from?
- Who are the customers who generate most of our revenue?
- Who is our target customer? What do they want from us?
- Who is our competition? What are they up to in terms of positioning and promotions?
- How do we currently differentiate ourselves from the competition?

- How is the marketplace changing toward our products or services? Is it growing, shrinking, or maintaining?
- What are our business objectives for the next three, six, nine, and twelve months? What is our plan beyond that?
- What are the results of our analysis of strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities?

Three-Year Marketing Plan Sample

Consider this example of a three-year marketing plan. Here is its Table of Contents:

Section 1: The Organization

Section 2: The Governance

- Responsibilities and Reporting Structure
- Company Communications Policy
- Privacy Policy

Section 3: The Message and Audience

- Core Message
- Audience Groups

Section 4: Media Protocols

- Mainstream Media
- Newsletters
- Brochure
- Website
- E-mail/Electronic Documents
- Social Media
- Special Events

Section 5: Project Plans

- Best Practices
- Branding
- Community Engagement
- Financial Sustainability

Resources

Note how Responsibilities and Reporting is near the beginning of the document. Tasks are completed best when assigned, monitored, and supported by the necessary staff and budget. The task list is complete only when each task has been identified and assigned, with resources attached. In this example, tasks are listed under Project Plans, with a specific plan for each item.

Sample Project Plan

Here is an example of a project plan that details how some of these marketing activities will be carried out.

Sample Project Plan: Community Engagement Activities

This plan outlines key activities identified in the company’s three-year business plan.

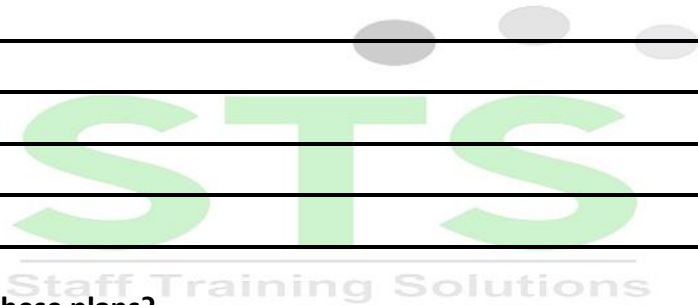
Category	Partnerships
Activity	Three new stakeholder acquisitions per year
Responsibility	Management team as presenters, staff as support
Hours Required for Planning/Preparation	Eight to 10 hours
Hours Required for Delivery	Two hours per visit
Expenses	Travel: \$100
	Printing Support Material: \$500
Qualitative Results	Increase in community support and image
Quantitative Results	Increase in market share
Priority Assignment	Years one, two, and three
Budget Line	Advertising and Promotion
Category	Service Awareness and Feedback
Activity	Obtaining feedback from existing and potential clientele on quality/appeal of our service
Responsibility	Staff and Management
Hours Required for Planning/Preparation	Eight to 10 hours
Hours Required for Delivery	Approximately ½ hour per interview

Expenses	Printing of comment cards and display items: \$100
	Prizes for participation: \$100
Qualitative Results	Increase in community support and image, increase in efficiency of service
Quantitative Results	Increase in efficiency of service, revenue from additional customers
Priority Assignment	Years one, two, and three
Budget Line	Miscellaneous
Category	Annual Conference
Activity	Day-long public event with expert roundtable
Responsibility	Staff and Management
Hours Required for Planning/Preparation	20 hours
Hours Required for Delivery	Five hours
Expenses	Facility/equipment: \$100
	Document printing: \$100
	Guest speaker: \$100
	Catering: \$300
Qualitative Results	Increase in community support and image
Quantitative Results	Revenue from public conference registration
Priority Assignment	Years two and three
Budget Line	Advertising and Promotion

Test your Knowledge

What marketing plans exist in your company?

Who is responsible for these plans?



What is included in these plans?

What additional parts do you need for these plans?

Public Relations Plan

Components of Your Public Relations Plan

If your communication pieces form the highway for your company, a good public relations strategy is an off-ramp to draw the public in to your storefront, website, or organization.

Consider the following when creating your public relations plan:

- Who among our stakeholders are making decisions about our products or services?
- How do we currently differentiate ourselves from the competition?
- What are the pertinent details of our current business, strategic, and marketing plans in place?
- Are we prepared (and in what ways) for any kind of crisis intervention?
- What are the implications for PR and communications as we look forward?

Overall, your PR plan will include the following phases:

- Defining reality
- Defining the goal
- Choosing your strategy and tactics
- Setting benchmarks
- Implementing your plan
- Evaluating and reviewing the plan

Defining Reality

Be very clear on what your situation is, who you support, who your stakeholders are, what your budget is, and what the limitations are. Completing a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis for each aspect of your plan can be useful.

Define the Goals for This Plan

What are you trying to achieve? Are you building a broader reach for a particular product or service? Is your priority in improving the company image? How about attracting staff who can align with the company values and will stick around for a while?

Describe Your Strategy

You should be able to speak about your strategy to stakeholders in a way that they immediately know what it is, how they are involved, and what the outcomes are.

Set Up a Tactics List

- It needs to be short but include all essential details of your message.
- It needs to sound natural, even though it will be best delivered after much practice and polishing.

Developing Your Pitch

The following steps can help you craft an accurate, effective elevator pitch:

Step One: The Goal

What do you want your audience to remember from your 20-30 second pitch? The goal of your elevator pitch could be to:

- Increase awareness of your business
- Introduce a product or service
- Enhance your profile as a product/service expert

Choose one goal. This will help you define and focus your message.

Example

“Our company can now offer its services to a new market. We want to promote this development to the general public.”

Step Two: The Details

Include in your pitch:

- What your organization does
- What problems it solves and/or how it helps people
- A statistic or number that is interesting and supports your case
- What makes your company, product, or service unique

Example

"Our company has been a book printer for 20 years, but our recent purchase of new technology now lets us offer print services to self-published authors and other small-demand markets at a reasonable cost. With an estimated 200 self-published authors in our area alone, we are excited to meet this demand for service while supporting the local arts community."

Step Three: The Question

Close your pitch with an open-ended question that cannot be answered with a simple yes or no. This involves the audience in the conversation and gives you valuable information on how best to proceed.

Example

“Who do you know of that has a story or photo collection to share?”

The audience will respond with a name and likely a description of a story, project, or situation. You can then continue the conversation or, if pressed for time, offer a card and follow-up call or visit.

If the question had been, “Do you know of someone with a story to share?” the answer may have been “No,” and the conversation would have ended. Even if the answer could have been “Yes,” you are left offering more questions for details, which can sometimes appear awkward or pushy.

Step Four: Assembly

Write out your explanation, add your question, and compare it to your goal. Does this pitch meet the goal you identified? Then, read the entire pitch aloud at normal speed in front of a timer. The time for complete delivery should be no more than 20-30 seconds. If the pitch is too long, delete non-essential facts or rework sentences to be shorter.

Step Five: Practice

There are three kinds of practice:

- By yourself
- With a trusted friend/colleague
- With your audience

You should use these three methods in order. First, practice by yourself in front of your clock and a mirror until the pitch is the proper length and your delivery looks and sounds natural. Then, practice in front of a trusted colleague for their feedback on your message, tone, appearance, and demeanor. Finally, share your pitch in public, using each session as a means to gauge success and ways to polish it. Are people confused by your message? Do they respond positively? Do conversations continue when the pitch is completed? Remember, communication is a work in progress, so use your audience’s feedback to improve your pitch.

Delivery Tips

How you deliver your pitch it is as important as what you say. Polished delivery includes an even, natural tone of voice; a comfortable speed for speaking and listening; and elements of the pitch in the right order. Body language is also important, since it can convey more information than words. A relaxed, attentive pose puts your audience at ease while telling them the conversation is important to you. Practice in front of a mirror or, better yet, in front of colleagues until the pitch feels natural. As you become more comfortable delivering your pitch, it's fine to vary it a little, as long as the essential information is still clearly conveyed.

Practice Makes Perfect

Follow the list of steps from the previous session to create an elevator pitch for your company.
