**Seven Communication barriers**

**1-Examples of physical barriers**

Examples of physical barriers that prevent individuals from effective communication include:

* **Environment -** Some barriers are due to the existing environment. For example, if you are standing in adverse weather conditions, your conversation would be hampered because you would not be able to pay full attention to what the other person is saying.
* **Distance -** Distance also plays an important part in determining the course of a conversation. For example, if the staff in an organization are made to sit in different buildings or different floors, they might have to substitute face to face communication with phone calls or emails.
* **Ignorance of Medium -** Communication also includes using signs and symbols to convey a feeling or a thought. However, if there is a lack of ignorance about the medium in which sender is sending the message, the conversation can be hampered.
* **How to over come physical barriers:**

To overcome physical barriers within the workplace, here are some helpful hints:

* If you send a lot of email or digital messages, make sure you are surgical in your word choice. Choosing the correct words and stamping out ambiguity is the only step to making communication more effective. Face-to-face communication is far superior for most people, especially once the connection has already been made.
* Open-concept offices are designed to improve workflow and communication. This concept have grown rapidly over the last decade. A report outlining 6 design meta trends for 2014 by Gensler, states, "As organizations recognize the benefits of face-to-face interaction, 'getting everyone under one roof' will grow.
* Video conferencing adoption is increasing as enterprises turn to higher-quality, lower-cost video technology to improve workforce collaboration and reduce reliance on travel.
  1. **Cultural barriers** are a result of living in an ever shrinking world. Different cultures, whether they be a societal culture of a race or simply the work culture of a company, can hinder developed communication if two different cultures clash. In these cases, it is important to find a common ground to work from. In work situations, identifying a problem and coming up with a highly efficient way to solve it can quickly topple any cultural or institutional barriers. Quite simply, people like results.

Examples of cultural barriers that prevent individuals from effective communication include:

* **Generational -** Each age group has a different general approach to work, which often leads to conflicts with older workers describing younger workers as "slackers," and younger workers criticizing older workers as being "out of touch."
* **Status and Resistance -** Workers who are accustomed to workplaces where seniority and status are emphasized may find it difficult to adapt to more fluid environments, where job titles are de-emphasized and production methods do not always follow a predetermined set of guidelines.

To overcome cultural barriers within the workplace, here are some helpful hints:

* **Determine whether a specific behaviour or attribute is a requirement of the job**. There are some cultural differences with your employees that you just have to accept and not try to change if you want your employees to perform well. However, there also are some cultural issues that are relevant to your business and to which employees of a different culture will have to adapt to if they are going to succeed in the *work* culture.
* **Identify whether or not you can reasonably accommodate the cultural difference**. Some cultural differences - such as an employee's willingness to confront her boss - can be accommodated by slightly altering the expectation or changing the circumstances of the situation. For example, some cultures are not responsive to stern feedback, but they are receptive to less direct insinuations regarding their performance. If you ask your employees they will tell you how best to communicate with them without violating their cultural norms.
* **Determine how best to accommodate the cultural difference**. Some cultures are group-centric rather than individually focused. In such cases praising an individual for their effort, rather than recognizing the entire group, can create contention among the group and embarrassment for the individual, thereby decreasing the employee's performance instead of enhancing it. Likewise, giving someone negative feedback in public, even if it is not severe, can have a detrimental effect on employees of certain cultures. Being sensitive to and aware of the unique cultural differences of your employees will help you determine where you need to alter your management style or practices.
* **Learn about other cultures**. There are numerous excellent books and articles on cultural diversity in your local bookstore or library. The internet is a valuable tool of unlimited resources explaining the differences in cultures. There is no excuse for your not understanding the cultural issues of your employees when you have so much information literally at your fingertips.
* **Ask your employees for insight** into how best to manage them. If you show an open and honest willingness to learn and to adjust your management practices, most of your employees will tell you how to accommodate their cultural needs if you ask them.
  1. **Language barriers** seem pretty self-inherent, but there are often hidden language barriers that we aren't always aware of. If you work in an industry that is heavy in jargon or technical language, care should be taken to avoid these words when speaking with someone from outside the industry. Without being patronizing, imagine explaining a situation in your industry to a child. How would you convey these concepts without relying on jargon? A clear, direct narrative is preferable to an incomprehensible slew of specialty terms.

Examples of language barriers that prevent individuals from effective communication include:

* **Dialects -** While two people may technically speak the same language, dialectal differences can make communication between them difficult. Examples of dialectical language barriers exist worldwide. Chinese, for example, has a variety of dialects that are commonly spoken, including Cantonese and Mandarin.
* **Language Disabilities -** Language disabilities are physical impediments to language. Physical language disabilities that cause language barriers include stuttering, dysphonia or an articulation disorder and hearing loss.

To overcome language barriers within the workplace, there are a few things you can do:

* **Translate all relevant documents** into the primary language of your employees. There are several free websites that translate text from one language to another. However, you have to be careful since the translation is not always in the exact same dialect as that of your employees. Also, sometimes the meaning of a word used in written translation does not always correspond to the meaning you wish to convey in your work documents.
* **Use an interpreter** whenever you give instructions or provide feedback to your employees. There may be someone in your organization who speaks both languages fluently enough to convey your message to your employees. Find someone who you trust to translate your instructions and feedback properly.
* **Provide language classes** for your employees on the basic language requirements for your business. Teach them work words, phrases, warnings, and other critical communication elements that are necessary for them to perform to your performance standards. Teach the basics first. Give all of your employees a "survival" crash course in the predominant language of your workplace. Later, if you have the desire and the resources, you can provide additional opportunities for your employees to learn the language skills they need in order to "thrive" in the workplace.
* **Use both telling and showing methods of training**. Simplify your training methods, particularly those that rely heavily on telling versus showing. Demonstrate what you want and then have the employees perform the function as you observe their performance. Re-demonstrate as often as needed until the employees can perform the task successfully.
* **Use *visual* methods of communication** more than audio. Show more than tell. Explain it with pictures as much as possible. Take a lesson from the airlines in how they convey their safety instructions. Use pictures in your instruction manuals rather than words. Almost every step in every process can be described in picture format. Give your employees signs, cue cards or other methods to help them learn.
* **Use repetition**. As with any new concept, most people don't learn something the first time they hear it. Employees need to hear the same message over and over before they fully grasp it. Don't expect people to learn anything after being told once. This is true of all of your employees whether they have a language barrier or not.
* **Never raise your voice or over-enunciate your words**. Talk slower, not louder. Speak clearly, not forcefully. People of a different language and culture can hear fine. They probably also are intelligent enough to grasp what you are saying if you intelligently deliver your message without talking down to them. Don't speak "Pidgin English." Speak correct English the correct way, just more clearly. People cannot learn the language right if you don't speak it right.
* **Use simpler words with fewer syllables**. Be aware of the complexities of your words. Use more common words that convey your message in simpler terms. Again, don't talk down; just use a less complex vocabulary.
* **Learn the basics of your employee's language**. If you want to communicate effectively and build rapport with your employees you should consider learning a few words and phrases in their language. Nothing sends the message that you value the diversity of your employees more than your willingness to learn from them. Have them teach you how to say hello, goodbye, please, thank you, and other important pleasantries you can use in your interactions with them.
* **Have the employee** demonstrate their understanding. Don't assume the employee understands; check for understanding. Ask the employee to demonstrate that they know how to do what you have asked them to do.

**4-Perceptual barriers** are internal. If you go into a situation thinking that the person you are talking to isn't going to understand or be interested in what you have to say, you may end up subconsciously sabotaging your effort to make your point. You will employ language that is sarcastic, dismissive, or even obtuse, thereby alienating your conversational partner.

* Think of movie scenarios in which someone yells clipped phrases at a person they believe is deaf. The person yelling ends up looking ridiculous while failing to communicate anything of substance.

Examples of perceptual barriers that prevent individuals from effective communication include:

* **Perceptual Filters -** We all have our own preferences, values, attitudes, origins and life experiences that act as "filters" on our experiences of people, events and information. Seeing things through the lens of our own unique life experiences or "conditioning" may lead to assumptions, stereotyping and misunderstandings of others whose experiences differ from our own.
* **Triggers and Cues -** What we say is affected by how we say it (tone, volume) and by our nonverbal cues, such as body language and facial gestures. For example, you may perceive a situation differently if the person you are speaking with is smiling or frowning, has body odour and is standing too close or is not giving you direct eye contact.

To overcome perceptual barriers within the workplace, there are a few things you can do:

* The audience may make assumptions about you or the situation; perhaps you are new to the organization, or the situation is a challenging one. To get your message past these barriers, provide evidence to support your claims and enhance your credibility.
* Effective communication relies on being aware of nonverbal aspects of interactions with others. It is equally important to be aware of one's own nonverbal behaviours and be sensitive to how they may be perceived. For instance, maintaining eye contact when communicating indicates interest. Staring out the window or around the room is often perceived as boredom or disrespect.

5**-Interpersonal Barriers**

* **Interpersonal barriers** are what ultimately keep us from reaching out to each other and opening ourselves up, not just to be heard, but to hear others. Oddly enough, this can be the most difficult area to change. Some people spend their entire lives attempting to overcome a poor self-image or a series of deeply rooted prejudices about their place in the world. They are unable to form genuine connections with people because they have too many false perceptions blocking the way.
* Luckily, the cure for this is more communication. By engaging with others, we learn what our actual strengths and weaknesses are. This allows us to put forth our ideas in a clear, straightforward manner.

Examples of interpersonal barriers that prevent individuals from effective communication include:

* **Desire to Participate -** The lack of desire to participate in the communication process is a significant barrier. There is nothing more frustrating than trying to communicate with an individual that clearly does not want to.
* **Desire to Explore -** Unwillingness to explore different ideas, opinions, and priorities create communication barriers every day of our lives. A clear lack of desire to explore your views, opinions, or ideas can be extremely frustrating.

To overcome interpersonal barriers within the workplace, here are some helpful hints:

* **Use simple words to convey the message.** To have an effective process of interpersonal communication, you have to simplify language. Everyone hates to decipher spoken words, reserve the deciphering to the writing and when speaking, keep it simple and easy to understand.
* **Learn the art of listening.** A person will always try to get his opinions across first before listening to the other person's point of view. To improve interpersonal communication, listen both attentively and proactively.
* **Keep composure while communicating.** The process of interpersonal communication is more effective if emotions are kept at bay. Keeping your composure while talking or negotiating with a business partner will keep you on the right track towards your goal.
* **Provide constructive criticism.** Constructive criticism is perhaps the best sign that you are communicating with the other person on a more personal level. Both the sender and receiver of communications may use feedback for effective interpersonal communication.

## 6- Gender Barriers

**Gender barriers** have become less of an issue in recent years, but there is still the possibility for a man to misconstrue the words of a woman, or vice versa.

Even in a workplace where women and men share equal stature, knowledge and experience, differing communication styles may prevent them from working together effectively. Gender barriers can be inherent or may be related to gender stereotypes and the ways in which men and women are taught to behave as children.

Although not all men or all women communicate the same way as the rest of their gender, several traits that tend to be more common in one gender or the other have been identified. Understanding these tendencies is key in creating a work environment that fosters open communication among all employees.

According to [Heather R. Huhman of Forbes](http://www.forbes.com/sites/work-in-progress/2012/05/30/how-to-be-a-part-of-the-male-conversations-at-work/#ref=guides.co), becoming aware of the following generalizations may help you more effectively communicate at work:

* Women talk about other people. Men talk about tangible things like business, sports, food and drinks.
* Women ask questions to gain an understanding. Men talk to give information rather than asking questions.
* Women are more likely to talk to other women when a problem or conflict arises. Men are often known for dealing with problems or issues internally
* Women focus on feelings, senses and meaning. They rely on their intuition to find answers. Men focus on facts, reason and logic. They find answers by analyzing and figuring things out.
* A disagreement between women affects many aspects of their relationship and may take a long time to resolve. Men can argue or disagree and then move on quickly from the conflict.

*Please keep in mind that these are generalizations, and do not necessarily apply to every individual.*

To overcome gender barriers within the workplace, here are some helpful hints:

* **Educate Team About Gender Bias.** Bias is embedded in stereotypes and organizational practices that can be hard to detect, but when people are made aware of it, they see possibilities for change.
* **Create Safe "Identity Workspaces".** Companies should encourage women to build communities in which similarly positioned women can discuss their feedback, compare notes, and emotionally support one another's learning. Identifying common experiences increases women's willingness to talk openly, take risks, and be vulnerable without fearing that others will misunderstand or judge them.

*For more information regarding gender barriers and how to overcome them, Harvard Business Review has published an excellent article, "****Women Rising: The Unseen Barriers****",*

## 7-Emotional Barriers

**Emotional barriers** can be tough to overcome, but are important to put aside to engage in conversations. We are often taught to fear the words coming out of our own mouths, as in the phrase "anything you say can and will be used against you." Overcoming this fear is difficult, but necessary. The trick is to have full confidence in what you are saying and your qualifications in saying it. People often pick up on insecurity. By believing in yourself and what you have to say, you will be able to communicate clearly without becoming overly involved in your emotions.

Examples of emotional barriers that prevent individuals from effective communication include:

* **Anger** - Anger can affect the way your brain processes information given to you. For example, angry people have difficulty processing logical statements, limiting their ability to accept explanations and solutions offered by others
* **Pride -** The need to be right all the time will not only annoy others, it can shut down effective communication. For example, you might focus only on your perspective, or you might come up with ways to shoot down other people before you even listen to their points.
* **Anxiousness -** Anxiety has a negative impact on the part of your brain that manages creativity and communication skills. For example, your constant worries can hinder your ability to concentrate on the information you are giving or receiving.

To overcome emotional barriers within the workplace, here are some helpful hints:

* **Removing Yourself.** Angry people have difficulty processing logical statements, limiting their ability to accept explanations and solutions offered by others. With this in mind, remove yourself from communication until you feel you can collect your thoughts, think clearly and hold back potentially hurtful and undue comments.
* **Accepting Imperfections.**The drive to win every argument or get the last word often spawns from overcompensation, or trying to cover emotional insecurities with a sense of superiority. Other people might find you easier to communicate with when you accept your imperfections from time to time.
* **Relaxation Exercises.**While a mental health professional should address anxiety disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder or phobias -- typical anxiety, like the anxiety you feel before giving a speech -- can be managed with relaxation exercises.

communication is not a one-way street. To have others open up to you, you must be open yourself. By overcoming the seven barriers to communication, you can ensure that the statement you are making is not just heard, but also understood, by the person you are speaking with. In this way, you can be confident that your point has been expressed.