

Strategies of Minimizing Ineffective Communication in Society for the common Good

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Abstract

Effective communication remains the driver of people and life regardless of age, time and education. Nothing significant is achievable without it and it influences even the morale and happiness of people. Unfortunately, however, there is poor or ineffective communication which is detrimental to human existence and success but yet consistently struggles to co-exist and choke effective communication. Ineffective communication influences effective communication in different manners leading to many levels of consequences which might go unnoticed without a careful observation. Meanwhile, communication is a complex activity that requires experience as well as a very careful handling to succeed, most of the times. Hence, the purpose of this article is to project effective communication to the detriment of ineffective communication. Using the literature, therefore, related subheads are discussed alongside some scenarios of poor communication attitudes by people in society. The conclusion is that no person can boast of having perfect communication skills so there is room for improvement to which some recommendations including making sure that every incoming message is understood by a receiver, having an objective and positive attitude towards communication and providing feedback to all messages received notwithstanding whether it is positive or negative are proffered.

Keywords: Effective communication, ineffective communication, communication success, minimizing, society

1.0 Introduction

As humans, we all have the need to communicate for various purposes which are either obvious or concealed from very early in life till death. In fact, the very absence of communication in a person is one of the first and obvious signs of death. All through life, people are so involved in communication at various levels, places and times that it seems like life is all about it which is not the case but, rather, life is about engaging in one activity or the other which only communication can make possible and successful.

So far, engaging in communication ordinarily may not warrant its success. For instance, age is not a determinant on how well people communicate and neither is education but knowing the basic principles and practice of communication which must be learned, imbibed and implemented fully. As an act, it is a very complex and constantly changing activity which needs a careful, dedicated and skillful handling in order to always do the needful depending on prevailing situations and time.

From observing people, however, it seems that majority do not still understand basic communication principles although they realise its importance to the things they need to do and so they engage in it, often times without paying it the desired attention and participation amounting to poor or ineffective communication which according to Kinsey (2019) can influence stress levels, deadlines, morale, health and the bottom line negatively whereas good or effective communication can have a positive and healing effect.

Hence, this article has the purpose of making people realise that any communication worth doing at all is worth doing well taken from the angle of de-emphasizing ineffective communication with an examination of some of the scenarios of ineffective communication in society with suggestions for some corrective strategies.

2.0 Communicating in Society

The definition of communication which suits this context of discussion is that it is a two-way process of reaching mutual understanding, in which participants not only exchange (encode-decode) information, news, ideas and feelings but also create and share meaning (Businessdictionary.com, 2019). Communication as an activity is very useful in society because without it, existence itself may either be very difficult or impossible. Buttressing this point, Saltilo (2019) asserts that people communicate for a variety of reasons including the sharing of information, making a comment, asking questions, expressing wants and needs, developing social relationships and social etiquettes, etc. Without communication, therefore, human activities would be grounded to a halt and society as it were would be too chaotic for comfort. In another dimension, people and organisational success depends to a very great extent on their ability to manage communication; individuals and groups with excellent communication skills generally achieve more and greater successes. Concisely, success is directly proportionate to one's ability to communicate (Adair, 2003).

So far, however, not all communication in society is successful; many do not yield any response but rather are misinterpreted with very serious consequences. Such are ineffective communication and they result to people having a feeling of resentment, feeling hurt, frustration, confusion and even death in medical circles, for instance.

3.0 Effective Communication

Communication is an important activity which should be paid the attention it deserves being that it is the singular tool necessary to achieve most individual and organisational goals in society; it is what keeps people and society going when it is effective. An effective communication takes place when a sender transfers meaning using verbal and non-verbal symbols which is received exactly the same way by a receiver as intended by the sender (Mondal, n.d). Such is the communication to which a feedback is given, whether it is positive or negative, there is an action or subsequent change in behaviour as a result of the receiver understanding clearly what the message is and also executing his own part or what is expected of him. Furthermore, it means that unless a common understanding results from the exchange of information, there is no communication (Lunenburg, 2010).

Effective communication does not just happen since according to Lunenburg (2010) it is a two way process that requires effort and skill by both sender and receiver, which then means that if both do not have the two requirements, there would still be problems except, perhaps one of them has and uses them as well as guides the other to bracket up.

Some benefits of effective communication culled by Papa and cited by Elkin 2018; Eastridge, 2017 are:

- Facilitating successful businesses, associations and families
- Building rich relationships and the ability to accurately and comprehensively express thoughts, feelings and ideas
- Allowing corporate policy to be easily understood
- Aiding husbands and wives to develop intimacy
- Enabling employees to know the common mission and goal of their organisation
- Being the foundation of every successful action
- Bringing about a reduction in the amount of communication which causes arguments
- Causing people to stand out among their peers
- In the business world if a company is able to effectively communicate with its workers, they will feel empowered, informed and appreciated. Such companies are then able to expand into new markets and grow their virtual workforces

4.0 Ineffective Communication

The greatest problem with communication is the illusion that it has been accomplished (Shaw, 2011). This concern is very pertinent here because it is a typical belief of many communicators. For instance, often, after most people in

communication have played their part so to say, they simply relax without caring about what could be happening to their efforts which should not be the case. Since communication is a reciprocal process, the moment a sender releases a message, he is expected to follow it up till it gets to the receiver who is also expected to process it and return a feedback of which he is the sender and should equally ensure that it gets to the then sender but now receiver. However, it is easier said than done as the foregoing is not easily achievable because communication is a complex, give-and-take process capable of breaking down anywhere in its circle and consequently block the transfer of understanding that facilitates its effectiveness.

Ineffective communication therefore is any piece of communication which does not yield a feedback as a result of a breakdown or misunderstanding of the message and there is no time that ineffective communication is desirable because its consequences are always negative, hence, people should vehemently avoid it. It could be said with conviction that most of the problems that occur in relationships, within and between business organisations are due to ineffective communication which can happen when people fail to communicate or when the processes engaged lead to the non-delivery of messages, confusion or the communication not being fully understood.

5.0 Comparison Between Effective and Ineffective Communication

Simply saying that ineffective communication is the opposite of effective communication and that is less productive and undesirable may not adequately point up all their differences. The table below presents more aspects of differences between effective communication and ineffective communication but the list is not exhaustive.

Comparison between effective communication and Ineffective communication	
Effective Communication	Ineffective Communication
Builds relationship	Creates hostilities in relationships
Fosters relations	Builds barriers in relationships
Facilitates human development	Destroys human relationships
Enhances industrial growth	Detrimental to industrial growth
Nurtures a harmonious working relationship	Discourages a harmonious working relationship
Differences in human relations are reduced	Differences in human relationships are enhanced
The few differences which arise among people, in and between organisations are easily resolved	Differences among people, in and between organisations are difficult to resolve
Yields intended results	Mars intended results
Has the ability to console	Possesses the power to misinform and hurt
Has good attributes	Has bad attributes

6.0 Scenarios of Ineffective Communication Practices in Society

While either communicating with people or watching people in communication over time, I have observed the following scenarios which at times were easy to correct but at other times very difficult. They are as follows

a. **One or both parties not responding to an incoming message**

Sometimes during a face to face communication, the second party does not respond upon receiving a message which has also been understood simply as a behaviour and such a behaviour causes confusion at times and anger often times. A typical instance of such is when A requests B to get something for her which B understands but simply walks away with the intention of bringing the thing but without saying anything at all to A. Whenever it so happens, unless the first party is experienced enough to know what to do, for instance, like A calling back B to ask if she had understood and was going to bring the thing, the communication could be thwarted at that point if A feels neglected and gets angry leading to an exchange of words and in the end the intended aim of the communication is not achieved. Being incomplete, it translates to ineffective communication.

b. **Keeping malice**

Keeping malice negates the saying that no man is an island to himself. When people keep malice it could be by one party or both and it's mostly manifested by one not talking to the other or both not talking to each other. Perhaps some of us might have heard the story told about a man and his wife who were both keeping malice then one day came when the husband wanted to keep an early appointment the next day and needed his wife to help by way of waking him up so he dropped a note for her where he was sure she would see it which she did. Quickly, she too wrote a wake up reminder and placed it under his pillow. Unfortunately, however on the next day, he still failed to wake up early enough for his appointment; he slept past the time written on the wake reminder! Feeling very angry, he was compelled to speak to his wife and he accused her of failure to wake him up as he had requested of her but in the process realised that just like him, she had done so in writing and at the appropriate time. In the end, both parties learned their lessons the bitter way and certainly after losing something that would have benefited their family. The essence of communication presupposes that the parties act reciprocally for it to be successful. Each party is very crucial and should not be taken for granted by the other.

c. **Delay in sending and receiving message.**

The function of the parties in communication are reciprocal, for instance, when I ask for your name in a face to face communication I am the sender

and you are the receiver, while, when you respond, you become the sender and I the receiver. Whether one is the receiver, of a message or the sender/originator, one should be conscious of time. Every message has a time frame of relevance that should not be missed, otherwise, the goal or purpose for the message would be missed which is the reason why people should carefully study each message being sent or received to ascertain the appropriate time to send a message or respond to one. In this context, we usually hear people say: "I thought . . ." when they should have sought clarification and done the needful rather than allowing a communication breakdown due to their presumption.

d. Refusal to seek further clarification when a message received is not understood.

One of the stages of the communication process is decoding the message according to Grimsley, 2019; Osasona & Onjewu, 2008 which means it's being understood by a receiver. At times, some message are naturally difficult to understand or are affected by their medium in one way or the other which prevents them from being understood easily or without further clarification which a receiver should do immediately and also do so as many times as necessary until a message is well understood. However, many people, would rather make no effort at all or only a few attempts then relax even when the message is still not understood and without informing the sender.

e. Not insisting on getting a feedback

Feedback, although the last stage of the communication process (Agamah & Adaji, 2006) is not the least, rather, it is so important that without it, an ongoing communication act is not complete, is termed ineffective and it is difficult to continue to another act. However, when provided whether positive or negative, it enables the completion of a communication task, confirms that the task has been successfully executed and that a subsequent task could be commenced. Sadly however, many people in the society, do not accord relevance to the provision of feedback when they are the receivers of a message based again on preconceived notions. For example, A sends a text message to request for some money from B. B gets the message, reads and understands it properly but not having the money to give decides to keep quiet based on the presumption that since he had obliged A such requests previously, A would understand that he, B doesn't have the money this time. If A just continues to wait and does nothing to get the necessary feedback from B, A would get confused, angry and if care is not taken, there would be worse consequences which a mere single line response from B would have abated.

7.0 Conclusion

There is no perfect communication which means there is always room for improvement. Considering the importance of communication to individual and societal growth, it is in order to constantly seek ways for improvement. To this end, I believe that we all do not have a choice, since, gone are the days when people ask why they need to communicate. Now, instead, people ask how they can make communication more effective. Come on then, let us make communication more effective as it is the essence of life and successful living.

8.0 Recommendations

Like the other good things of life, any communication worth doing is worth doing well. Based on the scenarios discussed above, the following approaches may improve societal communication:

- As the receiver of any message, always make sure that you give a feedback, whether it is positive or negative to the sender once you have understood and interpreted it and when not understood, kindly inform the sender. By so doing, the instances of ineffective communication would be minimised.
- Avoid keeping malice as it is condemnable and forbidden both morally and Biblically. According to Clifford, Fitzgerald, Jensen, Murphy, Norwell, & Sanderson (2011), Eph 4:31; Col 3:8; 1Pet 2:1 are Bible verses that out rightly forbid the keeping of malice and refer to it as a vice. The keeping of malice has never improved any situation but rather worsens it. Also, it is of no use in communication and should not be given any room to rare its ugly head. To prevent it, the parties in communication must quickly seek clarification when in doubt and be objective. In addition to being open enough, to tender an apology whenever the need for it arises. Relatedly, the party apologised to should willingly forgive and let go of the misunderstanding. Both parties must resolve to turn a new leaf thereafter and forge ahead.
- Do not delay in sending any message as doing so at times leads to very grave consequences. Whether as an originator of a message or respondent, be sure of its time frame of relevance and keep to it as not doing so might be interpreted negatively with further consequences.
- Seek clarification immediately a message received is not understood no matter the number of times necessary. Never sit on such a message with the belief that it not your responsibility since whatever goes around, comes around.
- As a receiver of any message, you owe it as a duty to give a feedback whether it is positive or negative. Otherwise, a sender should pick up the challenge and do all it takes to get a feedback which is his right to get.
- Both parties should be positive in their attitudes while communicating and be willing to give the other the benefit of doubt until proven otherwise.
- Both parties should learn to forgive easily and quickly and try hard not to revisit past misunderstandings.
- Both parties should be polite during communication so as not to easily turn off the other person

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