**Chapter # 1**

**Definition and objectives of communication**

Definition: Communication With respect to the Business Communication syllabus, communication can be defined as: **“The imparting or exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium”.**

**The key purposes of communication can be summarised as:**

**Acquiring information –** collecting, analysing, checking and processing numerous types of communication both internal and external to an organisation. This often involves initiatives to generate ideas and solutions.

**Disseminating information** – sharing information to those who need it to perform their job, make a decision or solve a problem. This might involve co-ordinating plans and communicating goals and structures.

**Maintaining relationships** – relationships between co-workers and with both suppliers and customers need managing through effective and appropriate communication to ensure continuity of operations and ultimate profitability of the organisation**.**

**1 1.2 Effective communication**

Communication should demonstrate the following characteristics in order to maximise its impact:

**Accurate –** Facts and figures including numbers, times, dates and names must be accurate as inaccuracies can create a bad impression for an organisation which can ultimately impact on its profitability. Imagine how upset you would be if you received the wrong amount of salary (too low) one month, if you were a supplier and were paid the wrong amount (too low) by one of your largest customers or if you are a corporate customer and were sent the wrong type or amount of goods.

**Appropriate media and channel –** This means selecting the right type of communication such as an e-mail, letter, telephone call, report or meeting. Before communicating something consider how you would feel and what message you would actually receive if it was you receiving that particular message via that particular type of communication.

**Clear –** There should be little doubt as to what is meant by the communication. This requires careful choice of language and keeping the communication as simple as possible

**Appropriate language (image and tone) –** The image and tone that are portrayed reflect both the sender and their organisation. It is particularly important when communicating with parties external to the business to set the right image and tone to ensure the message being communicated is not distorted and misinterpreted. Common advice around language includes: avoid using complex words; support words with tables, graphs and other images; and avoid jargon and technical terms unless absolutely essential

**1 1.3 Direction of communication**

The concept of “direction of communication” can be applied to situations where some kind of hierarchy or structure exists

**Vertical**

Managers communicate downwards when issuing instructions and briefing their teams.

Employees would communicate upwards when reporting back to their managers with updates and results on work performed

**Vertical communication** is typically more formal as it recognizes the different levels within the hierarchy. However, there can be challenges in ensuring that upward communication is effective in large organizations. For example:

* Subordinates may consider that the seniors would not be interested in the opinions or information given by the subordinates.
* Subordinates may think that the seniors are busy and already facing information overload and would not have time to consider the problems or suggestions provided by subordinates.
* Subordinates may fear that reporting of a problem or communication of a grievance may result in antagonizing or disappointing the seniors which may have adverse consequences.
* Subordinates may fear that the upward communication may be considered by their colleagues as a way of getting closer to their seniors and seeking favours.

**Horizontal (also called ‘lateral’)**

Horizontal communication occurs between peer groups and people of similar standing.

Horizontal communication may be formal or informal depending on whether it occurs between colleagues and friends (more likely to be informal), or external to the organisation or group (more likely to be formal).

**Diagonal**

Diagonal communication describes the simultaneous combination of vertical and horizontal communication

. In a commercial environment this might involve cross-team communication when co-ordinating projects, innovating new ideas or problem solving.