

LESSON-28

Feedback And Evaluation of Presentation

FEEDBACK IN COMMUNICATION

Meaning and Nature

The only real hope of an improvement in our communication system is for the sender to assure himself that his communication has been thoroughly understood, by the receiver. All the way through a communication, he must use a control that will ensure the degree of meaning which he has placed on his words is appreciated when received. A piece of message transmitted is said to be effective only when there is a provision for feedback in communication. A communication process is said to have feedback, when the receiver of the message has given his response to the sender's message. On the other hand, the communicator must know how well the message has been received by the receiver, understood, interpreted and acted upon. Feedback helps to determine this process. Sending back the knowledge about the message to the communicator is known as feedback. Thus feedback is one of the important elements of the communication process. A communication process without a provision for feedback is not an effective communication. 1-

The importance of feedback cannot be over emphasized and needs no special elucidation. Feedback is the yardstick which measures the effectiveness of communication and is used for evaluation and review, and to amend the message in the light of response. Efficient managers have reliable feedback and they succeed in their effective communication.

Leland Brown remarks that, all other things, being equal, the Manager who does not allow feedback will be less effective than the Manager who receives feedback. The management has to provide an opportunity for feedback for effective decision making. Leland Brown states that, to be effective, feedback takes into account the needs of both the sender and receiver. 2 "Feedback or response, enables the source to know whether or not the message has been received and interpreted correctly. Feedback can cause the original source to modify future communication according to the way in which the source perceives the reaction of the receiver.

Feedback - A Two-Way Process

Two-way communication is essential in good feedback between the superior and subordinates which promotes good relations between management and employees and motivates people to do their best. Accepting and carrying connections in messages will create interest and responsibility, recognition in their jobs. Feedback is the means of subordinates getting through to the supervisor and getting approval and encouragement for what they are doing. Management cannot ignore or eliminate the feedback, for, it must exist for effective communication in spite of the channel. Therefore, it is up to the executives to accept it, introduce it, by understanding its importance, and direct efforts to use it for positive good. Feedback is also one of the important factors to be considered while selecting means of communication. The importance of feedback has been well-described by Leland Brown in the following words: "Competent administrators need to become aware of the importance and use of feedback. Most problems with feedback are

caused by person's ignoring it or not even being aware of it or by not seeking it when it is not apparent. Adequate feedback should be recognized, sought, and used.

Feedback is one of the important essentials of good communication. In written communication, in respect of many matters, like objectives and policy matters, there is no scope for feedback. Feedback provision in the process of communication calls for making it a two-way process. Feedback is an inherent quality in oral communication. The communicator cannot ascertain whether the receiver has accepted or rejected the message. The reaction of the receiver of the message can be assessed effectively in oral communication than through written communication. Getting feedback information is easier in verbal communication.

Feedback is probably the most important technique of improving communication. Two-way process ensures feedback. The communicator has to obtain feedback from the receiver of communication. Feedback is necessary to understand immediate reaction which would help in a great way in the decision-making process. The formal channel would not serve as an effective feedback system. Similarly, it cannot be used as a testing device. Listening to the Feedback response is a good principle of effective communication.

Feedback is necessary in all group activities, irrespective of the type of organization. An informal communication also helps as a feedback system. So the management can use grapevine as a testing tool. In a feedback, immediate response and reaction can be gained which is more useful in the process of decision-making. Listening to the feedback response is a good principle of communication.

Feedback is, though the last element, is the important one in communication process. As it has been explained, communication is an exchange. The exchange to be complete, the information must go back to the communicator. So that he can know the reaction of the receiver. It ensures that the receiver has received the message and understood in the same sense as sender meant for. Feedback enables the communicator to carry out corrections or amendments or change message to be effective. The principle of feedback promotes a two-way communication. Feedback is a process to ascertain whether or not the receiver properly understood the message, in which the superior has to listen, answer, interpret, amend the message. Interface and interaction are possible in

feedback. It avoids errors in the transmission of message and in invoking effective participation of the subordinates. Thus, feedback enables the communicator to take initiative in order to receive feedback regarding the effectiveness of communication.

B. Sigband Writes: "It permits expressive action on the part of one or more persons and the conscious and unconscious perception of such action. Perhaps one of the most important factors in this network is feedback (which) is vital if the originator and receiver, are to secure some level of effectiveness in the communication process."⁵

According to Gellerman, "the nub of the entire communication problem" is the following:

"The sender, to be certain that his message will be accepted by the receiver, must be prepared to let the receiver influence him. He must even be prepared to let the receiver alter or modify the message in ways that make it more acceptable to the receiver.

Otherwise, it may not be understood or it may not be accepted, or it may simply be given lip service and ignored.'6

Characteristics of Feedback

(1) *Intention*: Effective feedback is directed towards improving job performance and making the employee a more valuable asset. It is not a personal attack and should not compromise the individual's feeling of self-worth or image. Rather, feedback is directed towards aspects of the job.-

(2) *Specificity*: Effective feedback is designed to provide recipients with specific information so that they know what must be done to correct the situation. Ineffective feedback is general and leaves questions in the recipient's mind. For example, telling an employee that he or she is doing a poor job is too general and will leave the recipient frustrated in seeking ways to correct the problem.

(3) *Description*: Effective feedback can also be characterized as descriptive rather than evaluative. It tells the employee what he or she has done in objective terms, rather than presenting a value judgment.

(4) *Usefulness*: Effective feedback is information that an employee can use to improve performance. It serves no purpose to berate employees for their

lack of skill if they do not have the ability or training to perform properly. Thus, the guideline is that, if it is not something the employee can correct, it is not worth mentioning.

(5) *Timeliness*: There are also considerations in timing feedback properly. As a rule, the more immediate the feedback, the better. This way, the employee has a better chance of knowing what the supervisor is talking about and can take corrective action.

(6) *Readiness*: In order, for feedback, to be effective, employees must be ready to receive it. When feedback is imposed or forced upon employees, it is much less effective.

(7) *Clarity*: Effective feedback must be clearly understood by the recipient. A good way of checking this is to ask the recipient to restate the major points of discussion. Also, supervisors can observe non-verbal facial expressions as indicators of understanding and acceptance.

(8) *Validity*: In order, for feedback, to be effective, it must be reliable and valid. Of course, when the information is incorrect, the employees will feel that the supervisor is unnecessarily biased, or the employee may take corrective action which is inappropriate and only compounds the problem.

The characteristics of feedback for effective and ineffective interpersonal communication in human resource management as suggested by them are as follows:

EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

(1) Intended to help the employee

(2) Specific

- (3) Descriptive
- (4) Useful
- (5) Timely
- (6) Employee readiness for feedback
- (7) Clear
- (8) Valid

INEFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

- (1) Intended to be little the employee
- (2) General
- (3) Evaluative
- (4) Inappropriate
- (5) Untimely
- (6) Makes the employee defensive
- (7) Not understandable
- (8) Inaccurate

(1) *Positive Feedback*: A feedback is said to be positive when it is given promptly and with interest in it. Supervisors consider positive feedback in a different way comparing negative feedback. It is received by a positive sense correctly perceived and accepting the reality. The recipient also does the same thing.

(2) *Negative Feedback*: In the case of negative feedback, there is always some resistance and some degree of unwillingness in its acceptance. It is not almost always accepted. Managers show resistance because they want to hear always only good news and resist bad and unpleasant news. In some cases Managers accept negative feedback. Some research studies indicate that they may accept negative feedback provided it comes from a credible source.

According to K. Halperin *et al.*, subjective impressions carry weight only when they come from a person with high credibility and status. S.P. Robbins writes thus: "Negative feedback, i.e., subjective can be a meaningful tool for experienced Managers, particularly those high in the organization *who* have earned the respect of their employees. From less experienced Managers, those in the lower ranks of the organization and whose reputation has not yet been established, negative feedback is not likely to be well received."⁹

Feedback in Oral Communication

The advantage of oral communication is that it can be used for instant feedback. In oral media, feedback is used to improve understanding and avoids faulty communication. It permits subordinates and superiors to interact or ask questions about any points of view that are in doubt to them. Both Managers and subordinates directly and personally are involved in the process. Emotions, values, attitudes, perception etc., may lead people to interpret the message in different ways. This is the reason for faulty communication. Multiple meanings for different words causes misunderstanding.

For a word “fast”, there are over ten different meanings or definitions given in Webster’s Dictionary.

So, oral communication permits instant feedback which helps the speaker or sender to avoid some problems. It checks emotional feelings, values and perceptual impact of the message. Receiver of the message or the listener in oral communication is important in the entire process of communication. Feedback enables the listener’s interpretation of his communication and-whether he has been specific enough and the words he has used mean the same thing to the listener. Feedback also helps both the parties in the communication, the sender or speaker, make his message clearer, the listener to interpret the message more accurately.

Feedback - Written Communication

In the case of written communication, the instant feedback is not possible. Robert J. Mockler writes that in written communication: “there is not the same opportunity for instant feedback. A Manager must find a way to anticipate the reader’s frame of reference gaps in reader experience and knowledge, reader’s levels of intelligence, the emotional connotations of words to the reader and reader’s capacity to understand.”

There are several media of written communication like letters, pamphlets, booklets, memoranda, instructions, manuals, office notes, circulars, notices, newspapers, posters, leaflets, bulletins, catalogues, brochures, house journals, union publications, hand files etc.

Effects of Feedback

The effects of feedback should not be ignored. Many people have proved in their research work some effects of feedback. Hellriegel and Slocum have identified four consequences of feedback. The effects are as follows:

- (1) The actions of the sender affect the reactions of the receiver. The reactions of the receiver affect the subsequent actions of the sender.
- (2) Reactions of the receiver serve as a feedback and tell the sender how well the objectives are being accomplished.
- (3) A sender who received feedback that is rewarding will continue to produce the same kind of message; if the feedback is not rewarding, the message will eventually change.
- (4) The receiver exerts control over the sender by the kind of feedback he or she gives to the sender.

Improving Feedback

The importance of feedback in effective communication has been discussed at length. It occupies such an important place, it is so necessary to introduce it and to derive the benefits from feedback. As such, the system of feedback itself is to be improved. Some experts have suggested some guidelines and recommendations to improve feedback. For instance, Procter and Gamble, Exxon and others, in their training programme, to improve feedback, have given some guidelines. The guidelines are briefly discussed as under:

(1) *Help*: Feedback should be intended to help the receiver. The object of feedback is to know the receiver's response and to help him in correct understanding, interpreting and to act accordingly. So feedback should help the receiver. So the management should endeavor to improve feedback to achieve this objective.

(2) *Descriptive*: Feedback should be descriptive rather than evaluative. Descriptive should be in detail to review which must bring some changes.

(3) *Specific*: A feedback should be specific, rather than general. In specific feedback, the receiver should be provided full information on a particular piece of message under review so as to enable him to understand the message.

(4) *Hear*: Feedback is to be taken up when the receiver appears ready to hear. It should be well-timed. Feedback should not overwhelm the receiver. It involves to understand the capacity of the receiver to receive feedback load at one time.

Developing Effective Feedback Skills

According to S. P. Robbins, there are six specific suggestions for making effective feedback.

(1) *Focus on Specific Behavior*: Feedback should not be general but be specific.

(2) *Keep Feedback Impersonal*: C. R. Miller says that feedback, particularly the negative feedback, should be descriptive rather than judgment or evaluation. He should always be job-oriented but not personal. Telling people -that they are useless, idiots, inefficient, incompetent etc. are not good for the supervisors, as they are unproductive,-the subordinates may *not* co-operate. Even the criticism should be reasonable anti related to job but not personal.

(3) *Keep Feedback Goal-Oriented*: As far as possible, feedback should be positive. It should not be given primarily to dump or unload on the other. The resistance or negative feedback should be directed towards the recipient's goal.

(4) *Make Feedback Well-Timely*: A timely feedback is more meaningful and useful to the recipients. A well-timed feedback is effective. Delay defeats the objective of feedback. The feedback will be effective when it helps in bringing about the desired change. S. P. Robbins says that making feedback prompt merely for promptness' sake can backfire, if you have insufficient information, if you are angry, or if you are otherwise emotionally upset. In such instances, "well-timed", may mean "*Somewhat delayed.*"

(5) *Ensure Understanding*: The purpose of feedback is to have interaction, to make the recipient understand clearly and fully. It is to be remembered that every piece of effective communication involves passing of information and understanding the meaning. Unless feedback communication is understood by the recipient, it is not an effective communication.

(6) *Control*: Direct negative feedback towards behavior that is control-lable by the recipient is also an important skill for effective communication. In the case of negative feedback, it should be directed towards behavior, the recipient can do something about (K. S. Verderber *et al.*).

Feedback Loop

An effective two-way communication occurs when the sender transmits the message and the receiver involves in feedback to the sender. This completes the communication *circuit*. It satisfies process elements like message flow from the sender to the receiver and back to the sender. Douglas G. Curley calls this two-way communication as *feedback loop* or *communication loop*.

The two-way communication can be illustrated with the tennis game, because it has back-forth pattern. The sender sends a message and the receiver's response comes back to the sender. K. Davis writes that "The result is developing play-by-play situation in which the speaker can adjust the message to fit responses of the receiver. This opportunity to adjust to the receiver is the one great advantage of two-way communication compared with the one-way variety. It provides a better understanding for both the parties."

Advantages

- (1) It provides better understanding.
- (2) Frustration is reduced.
- (3) Favorable feelings are usually generated.
- (4) Accuracy is improved.

Using Exposure and Feedback

Relationships tend to improve when the participants act to improve the quantum of their knowledge. *Exposure* occurs when a person reveals certain things he or she knows to another person. Largely under the individual's control, exposure often serves as a means of building mutual trust and legitimizing mutual exposures reciprocal relationships. *Feedback* takes place when one person actively solicits information unique to the other.

Feedback that Signals Misunderstanding. You can usually tell when listeners don't understand by the dumbfounded expressions on their faces. You may need to define an unfamiliar word or rephrase an idea to make it more understandable. You could add an example or story to make an abstract concept more concrete. It might help to compare or contrast an unfamiliar idea with something the audience already knows and understands. You could smile and acknowledge the problem: "You don't understand this, do you? Let me put it another way." Then go on to provide the clearer explanation needed.

Feedback that Signals Loss of Interest. It's easy to spot a bored audience., Listeners wiggle in their seats, drum their fingers, or develop a glazed look. To regain their interest, remind them why your speech is important to them. Provide an example from your own experience or ask a question that calls for a show of hands. Try telling a story that makes your idea come to life. You might even need to startle the audience into attention with an unusual statement. Keep in mind that enthusiasm is contagious. Be more animated. Move from behind the lectern and closer to your listeners. If none of these techniques work,

stick with your message, stress your main points, and try to act as though you are satisfied with your presentation. In all likelihood, some people - probably more than you think - will have found the speech interesting.

Feedback that Signals Disagreement. Signs of disagreement include frowns, scowls, or shaking heads. Fortunately, there are a number of techniques you can use to soften disagreement. If you anticipate resistance, work hard to establish your ethos in the introduction of your speech. It is important for your listeners to see you as a competent, trustworthy, and likable per

son who has their best interests at heart.

To be perceived as competent, you must *be* competent. Arm yourself with a surplus of information, examples, and testimony from sources your audience will respect. Practice your presentation until it is polished. Set the example of tolerance yourself by respecting positions different from your own.

You may find that although you differ with listeners on methods, you may agree with them on goals. Stress the values that you share. Appeal to their sense of fair play and their respect for your right to speak. you should be the model of civility in the situation. Avoid angry reactions and the use of inflammatory language. Think of such listeners as offering an opportunity for your ideas to have impact.

Disadvantages

- (1) Strong disagreement may be expressed until a two-way communication is effected.
- (2) Possibility of separation from each other.
- (3) Cognitive dissonants may arise.

Feedback performs two important functions for the organization. They are:

- (1) Evaluation - the effectiveness of output.
- (2) Adjustment — allows adjustment of subsequent output to achieve better results.

Cutlip and Center found that feedback involves a two-step process. They are:

- (1) Pre-testing.
- (2) Post-testing.

Several media are used to measure the initial state of the environment.

Output Impact

Wright suggests the following four 'dimensions to be measured in determining communication output impact:

- (1) *Audience Coverage:* What segment of the environment was reached by the message? Were the relevant opinion leaders reached?
- (2) *Audience Response:* How did those receiving the message respond? Did they understand? Were they interested? Was their response Favorable?
- (3) *Communications Impact:* Did the message produce observable effects?

- (4) *Process of Influence*: By what -process did the message influence the audience?
Through what channels did it finally reach each individual? How did influence spread throughout the environment?

To Sum Up

To sum up, effective feedback can be gained by building an organization free from fear. This is also possible when an organization whose people are prepared to admit to their senior as well as their equals that they are not sure of meaning or not clear on the action required. Overall and at its simplest, this assurance can be gained provided that at all times they are prepared and happy to voice an opinion on the desirability or otherwise of a particular course of action.

Building this security-climate in which people are working know where they stand with people and they know where they should with others in an environment which encourages comment and questions and which encourage this feeding back sound simple, but in fact is incredibly difficult, and is the root cause of many industrial problems today.

Evaluating a presentation

1. Check Communication Mix

1. Purpose: Has it been clarified and/or does it emerge clearly during the presentation? Has the presentation positioning been considered?
2. Audience: Have the immediacy and relevance factors of the audience considered? Is it structured to move from the familiar to the unfamiliar step by step?
3. Content: Is it concrete and backed up by evidence? Is it capsulised? Is there right amount of repetition?
4. Time: Have the time and place factors kept in mind?

2. Check Media Mix

- . Have the right media been used?
- . Are the explanations synchronized with the visuals? .
- . Are the visuals too many or too few?
- . Are the visuals picturised or wordy?
- . Are the wordy visuals crammed? legible? readable? and colorful?

3. Check Speaker's Abilities

1. Eye contact
2. Facial expressions
3. Hand movements and gestures
4. Posture and movement
5. Verbal ability
 - . Language? Content structuring? Humor?
 - . Modulated delivery: Volume, tone, speed, pauses, and pronunciation?
6. Physical appearance?

4. Check Overall Performance

1. Enthused?
2. Caught and held the attention?
3. Attitude percolated and generated?
4. What is the final message?
5. What to do next?
6. Worth the time?