

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS UNIVERSITY

LUSAKA

STUDY AND BUSINESS COMMUNICATION SKILLS

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FORWARD

Although it is said that a human being is, by nature a communicator, for years in memorial, challenges in effective communication have been faced. Even Jesus Christ; The Son of Man, experienced some challenges in effective communication. Poor communication leads to misunderstandings, quarrels, conflicts and in some cases civil wars. In some cases, some employees and some managers are fired from employment because of misunderstanding arising from poor communication skills. As a result, to be effective in communication, Jesus Christ used Parables to try and put his message across.

It is from such perspective that even today, effective communication is, to a large extent, a big challenge.

Maurus(1999:89) warns that don't take communication for granted. Many people think that communication is easy. This is why they do not work hard to improve on it. Even when you are talking to your friend or spouse, be careful with the way you communicate; or else you might be misunderstood.

Maurus goes further that communication is an attitude; but also a skill, a technique, an art, a facility of expression(ibid). Consequently, your attitude towards someone; and your skill in communication might affect your relationship with another person.

However, despite communication being a big challenge for generations and generations; our efforts to improve on our communication can yield desired results. Consequently, Vince Lombard said: 'If we can aim at perfection; we can achieve excellence.'

In any social, professional and business life, effective communication catapults someone to great heights in success. With effective communication skills, some people yield great benefits. Many world successive people are associated with effective communication skills. Many people who rose to and still spring to fame are those who are effective in communication. Communication is a fabric of life to success.

But achieving effective communication skills is not done over night. Hence, Maurus(1999:18) states that learning to communicate properly is a life-long task. It is from such a background that Maurus(1999:51) argues that improvement in communication is clarity of what we mean to say; and what we say means. But this depends on one's command in that language. Wide vocabulary and good command in grammar help one to say what you mean; and mean what you say.

To improve on our communication, some communication experts and scholars have said: 'Think before you talk.' Other communication scholars and experts have advised us to: 'Engage your brain in gear before you set your mouth in motion.'

Regardless of field of study or occupation one is in, there is need to develop effective communication skills. In other countries, one cannot be promoted to supervisors or senior management levels without acquiring effective skills in oral and written communication.

In employment, business or whatever occupation one finds himself or herself in, there is need to write job application letters, Curriculum vitae (CV), memoranda, reports and project proposals. Giving and receiving instructions are common in business life. In some cases, one is required to chair a meeting or write minutes of a meeting. Writing each business letter and communication effectively during telephone conversation can determine one's status in civilization hierarchy. Public speaking and making presentation needs some communication skills.

These and many other business communication assignments require one to demonstrate his or her knowledge and skills in effective communication. It is from such a background that A P Pereira(1994) argues that one cannot make great strides in success with a language of mistakes and weaknesses on his or her back. With effective communication, one can make great strides in achieving his or her social, professional and life goals!

ORIGIN OF COMMUNICATION

The origin of communication can be traced in John 1:1 where it states: 'In the beginning there was a Word; the Word was with God; and the Word was God. This means that words which form most types of communication started with God himself. Philosopher E Ebner said the word is the way. The word, written or spoken, is the mode of human communication. But more important is that, in communication, we mostly use words either in spoken or in written communication.

But since a human being was created in God's own image, it means that the ability to communicate was also planted in humankind. It is from such a background that for one to communicate, one does not necessarily need to go for training first. Look at a newly born child. Immediately it is born, it communicates to the mother through producing sound in form of a cry. That is communication to the mother to say: "I am here! Get me."

From such understanding, it is said that a human being is, by nature, a communicator.

IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION FROM GOD'S POINT OF VIEW

Importance of communication in human life is demonstrated when, in, God; The Creator said: 'Let's create a human being in our own image.' From this, we learn that communication is supposed to promote love, unity, co-operation and development.

And in John 1:14, it is stated: 'The word became flesh(Adam).' From God's transformation of 'word' into flesh, since a human being was created in God's image; and that some good qualities and capacities of God were transplanted into a human being, one can realise that from communication, you and I can achieve great things like God did. Most of the people who rose to fame were effective communicators. Therefore, effective communication is persuasive communication. One can further argue that persuasive communication is a great tool for effectively marketing oneself in social, business and professional life.

EXAMPLES OF FAMOUS PEOPLE FROM COMMUNICATION

Dr Martin Luther King Jr, former South African president, late Nelson Mandela, former Zambian president, Dr Frederick J T Chiluba, Former Zambian president, Michael Chilufya Sata

DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATION

Coincidentally, when Adam and Eve were expelled from The Garden of Eden, there was an increase population. Different families, clans, communities and chiefdoms emerged. Such developments increased types of languages, words, signs and symbols to use in communication. Effects of Industrial Revolution in the 18th century also contributed a lot to the development of communication. Improved communication technology such as invention of press machine which facilitated printing of words on pieces of paper, telecommunication(telephone), radio(1920s), television(1930s), etc contributed a lot to the development of forms of communication.

DEVELOPMENTS OF CHALLENGES IN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Which development of communication was a positive thing, it also was also the beginning of challenges of communication. Increase in languages, use of different signs and symbols in different societies created challenges in communication. For instance, while initially some people in some societies were using oral communication, ancient drawings or writing on the walls, invention of press machine and starting printing words on pieces of papers created some challenges in communication. Similarly, invention of telephone, radio (1920s) and television(1930s) needed their own approaches to communicate effectively. Introduction of telegrams, telex and facsimile needed certain levels of literacy.

Now while the development of internet, e-mail, online publication and social media ease communication; they have also created some challenges to some people on how best to use for their own benefits.

From such developments in communication, communication skills have become a huge challenge. However, students in colleges and universities have a great opportunity to change negative attitudes which affect individual, family, organisational and societal sustainable development processes. Former South African president, late Nelson Mandela said: 'Education is the only key to change the world for the better.' Hence, graduates from colleges and universities in various professional fields hold various positions in families, organisations and society which, when used effectively through effective communication, can improve individual, family, organisational and societal negative situations for the better.

It is from such a background that students in colleges and universities, despite being adults and having vast experience almost in all forms of communication, are required to learn effective communication skills with a view to restore effective communication as it was in The Garden of Eden. Such an understanding makes students in colleges and universities to be good disciples in promoting effective communication skills not only in organisations they are employed in but also in families, social gathering and in societies they live in generally.

WHAT IS COMMUNICATION?

Desmond A D'Abreo said communication is the fabric of life. This means that there can be no life or society without communication. Maurus(1999:23) said that communication is a basic element to establish a commonness with someone. Human beings communicate in many ways. We communicate orally and in writing. We also communicate through body language. Using various sociological and psychological factors of communications in various societies, facial expressions, gestures and other body signs send various messages to people around us. The type of clothes we wear; and their fashions communicate to others what type of a person we are; and what others should expect from us. Hence, G David Mortensem argues that even when someone is quiet, one is still communicating.

However, the word communication is derived from a Greek work 'communis' which means 'to share'. But Maurus(1999:10) states that communicate is to have, or put, things in common; that is to share. Therefore, communication is a process of sharing ideas. It is said to be a transfer of ideas, feelings or emotions from one person to another.

According to King(1979: 3), in its broadest sense, the word communication refers to a process in which a response is evoked; or elicited or induced by a message sent and received. King's definition of communication brings some thinking that communication is not complete unless it is received. It is also hits hard that communication is not effective until it evokes, solicits or induces a reply.

But other communication experts have argued that communication does not only mean to share but it also means caring for a receiver or audience while sharing information, ideas, emotions, symbols or signs. This implies that when we are communication, we should make a deliberate effort to show love, respect and promote co-operation with a receiver or audience of our message. Remember that a British poet, John Donne said: 'No man(woman inclusive) is an Island.'

DEFINITIONS OF COMMUNICATION

Maurus(1999:11) defines communication as a process of transmitting information to another person. In it is from this background that Maurus (1999:42) goes further to state that communication means getting your own ideas across to others.

According to King(1979:6), the word 'communication' is related to other words with the same root: 'commune, communal, community, etc. King(1979:6) argues that communication involves finding something in common.

Reflect on how such a meaning of communication relates with that of a Greek word 'communis'. As a result, King (1979:6) describes communication as sharing of ideas, understanding, experiences or sharing meaning of something.

King(1979:6) argues that the more in tune communicators are; the more their fields of experience are in essential harmony; and the more easily they can communicate effectively. From this point, King(1979:6) argues that people with common background, common beliefs, common values, common attitudes, a common language and common meaning have a basis for effective and successful communication together.

OBJECTIVES OF COMMUNICATION

Stanton(2004) states that communication has four(4) objectives. These are:

- (a) To be received(read or hear)
- (b) To be understood
- (c) To be accepted
- (d) To influence affirmative action on what has been communicated.

Agreeing with Stanton, King(1979:9) states that the first goal of communication is stir up a meaning in a receiver that is as close as possible to the meaning a sender intended when he or she sent that message in the first place. According to King(1979:9), if a receiver understood a message as a sender understood that message; then, that communication was efficient. Therefore, not until the meaning of a message is the same between a sender and a receiver is communication effective.

But King(1979:10) argues that a sender does not just want the message to be understood; but that the same message should solicit the desired feedback. This is the purpose of every communication.

COMMUNICATION IS FOR LOVE, UNITY, CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Communication can be negative or positive. Communication can be used good things or for bad ones. God used communication for love. He used communication to create humankind. Hence, one can use communication to promote love, unity, co-operation and development. Some people; including some nations use communication for negative purposes against others. Some hatred, hate speeches, quarrels, conflicts and political violence generate from some communication with such a purpose. Some conflicts, civil strife and wars are a product of communication.

But learning from God's usage of communication, it is used for promoting love, unity, co-operation and for enhancing development processes at all levels of human institutions or society.

Communication should be used to promote love, unity, mutual understanding and mutual benefits between a sender and a receiver.

UNDERSTANDING COMMUNICATION

As already alluded to, different communication practitioners, experts and scholars have described communication in many different ways. Nonetheless, little differences appear in how each communication psychologist, practitioner, expert or scholar argue what communication is all about. To the end, what is common in what communication practitioners, experts, psychologists and scholars say communication is and what it involves is that:

- (a) It is exchange of information between one person and another
- (b) It is sharing of information, ideas, feeling or emotion, signs or symbols from one person to another
- (c) It is a transfer of information from one person to another; and that
- (d) It is a process of such activities between one person or group of person to another.

See Stanton

See Fundamentals of human communication

WHAT IS TOTAL COMMUNICATION?

While animals and all living things communicate, King(1979:4) defines human communication as communication in which a human being is involved either as a sender or as a receiver or both. But King(1979:4) also argues that communication between a human being and an animal is also communication. One can communicate with a dog, cow, chickens, etc. Human beings and societies communicate in many ways. We speak verbal language, sound language, visual language, body language as well as language of mimicry. It is reported that we communicate through words with a meagre 7 per cent. But newspapers, radio and television sets will continue being major sources of information. It is from such a background that some communication experts and scholars are already talking of total language communication. Maurus(1999: 52) said that total language communication means a combined vocabulary of words, images, body expressions, sound and smell.

BODY LANGUAGE

Maurus(1999:60) states that body language is more impressive than words. It is expressed in the selection of words, tone of the voice, a look in the eye, the flare of nostrils, a smile, a frown, upturned lip, a stance of a walk, etc. With body language being so impressive than words, Maurus advises us to know how to use body language as conflict between what we say and what our body language communicates to a receiver or to audience can betray us.

As a result, psychologists have found that we communicate 85 per cent through non-verbal communication. It is revealed that we communicate 30 per cent through symbols, clothes, hairstyle, cosmetics, jewelry, gifts, etc. But we communicate 55 per cent through body language such as facial expressions, gestures, eye-contact, etc.

Body language is said to be one of the most effective and reliable types of communication. Nodding, eye-contact, gestures, facial expressions and many others are part of body language. (See research on total part of communication is body language).

Meta-communication

Body language is also known as meta-communication. Therefore, meta-communication involves body language. As already alluded to, gestures, facial expressions, distance from the other person and many other types of communication involving human body is part of meta-communication.

Holding of a chin, crossing one's arms on the chest, holding one's head while listening to someone or holding one's palms together at the back is part of meta-communication which should be known and interpreted according to the culture of that society.

Like any other type of body language, it is importance for students and all other human beings to know and interpret different types of meta-communication.

PRIMARY COMMUNICATION AND META-COMMUNICATION

King(1979:14) advises communicators to distinguish between primary communication and meta-communication.

According to King(1979:14), primary communication is a main message transmitted by sender to a targeted receiver. The word 'meta' comes from a Greek word 'meta' which means 'next to'; or 'along with something else'.

Therefore, in communication, 'meta' means that there is a message sent along with the primary communication. In this regard, King(1979:14) defines meta-communication as extra message transmitted by sender. King(1979:14) states that meta-communication can be verbal or non-verbal. Meta-communication is usually used in body language.

PARA-LANGUAGE

See Nicky Stanton(2004), Mastering communication.

Maurus(1999:89) states that communication is not only what you say; but it is also how you say it. How one says something can change meaning of what has been said. Parents and superiors use para-language in some situations.

For instance, when a child has made a certain mistake, a parent can react; and say: 'Thank you very much for what you have done. May God bless you forever!'

One can know that a parent does not mean what he or she has said to a child who has made a serious mistake through checking the body language of such a parent. Facial expressions; including the lips while saying such words can demonstrate that such a parent is not happy with that child although the mouth is saying words which sound like he or she is happy with what the child has done. Therefore, to know whether communication is pare-language or not, check:

- (a) What has been done or said whether it is good or bad
- (b) Check the words used in reaction to what has been done or said. Is it a praise or a restitution for or against what has been done or said?
- (c) Check the facial expression or general body language when one is reacting to what has been done or said.

When the word used in reaction to what has happened or what has been said contradict has had been done or said, it means it is para-language.

THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

Considering that communication is a complex and challenging activity; therefore what is involved in trying to achieve effective communication, communication is said to be a process. According to Harlod Lasswell, communication involves a:

- (a) Sender
- (b) Message
- (c) Medium;

(d) a Receiver

Lasswell and others argued that for communication to take place, a sender should initially have a raw idea of what to communicate. It was also realised that having a purpose(objective of communication) is critical in effective communication.

Additionally, having social, cultural, economic, political, legal or technological background of a receiver is helpful in effective communication with a receiver or audience. Knowing a receiver's or audience's interests, likes and dislikes is also critical in effective communication.

Packer and Timpane(1988: 8) states that what kind of writing we do, we write for a purpose and for an audience. This is also true to every form of communication. It is from the same background that Packer and Timpane(1988), 'Writing worth reading' states that communicators should always communicate with audience in mind. This facilitates a sender of a message to include enough and relevant facts and figures in communication that not only help to achieve the purpose of that communication but also address overt and covert needs, interests and expectation of a receiver in that issue.

COMMUNICATING WITH A RECEIVER IN MIND

Communication involves considering many factors before one delivers any message to any person or group of people. This is why it is said that 'Think before you talk.' Other communication experts have para-phrased such an expression to say:

'Engage your brain in gear before you set your mouth in motion. Although such expressions refer to oral communication, they also apply to all forms of communication; including written communication and body language.

Always ask yourself how a receiver will perceive or interpret your communication. Further ask yourself why a receiver or the audience might receive that communication in that manner.

Packer and Timpane(1988:13) documents some questions on what a sender of a message should ask himself or herself before communication to a receiver or audience. Among such questions include:

- What do I expect from receiver or audience?
- What is an appropriate language to use for a receiver or audience?
- What does my audience know about this subject or topic?
- What does my audience want to know about this issue or subject?
- What detail should I include in the message?
- What are the values or interests of my audience on this issue?
- What type of response to I want from an audience?

In conclusion, Packer and Timpane(1988:14) state that to achieve one's purpose of writing, a writer should have the receiver or the audience in mind throughout his or her writing.

RESEARCH ON THE AUDIENCE BEFORE COMMUNICATING

Packer and Timpane(1988) emphasis on communicating with a receiver in mind demands that a sender of any information should research on the receiver or the audience before communicating. Generally, understanding sociological and psychological factors of communication according to a specific society is beneficial before delivering any message. Similarly, gathering enough facts and figures on needs, interests, expectations, likes and dislikes of a receiver; especially relating to the message can contribute a lot to receiving a favourable feedback from a receiver of that message.

It is from such a background that it is argued that the burden to ensure that there is a favourable feedback from communication does not lie on the receiver; but on the sender of that message.

COMMUNICATION PROCESS MODELS

Many communication process models have been conceptualized and developed. Some of such communication process models are complicated while others are simple and clear to understand. For the sake of clear understanding of the communication process model, one can select that of Harold Lasswell.

As already alluded to, communication process models involve:

Sender: This is a source of a message. He or she has a purpose for communicating with a specific receiver or audience. He or she researches on a topic before communication. One should also research on the socio-cultural, economic, legal, political and technological background of a receiver. This helps a sender of information to encode his or her message accordingly. Encoding a message should include addressing needs, interests and expectations of a receiver. It also include including enough relevant facts and figures to persuade a receiver of a message to agree with your point of view on that subject.

Message: A message is encoded raw information. A message should have enough relevant facts and figures. It should be in appropriate language to a receiver. Logical flow of a message is easy to understand. Include enough relevant visual aids in a message. Tables, charts, graphs, illustrations and pictures are good visual aids in a message. Remember that is said that a picture is more than 1,000 words.

Medium: This is a channel of communication. Face-to-face, poster, bill board, newspaper and magazine are among media of communication. Radio, television, internet and social media are part of media of communication. A good medium should have less noise to a receiver.

Feedback: This is a response from a receiver. Positive or negative feedback from a receiver completes communication process. Without a feedback from a message sent, one feels that no communication took place.

Draw Harold Lasswell's Communication Process Model here!

Exercises:

So, what are the qualities of a good sender of a message? And what are the qualities of a good message? Further what do you think are the qualities of a good receiver of a message? Who do you think is responsible for positive or negative feedback from a message sent?

BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION

A barrier to communication is anything that prevents effective communication from taking place. Any hindrance to effective communication is a barrier to communication. Shouting, loud singing, drumming, banging, etc while a certain type of communication is in process can be said to be a barrier to that communication.

SOURCES OF BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION

Barriers to communication can from various elements of the communication process. As already stated, the five (5) major elements of the communication process are:

- (a) Sender
- (b) Message
- (c) Medium
- (d) Receiver; and
- (e) Feedback

However, the communication process elements that stir and steer barriers to communication include:

1. Sender
2. Message
3. Medium; and
4. Receiver

A: SENDER

In a sender, the main factors that create barriers to communication are:

- Not defining purpose of communicating with a receiver can create barriers to communication in that message
- Poor planning on how best to present that message can factor in many barriers to communication in a message
- Using wrong language to a receiver
- Prejudice for or against a receiver/audience
- Not including needs, interests, likes and expectations of receiver according to his or her socio-cultural, economic, political, legal, etc background
- Not including enough relevant facts and figures in the message with which to convince a receiver on what you want
- Use of jargon can create barriers to communication
- Not including enough visual aids in communication can create barriers to communication

Barriers to communication that originate from a sender are called sender-oriented barriers to communication.

B: MESSAGE

Although a message is a product of a sender, it is also a source of barriers to communication. For instance, if a message contains wrong spellings, wrong punctuation marks and poor grammar, such a message can create barriers to communication with a receiver who is conversant with effective use of such factors in written communication. Poor introduction, haphazard presentation of points and their facts and figures in a main body of a message can create barriers to communication. Therefore:

- Not defining a receiver of a specific message adds barriers to communication
- Wrong language
- Wrong spellings
- Poor introduction of a message
- Haphazard presentation of points
- Poor choice of word selection according to what you want to mean and its impact on a receiver creates barriers to communication
- Poor conclusion from a message can create barriers to communication
- Not being persuasive in message presentation can include barriers to communication

- Not using relevant visual aids such as table, graphs, charts, illustration and pictures in a message creates hindrances in communication

Barriers to communication which are derived from a message are called message-oriented barriers to communication.

C: MEDIUM

A medium is any channel of communication in which a message passes through before reaching a receiver. A medium is a singular word for plural: media.

Media include face-to-face, letters, reports, proposals, business plans, poster and bill board. Newspaper, magazine, radio, television and social media are also part of media of communication.

If a sender chooses a wrong medium of communication for a certain receiver, a hindrance to communication can be established.

D: RECEIVER

A receiver can also be a barrier to communication. Therefore, a receiver is also a source of barriers to communication. For example:

- Prejudice for or against a sender of a message can be a hindrance to effective communication
- Day-dreaming or serving two masters at a time when communication is in process creates barriers to communication.
- Not having basic knowledge of a sender

TYPES OF BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION

See Fundamentals of human communication

Basically, there are three types of barriers to communication. Types of barriers to communication are also known as noise in communication. therefore the type of noise in communication are:

1. ***Physical Noise:*** This is the actual noise around communication. Shouting, dogs barking and children playing games while shouting and laughing loudly is a barrier to communication. Note also that physical noise can include any sound that is not wanted at that time regardless of how essential it can be at any other time.
2. ***Semantic Noise:*** This are barriers to communication found in a message. They are more associated with jargon or technical words used, wrong spellings, wrong sentence construction, poor punctuation marks, etc. Excessive use of complex sentences can also create semantic noise as one might fail to comprehend some sentences because they are too long to remember meaning of a sentence from a beginning to its end.
3. ***Psychological Noise:*** This is when a sender or a receiver is serving two masters at a time. This is commonly known as day-dreaming. One might be thinking about other issues while communication to someone. A Receiver might also be cogitating some other things while someone is communicating to him or to her. Thinking about other things during communication process creates psychological noise in communication process.

SOCIOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS OF COMMUNICATION

Maurus(1999:54) states that a meaning of words can changes according to time, place and social environment. In Bemba, the word 'Bakalamba' meaning respectful way of addressing an elderly person, is slowly changing its pronounciation to 'Bakamba' according to time, place and social environment.

But most important is that some words change meaning according to society. For instance, in Zambia with about 73 ethnic tribes, some words in Eastern province mean something else in Cibemba, Silozi or in Luvale; and vice versa.

ARISTOTLE ON ELEMENTS OF PERSUASION

The Greek philosopher, Aristotle argued that for communication to serve a purpose, it must be persuasive. He further argued that for a message to be persuasive, it should have at least three (3) elements. From this background, Aristotle conceptualised and popularized three elements of persuasion. These are:

- (a) Ethos
- (b) Pathos
- (c) Logos

ETHOS: In Greek, Ethos are the same as ethicus in Latin. Ethos (Greek) and Ethicus (Latin) are associated with morals. There are related to ethical conduct. In this regard, ethos are associated with the character of a sender of a message. Thus, as a sender of a message is delivering his or her speech or presentation, the receiver or members of the audience ask in their hearts: 'Is the sender of a message honest, trusted or of high integrity?'

In short, if a sender is known to receiver or members of the audience, a receiver or some; if not all members of the audience might have a folder (personal file) about the character or personality of the sender of that message.

Depending on what each receiver knows about the sender of a particular message, the message might be accepted or not.

PATHOS: Pathos are associated with the contents of a message. The message should be in a language a receiver or audience can understand. It should have relevant and enough facts and figures as bullets for convincing a receiver or audience on that message. It should consider the sociological and psychological factors of communication. Unless receiver or members of the audience are conversant with technical or jargon words used, use of jargon or technical words should be avoided. A message should also consider needs, interests and expectation of a receiver or audience on subject or topic at hand. Therefore, according to Aristotle, a message should appeal to receiver's or audience feelings. Additionally, it should answer the 5Ws and 1H (What? Who? Where? When? Why? And How?) Pathos should also consider opposing views on the subject. Failure to acknowledge opposing views on message is like a sender is deliberately hiding something for personal gain. This implies that a sender should communicate with a receiver or audience in mind. This requires adequate research on receiver or audience before one communicates.

LOGOS: In Greek, logos are associated with logical flow of a message. Each fact and figure should support the purpose of a message to that receiver or audience. The facts and figures in a message should logically be presented. This facilitates easy understanding of what a message is all about. Depending on the nature of message and its contents, a flow of that message can be logical (ascending or descending), spatial (space) or chronological (time) order.

According to Aristotle, ethos over-ride the other two elements in persuasion. This means that when moral character of a sender is perceived to be bad, even if the message is good, receiver or audience might not do or implement what the message is telling them to do.

From Zambia's political personalities, discuss how Aristotle's elements of persuasive have affected some political candidates at ward, constituency and at national levels in some political parties. Are some citizens using secret folders (personal files) to judge some political candidates.

WHERE DOES A BURDEN TO RECEIVE A FAVOURABLE FEEDBACK LIE?

According to the communication process displayed and learnt above, it is clear that the burden to receive a favourable feedback in communication process does not lie on the receiver; but on the sender. Therefore, from what we have so far learnt, the adage that "Think before you talk"; or the modern saying that 'Engage your brain in gear before you set your mouth in motion' is as critical as ever for every sender of a message. The sender of a message has a lot to do before initiating or replying to a specific message.

PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

From factors stated in communication process above; and considering barriers to communication from a sender, message, medium and from a receiver, one can draw the following principles of effective communication:

- (a) Accurately define purpose for communicating
- (b) Clearly identify a receiver of that message
- (c) Research on receiver of a message adequately
- (d) Research on topic adequately
- (e) Plan message effectively
- (f) Include interests and expectations of a receiver in your message
- (g) Use right language
- (h) Include enough facts and figures in message
- (i) Craft an effective introduction of a message
- (j) Present relevant and enough points, facts and figures on a message logically
- (k) In oral communication, use eye-contact accordingly
- (l) Both in written and oral communication, avoid mannerisms
- (m) In written communication, use active voice sentences; and not passive ones. An active voice sentence is a normal sentence that starts with a 'subject' followed by a verb and then an object. For instance: 'Peter is studying Economics and Finance' is an active voice sentence.
- (n) Include visual aids in a message
- (o) Select relevant words which facilitate achieving meaning of each sentence
- (p) In written communication, use punctuation marks accordingly
- (q) In oral communication check body language
- (r) In oral communication, moderate pitch of voice (high, low and moderate) according to purpose
- (s) In oral communication modify rate of speaking (slow, fast and moderate) according to purpose of emphasis
- (t) Both in oral and written communication, avoid mannerisms. A mannerism is any common and regular practice that hinders effective communication. Mannerisms include any form of touching any part of your body, repeatedly winking, giving a certain sound such as 'Eeeeh!'; 'Aaaah!'; 'Are you with me'; 'Ok'; 'Is it clear'; etc after almost every sentence. In written communication, using certain words or phrases regularly in one message can create mannerisms which disturb effective communication process.
- (u) Craft an effective conclusion from a message presented
- (v) Answer the five (5) Ws and 1H
- (w) Remember to apply the 7Cs as well in your communication.

TYPES OF COMMUNICATION

See Maurus, The art of communicating effectively.

According to King(1979:4), there are five levels of human communication. These are: intra-personal, inter-personal, person-to-group, group-to-person and group-to-group communication.

Intra-personal communication

'Intra' means 'within' or 'inside'. Therefore, according to King(1979:4), intra-personal communication takes place within or inside a person. In this type of communication, the same person is a sender and a receiver of a message. One asks questions and answers them himself or herself. King(1979:4) reveals that this is the most complicated type of communication as the same brain sends one type of an issue to all parts of the body as a question; and then, almost at the same time, also sends some potential reply on the same issue to all parts of the body for an answer!

Inter-person communication

The word 'inter' means 'between'. Therefore, King(1979:4) defines inter-personal communication as person-to-person communication. This is where two people are involved in sharing ideas, feelings or emotions, etc.

Person-to-group communication

King(1979:5) states that in this type of communication, one person sends a message to a group at the same time. A good example is when a teacher is talking to a class on a certain topic. Preachers, evangelists, priests and many other clergyperson use person-to-group communication when they are preaching in church. During political campaigns, political candidates are also involved in person-to-group communication.

Group-to-person communication

According to King(1979:5), group-to-group communication is where a group of people react to a person's communication. For example, where a person-to-group communication induces a reaction from all members in a group(class), that is a group-to-person communication.

Group-to-group communication

King(1979:5) states group-to-group communication is where a group of people sends a message to another group of people. For example, trade union leaders can send a message on workers' demands to a board of directors(BoDs) in a certain organisation. When a soccer team, for example, sends a letter to another soccer team, this is group-to-group communication.

Mass communication(Maurus, page 83): Mass means a group of or crowd of people. Mass in people is always associated with unknown people to a sender. While one can know the type of people he or she is communicating to, one cannot know see or know individuals who might be reading, listening to or viewing a message at that particular time. Hence, mass communication is sent to not well defined individual in a certain group of people. For instance, agricultural feature articles, radio and television agricultural programmes and many others in the news media target farmers; but one when is writing such articles, presenting such programmes, one cannot know who among farmers will read, listen to or view such a programme! In live radio and television programmes, one can be talking on air without knowing who are listening to or who are viewing the programme. But listeners listen to your voice; and can identify the voice to be yours. On television, viewers see you; but you cannot see them.

Cross-cultural Communication

With liberalisation of national economies leading to numerous trans-national companies (TNCs) and multi-national companies (MNCs) in each country, one experiences many forms of cross-cultural communication. The Africans, English, the Americans, Indians, Chinese, Japanese, the Russians, Cubans, Greeks, etc are all over in most countries sharing one organisation. In some cases, officials from different organisations in different countries meet in one venue for a present reports on common purpose.

Such fora are fertile ground for cross-cultural communication. Cross-cultural communication is where communication is done in an environment where different cultures are at play. This is where sociological and psychological factors of communication are critical to ensure that no official or group of officials from one culture are hurt by a form of communication that is repugnant to their respective culture. Some words, body language, signs, symbols might mean something different in other languages or in some cultures.

Give examples of words, signs and symbols which mean differently from one language or culture to another. In Zambia, some Cibemba words mean a different thing when used in Cinyanja. Similarly, some Silozi or Luvale words mean something else when used in Cinyanja. However, some words, signs and symbols in some cultures mean the same thing in other cultures.

It is communication that ensures words, body language, signs and symbols used are in harmony with all cultures present that is called cross-cultural communication.

Vertical Communication

This is also known as upward and downward communication. It is communication between superiors and subordinates in an organisation. It is also communication between parents or elderly people and children or young ones accordingly depending on culture of society. For supervisors, it is used for giving instructions to subordinates. For subordinates, it is used for reporting back or giving feedback to superiors.

Horizontal Communication

This is communication between or among peers. For example, sales clerks in different sales territories can communicate to find out how each is keeping sales records. Horizontal communication is used for co-ordination or consultation purposes. Therefore, in horizontal communication, there is no supervisor for the other. Both sender and receiver of horizontal communication is at same level of organizational hierarchy; and are communicating at the same wavelength.

Diagonal Communication

This is a type of communication which originates from one subordinate person in one department to someone who is on a higher position in another department or vice versa. Like in horizontal communication, this type of communication is used for consultation or co-ordination purposes. For example, an accounts clerk in Accounts Department can consult a Purchasing Manager for a receipt of purchases made for orders; or the latter asking the former if suppliers brought a receipt for purchases made recently.

Grapevine Communication

Grapevine communication is also known as gossip. It is a rumour. Every organisation has some people who are good at rumour mongering. Grapevine is an unofficial communication in an organisation. Grapevine communication can be negative or positive.

Positive grapevine communication is one which disseminates good news which even management plans to communicate in due course. Negative gossip communication is one which is false and likely to incite workers into industrial unrest.

Whatever effects gossip can create in an organisation, rumours can make top management to be pro-active. Therefore, when grapevine is learnt, top management should not just condemn it; but should investigate its validity and reliability. Findings from such an investigation can lead to top management being pro-active in issues ahead of them.

VERBAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

See Maurus, The art of communicating effectively page 51.

Packer and Timpane(1988:12) outlines some differences between writing and talking. Packer and Timpane argue that when one is talking(oral communication), a sender is in front of a receiver or audience. This gives a receiver or an audience an opportunity to relate what a mouth of a sender is saying in relation to his or her body language. Packer and Timpane(1988:12) add that in oral communication, a sender usually adjusts to a receiver's or audience in terms of speed of talking and allowing for clarifications or questions from receiver or audience. In short, in oral communication, one is able to support what he or she is saying with body language such as gesture, facial expressions and other pieces of body language.

On the receiver's or audience's side, oral communication has a provision for seeking clarification where one did not understand a point clearly or asking questions where necessary.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

See Maurus, The art of communicating effectively; page 69.

Packer and Timpane(1988:12) states that when writing, think of a reader as an intelligent person who is familiar with a subject you are writing on. This is also true in writing academic assignments, job application letters, in writing curriculum vitae(CVs), any form of a report, project proposals and many writing other document.

VISUAL AIDS

See Nicky Stanton(Mastering Communication)

Visual aids are paramount in communication. A Chinese proverb states that a picture is worth 10,000 words. This means that from a picture, one can get the whole story of what the visual aid is talking about.

Pictures, illustrations, tables, bar and pie charts and graphs make good visual aids in communication.

But Stanton (2004) advises that visual aids should be relevant to topic at hand. Put a picture or an illustration of child when a topic is about a child or children. They should also be enough according to the length and nature of a presentation. Too many visual aids can obscure a topic. Use relevant visual aids. Bring each relevant visual aid strategically. Release one according to what you are talking about at that moment.

STYLE OF WRITING BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

Any form of business communication follows a specific format and style of writing. This is so in sales letters, letters of inquiry, letter of complaint, offer or rejection letter, in invitation letters, etc.

The following show the format and factors to consider in writing all business communication documents.

- Your address
- Date of writing a business letter
- Receiver's address
- Proper salutation(Dear Sir, dear Madam, etc)
- Right subject or reference
- Be honest
- Be objective
- Be accurate
- Be brief
- Be clear
- Use simple, common words
- Use active voice sentences; and not passive voice ones
- Use normal sentences that follow: subject + verb +object
- Use adverbs and adjectives sparingly
- Use verbs with strong action
- Use right punctuation marks in each sentence
- Use active voice sentences; and not passive ones.
- Use 'Yours faithfully' as leave-taking
- Put your signature below Yours faithfully
- Write your full names below your signature
- Write your job title after

DEVELOPING READING AND WRITING SKILLS

Reading and writing skills are important both in social, professional and business life. Most people have benefited a lot from developing effective reading and writing skills. However, some people face serious challenges to develop such skills. Failure to develop effective reading and writing skills can lead to many other challenges in social, professional and business life.

It is said that if success was easy, everyone would have been successful. Similarly, for you and I to be relatively successful, among other things, developing effective reading and writing skills would add more value to our road to success. Note that people mostly judge our professional status from the way we articulate professional issues. Effective articulate of professional issues derives from wide and effective reading and research. Similarly, the way we write job application letters, CVs, minutes of meetings, reports, proposals and many other business communication documents speak volumes about our professional expertise.

DEVELOPING READING SKILLS

Developing positive reading culture is beneficial both in studies and in professional life. With positive reading culture, one can gain more knowledge and develop some levels of wisdom from such knowledge. Remember, it is said that 'Knowledge is power.' And knowledge comes from wide reading and research. But good reading culture is one of the challenges most societies in developing countries have.

To develop effective reading culture, read as many relevant books as possible. Developing a hobby of reading books in your field of interest culminates into good reading culture.

When you are reading for comprehension or academic writing purposes, ensure that you note down particulars of a textbook you are reading. Particulars of a textbook include author, year of publication, title of a book, edition, publisher and when it was published. Ensure that you write your own notes; indicating page numbers of each textbook you read for studies.

When you are reading, it is advisable to apply active reading method. Read with a pencil or a pen. Active reading approach is when you make an effort to understand whatever sentence you read. To achieve this, agree or disagree with each sentence you read. Write in a margin: 'yes' or 'no' to a sentence you agree or disagree with respectively. Put a question mark against a sentence you can neither agree nor disagree with. Giving examples of your already existing knowledge, experience or reports on what you are reading is a sure way of relating what you read to what happened to you, to a friend, relative in any part of your society.

In short, in active reading, you relate what you read to your existing knowledge, experience or what you were told or saw in your community or somewhere else.

DEVELOPING WRITING SKILLS

Writing skills are as important as any other type of communication. However, writing appears to be more difficult than speaking. Because of its permanent form, writing demands certain knowledge and skills from a writer. A good command of language one uses is critical in writing. Therefore, knowing parts of a sentence and parts of speech in that language is beneficial. Spellings, punctuation marks, rules of concord and many other types of grammar are critical in developing effective writing skills.

Additionally, to write effectively, one needs to know how to introduce a subject. An effective introduction entices a reader to continue reading a message. A main body of a message should have enough relevant facts and figures. Logical and persuasive presentation of such facts and figures is not only educative to a receiver but are also interesting to read. Use of good command of language in each message makes meaning of a message accurate and clear.

From such considerations, effective writing skills demand effort. It also takes some time to achieve it. Writing skills experts recommend that one should spend at least 20-30 minutes per day to develop effective writing skills. Developing effective writing skills requires brainstorming on a specific topic. Making an outline, drafting, proof-reading and editing several times on same message is a sure way of ensuring that your writing on that message is effective.

DEVELOPING LISTENING SKILLS

Messages bombard a human being every day. One study revealed that we receive 1, 700 to 2, 500 messages a day. In the same study, it was discovered that we remember only 65 per cent of messages we receive.

Another study about retention capability suggests that we remember 10 per cent of what read. We retain 20 per cent of what we hear. And we retain 30 per cent of what we see. But we keep 50 per cent of what we see and hear.

✦ To be an effective listener, have an open mind to learn from a specific speaker. Having a pen and a piece of paper with which to write what is going to be said is beneficial.

Follow the speaker's introduction, main points in the main body of a message and a conclusion effectively. Where you are not clear, ask for clarification or explanation. Taking down each point in short hand form helps a student to capture many points from each speaker.

- ✕ Effective eye-contact with a speaker is a good tool for effective listening. Follow speaker's body language in relation to what he or she says at every time.

DEVELOPING NOTE-TAKING SKILLS

Note-taking skills are critical in professional life. Students in universities should learn note-taking skills. No speaking lesson can be given on how to develop note-taking skills. This is a slow process that needs sustained effort. In every lesson, a student should be attentive. Write down each point from a speaker. Use your own shorthand method. Don't write a full sentence. Some speakers are fast. To catch up with their rate of speaking, use shorthand. For instance: If a lecturer said: 'If you want to be successful in life, study hard.' In note-taking skills, you can write: 'Study hard=success.' It is important to remember what each abbreviation or acronym stands for. Don't change your code or abbreviation for each word you use throughout your life. Write full sentences from your shorthand notes after each lesson.

DEVELOPING PUBLIC SPEAKING SKILLS

Effective public speaking skills are not a preserve of professionals in social sciences. Every professional regardless of field of study expected to have effective public speaking skills. This is evidenced by need for every professional in organizations to make presentation of monthly, quarterly or annual reports. Research report or project proposal presentations also demand effective public speaking skills in every professional.

To develop effective public speaking skills, you have to consider many factors. Among these are always to remember that you were created in God's Own Image. Always remember that you were also created to be successful in whatever you do; including in public speaking. You should tell yourself that: 'If others are effective public speakers, you can be; and therefore, you are an effective public speaker. Equipped with such confidence, now do the following to develop effective public speaking skills:

- Develop a good reading culture both in social and professional areas
- Acquire sound knowledge on professional and social issues; including on professional and current affairs
- Have a purpose for speaking to that person or audience
- Research widely on topic
- Research widely on receiver or audience
- Know audience knowledge levels on topic
- Have basic knowledge on receiver's or audience socio-cultural, economic, legal and political background
- Know needs, interest and expectations from receiver or audience on topic
- Craft an effective introduction.
- Anecdotes are good before starting a presentation or public speaking
- Use effective eye-contact with receiver or each member of audience
- Read receiver's or each member of audience's body language effectively to check type of unconscious feedback he or she is giving you
- Solicit feedback at every stage of your public speaking
- Use enough and relevant visual aids
- At appropriate stage, apply relevant humour in your public speaking
- Use practical examples

- Involve receiver or audience in your speaking process
- Be accurate
- Be brief
- Be clear
- Moderate your voice pitch. Same pitch throughout your public speaking might send most members of your audience to sleep.
- Adjust speed of speaking accordingly. Same rate of speaking is boring to audience.
- Be careful with your body language messages
- Avoid mannerisms in public speaking
- End on an interesting note
- Design an effective conclusion; and appeal to audience for affirmative action on message.

Readings:

You can be an effective speaker

Public Speaking(See Prof. Roy: The art of Mastering Business Communication Skills)

Public Speaking Today

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION RELATED KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

Business communication is a wide field of study. Topics that have been covered above are also part of Business Communication. However, some specific types of Business Communication also need to be emphasised further.

WRITING A MEMORANDUM

A memorandum is one of the most common channel of communication within an organisation. This is why it is called an internal communication tool. Memorandum is singular for plural memoranda. A memorandum is one of the simplest tools for internal communication. However, it has a specific format and requires some knowledge and techniques of how to write it.

Qualities of a good memorandum.

The following are qualities of a good memorandum:

- It has words '**MEMORANDUM**' written on top of a paper; and centred.
- It starts with '**TO**':
- Then, it has '**FROM**':
- From is followed by '**DATE**':
- Then, '**SUBJECT**' or '**REFERENCE**': The former is abbreviated as '**SUBJ:**' while the latter is shorted as '**REF:**' Subj: is use when you are initiating communication on a certain issue with that office while Ref: is used when you are replying to communication on a specific issue from a certain office.
- It has a purpose
- It is accurate in message
- It is clear in its message
- It is shorter than a letter. This means that it should be less than a page
- It is semi-official. One can use Dear Sir, Dear Madam, Hi, or just John, Mary,
- It can include casual or common and well-understood street language such as 'Bakalamba', 'Boss' or 'gong'a', etc
- It is signed by author. Use common known signature by members of an organisation.
- It has identification of author through putting full names or just recognizable initial of name (s).

- Paragraphing in a memo is as important as it is in any other form of Business Communication.
- Despite being a semi-official document, a memo is accurate, brief and clear on the purpose of communication.

WRITING A JOB APPLICATION LETTER

Always remember that you are a product for sale. To achieve this, read on The Total Product Concept in Marketing. Consider that you are product with many layers which offer different benefits to individual customers.

A marketing commentator, Theodore Levitt stated that customers don't buy products. They buy benefits they can accrue from that product. In short, customers buy what a product can do to address their problems or satisfy their needs.

This is also the same with employers. They don't employ workers. They recruit what a worker can do to add value to that organisation according to its vision, mission, values and goals.

Therefore, a job application letter is a sales letter for a job applicant. It should have relevant selling points in line with the stated job description. In a job application letter, address each item in the job description to prove that you are the best candidate to fill that vacant position.

Consequently, to be effective in job application letter writing, one is supposed to know his or her strengths and weaknesses. It is also important to understand each job description of a vacant position advertised before writing a job application letter for that vacant post.

Good command in a language and effective writing skills are critical in job application letter writing. Your writing skills in job application letter can effectively market or de-market your chances of filling that vacant position. Like any form of Business Letter writing, considering margins on all sides of a paper enhanced effective presentation of your job application letter.

Critical factors to consider in job application letter writing are:

- Your address
- Date of writing your letter
- Receiver's address
- Proper salutation: Dear Sir, Dear Madam, Dear Mr Mubita,, etc
- Specific, accurate, brief and clear subject or reference. For example: APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT AS A CUSTOMER RELATIONS MANAGER. Just stating: 'Application for employment' shows that you do not know what you are doing; and that you are not serious in your life.
- In the first paragraph, refer to the advertisement of a stated vacant position on a specific date, in a named news media such as a specific newspaper, radio or television station.
- State that having analysed contents of the stated job description of a vacant position, you feel it was designed with you in mind. Therefore, state that you are for the same position because you have enough relevant attributes in terms of academic or professional qualifications, experience and skills.
- Briefly, state your work or professional experience and skills soon after first paragraph

- Demonstrate briefly, how your experience and skills have benefited some employers before or now, Showing verifiable outputs is critical in effective job application letters. To achieve this, one needs good working culture in every position one holds
- Show how your academic or professional qualifications have catapulted you into performing well in positions you held or you are holding now
- State that you have enclosed photocopies or electronic copies of your certificates stated in that ob application and a curriculum vitae(CV). State that you have included any other relevant document in that letter.
- Mention that you are looking forward to being invited for personal interviews where you are doing to demonstrate your professional and practical knowledge and skills in line with job description of that vacant position
- End with 'Yours faithfully',
- Sign
- Put your full names; including your title such as Mr, Ms, Mrs, Dr, Professor, SC, etc

WRITING A CURRICULUM VITAE

Like a job application letter, a CV is a sales letter. It sells you, a job applicant. Therefore, presentation and contents of a CV can market or destroy your chances of filling that vacant position.

Critical in CV writing are demonstrating that you have enough and relevant knowledge and skills required to perform effectively in that vacant position.

However, it is important to note that there are many types of CVs. We have ordinary, summarized or functional CVs. But for the sake of this training manual, one can use an ordinary and common CV writing style.

To effectively show how a CV should be written, one should use the five (5) main parts of a good ordinary CV.

These are:

1. Personal details or Bio-data
2. Work Experience
3. Academic or Professional Achievements
4. Hobbies
5. Referees

Personal Details. This can be summarized or detailed depending on what a prospecting employer has demanded. Here, age, gender, marital status, language (s) spoken, etc are included.

Work Experience: This is where you demonstrate what you know,, skills you have and what you have done before or what you are doing now which benefit employers in line with your qualifications. To objective and fair employers, this is a critical part of a CV. Therefore, stating verifiable outputs in each position you held or you hold can spring you to being invited for personal interviews. Because this is a high marketing part of a CV, it should come earlier than Academic or Professional qualifications. Serious potential employers who have a purpose for their vision, do not buy academic or professional qualifications in form of a Diploma or an academic degree at whatever level. They buy practical application of such knowledge into outputs that contribute to achieving an organisation's goals.

Academic or Professional Achievements: Here, state your academic or professional achievements. State with the latest and go in descending order.

This means that start with the latest qualification you have, then go down the years with their respective academic or professional achievements you got in each learning institution down to the first academic or professional achievement you have. Remember to include only relevant qualifications. Grade 2, 5 or Grade 7 qualification might not be necessary depending on the level of vacant position you are applying for. Include grade of your certificate, Diploma or undergraduate or postgraduate degree. For instance, on qualification achieved, state: Diploma in General Agriculture with a Merit. Additionally, show grades in each course where you scored highly. For instance, Business Communication Skills with a Distinction. Put grades in courses where you scored high marks if those are the areas the job description appear to favour most if you have high marks in such courses

Hobbies: Hobbies are important in career development. Develop relevant hobbies in line with your career. In CV writing put hobbies that are in tandem or in consonant with the vacant position you are applying for. Showing that your hobby or hobbies support your career or a vacant position proves that you enjoy doing such functions. Contradictory hobbies to a vacant position can betray your opportunities to be offered that job. For example, how can a hobby in reading crime or adulterous novels help a someone applying for a clergyperson's vacant position?

Referees: It is important to note that this is not 'references' as most people like writing in CV or CV related examination questions.

Referees are at least three (3) or more number of people (but always an odd number) who can honestly, objectively, factually and fairly testify about your true personality and performance in that vacant job. Therefore, relatives, friends or some associates such as family friends are not among the best referees in job application. Referees should be fair both to a job applicant and to a potential employer as far as personality and job performance of a job applicant. Being biased to one for or against can be detrimental to a job applicant or to a potential employer. The number of referees can more on academic; or more on work or professional experience depending on the nature of vacant position you are applying for.

JOB INTERVIEWS: INTERVIEWING AND BEING INTERVIEWED FOR A JOB

Interviews play a critical role in career development and in selecting right candidates to fill vacant positions in organizations. However, in some cases, some candidates and some organizations take job interviews lightly or casually. In the process, nepotism, favouritism or bribery drift in; leading to unfairness either against some candidates or against an organisation filling vacant position(s). If all vacant positions were filled in honestly, objectively, factually and fairly, each organisation would have expanded; creating many branches and vacant position in many regions. Such a development would have created more decent job opportunities for many citizens in each country.

INTERVIEWING A JOB APPLICANT

Before interviewing a job applicant, a lot of factors are considered. The following are among the factors to be considered before even advertising for a vacant position; and after doing so:

- There should be a vacant position with a specific job title and job purpose.
- There should be a job description for that job title
- Design relevant qualifications and attributes for a candidate to fill that vacant position
- Determine a basic salary and other conditions of service for a vacant position
- Prepare an advertisement for a vacant position for that job
- Prepare relevant categories of interview questions to facilitate evaluation of which candidate should be selected. This can include administrative, psychological, technical or professional questions on each candidate

- Determine who should sit on panel to interview candidates. Give reasons for one to be on such a panel.
- Decide when interviews should be conducted
- Shortlist candidates
- Prepare effective scoring sheet for each category of questions for panel members to use
- Inform shortlisted candidates when they will be interviewed. Day, date, time and venue are critical pieces of information to potential candidates as you inform them when to be interviewed.
- Prepare interview room

During job interviews, interviewing panel should:

- Make each candidate free
- Do not allow a candidate to be watching sharp rays of the sun through a window or so
- Ensure that where candidates sit is not exposed to a strong heat of the sun
- Introduce panel members
- Ask one question at a time
- Listen attentively to each answer to every question
- Record responses to questions on each candidate on respective part of scoring sheet
- Ask relevant follow-up questions according to purpose and probably what a candidate has said
- Not be biased in how they ask questions to some candidates
- Be aggressive in relevant questions depending on purpose
- Make relevant follow-up questions depending on what a candidate say
- Thank each candidate for being interested to work for an organisation

BEING INTERVIEWED AS A JOB APPLICANT

Job seekers are supposed to be prepared for job opportunities. It is said that opportunities occur to those who are prepared. To be prepared for job opportunities, one needs to work hard in life. Acquiring relevant qualifications, experience and skills is part of being prepared in job hunting and in career development processes.

Equipped with such qualifications, a job seeker should:

- Analyse each job description of an advertised vacant position
- Assess and compare functions of an advertised vacant position and his or her own abilities
- Be realistic with what the job entails and what you can really do
- Not apply for any vacant job just because it is in one's field of study

When one feels that he or she qualifies to fill that vacant position:

- Find out who is recruiting officer in that organisation. Is it a male or a female
- Research on the background, policies, rules, operations or an organisation
- Research on vision, mission, values and goal of an organisation
- Find out basic salary scale range for the advertised vacant position

If your research appeals to your needs and expectations in line with an organisation you have passion for because of its organisation's culture and purpose:

- Write an effective job application letter
- Ensure you attach a marketing CV to your job application letter
- Keep copies of your application letter and CV you have sent for that vacant position

- Never send the same CV content to every position you apply for. Tailor your CV contents to a specific job description of vacant position advertised.
- Among other factors, attaching your passport size photo together with a CV to your job application letter is another technique in ensuring that you are shortlisted for interviews.

Before and when you are informed that you have been shortlisted for personal job interviews, the following preparations are critical:

- Decide which clothes you are going to wear on the day of interviews; and why
- Ensure you have photocopies of all relevant documents to carry for interviews
- Ensure you have original copies of all relevant documents to carry for interviews
- Carry extra copies of your CV in case some members of the panel might not have
- Carry copies of CV and job application letter you sent for references on what you promised on that vacant position
- Prepare effective marketing points for job interviews. Rehearse such points
- Go early enough for job interviews
- Report to a receptionist and introduce yourself fully soon after arriving at interviewing venue

During job interviews:

- Be composed
- Walk in an interviewing room with confidence
- Do not sit down in front of the interviewing panel until you are told to do so
- If written down, put a piece of paper where you have marketing points on your laps
- Develop relevant eye-contact with each member of interviewing panel
- Listen to each statement or question attentively
- Be accurate in your answers to each question
- Relate each interview questions to relevant marketing point(s) you prepared
- Smile before giving some replies to interview questions
- Thank a specific member for interview panel for intelligent or professional or psychological question
- Never be emotional with some questions or with the way some interview panel members ask questions
- Do not be confrontational with those interview panel members who seem to have a bee in their bonnet against you
- Be brief; but adequate in replies to each question
- Be clear in answering each question
- While answering some questions, give relevant practical examples of how you achieved certain objectives in your work experiences; or how you solved certain work challenges.
- Use your research findings on the operations of the organisations in some catchment areas to demonstrate how you can add value to that organisation through solving some challenges it faces.
- Be persuasive in your answers to each questions
- Demonstrate that you are the right candidate to fill that vacant position
- Thank the members of the panel for their professional, practical and interesting questions
- State that you are looking forward to being offered that job for you to add value to an organisation
- Send the organisation a 'Thank you letter for inviting you for interviews'; and promise that you are still looking forward to being offered that job

When you are offered a job after interviews, perform the way you promised during job interviews. Such work culture sustains your effective and saleable CV for many other vacant positions to come!

(See Prof. Roy: the art of Mastering Business Communication Skills)

CONDUCTING MEETINGS

Meetings are usually conducted in committees; chaired by chairpersons.

STANDING COMMITTEES

A standing committee is a group of people in an organisation who has legally appointed or elected to represent an organisation on specific functions. For example, an organisation can have a policy that there should be standing committees for transport, loans, funeral grants, housing, etc. The fact that such committees spring from an established policy of an organisation, they are standing committees.

It is important to note that a standing committee is a group of people to facilitate workers' participation in decision-making processes of an organisation. Hence, standing committees connect top management to workers at lower levels of an organisation. In short, standing committees promote not only good corporate governance but also enhance workers' full and active participation in organisation's decision-making processes.

STANDING ORDERS

Standing committees have standing orders. The latter are rules or by-laws that guide a committee on how to run functions of a specific committee. Standing orders of a standing committee include what constitutes a quorum for that standing committee, how many times should a member be consecutively absent without apology before he or she is suspended, how a member can be expelled from a committee, etc.

FUNCTIONS OF COMMITTEES

Functions of a standing committee are according to the mandate of that committee. Functions of a standing committee depend on its terms of references (ToRs). If it is responsible for Housing, Transport, Loans, Funeral grants related functions, etc, then, its function will be in that line.

FUNCTIONS OF A CHAIRPERSON OF A COMMITTEE

Being an extension of top management to middle and lower levels of an organisation's hierarchy, a standing committee has an appointed or elected chairperson. The following are the main function of a chairperson of a committee:

- Overseeing the performance of a committee according to its mandate
- Ensures that through teamwork, a committee achieves its objectives
- Presiding over meetings of a respective committee
- Ensuring and facilitating full and active participation of every member of that committee.
- Promoting democratic decision-making processes of that committee
- Ensures and facilitates discipline during the deliberations of meetings
- Co-ordinates functions of members of a committee

FUNCTIONS OF A SECRETARY

A standing committee has a secretary. A secretary should be of some relatively high literacy levels with sound writing skills. Administrative experience and skills are desirable in a secretary. The following are functions of a secretary of a committee:

- Is a chief administrative officer of a committee
- Is chief technical advisor to a chairperson

- Keeps all documents and correspondence of a committee
- Is responsible for incoming and out-going correspondence of a committee
- Takes minutes at every meeting
- Writes minutes of every meeting

NOTICE OF MEETING

Members of a committee should suggest to a secretary or to a chairperson when to have a meeting. During such suggestions members should also propose what should be deliberated at such a meeting. Items to be discussed at a meeting are called 'motions' until the same meeting adopts each of such motions as part of agenda. Although practically in some societies, deciding what should be discussed at a meeting is a preserve of a chairperson and a secretary, other members of a members of a committee are also empowered to propose motions. Therefore, agenda of a meeting is a list of adopted motions.

Depending on size of a committee or an organisation, Notice of Meeting can be on an ordinary or headed paper. In some committees, Notice of Meeting can be just word of mouth, a telephone call or a message on social media. Whatever means of Notice of Meeting, it should be official.

For written Notice of Meetings, the following are the qualities of Notice of Meeting:

1. It should have words: 'Notice of Meeting' on the top centre part of a paper
2. It should have salutation such as Dear members, or Deal colleagues,
3. It should be brief and to the point
4. It should show the date it was written
5. It should state day, date, time and venue of a meeting
6. It should have a signature, full names and title of author in that order
7. It should sound more inviting to members

Notice of Meeting is usually sent with proposed agenda of a meeting. This facilitates members of a committee to research adequately on motions for the meeting.

A Notice of Meeting is also sent together with minutes of previous meeting. This helps members to read minutes of a previous meeting; and where necessary, correct agree or disagree with some or all contents of minutes of a previous meeting. Such an approach to handling issues relating to forthcoming meetings reduces time wasting on activities which could have been done before members come for a meeting.

Depending on composition of members in relation to where they live and distances covered before reaching a venue of a meeting, Notice of Meeting can be sent 2-3 days, one or two weeks or a month or so before a meeting takes place.

Such a period of Notice of Meeting helps members to re-organise themselves in relation to their routine functions in their respective offices, departments or other organizations related to that committee.

EXAMPLE OF AGENDA

Pieces of agenda are written in different formats depending on in-house arrangements. However, the following format is common:

1. *National Anthem*
2. *Chairperson's opening remarks*
3. *Confirmation of minutes of previous meeting*
4. *Adoption of minutes of previous meeting*
5. *Matters arising from minutes of previous meeting*

6. *Transport*
7. *Housing*
8. *Loans*
9. *Financial Report*
10. *Closing remarks*

WRITING MINUTES OF MEETINGS

Writing minutes can be simple and traditional or professional. However, minute writing in organizations should be professional. Professional minute writing is one where minutes follow a specific format agreed in an organisation; but which is also related to international minute writing style. Minutes should be accurate, brief and clear. They should facilitate effective and timely decision-making processes.

When writing on Opening remarks, state specific time when meeting was called to order.

For minutes to be accurate and clear, a secretary should be attentive during deliberations of meetings. Effective note-taking skills are essential in a secretary for minutes to be accurate, brief and clear.

A secretary should not write word-by-word of deliberations of a meeting. Writing only main points and resolution of every item of an agenda is helpful. During writing of actual minutes, a secretary should:

- Write a sub-topic of item of agenda
- State a point or an issue on that sub-topic
- Write a resolution (s) on each decision made on a sub-topic
- Number every item deliberated on during a meeting.
- No names of speakers in minutes. Whatever was said and resolved was done by the whole meeting; and not specific individuals
- When minutes are adopted as a true reflection of deliberations of the previous meeting, only a member present during the deliberations of a previous meeting can propose adoption of such minutes.
- To propose adoption of minutes, one should say. For instance: 'I, Kayombo Bwalya, being present during the deliberations of the previous meeting, propose that the minutes be adopted as a true reflection of the deliberations of the previous meeting.'
- To second such a proposal, one should said, for example: 'I, Mabvuto Sitali, being present during the deliberations of the previous meeting second that the minutes be adopted as a true reflection of the deliberations of the previous meeting'.
- Upon the proposal being seconded, all copies of minutes of such a meeting should be signed by a chair and a secretary as a evidence that such a record is now a legally bidding on the committee and all its members. Minutes not signed cannot be submitted in courts of law as prove of any resolution.

An example of how to write a statement or an observation in minutes is:

5.0 TRANSPORT

It was observed that ABC Company Limited spends about K4, 500 per month on fuel and spare parts for transport.

It was Resolved:

That the Transport Officer should authorize every usage of each vehicle and ensure that mileage in log book is recorded before and after usage of each vehicle.

For every item of agenda deliberated on, there should be an accurate and clear resolution. Meeting resolution determines the way forward on that item.

When writing Closing Remarks, include specific time the meeting was closed. Before this, write proposed day, date, time and venue of next such a meeting.

GLOSSARY OR TERMINOLOGIES RELATING TO MEETING

Agenda: This is a list of items to be discussed in a meeting. Agenda is when proposed items to be discussed (motions) have been adopted as approved items to be discussed in a meeting.

Motion: This is a suggested item to be discussed at a meeting. It is a motion before a meeting approves it to be on agenda. Consider a 'motion' and a 'bill' in National Assembly or in Parliament. What are the similarities or differences?

Resolution: Is what a meeting has agreed as a final decision on an item on agenda. It serves as a way forward on that item or issue.

Point of order: This is a request from a member of a meeting to a chairperson to stop a member on the floor from continuing talking because the person on the floor is misleading a meeting with false information. Wrong policies, facts and figures, or mere lies can lead to point of order. A person raising a point of order should first raise his or her hand for a chairperson to give him or her chance to raise a point of order.

Quorum: This is a minimum number of members of a committee who should constitute a legal meeting. A quorum of most committees is two-thirds of the total number of members in a committee. Any meeting deliberations resolved before a quorum is formed is null and void. A quorum does not include ex-officios.

Adjourn: This is done before a meeting starts. It is a deferment of a meeting to another specific date before it starts.

Adjourn sine die: This is deferring a meeting which has not started yet to unknown date.

Minutes: In meetings, these are written records of deliberations and their resolutions. They are official; and therefore legal records of deliberations of every meeting.

Postpone: This is deferring a meeting to another date after it has already started.

Ex-officio: This is an expert or officials who co-opted in a committee by virtue of their respective knowledge, skills or positions relating to that committee's mandate. Ex-officios can be permanent or temporary depending on what is on agenda at a given meeting.

Standing committee: This is a legally constituted group of people for a specific purpose in an organisation. In local authorities, they might have 'Planning Committee', 'Staff and Recruitment', 'Works Committee', 'Housing Committee', etc.

Standing orders: These are policies, rules, regulations and procedures governing a specific committee or that determine how a member of a committee or a whole committee should conduct himself, herself or itself respectively for the smooth and effective operation of a given committee.

On the floor: When a member of a committee is given a chance to talk in a meeting, such a member is said to be on the floor. There is only one person allowed to talk at a time in a meeting.

Unless under point of order allowed by a chairperson, no one should talk unless he or she is on the floor in a meeting.

Call meeting to order: Give sign that meeting has started; and that every member should pay attention to deliberations of that meeting.

DEVELOPING REPORT WRITING SKILLS

It is said that reporting writing is a professional in its own right. This is because, like effective Business Communication Skills, no professional can claim to be one without effective report writing skills.

WHAT IS A REPORT

A report is an honest, objective, factual and fair presentation of facts and figures relating to a specific activities, event or functions at a specific time to facilitate accurate and timely decision making.

FUNCTIONS OF A REPORT

Functions of a report include:

- To inform a receiver
- To educate a receiver
- To persuade a receiver to agree with your point of view; and support you in your recommendations

QUALITIES OF A GOOD REPORT

The following are the qualities of a good report:

1. It has a cover page where it shows Title of a report, period under review and when it was written
2. Has Author on cover page
3. Has Receiver
4. Has a purpose
5. Specific format. This depends on in-house style
6. It has specific objectives
7. Is written in line with vision, mission, values and goal of an organisation
8. It follows a specific work plan; and what was done in that work plan, when, how, with what quantity and quality of resources and why.
9. It is written to show progress towards specific objectives which lead to a goal
10. In each thematic area, it shows successes and challenges in achieving specific objectives where they occurred
11. However, generally, ordinary or routine reports have an Introduction, Main thematic areas, Successes, Challenges, Conclusion and Recommendations.
12. Has date of writing
13. Has period or time under which activities were done
14. Is written using active voice sentences
15. Is honest
16. Is objective
17. Is accurate
18. Is factual
19. Is fair both to author and to receiver(organisation)
20. Is brief
21. Is clear
22. Is informative
23. Is educative
24. Is interesting
25. Is persuasive to solicit favourable feedback from receiver
26. Has relevant visual aids(tables, graphs, charts, illustrations, pictures, etc)
27. Has each main heading and sub-heading numbered accordingly
28. Has signature of author
29. Has full names of author

An example of an ordinary or routine report format is:

1.0 Introduction

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.....
.....

2.0 Nutrition and Health

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.....
.....

2.1 Nutrition

.....
.....
.....

2.2 Health

.....
.....
.....

2.2.1 Health Body weights

.....
.....
.....

2.2.2 Fitness and Physical Therapy

.....
.....
.....

3.0 Agriculture

.....
.....

4.0 Forestry

.....
.....
.....

5.0 Successes

The following are the successes during the period under review:

- 5.1.....
- 5.2.....
- 5.3.....

6.0 Challenges

The following are the challenges during the period under review:

- 6.1.....
- 6.2.....

7.0 Conclusion

.....
.....
.....

8.0 Recommendations

The following are the recommendations for the period under review:

- 8.1.....
8.2.....

Note that there is a differences in formats among simple, ordinary, complex(Annual or three year report) and academic research reports. Some start with Executive Summary; then Background followed by Introduction while an ordinary reports starts straight with Introduction.

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION LETTERS

In Business letter writing, students should note that every official letter has:

1. Two different addresses: These are for the sender(yourself) and for a receiver. For a sender is usually written in far right corner; and for a receiver is usually put in the far left corner of a page. Capitalising and or underlining towns is essential in both sender's and receiver's.
2. Use appropriate salutation: Dear Sir; Dear Madam, Dear Mr Mubiana, etc
3. Like in any other Business Communication letter, ensure enough margins all round a document
4. Use relevant leave-taking(Yours faithfully)
5. Know purpose of writing that letter
6. Be honest
7. Be objective
8. Be factual
9. Be fair
10. Be accurate
11. Brief
12. Be clear
13. Use correct spellings, punctuation marks and capitalization. Demonstrate good command of a language
14. Sign
15. State your full names
16. Show you job title below your names

SALES LETTERS

Sales letters are also known as 'Sales promotion letters. These are letters written to create awareness and educate potential customers of the need to buy a certain product or service. Remember that in marketing, the word 'product' includes 'services'. This is why nowadays, even commercial banks and insurance firms state that: 'We have the following products for offer...'

To effectively write sales letters:

1. Like in any other Business Communication letter, ensure enough margins all round a document
2. Know present main feature of a product in relation to what a customer needs
3. State product performance in relation to what a customer's needs are
4. Show how main feature lead to benefits to a customer
5. Promise that with your product, a customer will be satisfied
6. Use relevant leave-taking(Yours faithfully)
7. Sign
8. State your full names
9. Show you job title below your names

WRITING LETTER OF INQUIRY

A letter of Inquiry, as the name implies, is written to a suppliers to find out whether certain items or services are in stock or not.

It achieve this, a letter of inquiry carries the same Business Communication letters' format; and other qualities of a good business letter.

Additionally, a letter of inquiry states goods or services being ask for. In this purpose, a letter of inquiry states brands or models of goods and services with their respective specifications. Colours, sizes, capacities, shapes, etc are among specifications given in a letter of inquiry. Quantities required in such an inquiry is important to signal a supplier if all such quantities can be supplied at once or not.

State why you need such items or services and when. Politely, request a supplier when you need a feedback for such an inquiry. Stating when you want to use such items or services is beneficial.

WRITING A LETTER OF COMPLAINT

Some organizations write very interesting; but unprofessional letters of complaint. Such organizations feel that because it is said to be a letter of complaint, then one should sound really complaining against any negative eventuality. This should not be the case. A letters of complaint should as polite and objective as any other business letter. It should be accurate, factual and fair.

It should state quantities and unit cost of what was ordered in items where there is an error. This shows the amount of money paid for such quantities and specification of items. Then state what was supplied in terms of shortage, breakage or malfunctions. Show the quantity of items affected; and their total cost. For example, state the balance after deducting those which are working well.

Do so on every category of item affected. Then, state how much a supplier owes your organisation considering what is paid according to quantities and their respective specification; and what was delivered as expected.

Give supplier options of either refunding your organisation for goods received in bad condition or not delivered; or to supplier remaining items or replace damaged goods delivered.

Close a letter of complaint with a promise such as:

'We are looking forward to doing more business with your organisation.'

And then, Yours faithfully,

Sign
Full names
Job Title

TELEPHONE CONVERSATION SKILLS

Communicating through a telephone has become a common means of communication. Like any form of communication, while telephone communication is perceived to be easy and straightforward, it is another difficult means of communication.

Telephone conversation can be difficult and ineffective if one does not consider certain factors before, during and after telephone conversation.

A SENDER BEFORE TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

Generally, before using a telephone, one should consider:

- (a) Purpose of communicating with that receiver
- (b) Time of communicating with a specific receiver
- (c) Enough and relevant points in communicating with a receiver
- (d) Cost of using a telephone
- (e) Socio-cultural, economic and other factors of a receiver
- (f) Time availability of a receiver
- (g) Intelligence levels of a receiver
- (h) Writing skills of a receiver
- (i) Correct telephone number of a receiver
- (j) Where necessary, write down each point of a message

A SENDER DURING TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

During a telephone conversation, a sender should consider the following:

- (a) Ring correct telephone number
- (b) Find out if you are speaking to a right receiver of a message
- (c) If not, ask for the right receiver for a message
- (d) Find out if it is the correct time to speak to that receiver
- (e) Read through each point of a message
- (f) Ensure that a receiver is getting each point accurately and clearly
- (g) Ask a receiver for appropriate feedback on each point of a message
- (h) For official communication, request a receiver to write down each point of a message
- (i) Be accurate in telephone conversation
- (j) Be brief
- (k) Be loud and clear

A SENDER AFTER TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

Request a receiver to repeat each point of a message to ensure that the message was collected accurately. A sender of a telephone message should thank a receiver for taking that message.

See Stanton, Mastering Communication.

A RECEIVER BEFORE TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

Many people with telephone handsets receive telephone calls. Because of this, a potential receiver of a telephone call should:

- (a) Always be near to telephone
- (b) Have a pen and a paper/note book with which to write relevant telephone messages
- (c) Answer a telephone call before it rings more than three (3) times

A RECEIVER DURING TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

- (a) Should introduce him or herself accurately, adequately and clearly
- (b) Note down each point of a telephone message
- (c) Give feedback on whether a point is clear or not
- (d) Repeat all point of a telephone message to a sender of a telephone message

A RECEIVER AFTER TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

At the end of a telephone conversation, a receiver of a telephone call should thank a sender of a telephone message for the message received

GIVING INSTRUCTIONS

Giving instructions is similar to giving directions. Like in telephone conversation, giving instructions follows a specific procedure and pattern. For example, an instructor should:

1. Be conversant with stages and processes in doing what he or she wants a receiver of instructions to do
2. Should write down what to instruct a receiver
3. Know the mood of a receiver of instructions at a given time
4. Should be accurate in giving each point of instruction
5. Should be clear in each point of instruction
6. Should ask receiver of instruction to give relevant feedback on whether each part of instruction is clear or not
7. Should ask receiver of instructions to write down each point of instruction given
8. Ask a receiver of instructions to repeat each point of instruction to an instructor to check in instructions were received accurately and clearly.

See Nicky Stanton, Mastering Communication

RECEIVING INSTRUCTION

Receiving instructions is highly related to listening or comprehension skills. With poor listening or comprehension skills, one cannot be good at receiving instruction. Even academic assignment and examination instructions are too difficult to follow without effective listening or comprehension skills. Therefore, develop listening and comprehension skills for you to be effective in receiving instructions.

To receive instructions effectively,

- Avoid prejudice for or against a sender of instructions
- Have an open mind to accept instructions as they come
- Have a pen and a piece of paper with which to write instructions
- Pay particular attention to each point of instructions
- Note down each point of instructions accurately and clearly
- State to an instruction if a point is not clear to you
- Repeat each point of instruction to an instructor to ensure that you have noted down each point of instruction accurately and clearly

See Stanton, Mastering Communication.

GIVING DIRECTIONS

- Know the route as giver of directions.
- Know major signs or posts on the route to a particular place
- Use compass directions effectively
- Know when to turn right or left to reach a destination
- Be audible enough when giving directions
- Tell receiver to jot down directions given
- Ask receiver whether you are clear on each point or not
- Don't be too fast for a receiver to get directions clearly

RECEIVING DIRECTIONS

(As in Receiving Instructions or in Receiver in telephone conversation)

ISSUING AN INVITATION

Issuing an invitation can be easy or difficult. However, when issuing an invitation, state an event or function and its importance to a person being invited.

Inform an invited person day, date, time and venue of an event. State reason(s) for inviting that person for that function. An invitation should be as accurate, brief and as clear as possible.

ACCEPTING AND DECLINING AN INVITATION

Each of us has been invited to an event before; or will soon be asked to attend an event in any capacity. When this is the case, one can accept or reject such an invitation for whatever reasons. When accepting or rejecting an invitation, one should do it carefully.

ACCEPTING AN INVITATION

In accepting an invitation, show the pleasure that you have been invited to such an event. State that you are humble be the gesture you have been accorded to attend that function in that capacity. Then, state your willingness and presence at that function on the stated day, date, time and venue.

REFUSING OR REJECTING AN INVITATION

Like in accepting an invitation, when you are invited to attend any function in any capacity, show that you are excited that you have been asked to be present at that event. Show the importance of that function; and why your presence can add value to your career, personality or to your life. However, with due respect or high levels of politeness, show you inability to attend the stated function due to other commitments you have on that day, date and time. The trick is to be as polite as possible in rejecting the invitation regardless of reasons for doing so. Never show or state that you are too bitter for whatever reasons against someone or against that organisation that you cannot attend his, her or their function. Instead, show that you regret not attending such an important and interesting function or event.

See Prof. Roy The art of mastering Business Communication Skills

ACCEPTING AND REFUSING AN OFFER

Refer to accepting and refusing an invitation. The principles in approach in accepting and refusing an offer (job, gift, etc); and those of an invitation are almost the same.

Again, in refusing an offer, never state your negative feeling against a person or organisation offering you something. Just give some other reasons which do not show that you are not happy with that person or organisation due to some other reasons.

See The art of mastering communication

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