



East African Community
(EAC)



Federation of East African Freight
Forwarders Associations (FEAFFA)

THE EAST AFRICA CUSTOMS AND FREIGHT
FORWARDING PRACTICING CERTIFICATE

CUSTOMER CARE AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS

FEAFFA in collaboration with East Africa Revenue Authorities





East African Community (EAC)

The East African Community (EAC) is a regional intergovernmental organization of six (6) Partner States, comprising Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda, with its headquarters in Arusha, Tanzania.



Federation of East African Freight Forwarders Associations (FEAFFA)

The Federation of East African Freight Forwarders Associations (FEAFFA) is a regional private sector apex body of the Customs Clearing and Freight Forwarding (CFA) industry in East Africa. It aims at promoting a professional freight logistics industry for trade facilitation and regional economic growth. FEAFFA strives to address the challenges experienced by its members through training, provision of information, and other aspects of capacity building. It advocates for the full implementation of the East African Community (EAC) Customs Union. The East Africa Customs and Freight Forwarding Practicing Certificate (EACFFPC) is the Federation's and the industry's premier training program in East Africa since 2007.

Copyright © 2021 Federation of East African Freight Forwarders Associations (FEAFFA)

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior written permission of the copyright holder. Material published in this manual may not be used for any form of advertising, sales, or publicity without prior written permission.

Federation of East African Freight Forwarders Association's liability, trademark, and document use rules apply for the original and the translation.

Copies may be obtained through the following address:

C/O. Federation of East African Freight Forwarders Associations
P.O. Box 22694-00400, Tom Mboya, Nairobi.
Hillcrest Court, Waiyaki Way, Slip Road Westlands, Nairobi, Kenya

Tel: +254 202-684802 | Cell: +254 738 150 673
Email: info@feaffa.com | Website: www.feaffa.com



**East African Community
(EAC)**



**Federation of East African Freight
Forwarders Associations (FEAFFA)**

THE EAST AFRICA CUSTOMS AND FREIGHT
FORWARDING PRACTICING CERTIFICATE

CUSTOMER CARE AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS

FEAFFA in collaboration with East Africa Revenue Authorities



Table of contents

1.0	UNIT OVERVIEW	10
1.1	Unit Description	10
1.2	Unit Summary Learning Outcomes	10
2.0	CUSTOMER CARE OVERVIEW	10
2.1	Specific Learning Outcomes	10
2.2	Concept of Customer Care	10
2.3	Importance of Customer Service/Care	11
2.4	Nature of Customer Care	12
2.5	Types of customers in C&F industry	12
2.6	Principles of Customer Care	13
2.7	Learning Activities	13
2.8	Self-Assessment Questions and Activities	13
2.9	References	14
3.0	CUSTOMER HANDLING PROCESS	15
3.1	Specific Learning Outcomes	15
3.2	Steps of Handling Customers	15
3.3	Customer's Expectations	15
3.4	Customer Engagement	16
3.5	Learning Activities	18
3.6	Self-Assessment Questions and Activities	18
3.7	References	19
4.0	DEALING WITH CHALLENGING CUSTOMERS	20
4.1	Specific Learning Outcomes	20
4.2	Challenging Customers	20
4.3	Causes of Customers Challenging	20
4.4	Types of Customers Behaviors	20
4.5	Types of Challenging Customers	20
4.6	Strategies to Manage Challenging Customers	21
4.7	Handling Difficult Customers and Situations	23
4.8	Development of Strategies for Retaining Challenging Customers	23
4.9	Learning Activities	25
4.10	Self-Assessment Questions and Activities	25
4.11	References	26
5.0	DEALING WITH CUSTOMERS COMPLAINTS	27
5.1	Specific Learning Outcomes	27
5.2	Types of Customer Complaints	27
5.3	Sources of Customers Complaints	27
5.4	Causes of Customer Complaints	27
5.5	Preventing Customer Complaints	27
5.6	Handling Customer Complaints	28
5.7	Challenges of Handling Customer's Complaints	28
5.8	Learning Activities	29
5.9	Self-Assessment Questions and Activities	29
5.10	References	30
6.0	CUSTOMERS SATISFACTION	31
6.1	Specific Learning Outcomes	31
6.2	Scope of Customer Satisfaction	31
6.3	General Characteristics of Customer Satisfaction	31
6.4	Components of Customer Satisfaction	31
6.5	Customer Satisfaction Process	32
6.6	Drivers of Customer Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction	33
6.7	Creating Customer Loyalty	34
6.8	Customer Satisfaction Measurement	35
6.9	Learning Activities	36
6.10	Self-Assessment Questions and Activities	36
6.11	References	37

7.0	EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION	38
7.1	Specific Learning Outcomes	38
7.2	Overview of Communication	38
7.3	The Communication Process	38
7.4	Objectives of Communication	40
7.5	Principles of Effective Communication	41
7.6	Types of Audiences, Needs and Characteristics	42
7.7	Different Types of Communication	42
7.8	Forms of written communication	44
7.9	Channels of Communication	45
7.10	Selecting Channels of Communication	46
7.11	Handling Telephone Communication	47
7.12	Learning Activities	48
7.13	Self-Assessment Questions and Activities	48
7.14	References	49
8.0	BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION CHANNELS	50
8.1	Specific Learning Outcomes	50
8.2	Barriers to Communication	50
8.3	Effect of Barriers to Communication	50
8.4	Sources of Communication Barriers	51
8.5	Mitigating Communication Barriers	51
8.6	Overcoming Barriers of Communication	52
8.7	Learning Activities	53
8.8	Self-Assessment Questions and Activities	54
8.9	References	55
9.0	EFFECTIVE LISTENING SKILLS	56
9.1	Specific Learning Outcomes	56
9.2	Overview of Effective Listening	56
9.3	Types/Forms of Listening	57
9.4	Barriers to Effective Listening	58
9.5	Effective Listening Techniques	58
9.6	Questioning Techniques	60
9.7	Learning Activities	61
9.8	Self-Assessment Questions and Activities	61
9.9	References	62
10.0	INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION	63
10.1	Specific Learning Outcomes	63
10.2	Meaning of Interpersonal Communication	63
10.3	Importance of Interpersonal Communication	63
10.4	Principles of Interpersonal Communication	64
10.5	Types of Interpersonal Communication Skills	65
10.6	Learning Activities	67
10.7	Self-Assessment Questions and Activities	67
10.8	References	68
11.0	REPORT WRITING	69
11.1	Specific Learning Outcomes	69
11.2	Purpose and Scope of Reports	69
11.3	Types of Reports	69
11.4	Forms of Reports	69
11.5	Business Reports	70
11.6	Components of the Reports	70
11.7	Preparation of the Business Reports	70
11.8	Basic Principles in Preparing a Report	72
11.9	Structure and Contents of Business Reports	73
11.10	Field Report	73
11.11	Learning Activities	75
11.12	Self-Assessment Questions and Activities	75
11.13	References	76

FOREWORD

Customs Clearing Agents, Freight forwarders, and Warehouse Operators in the East African Community (EAC) region continue to play a vital role in the facilitation of trade particularly with regards to the assessment tax, storage of goods, transportation, and last-mile delivery to clients. This, in turn, facilitates cargo movement and clearance from all ports.

The agents handle goods worth millions of dollars on behalf of the shippers. Besides, they originate documents that facilitate movement and clearance of cargo culminating in errors that slow down the flow of business. The movement of cargo depends on how fast and correctly documentation is done for verification by the respective Customs Authorities. A delay in customs clearance increases the cost of doing business.

This pointed to the need for these agents to be equipped with the requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes to carry out their work efficiently, just as their counterparts from customs.

The EAC region, with support from TradeMark East Africa (TMEA), has made significant steps towards bridging the knowledge and skills gap in the customs clearing and freight forwarding industry. The introduction of the East Africa Customs and Freight Forwarding Practicing Certificate (EACFFPC) in 2006, a regional training programme jointly implemented by the EAC directorate of customs, the East African Revenue Authorities (EARAs), the National Association of the Freight Forwarding Industry, and FEAFFA was a big step. Since its inception, over 7000 agents have graduated from this training.

A review of the programme in 2015 and a market survey conducted in 2020 supported by TradeMark East Africa (TMEA) highlighted key areas of improvement for the EACFFPC programme to achieve the aim of producing competent customs agents, freight forwarders, and warehouse keepers. The revised curriculum has therefore been designed to address these challenges and shortcomings. The revamped EACPPFC programme is designed to enhance the ability of freight forwarders to provide competitive and high-quality end-to-end services thereby reducing inventory costs and increasing safety levels in warehousing operations in the East African region.

With the revised EACFFPC curriculum, the dream of attaining a professional and compliant freight logistics industry in the East African region has been strongly boasted.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The Curriculum Implementation Committee (CIC) is grateful to the EAC sectoral council on Trade Industry Finance and Investment for adopting the EACFFPC as an EAC training programme for clearing and forwarding agents in the region. This is a testimony to the effect the programme has had on the clearing and forwarding industry in the EAC region.

The CIC is also grateful to the EAC Directorate of Customs, the Commissioners of Customs of the East Africa Revenue Authorities, the Chairpersons of National Associations of clearing and forwarding agents, and the President of FEAFFA for their dedication and support to the EACFFPC programme.

Special appreciation for the National Curriculum Implementation Committees for providing their trainers to participate in the development and validation of the curriculum and training materials. CIC also acknowledges the FEAFFA secretariat for excellently coordinating the curriculum and training materials development and validation process.

The CIC in a very special way recognizes TradeMark East Africa (TMEA) who provided the financial support to update the curriculum, develop and publish the 2021 edition of the EACFFPC training materials. We remain indebted to you forever.

We also appreciate all EACFFPC trainers, students, and stakeholders for the constant feedback that has been incorporated in this edition of the training materials.



CUSTOMER CARE AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS

1.0 UNIT OVERVIEW

1.1 Unit Description

This unit analyses the competencies required to develop and manage loyal customers through effective customer care and communication. The unit addresses various principles, strategies and techniques to create customer relationships including effectively managing different types of customers, attracting, retaining and growing satisfied customers, effective communication skills, managing barriers to communication, developing effective listening skills and interpersonal communication skills.

1.2 Unit Summary Learning Outcomes

At the end of the unit, the trainee should be able to:

1. Carry out effective customer care
2. Handle customers within the Clearing and forwarding sector
3. Manage challenging customers
4. Manage customer's complaints
5. Attract, retain and grow satisfied customers
6. Effectively communicate with clients
7. Use appropriate communication channels
8. Reduce barriers to effective communication
9. Develop effective listening skills
10. Develop effective reports
11. Carry out interpersonal communication

2.0 CUSTOMER CARE OVERVIEW

2.1 Specific Learning Outcomes

At the end of this topic the trainee should be able:

- i. Describe the concept of Customer care
- ii. Explain the importance of Customer care
- iii. Describe the nature of customer care
- iv. Identify types of customers in C&F industry
- v. Describe the principles of Customer care

2.2 Concept of Customer Care

2.2.1 Meaning of a Customer

Customers can be described as people who buy / use a firm's product(s) or services. Customers are the lifeblood of an organization. Their satisfaction is closely linked to retention and its less attractive sibling, churn, repeat business, and the positive word of mouth that attracts new customers. There is only one boss: the customer. And he/she can fire everyone in the company from the chairman on down; simply by spending his money somewhere else. Customer is equal to revenue which is equal to jobs. This means treating every customer as if they sign ones pay check because they do. Customers, buyers and clients want to pay a fair price for quality service or products, and feel satisfied they have paid for a service/product and received what they have paid for in return. They also want someone to take care of them. They need someone to understand their needs and help answer them. They need someone to hold their hands and walk them through a process.

Customer service starts with the ability to listen to the customer and find out through polite questioning what he/she needs or wants. The satisfaction of customers requires one to resolve their issues and do it quickly. At minimum, customers expect to be listened to and understood, taken seriously, treated with respect, and to receive timely action.

2.2.2 Customer Care

Customer care and customer service is all about thinking of the welfare of the customers. These two are always present no matter how large or small a company is. Companies are always striving in providing good care and service to their clients. Customer care means how well customers are taken care of while they interact with the brand. Customer care is actually caring for customers, listening to their needs, and finding the right solution. In many instances, customer care moves one step beyond basic customer service by building an emotional connection.

Customer care moves one step beyond basic customer service by building an emotional connection. It doesn't include the entire customer lifecycle, but it consists of a string of interactions. Hence

customer care is the act of providing and delivering professional, helpful, high-quality assistance before, during, and after the customer's requirements are met.

Customer care is focusing on customers in making them satisfied and knowing their interests while customer service focuses on the jobs involved when servicing customers rather than their needs. Customer care is more of a supportive management, where procedures are pretty essential in encouraging responsiveness to client's needs and find methods where management can support in achieving commercial goals. Customer service is a hierarchical management that follows procedures and strives to meet administrative and technical requirement.

2.2.3 Customer Service

Customer service is the act of taking care of the customer's needs by providing and delivering professional, helpful, high-quality service and assistance before, during, and after the customer's requirements are met. Customer service is a method when the company deals with its clients. This is most apparent in sales and post-sales service. These are designed to improve the stage of customer satisfaction, the feeling that the service or item has reached customer expectation. This method has the commitment of giving significant services to internal and external customers. This includes attitude, knowledge, quality of service and technical support.

Customer service is forming a relationship with customers. This is a relationship where individual customer feels that he/she would like to pursue. This is the kind of service that makes customer feel special, service that makes him/her want to come back and do more business with the company and recommending the company to other people. Customer Service is the lifeblood of an organization. Exceptional customer service will make customers often pay more, drive farther, and inconvenience themselves to do business with a company that appreciates them, thus building the bond that keeps customers coming back time and time again. Exceptional customer service increases productivity, efficiency and effectiveness. Satisfying an unhappy customer cost, a lot more, both in pesos and sense, than satisfying a customer on the first try. Customers when satisfied with the service given to them, is a large factor for customer retention. This fulfils

personal and organizational needs since customers buy experiences, and have repeat businesses.

Therefore, good customer service means:

- Providing quality product or service
- Satisfying the needs / wants of the customer
- Resulting in a repeat customer

Good customer service results in:

- Continued success
- Increased profits.
- Higher job satisfaction.
- Improved company or the Organization morale.
- Better teamwork.
- Market expansion of services / products.

2.3 Importance of Customer Service/Care

The benefits of customer care depend on quality service. This leads to loyalty, increment of business, attraction of new customers, savings in advertising and promotion budgets, reducing complaints, expending positive reputation, creating differentiation, improving the morale of the employee and hence their productivity. Beyond the routine handling of transactions, customers want also human satisfaction. They want to perceive empathy and supportiveness for their goals. They want to be listened and be given a feed-back to their requests. They want to be given politeness, knowledge and help.

A customer is:

- The most important person in any business;
- Not dependent and the organisation is dependent upon him/her;
- Not an interruption of work but is the sole purpose of it;
- Does the organisation a favour when he/she comes in
- An essential part of the business but not an outsider;
- Not just money in the cash register but is a human being with feelings and deserves to be treated with respect;
- A person who comes to the business with needs and wants which are met by the business
- Deserving the most courteous attention.

Today's customers are becoming:

- More sophisticated
- Highly knowledgeable and exposed
- More informed
- More skilled
- Aware of their rights and options in the market place and
- Have higher expectations.

The business world is getting increasingly competitive and the only differentiating factor is in the level of service given to customers. Therefore, a business must:

- Do ordinary things extraordinary well
- Go beyond what is expected
- Add value to every interaction
- Be at best with every customer
- Discover new ways to delight
- Taking care of customers like family members.

2.4 Nature of Customer Care

The customer is a person who seeks a service to satisfy a need. The business has to understand the customer's needs, wishes and expectations. Customer service is the act of taking care of the customer's needs by providing and delivering professional, helpful, high-quality service and assistance before, during, and after the customer's requirements are met. Some characteristics of good customer service include:

- **Promptness:** Promises for delivery of products must be on time. Delays and cancellations of products should be avoided.
- **Politeness:** Politeness is almost a lost art. Saying 'hello,' 'good afternoon,' 'sir,' and 'thank you very much' are a part of good customer service. For any business, using good manners is appropriate whether the customer makes a purchase or not.
- **Professionalism:** All customers should be treated professionally, which means the use of competence or skill expected of the professional. Professionalism shows the customer they are cared for.
- **Personalization:** Using the customer's name is very effective in producing loyalty. Customers like the idea that whom they do business with knows them on a personal level.

When the customers are satisfied and happy, profits and sales increases. The customer is always a priority; customers are like blood to the life of clearing and forwarding industry therefore freight forwarding agents are obliged to show respect, remain one step ahead of the customer, keep all promise, deliver the service on time or ahead of time this awards good customer relationship.

2.5 Types of customers in C&F industry

Every business has customers who must be taken care of. These customers include both internal and external. The relationship which exists between internal and external customers is the key factor to identify the type of customer. Every employee plays an important role towards fulfilling customers' needs. There are two categories of customers:

- a) **An internal customer** is a client or a purchaser, who uses goods or services directly from an organisation they are affiliated with. Internal customers are in most cases employees or shareholders. All staff (permanent or short-term employees) of the Clearing and Forwarding Industry who depend on each other to get their job done these includes:
- Managing Director
 - Management
 - Supervisors
 - Subordinates
 - Board of Directors

The employees of an organization are a key factor in facilitating its success and should be treated with respect. Internal customer care enables people to work as a team.

- b) **An external customer** is someone who uses a firm's products or services but is not part of the organization. Among the external customers there are three types.
- **Indecisive Customer:** This type of customer can't seem to make a decision no matter how many questions they ask. The thing to do here is acknowledge the indecision. Avoid being pushy. Instead, help the customer make a decision by offering facts and possible best solutions for their needs.
 - **Highly Critical Customer:** Critical customers can be a huge

challenge. They seem to know it all and are very critical of any suggestions. One needs to be patient and attentive. Don't take anything personally. Use clarifying statements, weaving in new information and ideas about the product of which they are being critical.

- **Aggressive Customer:** This type of customer is angry and feels their needs should be prioritized above all others. Stay calm and don't argue with them. Avoid responding to their outbursts or arguments in an agitated or emotional manner. Instead, one show to understand their feelings. Then one has to look for alternatives and offer other solutions.

External customers for C&F are:

- Importers
- Exporters
- Shippers and shipping lines
- Warehouse owners
- Banks
- Insurance companies
- Transporters
- Taxpayers,
- Service provider
- Suppliers,
- Community,
- Students or researchers and
- Government.

2.6 Principles of Customer Care

The purpose of these principles is to retain customers and keep them transacting with business. The principles build and maintain a strong customer care culture in the organization. They include:

- Listening carefully
- Remaining solution focused
- Not being defensive/ dismissive
- Using rules and policies
- Describing well the services to deliver
- Being spontaneous to serve
- Showing the customer that that they are understood well
- Treating all customers equally
- Being flexible when necessary.

2.7 Learning Activities

Identify a firm in the freight logistics industry that you may be familiar with.

Required:

1. Describe the two types of customers for that organization
2. Describe the characteristics of the firm's customers
3. What are the customers' expectations from the firm?
4. What should the organization do to ensure its customers are happy?

2.8 Self-Assessment Questions and Activities

1. Describe what you understand by the terms:
 - a. Customer
 - b. Customer care
 - c. Customer service
 - d. Internal customer
 - e. External customer
2. What are the benefits of good customer care in the C&F industry?
3. Explain the principles of customer care. How do these principles align with the customers in the C&F sector?

2.9 References

- a) Wellington, P. (2010). Effective Customer Care: Understand Needs, Improve Service, Build Relationships. Kogan Page. United Kingdom
- b) Shep Hyken (2020). The cult of the customer. Amazon book Clubs
- c) Harris, K. E. (2013). Customer Service: A Practical Approach, 6th Edition. Pearson Higher Education

3.0 CUSTOMER HANDLING PROCESS

3.1 Specific Learning Outcomes

At the end of this topic the trainee should be able:

- i. Describe steps in handling customers
- ii. Identify customer expectation
- iii. Describe customer engagement methods

3.2 Steps of Handling Customers

The process of handling customers consists of how to deal with a customer from the time the customer gets in touch with the organization until the service is consumed - from the entry point to the after-delivery phase.

1. Point of entry:

At this step, it is important to create a lasting impression. Let the customers know that they are valued and set a positive mood.

- Look at them in the eye
- Smile/Be jolly
- Welcome them
- Ask them how they feel.

2. Point of contact:

a) Response Time

- Customers are sensitive about time; they want to be helped quickly yet correctly,
- Avoid delays
- Listen to clients
- Offer more than just a product or service
- Exceed client's expectations
- Find out what their needs are. One should not assume to know what the problem is but encourage the customer to explain the situation.
- Individuals are different. Listen attentively and actively to see these differences.
- Ask questions to identify their needs.
- Look for opportunities to do something extra.

b) Delivery of service

- Only start to respond to customers after one has clarified customer's needs.
- Act promptly
- Agree on course of action
- Find opportunity to exceed expectations

3. Point of exit:

- Make it a lasting impression
- Check for feedback on customer's level of satisfaction. If no, find out why.
- Commit to follow up if necessary
- Thank the customer
- Say goodbye appropriately
- Keep in touch
- Follow up
- Communicate regularly.

3.3 Customer's Expectations

This is what a potential buyer thinks or feels about product or service he/she needs. There are preconceived ideas of a customer about a product or service. Customer expectation will be influenced by his/ her perception of the product or service. This can be created by previous experience, advertising, hearsay, awareness of competitors, and image perceived. A customer might expect to encounter efficiency, helpfulness, reliability, confidence in the staff and a personal interest in his or her investment.

Customers always expect a TREAT.

- **T**rust (ability to provide what was promised, dependably and accurately)
- **R**esponsiveness (willingness to help customers promptly)
- **E**mpathy (degree of caring and individual attention to be shown to customers)
- **A**ssurance (knowledge and courtesy shown to customers, and ability to convey trust)
- **T**angibles (physical facilities and equipment, and own (and others') appearance)

Ethics in Customer Service

Customers also expect to deal with an employee who is ethical. Ethics is a set of principles that govern the conduct of an individual or a group. In an ethically challenging situation, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Is it legal?
2. Is it fair?
3. How do you feel about it?
4. Would the court of public opinion find in my behaviour incorrect?
5. Am I fearful of what those I trust would say about my actions?

3.4 Customer Engagement

3.4.1 Meaning of Customer Engagement

Customer Engagement is the process of fostering and optimizing the relationship between consumer needs and a company or group's objectives to produce the most viable deliverable. The concept of customer engagement aggregates the multiple ways customer behaviours beyond transactions may influence the business.

Customer Engagement is also the emotional connection between a customer and a brand. Highly engaged customers buy more, promote more, and demonstrate more loyalty. Providing a high-quality customer experience is an important component in your customer engagement strategy. Customer engagement is more focused on value creation rather than revenue generation.

Digital customer engagement is the process of engaging customers interactively and deeply on digital channels like social media, email, website among others. Meaningful engagement on social media comes from more than just posting content. Digital customer engagement focuses more on customer experience and engagement and not on interruption. The entire process is about how to artfully use all the digital platforms to start a conversation and build a customer-brand relationship.

3.4.2 Importance of Customer Engagement

Customer engagement drives the success, product development and overall growth of a business. When clients are highly engaged, businesses will see an increase in sales, active participation in product launches and, ultimately, a strong loyalty to a brand. This means that engagement is an excellent indicator for how well a business is reaching its audience and addressing their needs or wants.

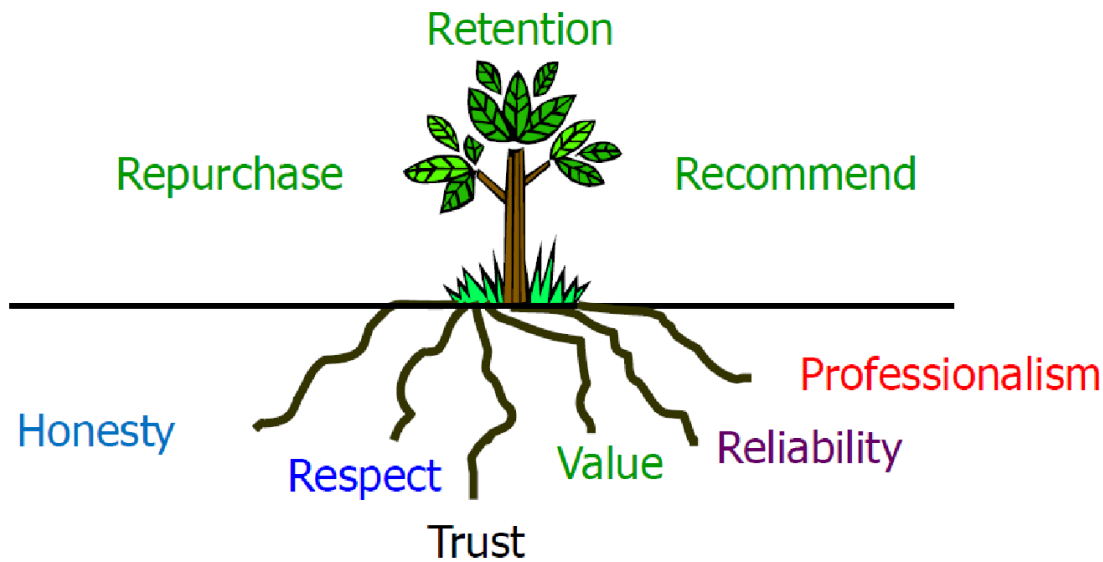
Customer engagement is important as it allows the team to ensure that they are providing the best possible overall solution most suited to the customer's expectations. It increases satisfaction scores and gives the customer the impression of a more professional and user-centric mind-set. It ensures a much higher likelihood of brand loyalty and advocacy.

Effective customer engagement aims to build mutual trust. The purpose of effective engagement is to develop a mutually beneficial working relationship between a business and its customers. It is not only about developing satisfied customers, but also about fostering customers trust in the decisions of the business and sense of legitimacy in the business more broadly. To be effective, customer engagement must be treated as vital to the broader strategy and ongoing operations of a business. At times it may be conducted outside the plan due to certain circumstances but it is not primarily conducted in an ad hoc or reactive manner.

Research has found that engaged customers display some of the behaviours (Three Rs) below:

1. Repurchase
 - More repeat business
 - Greater volume of purchases of goods and services
 - Increased frequency of service acquisition
 - Very high likelihood to repurchase when compared to those not engaged.
2. Retention
 - Increased customer life span
 - Lower customer attrition rates
 - Longer period of time as an active customer
 - More likely to be a customer even after a long time without a need for the service or product.
3. Recommend
 - One customer can motivate others to buy
 - Word of mouth "viral" endorsement marketing
 - Provide positive testimonies and referrals
 - Customers act as ambassadors and even assist other customers in the buying process

The Roots and Fruits of Customer Engagement



3.4.3 Customer Engagement Strategies

There is no single best way to undertake customer engagement, and effective engagement must be tailored to the specific needs and characteristics of the business, their customer base (which is often comprised of different customer segments) and the local, environmental, and regional issues facing them. Businesses need to develop their own customer engagement strategy that sets clear goals for the overall engagement process; identifies specific, preferred engagement methods and techniques for achieving these goals and defines ways of evaluating the success of achieving these goals and identifying potential opportunities for improving engagement strategies.

Effective engagement also:

- Values and incorporates customer feedback.
- Uses suitable avenues to report back to the community about engagement processes and outcomes.
- Adheres to ethical principles of privacy, confidentiality, respect for persons, and diligence

Customer engagement is a complex process and can be represented by a range of activities and experiences. Business customer engagement methods are as varied depending on the customers that business is trying to reach. Customer-engagement approaches are the most effective for establishing lasting bonds.

One should have a pulse on customer needs. To do this one listens to customers by regularly surveying and providing support, as well as making sure customers' needs are met. Listening to and understanding customer ultimately helps in fulfilling organisation goal of levelling the playing field for businesses, in order to grow and compete.

In summary, key customer engagement strategies include:

- Create positive customer experiences whenever you interact with them whether physical or online
- Always follow up with customers, even if only to find out how they are doing since the last engagement
- Personalize your communications as this makes the customer feel valued
- Seek customer feedback, comments, suggestions on ways to improve the service experience
- Use social media wisely with customers. Know the preference and perception of your customers with different social media platforms before engaging

3.5 Learning Activities

Read the statements below and indicate whether TRUE or FALSE

Statement	True	False
Laziness, poor communication skills, moodiness, inability to handle stress, and inadequate staff are all enhancements to customer service		
The way we see something based on our experience is our perception		
Expectations are always negative		
Expectations are always based on our perceptions		
The reputation of a company really is not important to perspective customers		
Our personal credibility can be the one characteristic that determines our success as people and as customer service providers		
Once credibility is lost, it is easy to regain		
Ethics are a set of principles that govern the conduct of an individual or group		
It is always popular to do the right thing and to have high ethical standards.		

3.6 Self-Assessment Questions and Activities

1. What do you understand by customer expectations? What are the different sources of customer expectations?
2. Why is it important to understand customer expectations in the C&F Sector?
3. What steps would you go through in handling a new customer in your organization?
4. Discuss the importance of customer engagement in the C&F Sector.

3.7 References

- a) Wellington, P. (2010). Effective Customer Care: Understand Needs, Improve Service, Build Relationships. Kogan Page. United Kingdom
- b) Shep Hyken (2020). The cult of the customer. Amazon book Clubs
- c) Harris, K. E. (2013). Customer Service: A Practical Approach, 6th Edition. Pearson Higher Education

4.0 DEALING WITH CHALLENGING CUSTOMERS

4.1 Specific Learning Outcomes

At the end of this topic the trainee should be able:

- i. Identify challenging customers
- ii. Discuss the causes of challenging customers
- iii. Identify strategies to manage challenging customers
- iv. Develop strategies for retaining challenging customers

4.2 Challenging Customers

A reality of life is that some people are easier and more enjoyable to be around than others. Challenging customers are those customers with problems, questions, fears, and personalities that require us to work to achieve true communication. Individuals are unique and, therefore, may not all be seen as challenging customers. Regardless of how difficult we find our customers to be, it is still our responsibility to serve them.

4.3 Causes of Customers Challenging

Customers may have personalities or communication styles with which we find difficulty in interacting. Customers may be perceived as challenging because of the following reasons:

- They do not speak your language.
- They do not have expertise or an understanding of the specific product or situation.
- They may be openly hostile.
- They are visibly upset about something (and it may not have anything to do with you or your company).
- They show an attitude of superiority.
- They are impatient.
- They imply that they are doing you and your company a big favor by doing business with you.
- They are extremely angry.
- They have difficulty in making decisions.

Regardless, any customer with whom we interact deserves to be treated extremely well and appropriately based on the circumstances.

4.4 Types of Customers Behaviors

There are many types of customers' behavior. The most frequent are:

a) The happy chatty customer:

Customers of this nature take much time such that others may be waiting. They should be serviced immediately and shaped to the official duties only. Use diplomacy to show them that time is being wasted. You may wish to stand while she/he is still sitting and automatically she/he will stand and walk them out. However, that should be done tactically.

b) Pompous customers:

This represents customers who pretend or have a lot of money, assets and has been abroad for a long period of time. They want to be praised by their achievement. Listen to them, praise them, and ask about things abroad. One should pretend not to have been in foreign countries. Take care of them. Make him feel at home then control time.

c) The fussy customers:

These are selective and those that takes long to decide. Be a patient listener; do not lose temper, read their highest expected standard. They may complain even for small mistake. They can magnify the mistakes unnecessarily

d) Rude customers:

Do not fight back. Keep on saying sorry and keep silent. If one reacts they can even report the matter differently to management. The situation is difficult if the customer is high placed person in the society.

e) Illiterate customers:

Illiteracy is not a barrier of giving customers services. Interview them and write what they have said. Read in turn what has been written. Advise them to come with a person who can focus on extreme cases. Use mother tongue if possible. Have a helping desk or a person who can help? Patience is necessary to educate them.

4.5 Types of Challenging Customers

a) Argumentative Customers: These are customers who questions, disagrees, take issues which an employee makes, always looking for errors or mistakes, quick tempered and sometimes typically slow in making decisions

Handling argumentative customers:

- Practice self-control
- Use merchandise knowledge
- Sell benefits, features
- Do not push a decision
- Give logical explanations
- Customer needs more information

b) Complaining/hard to please

This is a customer who thinks everything is wrong, no matter what the employee does it is wrong, tries to get employee to take side against the company and passes judgment on everything

How to please hard to please customer

- Listen to him/her
- Stress on product/service knowledge
- Let them feel they have made the decision
- Don't push the sale of the product or service

c) Irritable/moody customers

This is a customer who is irritable, moody, unpredictable, smiling and happy one day but hardly speaking the next.

Tips to handle the irritable

- Offer a place to rest if possible
- Lower voice
- Slow one's physical action
- Do not argue
- Practice empathy, consideration
- Listen

d) Insulting/snobbish: These customers are typically rude, loud, rough, may bluff and swear and are always ready to take advantage of a situation.

How to sell snobbish

- Do not be offended by this customer
- Quiet dignity is needed by an employee
- Be very pleasant
- Appeal to exclusiveness
- Make them feel special

e) Impatient: These customers expect immediate service without regard, indicate through actions, body language, and facial expressions that they cannot wait. These customers expect immediate service without

regard. They indicate through actions, body language, and facial expressions that they cannot wait.

How to deal with impatient

- Acknowledge that they need help
- Calm them down
- Get another employee to help them
- Suggest an alternative option
- Bottom line is get them in and out quickly

f) Leave me alone/just looking

These customers usually let people know right away they don't need help, prefer making their own decisions, may lack information which is needed to make buying decisions.

How to deal with just looking

- Do not pressure or ride this customer
- Stand at a distance
- Watch for shoplifting
- Inform customer the availability of help in case needed

g) Domineering/superior know it all customers: These difficult customers can be overbearing, have all the answers and opinion on the subject, overly self-confident, very talkative, pushy, think that they are always right

Know-it-all customers

- Let customer do the talking
- Will sell himself/herself if handled properly
- Let customer's opinion stand, if acceptable
- Don't argue with customer

4.6 Strategies to Manage Challenging Customers

Upset customer can be managed. The following strategies can be used in dealing with upset customers:

- Don't argue
- Avoid being the expert
- Avoid creating more anger
- Watch your words red flag words
- Avoid personal feelings

Steps of dealing with upset customers

1. Step One: Begin with a positive attitude

People are not born with an attitude. Begin with a positive attitude.

Keeping a positive attitude

- Start each day fresh
- Enjoy the moment
- Surround with Positives

Causes of poor customer attitude

- Low self-esteem
- Fear
- Boredom
- Resentment
- Unresolved conflict

In positive attitudes there are two types of people in life that is fountains and drains. The fountains are filled with positivity, hope and purpose that inspires others while the drains deplete others' resources by focusing on negative thoughts and emotions. In relationships with customers, most people are usually a fountain or a drain. They either flow and overflow onto others, or they just drain people of their energy. They either refresh the life in others or they dry it up. Driven by a positive attitude, great leaders focus on empowering people rather than exploiting them. This can be used in dealing with difficult customers.

2. Step Two: Let customer vent

Nothing can be solved while customer is angry. Venting allows anger to subside. In this step:

- Accept anger.
- Don't take it personally.
- Listen carefully and attentively to the customer.
- Do not interrupt the customer when venting off
- Never ask the customer to calm down
- Let the customer vent off before responding.

3. Step Three: Be empathetic to the customer

Customer empathy is understanding the underlying needs and feelings of customers. It goes beyond recognizing and addressing their tactical requirements and puts things into further context by viewing things from their perspective. Empathy is an important and necessary component to customer

service that allows you to connect with customers, which means that they feel you understand where they are coming from. In turn, this helps to increase customer satisfaction and build loyalty. Expressing genuine empathy may include:

a) Listening carefully

Be a good a listener and try to repeat what the customer says to assure them that you are listening and that you understand their concerns.

b) Smile

It may sound cheesy, but smiling when talking to customers can make a huge difference. It comes across over the phone and they will feel it in your voice.

c) Make it your problem

Take ownership of the customer's questions, especially if it is a complaint. Have a one-to-one relationship with your customer so that they have a point of contact that they can come back to.

d) Allow them to 'get it all out'

When the customer is angry, allow them to vent without interruption. Listen to the person carefully while using the time to figure out what you can do to fix their issue.

e) Be respectful

Make sure you talk to the customer with respect. Never talk down to the customer or talk over them. Approach it like a regular, professional conversation and they will appreciate you for it.

f) See it through their eyes

Share your customer's perspectives and try to see what their struggling with and why. What is their end goal, and what can you do to help them achieve it?

g) Understand their priorities

Every customer, particularly in an emergency situation, will have a list of priorities. Make them your priorities too and address them in the right order (mirroring them). This will reassure the customer that you know what they want and are taking care of them.

h) Show that you care

You can build rapport by showing a personal interest in the customer. For example, if a

customer says they have been sick, show that you care by asking them about their recovery.

i) **Begin with a positive statement**

If the customer has spent some time explaining a frustrating problem, then beginning your response with a short, direct statement of intent can gain their confidence. Something like “Okay, we can fix this...” or “Right, let’s get this problem sorted for you...” will reassure the customer that you are taking ownership of the problem.

j) **Avoid assumptions**

Don’t make assumptions about what the customer is telling you – actively listen!

4. Step Four: Demonstrate you understand

Paraphrase to the customer to show understanding. Refine vague objections to something specific, something which can be handled. Press for specifics to clarify the concern and respond with appropriate facts and/or benefits.

5. Step Five: Mutually agree on the solution

- Remember and make customer part of solution. Ask informative questions and don’t display power. Look for underlying reasons and be professional. Acknowledge that the customer’s concerns are valid. Ensure there is aligning with the customer, agreeing that one would feel the same in their shoes. Assure the customer that there will be a solution to their problem to their satisfaction.
- Dealing with emotional customers. Look for an emergency solution. Look for underlying cause of reaction if its frustration, fear or confusion. Reassure the customer that the organisation is there to help. Listen and limit responses. Acknowledge the customer’s underlying reactions. Take notes even when customer venting, save time later and help listening without interrupting.

4.7 **Handling Difficult Customers and Situations**

When dealing with difficult situations treat them confidently and effectively, establish the needs of the

customers quickly and overcome objections. At all times one must be polite, treat the customer with tact and in the same manner as they would wish to be treated. In general:

- Do not take complaints personally;
- Do not argue with the customer, remain calm;
- Do not interrupt customer, but find a suitable pause to respond;
- Find out the facts, apologize for a specific fault and ensure the complaint is dealt with quickly and efficiently;
- Never show annoyance or boredom;
- Give the customer full attention and interest at all times;
- One ensures to have an extensive knowledge of procedures of the organization;
- Investigate fully and always follow-up

While dealing with difficult customers such as angry customers:

- Listen carefully and attentively to his complaints. Be polite and do not be angry. Give him undivided attention. Show body language e.g. looking at him, nodding the head as a sign of acceptance.
- Sympathize. Try to put oneself in his/her shoes i.e. show sympathy and empathy, apologize if necessary, and say I apologize for.
- Don’t say no (do not immediately disagree with the customer to show that he is wrong);
- Don’t respond with anger, take positive action to resolve the problem, smile and if the customer stays angry, refer him/her to a senior manager or a later appointment.

In brief:

- Appreciate instead of blaming,
- Apologize for one’s own problem /fault
- Answer to any question raised.

4.8 **Development of Strategies for Retaining Challenging Customers**

Customer retention refers to a company’s ability to keep its customers over time, which in turn means they continue to buy products and services. In marketing, customer retention is the process of engaging existing customers to continue buying products or services from a business. Customer retention is deeply held commitment to using a preferred product or service consistently in the

future, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour. In other words, customer retention means to maintain existing customers. This happens if there exists a positive relationship between the company and the customer.

Customer retention is the activity that a selling organization undertakes in order to reduce customer defections. Successful customer retention starts with the first contact an organization has with a customer and continues throughout the entire lifetime of a relationship. A company's ability to attract and retain new customers, is not only related to its product or services, but strongly related to the way it services its existing customers and the reputation it creates within and across the marketplace. Customer retention is more than giving the customer what they expect, it's about exceeding their expectations so that they become loyal advocates for a brand. To retain customers over the long term, organizations must turn them into partners and proactively seek their input rather than waiting for and reacting to feedback provided after a problem has occurred

Customer satisfaction is a fundamental cornerstone of customer retention. An organisation develops a customer focus to be better able to satisfy its customer. Consequently, forward-looking organisation use customer satisfaction data to measure success. But measuring customer satisfaction alone is not enough. Customer satisfaction is the critical component in customer retention.

Importance of customer retention

Neglecting existing customers in pursuit of new ones is a common mistake. While customer acquisition is important for business growth, meeting the needs of the existing customer base can be just as critical. Businesses who implement a strong customer retention strategy will reap the benefits:

- Retained customers tend to buy other services from same company
- Retained customers are known to be less price/cost sensitive
- Positive word of mouth
- Repeat customers are more profitable
- You can save on marketing
- Customer retention can drive customer acquisition
- Retaining customers using insight
- The probability of selling to an existing customer is 60-70%

- The probability of selling to a new prospect is 5-20%
- Declined migration rates

It is more expensive to acquire a new customer than to retain an old one. The quantity of existing customers churns out along with newly acquired clients both affect retention numbers.

The negative signal to retention

- Increase in the number of complaints
- Decrease in the frequency of contacts
- Decrease in personal visits
- Decrease in enquiries
- Decrease in the volume of business
- Decrease in the number of active buyers
- Decrease in the extent of interaction
- Decrease in the flow of communication

Customer retention tactics

To retain customers one can use also the following tactics:

- Build trusting relationships
- Protect confidential information
- Tell customers the truth
- Provide full information (pros and cons)
- Be dependable, courteous, and considerate
- Be actively involved in community affairs
- Monitor the service delivery process
- Properly install products and train customers
- One should be there when needed the most
- Provide discretionary effort
- Welcome suggestions and complaints.

4.9 Learning Activities

As a C&A agent, one of your customers is unhappy with the services you have offered. This is due to various reasons including:

1. Delayed delivery of his container which arrived at the port a month ago
2. Lack of communication on the status of the cargo clearance process
3. Unfulfilled promises that were previously made by your organization before.

As a result, the customer has threatened to discontinue the relationship with your organization. In addition, the customer has threatened to sue your organization for lost business as a result to the delays. On the other hand, you are aware that the cargo clearance delay problem is not about your organization but is due to congestion at the Port.

Required:

1. The causes of the customer complaining and whether they are justified to do so
2. The process that you would take in handling the customer
3. The strategies you would use to ensure that you retain the customer and their business.

4.10 Self-Assessment Questions and Activities

1. What are the characteristics of a challenging customer?
2. What factors within the C&F sector would lead to the creation of a challenging customer?
3. Identify strategies to manage challenging customers segregated as:
 - a. Institutional strategies
 - b. Employee based strategies

4.11 References

- a) Wellington, P. (2010). Effective Customer Care: Understand Needs, Improve Service, Build Relationships. Kogan Page. United Kingdom
- b) Shep Hyken (2020). The cult of the customer. Amazon book Clubs
- c) Harris, K. E. (2013). Customer Service: A Practical Approach, 6th Edition. Pearson Higher Education

5.0 DEALING WITH CUSTOMERS COMPLAINTS

5.1 Specific Learning Outcomes

At the end of this topic the trainee should be able:

- i. Identify the types of customer complaints
- ii. Identify the sources / causes of complaints
- iii. Develop strategies for preventing complaints
- iv. Explain how to handle customer complaints
- v. Explain the challenges in managing customer complaints.

5.2 Types of Customer Complaints

A customer complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to an organization, related to its products or services, or the complaints-handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.

There are various types of customer complaints such as:

- Long wait on hold
- Unavailable or out of stock product
- Repeating the customer's problem
- Uninterested service rep
- Poor product or service
- No first call resolution
- Lack of follow up
- New product or feature request wrong information
- Poor customer service attitude
- Overpricing
- Lack of adequate information
- Product/service delays
- Unresponsiveness of service providers

5.3 Sources of Customers Complaints

- When customer expectations have not been met
- When customers want to release their anger
- When customers want the services improved
- Because of concern for others who also use the service

Generally, 9% to 37% of unhappy customers make complaints to the firms. The rest never bother to complain. Some of the unhappy customers do not complain as they think it is not worth the time or effort. They further think that no one would be concerned about their problem or solve it. They do

not know where to go or what to do. Each happy customer will tell at least six other people

5.4 Causes of Customer Complaints

Several reasons can be attributed to be the causes of customer complaints. Generally, the causes can be categorized as:

1. Employee based causes
2. Organization based causes
3. Customer based causes
4. Other customer's behaviours
5. Environmental based factors

Whereas some of the factors are under direct control of the organization, others can be influenced by the organization being more customer focused. Some of the controllable factors include:

- Not keeping promises
- Poor customer service
- Rude staff
- Not listening to customers
- Hidden information and costs
- Low quality of products or services
- Keeping an issue unresolved
- Inaccessibility
- Not listening to customers' concerns.
- Not taking customer concerns or complaints seriously.
- Doing nothing about service failures
- Not realizing the urgency of resolving a complaint or service failure as quickly as possible.
- Resolving the specific guest complaint, but not taking any measures to ensure it will not happen again.

5.5 Preventing Customer Complaints

There are several strategies that service employees and their organizations can do to help prevent customer complaints as indicated below:

- **Promise less deliver more.** (Under-promise, over-delivery). To improve customer experience, just do not over-promise.
- **Act on customer complaints,** find the root cause of the problem and take long term corrective action. Take action on complaints and ensure that similar complaints are not repeated.
- In addition to acting on customer

complaints, make sure that you have a mechanism in place to track **them**.

- **Make it right the first time.** If you are producing something and supplying to your customers, **make sure that no defective item or piece leaves your facility.**
- **Be open and available to listen to your customers.** The customer is doing you a favour by complaining and providing you with the feedback. If you do not want to hear, the customer will leave you and move to your competitor.
- **Respond to customer complaints** and respond fast.
- **Reward customers for complaining.** The more you listen to your customers, the more you act on your complaints, you will reduce the number of complaints in the long run.

5.6 Handling Customer Complaints

Handling customer complaints refers to welcoming complaints and treating them as opportunities to learn what customers really want and think. This means one can deal with the complaint effectively so as to retain customers and encourage their loyalty. The first step is to know regular sources of complaints. Then an organization can strategize on how to reduce or pre-empt the complaints from the regular sources. Such would prepare the organization to handle the common complaints before they occur. that can be summarized as:

When a customer complains, we should be able to resolve the issues by following the below actions:

- Thank the customer for sharing this valuable information with you.
- Explain why you appreciate the complaint.
- Apologize to the customer about the incident and any inconvenience it may have caused.
- Promise to do something about the problem immediately.
- Ask the customer for all the essential information about the incident, so you can more effectively try to resolve it.
- Correct the mistake promptly.
- Check customer satisfaction.
- Ensure that appropriate action will be taken to prevent this incident from happening again in the future.

- **Recording** – listen to or write down complaints to provide reference when planning action,
- **Questioning** – find out details of the situation by asking appropriate questions to give a complete picture,
- **Resolving** – Propose and agree on a solution that is acceptable to the customer,
- **Implementing** – carry out an action plan to rectify the situation and agree on standards and schedule,
- **Following-up** – ensure that the complaint has been resolved to the customer's full satisfaction.

5.7 Challenges of Handling Customer's Complaints

- **Lack of standard procedure.** Consumer complaints come from different sources, such as e-mail, phone, fax, and letters, or via the corporate Web site. A complaint may be reported by sales representatives and other employees who interact with the public. Complaints are often addressed by different people within an organization. Without a standard policy and a formal mechanism for gathering and processing data from different sources, complaints may languish in someone's "in" box or voice mail. Worse, complaints may get lost.
- **Lack of capability to escalate to adverse event.** Complaints that are gathered and stored in paper files are easier to misplace or overlook. The information captured may be insufficient for the purpose of reporting to the management. Escalating a complaint to adverse event would require extra effort on the part of the employees who initially process complaints. All of these can result in delayed and ineffective complaint resolution.
- **Inadequate documentation.** Without a formal record-keeping system and an effective tool for capturing data from complaints, documentation may be inadequate for the purpose of compliance, or in responding to a product liability lawsuit. Poor documentation of steps taken by management to resolve the complaint could serve as ammunition for the opposing party in case of litigation.

Methods for handling complaints

- **Lack of customer access.** A customer may have to talk to different departments before reaching the person with the appropriate authority to act on a complaint. This is frustrating to customers, whose information may help prevent future complaints.
- **Lack of management Strategy.** Without the ability to track complaints and monitor resolutions, it is practically impossible for a company to formulate an effective strategy for future complaint resolution. Managers who are unable to see the big picture are not equipped to fully understand customer concerns and prevent the issues that led to the complaints.
- **Failure to meet explicit or implicit customer requests such as** inability to provide what customers ask for, inability to respect and grant special requests, inability to respect special needs, inability to respect special preferences, in case of dealing with customer errors or not having an answer to the customer's queries
- **Failures Caused by Employee Actions and Inactions such as** intentional or unintentional acts, the level of attention, any unusual action, cultural norms or adverse conditions. Failing to understand what customers want. Customers can have a hard time explaining what they want. They may not know the technical jargon to tell exactly what the problem is.

5.8 Learning Activities

As a C&A agent, one of your customers is unhappy with the services you have offered. This is due to various reasons including:

1. Delayed delivery of his container which arrived at the port a month ago
2. Lack of communication on the status of the cargo clearance process
3. Unfulfilled promises that were previously made by your organization before.

As a result, the customer has threatened to discontinue the relationship with your organization. In addition, the customer has threatened to sue your organization for lost business as a result to the delays. On the other hand, you are aware that the cargo clearance delay problem is not about your organization but is due to congestion at the Port.

Required:

1. What you should have done to ensure that the customer does not complain
2. The process that you would take in handling the customer complaints to the satisfaction of the customer
3. The strategies you would use to manage customer complaints.

5.9 Self-Assessment Questions and Activities

1. What are the different types of customer complaints that are prevalent in your own sector?
2. What are the sources and causes of the customer complaints?
3. What process would you undertake to prevent customer complaints?
4. Discuss the strategies that you would adopt to handle customer complaints.

5.10 References

- a) Wellington, P. (2010). Effective Customer Care: Understand Needs, Improve Service, Build Relationships. Kogan Page. United Kingdom
- b) Kehoe, D. (2011). Effective Communication Skills. The Great Courses
- c) Locker, K. and Kaczmarek, S. (2013). Business Communication: Building Critical Skills, 6th Edition. McGraw Hill Education
- d) Floyd, K. and Cardon, P. (2020). Business and Professional Communication, 1st Edition. McGraw Hill Education
- e) Shep Hyken (2020). The cult of the customer. Amazon book Clubs
- f) Harris, K. E. (2013). Customer Service: A Practical Approach, 6th Edition. Pearson Higher Education

6.0 CUSTOMERS SATISFACTION

6.1 Specific Learning Outcomes

At the end of this topic the trainee should be able:

- i. Define the scope of customer satisfaction
- ii. Explain the drivers of customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction
- iii. Explain strategies to manage customer dissatisfaction
- iv. Explain how to create customer loyalty
- v. Explain the methods of measuring customer satisfaction.

6.2 Scope of Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is an overall customer attitude towards a service provider, or an emotional reaction to the difference between what customers anticipate and what they receive, regarding the fulfilment of some need, goal or desire. Customer focus is part of a process that leads to continual improvements in organization that, in turn, result in customer satisfaction.

Customer satisfaction is the state of mind that customers have about a company when their expectations have been met or exceeded over the lifetime of the product or service. The achievement of customer satisfaction leads to company loyalty and product repurchase.

Customer satisfaction is a measure of how people feel when interacting with the brand or organization. It can be influenced by any number of factors, such as:

- Perceived product quality,
- Perceived product value convenience,
- Customer expectations,
- Communication,
- Complaint handling.

6.3 General Characteristics of Customer Satisfaction

General characteristics involve features or qualities related to customer satisfaction serving to identify this phenomenon among other customer relationship management propositions.

- Customer satisfaction is a highly variable personal assessment that is greatly influenced by individual expectations based on his/her own information, expectations, direct contact and interaction, and circumstances (time, location and environment).

- Customer satisfaction involves the sum of personal (product and service) experiences driven by its antecedents.
- Customer satisfaction is most often related to purchase, loyalty and retention behaviour with an effect on an organization's profitability.
 - A totally satisfied customer contributes 2.6 times as much revenue to a company as a somewhat satisfied customer.
 - A totally satisfied customer contributes 17 times as much revenue as a somewhat dissatisfied customer.
 - A totally dissatisfied customer decreases revenue at a rate equal to 1.8 times what a totally satisfied customer contributes to a business.
- Customer satisfaction characterizes itself by a high degree of word-of-mouth where satisfied customers are most likely to share their experiences with other people to the order of perhaps five or six people. Equally well, dissatisfied customers are more likely to tell another ten people of their unfortunate experience.

In case of customer satisfaction, customer service is essential for survival of business and there is benefit from giving customers efficient service. Note that there are also several factors that contribute to customer satisfaction but some factors are considered essential to customer care:

- Type and quality of response provided
- Commitment to delivery promises
- Customer service provided
- Customer complaint management.
- Cost, quality, performance and efficiency of the product.
- The reliability and efficiency in fulfilling orders
- The level and quality of after-sales service
- The professionalism, efficiency and friendliness of employees
- How well one keeps customers informed

6.4 Components of Customer Satisfaction

Customers are satisfied whenever they consistently receive:

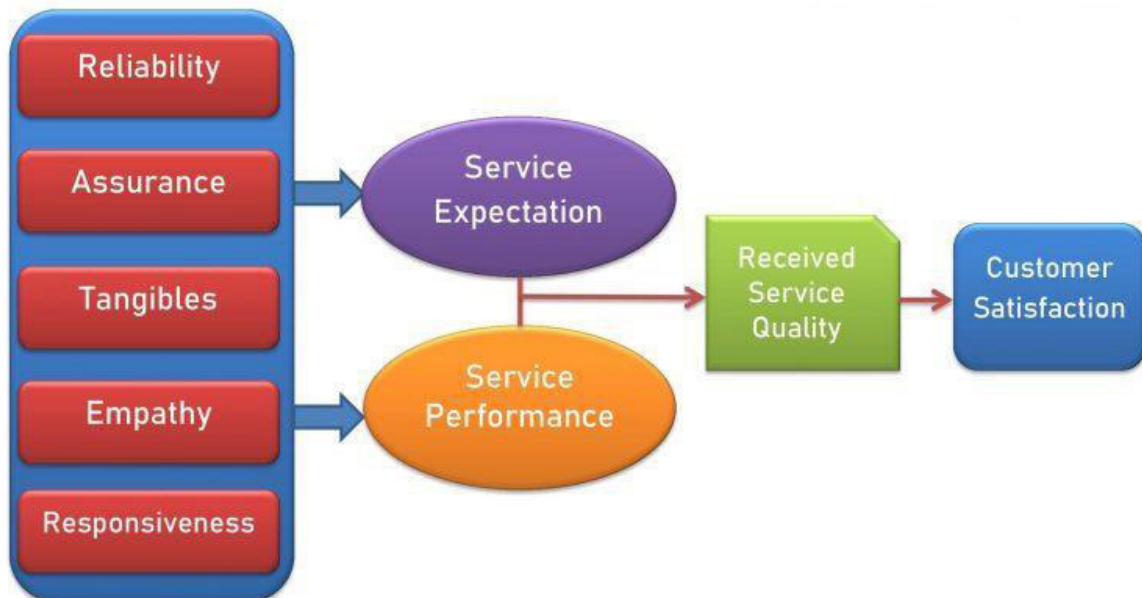
1. A perfect product
2. Delivered by a caring, friendly person
3. In a timely fashion
4. With the support of an effective problem resolution process.

6.5 Customer Satisfaction Process

Researchers in customer satisfaction have linked the level of service quality to satisfaction. The researchers have found five dimensions' customers use when evaluating service quality and which determines their satisfaction level. In essence if service providers get these dimensions right, customers be happy and loyalty. The five dimensions of service quality are:

1. Reliability
2. Assurance
3. Tangibles
4. Empathy
5. Responsiveness.

The Five Key Service Dimensions of the Servqual model



1. Reliability

Reliability is an essential dimension of service quality that confirms the capacity to provide services exactly, on time, and credibly. Consistency is a critical factor for providing assistance or product to the customers on time with error-free conditions. You have to respect the commitment to give your service on time accurately as you promised to them. It means the organization delivers its promises without fail and consistently in a reliable manner. For example, the organization is sending mail to the customers every day on time.

2. Assurance

Assurance means creating trust and credibility for the customers. It depends on the employee's technical knowledge, practical communication skills, courtesy, credibility, competency, and professionalism. Therefore, these skills will help the organization to gain customer trust and credibility. The assurance dimension combines four factors; for example, competence, courtesy, credibility, and security.

- Firstly, competence means having the requisite skills and knowledge.
- Courtesy refers to the politeness, respect, consideration, and friendliness of contact staff.

- Credibility is the trustworthiness, believability, and honesty of the staff.
- Finally, security means freedom from danger, risk, or doubt.

Assurance is seen when the employee is showing respect and being polite to the customers while servicing them.

3. Tangibles

Tangibles represent the physical facilities, employees' appearance, equipment, machines, and information system. It focuses on facilitating materials and physical facilities. For example, the organization maintains a clean environment, and staff follows the appropriate dress code.

4. Empathy

Empathy means focusing on the customers attentively to ensure caring and distinguishing service. It is an essential attitude in some countries in the world to serve every customer individually. It is also a great process to satisfy customers psychologically and increase confidence, trust, and loyalty. The company might lose its customers due to the lack of empathy inside the employees; therefore, they need to ensure compassion.

Additionally, empathy is a combination of the following factors:

- Access (physical and social) – (For example, approachable and ease of contact).
- Communication – (For instance, keeping customers informed in a language they understand and listening to them).
- Understanding the customer – (For example, making an effort to get to know customers and their specific needs).

5. Responsiveness

Responsiveness refers to the eagerness to assist customers with respect and provide quick service to satisfy. This dimension focuses on the two essential factors, including willingness and promptness. So, you have to ensure that the customer is getting their service quickly without delay and make the customers feel that you are very interested in helping them. Responsiveness will be defined by the length of time when customers wait for the answer or solution. In short, responsiveness solves the customer problem as soon as possible by providing expecting information or replacing products.

6.6 Drivers of Customer Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction

The main drivers of customer satisfaction are:

- **Communication:**

This is the most prominent driver of customer satisfaction. People communicating on the behalf of the company should be polite and have knowledge about the product, service as well as the issue. They must cover each and every single detail even if it seems to be small as it might be quite big for the customer. The company should focus on creating great relationships with customers by cordially discussing and setting right expectations prior to every stage of the process while maintaining clear communication at every step.

- **Turn Around Time (TAT):**

TAT is one of the crucial aspects that define the level of customer satisfaction in terms of response time. This is time taken for the consumer to get a response from the concerned qualified person who will put efforts to resolve an issue. Status updates which involve the process of keeping the consumer informed about the progress of their unresolved and unsettled issue should be provided in order to ensure the customer does not feel neglected.

- **Trust:**

A satisfied client, who trusts the company, tends to recommend the products or services of the company to others as well. In the absence of the much-needed trust factor, there will be no scope for sustaining a positive rapport with clients.

- **Well-organized and professional attitude:**

Every organization needs to address client questions politely. Obviously, any individual may not have all the answers, but then, he/she can get in touch with his/her team to source the answer from the group of professionals.

- **Problem Resolution:**

The moment a company resolves issues of a worried client, the team ends up turning the negatives into positives first-hand. The client needs to be kept informed at every step of problem resolving. Every company has a different set of solutions to the challenges involved with customer's issues.

Customers explore their relationship with a company in terms of responsiveness, ideas and demeanour.

Customer dissatisfaction

This is when the suppliers are unable to entertain customers or their business strategies fail to build a good relationship with customers. Customers' dissatisfaction is brought about by many reasons:

- Customers become dissatisfied when their expectations are not met by the current performance of a product or service. Consequently, they become disappointed and engage in complaining behaviour.
- Dissatisfaction can be interpreted as the unpleasant experience that one gets from using a product or service after usage. Before purchase, every consumer has an expected outcome. When consumers are dissatisfied with a product or service, they become very emotional and they exhibit all kinds of behaviours such as regrets and feelings of disappointment.
- When dissatisfied, consumers might stop repurchase, spread negative word of mouth, complain and even return products

Drivers to customer dissatisfaction

Dissatisfaction results when one of the products, or a service provided, fails to meet customer's expectations. This failure can take many different forms, including:

- Failure in terms of quality
- Failure to deliver what was promised
- Failure in terms of performance or usability of a product
- Failure of the product or service in meeting customers' needs and expectation
- Failure in terms of price-to-quality ratio
- Failure in regards to customer service
- Failure in terms of credibility and trustworthiness

Feedback is important for a number of reasons from a dissatisfied customer:

- For improvement
- For changing the way things are normally done
- For knowing the effectiveness of our programs
- For decision making.

6.7 Creating Customer Loyalty

High customer loyalty is one of the most important indicators of good performing companies. Since customer satisfaction is directly linked to customer loyalty it is evident that measuring customer satisfaction without taking customer loyalty into account and vice versa would be misleading. Organizations attempt to consistently exceed customer expectation for the purpose of creating and maintaining customer loyalty. Customer loyalty is all about attracting the right customer, getting them to buy, buy often, buy in higher quantities and bring you even more customer. Companies work hard to build customer loyalty. Loyal customer is a customer forever.

Customer loyalty matters because selling more to existing customers is easier, and cheaper, than finding and selling to new ones. Loyal customers tend to buy more, more regularly. And they will frequently recommend the business to others.

- There is need to make customer care a key part of business strategy. Effective customer relationship management means organizing the entire business to focus on the needs of customers. This ensures the business listing top key accounts, and give these customers the best service. Making sure customer-facing employees have access to all the information they need to serve customers efficiently. Giving them the power to make certain decision independently. Therefore, the drawing up a set of procedures and standards to be used wherever customers have direct contact with business. For example: set standards for speed and courtesy when answering phone calls.
- Learning as much about the different customer segments as you can. Finding out what, when and how customers buy, and use this information to improve the services offered. The use of the database to record information about the customer's buying habits so as to tailor the offer and service. For example, a travel agent could send customers information about their favourite resorts at the time they normally book holidays. Finding out more about the customers by generating opportunities for feedback.
- Developing a brand around the company, products or services. If customers can

identify with the company and feel good about it, they will be more likely to remain loyal. Create a consistent, clearly defined identity for the business or product. Advertise to build brand awareness of the product or service. The strength of the brand should always be accompanied by consistently high levels of customer service.

- Design and deliver a 'customer experience' to address how to handle customers when they contact the business, whether by phone, letter or email. Addressing customers by their first name or use a more formal form of address. Follow up queries with a 'thank you' letter, email or phone call.

6.8 Customer Satisfaction Measurement

This is a measure of how products and/or services supplied by a company meet or surpass customer expectation. It is also a key performance indicator (measure) within business and indicates the organizational success in customer management. It includes:

- Overall customer satisfaction with the organization and its products / services
- Satisfaction with value for money
- Desire to recommend the product or service to others
- Loyalty in terms of repeat purchases
- It is finding out where a company is doing well and where it needs to improve
- Get customer opinions on service or products before, during and after launch
- Understand how organizational initiatives are perceived by customers
- See where the organisation stands with customers compared to competitors
- Demonstrate a commitment to customer satisfaction by listening.

The customer satisfaction is measured because:

- Delighted customers or clients are profitable on every company business.
- It can be used as a basis of monitoring, evaluating and developing new products and process that contribute to company's performance management.
- Provides an indication of how successful the organization is at providing products and/or services to the marketplace.

Means of measuring customer satisfaction

• Customer feedback after delivery of product or service:

Customer feedback after delivery of product or service is one of the simplest, fastest and the most effective method of measuring customer satisfaction. The customers should be immediately asked to evaluate the product or service and comment upon areas of satisfaction and dissatisfaction

• Customer complaints and suggestions:

The organization must have a formalized system of recording all customer complaints and as well as the methods of their disposal. Customer complaints must be taken very positively as valuable inputs by the organization and should immediately trigger the improvement activities.

• Customer Surveys: Steps in conducting customer surveys:

- **Identify customers' requirements under various segments:** It is extremely important to know the requirement of customers before designing a questionnaire or survey. This will be useful in setting the right questions and receive the right answers. This will enable the researcher to get customers issues.
- **Determine survey methodology:** This requires the organization to answer the following questions such as how many customers to survey? Whom to survey? How to survey? When to survey? Who should conduct the survey?
- **Develop survey / interview questions:** Develop survey questions. The organization must develop a pre-determined set of questions which must take into account all the requirements of the customers. The questionnaire must give an impression to the customers that are thorough and organized when

gathering customer satisfaction information. The presentation and packaging of the questionnaire should not be shoddy. A good appearance can suggest evidence of organization's high commitment to customer satisfaction management process and vice versa.

- **Conduct survey / Interview customers:** Customers appreciate if asked for feedback and have come to expect in many industries. Whichever method is chosen to gather the information; it must be done in a way which shows the customers that sincerely desire the feedback and are serious in using their input for improving the product / service. It is equally important to acknowledge the participation of the customers in the survey. Once the survey is over and their valuable inputs have been considered, they must be informed about it as well. This has a great impact on customer loyalty and retention. Then the dissemination of the findings through a report on customer satisfaction management which includes: summary of findings, key trends, planned follow up measures and methodology of improvement plan.

6.9 Learning Activities

You have been appointed the Customer Service Officer for Jambo Global Logistics Ltd. The organization has different types of logistics customers based in different parts of East Africa who are involved with export and imports of cargo. You have identified various issues in the organization including:

- A lack of a clear customer management policy
- A lack of customer engagement strategies
- A lack of customer communication plan
- A lack of a customer database.

While you realize you will have to establish systems, the first thing to focus on understanding the feelings of your customers and level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

Required:

1. Discuss the various methods that you would use to measure customer satisfaction.
2. Based on the dimensions of service quality, undertake a survey of the satisfaction level of your customers (at least 15 customers). You can download from the internet the SERVQUAL tool for measuring customer service quality and adopt the questions to your organization.
3. Analyze the data collected and determine the level of customer satisfaction.
4. What areas were rated high as well as low in customer satisfaction?
5. What recommendations would you give to management of your organization to improve of the levels of customer satisfaction?

6.10 Self-Assessment Questions and Activities

1. What is customer satisfaction? What are the elements of satisfaction?
2. Explain the drivers of customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction in the clearing and forwarding sector.
3. How would you manage a dissatisfied customer in the C&F sector?
4. Explain who a loyal customer is. How can you create customer loyalty in your organizations?
5. Discuss the different methods of measuring customer satisfaction.

6.11 References

- a) Wellington, P. (2010). Effective Customer Care: Understand Needs, Improve Service, Build Relationships. Kogan Page. United Kingdom
- b) Kehoe, D. (2011). Effective Communication Skills. The Great Courses
- c) Locker, K. and Kaczmarek, S. (2013). Business Communication: Building Critical Skills, 6th Edition. McGraw Hill Education
- d) Floyd, K. and Cardon, P. (2020). Business and Professional Communication, 1st Edition. McGraw Hill Education
- e) Shep Hyken (2020). The cult of the customer. Amazon book Clubs
- f) Harris, K. E. (2013). Customer Service: A Practical Approach, 6th Edition. Pearson Higher Education

7.0 EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

7.1 Specific Learning Outcomes

At the end of this topic the trainee should be able:

- i. Explain the meaning of communication
- ii. Describe the communication process
- iii. Explain the principles of effective communication
- iv. Analyse the different types of audiences, their needs, and characteristics
- v. Identify the appropriate channels of communication.

7.2 Overview of Communication

Communication is the process of sending and receiving messages, and it occurs whenever we express ourselves in a manner that is clearly understood. Communication is a process of sharing/exchanging ideas, messages, information, feelings, or emotions between two parties (individuals or organisations) so that an understanding is reached by the two parties. Communication is also the process in which two individuals, two groups or an individual and group exchange or share information. It is the only way people get to know the ideas that are held by other people, and the only way that meaning could be created. Customs Clearing and Forwarding Agents do deal with importers, exporters, customs staff, business community and other stakeholders each of which need to be communicated to effectively.

Communication is mainly a human behaviour, but animals also communicate. The main difference is that animal communication is through sounds that could be interpreted by other similar animals, but these sounds are a result of instinct; human beings design and attach meaning to the sounds they produce, and the same sound could be used in different situations to imply different meanings. John (2008) expressed that in a conversational situation, there are actually eight kinds of communication going on all at once:

- What I mean to say
- What I actually say
- What the other person hears
- What the other person thought they heard
- What the other person means to say
- What the other person actually says
- What I hear the person say
- What I think I heard the other person say

Since Customs Clearing and Forwarding Agents deal with people all the time and are the intermediaries between revenue authorities and business community, it's important for them to always ensure that they have communicated effectively as a way of strengthening good relationship between traders and revenue authorities. Therefore, Communication is the process of passing information, idea or even emotions from one person to another with an aim of getting feedback. It can as well be defined as a transactional process of exchanging messages and negotiating meaning to establish and maintain relationships.

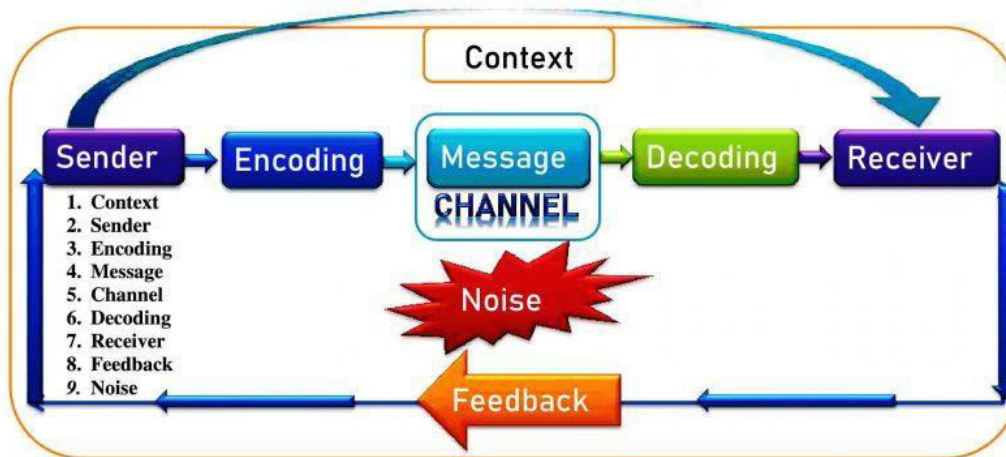
7.3 The Communication Process

The communication process is as an activity, an exchange or set of behaviour in which individuals participate. It is therefore not discrete, static, or solitary. It exists in time/context. In other words, it could also be said to be a system consisting of five major interdependent components namely sender, message, medium/channel, receiver, and feedback. Communication process is two-way since it must involve two parties and the success of the message can only be measured by the effect it has upon the receiver and the nature of feedback relayed.

In the process of communicating, the person who initiates (starts) the communication is the sender, while the person who receives the information is the receiver. The sender must decide how this information has to be sent – either as written, spoken/oral or non-verbal forms. The various ways that are used in sending information can be referred to as channels or media of communication. After the receiver has got the message, he/she has to show that it has been received and therefore 'react' by sending information back to the receiver. This information that is sent back by the receiver to the sender is called feedback. Depending on the feedback from the receiver, the sender is able to judge the success of the information that was originally sent, and as a result this individual may decide to send new or extra information, repeat, clarify etc. This goes on and on, as information continuously flows to and from sender – receiver – sender – receiver etc. This is the process that gives rise to the concept of "the communication cycle" represented by the diagram below.

In the figure below, which illustrates the communication cycle, the sender side could also

be referred to as the 'source' while the receiver side could be referred to as the 'destination'. The arrows represent the message or information. The context refers to all the factors that are both within and outside the sender and receiver – factors that affect the success or failure of the communication process.



Sender/Source

This is the first stage which begins with an individual (source) who is motivated to communicate. The motivation is as a result of a particular need, demand or requirement that is as a result of some circumstances. This is the person who initiates the communication process by sending signals after getting an idea or ideas in his/her mind. This individual then conceives ideas in mind and determines the purpose for which he should share these ideas with the receiver. For instance, the purpose could be to inform, to initiate action or to influence. After determining the purpose, the sender then moves on to the next stage.

Message

Refers to the actual contents to be relayed and it consists of a combination of signals which are understandable to the parties involved in the communication process. The content may be factual information, or it may be the ideas, thoughts and feelings expressed by the participants involved. Some messages may have a clear and obvious content, while others are hidden, or not so obvious.

Medium/Channel

This refers to the physical means through which the message is conveyed/relayed from the sender to the receiver. This stage involves the actual transfer of the information from the sender to the receiver and it requires the sender to choose a

channel for transmitting the message. The channel selected should be suitable for the message and the purpose. It should, therefore, be able to relay the message without distortion or loss of information. In selecting the medium of communication, factors like the cost, urgency of the message, confidentiality of the message, geographical distance, nature of the message and the psychological state of the receiver should be considered. For instance, it may involve print media including newspapers, magazines, letters, memos; electronic media including radio, TV, e-mail; word of mouth or non-verbal signals such as gestures.

Context

This refers to the parts of a written or spoken statement that precede or follow a specific word, usually influencing its meaning or effect.

Receiver or Respondent

This is the person to whom the message is sent and is expected to react to it by either writing back, acting in a certain way or desisting from doing something. The respondent is not a mere receiver of the message. He/she is an active participant in the communication process in that he/she intentionally and consciously pays attention to the message in order to understand and interpret it.

Feedback

This is the receiver's reaction to the message. In other words, this is the response received by the sender from the respondent in reply to the original message. The feedback is not limited to words, but it may include actions, words, restraint, compliance, and silence among others. Feedback is important because it lets the participants know whether they have ascribed the same meaning to the message or not. It also gives communication its dynamic nature by making it an interactive (two way) rather than linear (one way) process. Without feedback, the sender cannot confirm that the receiver has interpreted the message correctly. Feedback is a key component in the communication process because it allows the sender to evaluate the effectiveness of the message and take corrective action to clarify a misunderstood message.

Noise or Barrier

This is any kind of interruption that distracts or distorts the message, thus making it difficult for the message to be understood or interpreted correctly. Noise may also hinder smooth flow of information from the sender to the receiver and may consist of several factors which may be physical (technical, situational), emotional (psychological) or semantic.

Encoding

This refers to the process of arranging or organising ideas to form a meaningful message which is understandable to the receiver. In this stage the sender converts his thoughts or ideas into a message that can be relayed, considers the audience, and then chooses an appropriate media to relay the message. The media should be suitable to both the receiver and the message in that it should be the kind of media which the receiver is familiar with and that which can allow the message to be conveyed without any problems. The encoding process may take the form of writing, drawing or even making of gestures, depending on the media selected.

Decoding

Refers to the process of interpreting a message. This involves assigning of meaning to the symbols/signals, for instance words and gestures used. The receiver interprets the message by assigning meaning to the symbols used. This could be through trying to understand the meaning of a gesture, or words used, hence attaining understanding of the message.

Distortion

This is the alteration of a message when encoding, transmitting, or decoding in such a way that the meaning is changed thus leading to misunderstanding between the parties involved

7.4 Objectives of Communication

Communication is essential for any establishment to survive, thrive and attain its objectives. It is, therefore, imperative that each individual should strive to achieve good communication skills since such skills are vital in relationships, work-places and organisations.

The primary objective of communication in management is to convey information, instructions, policies, procedures, decisions among others so the listener will hear, read, understand what is said, agree and accept the message, and react as intended by the manager or sender of communication.

Businesses have many reasons for communicating a message. It may intend for the message to affect visibility, product positioning, issue awareness or employee behavior, or it may be designed to improve the company's stock value, investment potential or investor perception. These general communications objectives are often broken down into smaller goals or plans. If your company seeks to bring awareness to a new product, for instance, it can do this by advertising in traditional media, reconnecting with clients in the pipeline or by utilizing new media. Each of these options brings with it additional objectives and action steps, with the accompanying need to measure variables and their outputs in order to gauge the effectiveness of that particular communications strategy.

The purpose of communication is better understood in the perspective of an organisation where it serves as a tool of management. This is evident in that, favourable dealings with outside company contacts and effective relationships within an organisation depend upon communication. Without timely communication of accurate information, management cannot effectively conduct its functions of organising, directing, controlling, and coordinating the activities of the enterprise, nor can it maintain its external relationships. Communication is, therefore, essential because:

- It serves as a means of giving/receiving and exchanging ideas between the management

and the employees. This happens when the seniors relay information to the juniors and in turn seek for their views regarding certain matters.

- It serves to give directives, instructions, warnings, and guidelines to the juniors. This may involve the seniors issuing new policies.
- It enables the juniors to forward their complaints to the seniors.
- It helps enhance coordination of activities in the organisation in that through communication the management ensures that all the employees pursue the same corporate objectives.
- It provides positive impact upon employees' motivation and performance especially when the seniors give the employees feedback about their performance.
- It gathers data and information in order to solve problems. Successful decision making in organisations requires that managers should have access to as much information as possible. Hence the great need to good communication.
- Communication allows people to be involved with others, to form and maintain relationships.

7.5 Principles of Effective Communication

- **The principle of clarity:** A message should be clear, free from distortion and noise. A vague message is not only a barrier to creating effective communication but also causes a delay in the communication process and this is one of the most important principles of effective communication.
- **Principles of brevity:** A communication should be brief i.e., just necessary, and sufficient. Repetition and over-explanation are likely to destroy the actual meaning and importance of the message. Moreover, the reader may feel disturbed by receiving a long message.
- **The principle of simplicity:** Message should be given using simple and familiar words. Vague and technical words should be avoided. Simple words are easy to understand and help the receiver to respond quickly.

- **The principle of timeliness:** Communication is meant to serve a specific purpose. If communication is made in time, communication becomes effective. If it is made untimely then it may become useless.
- **Principle of understanding the receiver (Empathy):** understanding is the main aim of any communication. The communication must create proper understanding in the mind of the receiver. Thus, according to Killian, "communication with an awareness of the total physical and human setting in which the information will be received. Picture the place of work; determine the receptivity and understanding levels of the receiver(s); be aware of social climate and customs; question the information's timeliness. Ask what, when and in what manner you would like to be communicated with if you were in the similar environment and position.
- **The principle of compass:** The communication net should cover the whole organization. The concerned people must know "What exactly they need and "When they need it. And effective communication will serve such.
- **The principle of integrity:** Communication should consider the level of people, principles & objectives of an organization to create a network or chain. Such a network will provide a better field of internal and external communication.
- **The principle of strategic use of informal organization:** The most effective communication results when managers use the informal organization as complementary to formal communication, e.g. arranging sports, cultural functions & dinners for the employees can be an informal organization.
- **The principle of feedback:** To provide a message to the receiver is not a complete communication. The response from a receiver is essential. Therefore, feedback is required for communication to be effective.
- **The principle of alternativeness:** Effective listening is important in communication otherwise communication will be ineffective and useless.

- **The principle of language control:** The sender should be careful in selecting proper words and forming sentences, words and structured sentences are the keys to making effective communication.

7.6 Types of Audiences, Needs and Characteristics

Audience is an individual or collective group of people who read or consume any information presented.

Types of audience

- **Active audience:** An active audience is one that actively engages with a presentation or messages sent. They do not simply accept every message or information. They develop their own interpretation of every information presented in any forum based on their life experiences, education, family, and cultural influences.
- **Passive audience:** A passive audience is an audience that merely observes an event rather than actively responding to it. A passive audience does not actively engage with information. A passive audience is one that does not question the message sent/presented. They simply accept the message as it is presented.

Audience Analysis

Audience analysis entails identifying and understanding the audience and adapting your speech to their interests, level of understanding, beliefs, and attitudes. Taking an audience-centered approach is important because if the presentation is created and delivered properly, it will improve the speaker's effectiveness.

Importance of Audience Analysis

The preparation of a presentation is a hectic process, let alone the process of audience analysis. And often people left the analysis thinking that it would be managed on stage. But in most cases, it cannot be managed because the audience is the one dynamic quotient of a presentation we often ignore. So, here are some of the importance of proper audience analysis.

- **Better communication** – Once one knows the audience properly, it will be easy to communicate in a better way. This makes one tailor presentations to the group and make them more attractive.

- **Better presentation** – In case one has a proper audience analysis, it would be more helpful while preparing presentations for the little flaws, and the pros of preparing a presentation would be more prominent.
- **The audience understands better** – The audience will understand simultaneously as the presentation is going on hence meeting audience expectation. One can make the presentation information more convincing and understandable to the clients.

7.7 Different Types of Communication

1. Verbal communication

Verbal communication includes rate, volume, pitch as well as articulation and pronunciation. Verbal communication also includes sign language, sounds in addition to the above and written forms of communication. Verbal communication shows how communicators can use fewer words to greater effect. Verbal communication helps in expressing thoughts, emotions, and sentiments. A phone conversation, chat with a friend, an announcement made, or a speech delivered are all verbal forms of communication. For most of us, it comes with ease. As children, we learned verbal communication through the sounds around us. We soon develop and start understanding the language which helps us to communicate verbally as we grow older.

2. Non-verbal communication

Non-verbal communication is a process of communication without using words or sounds. Non-verbal communication uses gestures, body language, facial expressions, eye contact, clothing, hairstyles, and every part of the body to communicate with the audience. Dances or a gesture made by a mother to a child, are the perfect examples of non-verbal communication. Non-verbal communication incorporates any communication that does not involve the use of words: it is related to the ways we act and behave, which have the potential of sending messages to those looking at us.

Non-verbal messages can contradict or override verbal messages. When in doubt people tend to rely on non-verbal messages. Background, culture, physical conditions, communication, ability to influence how and when people use body language or non-verbal communication. Non-verbal language involves the use of the following:

1. Body language: recognizing, understanding, and reacting appropriately to the body language of others as well as using positive body language allows you to communicate more effectively.
2. Eye contact: it has been said that eyes are the windows of the soul. Eye contact is very powerful. A person's eye contact can send meaningful clues to you. A person's lack of direct eye contact with you could send a variety of messages such as lack of interest, confidence or trust or honesty. Eye contacts accomplishes a number of purposes such as
 - Indicate the degree of attentiveness or interest
 - Help indicate and sustain intimate relationships
 - Influence attitude change and persuasion
 - Regulate interaction
 - Communicate emotions
 - Define power and status relationship
 - Assume a central role in the management of impression
3. Posture: basically, posture or stance involves the way you position your body. Various terms define posture for example formal, rigid, relaxed awkward, sensual, and defensive. By standing or sitting with an erect posture, walking confidently or assuming a relaxed, open posture you might appear to be attentive, confident, assertive, and ready to assist your customers.
4. Facial expressions: the face is capable of making many impressions. The face can display happiness, sadness, boredom, concern, dismay, and dozens of other emotions. By being aware of the power of facial expression and using positive facial expressions, Customs Clearing and Freight Forwarders can initiate and sustain relationships with both the revenue authorities and business community.
5. Gestures: the use of hands, head, arms, and shoulders to emphasize verbal messages adds colour, excitement, and enthusiasm to the communication process. Using physical movements naturally during a conversation with a customer may help make a point or result in added credibility.

Advantages

- i) As it is largely unconscious and as such it tends to be more genuine than the verbal part so that in case of doubt, the non-verbal communication is trusted more. It sometimes reveals more than words ever could.
- ii) It can be used for instant feedback, just as oral/face-to-face communication.
- iii) Adds interest to verbal delivery making it livelier and decreasing boredom.
- iv) It may be used to release extra energy, which would have otherwise made a presenter nervous.

Disadvantages

- i) It can contradict verbal communication and therefore confuse listeners.
- ii) Sometimes it is culture-dependent; this way it may lead to misinterpretation of the message.
- iii) For those who are disabled of sight, this method is useless.
- iv) When overused, it distracts and may turn an otherwise serious message into comedy and negatively affect the attention of the audience.
- v) It can be confused with mannerisms (personal habits that have nothing to do with the meaning of the message), so distracting the audience.

3. Written communication

Written communication is the process of communicating a message by creating a hard or a soft copy of the message. It has great significance in today's business world. It is an innovative activity of the mind. Effective written communication is essential for preparing worthy promotional materials for business development. Speech came before writing. But writing is more unique and formal than speech. Effective writing involves careful choice of words, their organization in correct order in sentences formation as well as cohesive composition of sentences. Also, writing is more valid and reliable than speech. But while speech is spontaneous, writing causes delay and takes time as feedback is not immediate.

Written communication has a number of advantages and these include;

1. Written communication helps in laying down apparent principles, policies, and rules for running of an organization.
2. It is a permanent means of communication. Thus, it is useful where record maintenance is required.
3. It assists in proper delegation of responsibilities. While in case of oral communication, it is impossible to fix and delegate responsibilities on the grounds of speech as it can be taken back by the speaker, or he may refuse to acknowledge.
4. Written communication is more precise and clearer.
5. Effective written communication develops and enhances an organization's image.
6. It provides ready records and references.
7. Legal defences can depend upon written communication as it provides valid records.

Despite the above advantages there are some disadvantages associated with written communication and these are;

1. Written communication does not save upon the costs. It costs huge in terms of stationery and the manpower employed in writing/typing and delivering letters.
2. Also, if the receivers of the written message are separated by distance and if they need to clear their doubts, the response is not spontaneous.
3. Written communication is time-consuming as the feedback is not immediate. The encoding and sending of messages take time.
4. Effective written communication requires great skills and competencies in language and vocabulary use. Poor writing skills and quality have a negative impact on organization's reputation.
5. Too much paper-work and e-mails burden is involved.

The following are suggested tips to help create a successful written communication.

1. Take a writing course
2. Know your audience - Knowing the audience is always important. If communicating to an audience that is not in your profession, you should not use any jargon that the audience will not understand.

3. Use active voice when possible - passive voice rarely
4. Keep your writing concise and well-organized
 - Introduce your topic
 - Talk about the topic
 - Summarize your topic
5. Use an appropriate style - First person, third person
6. Use lists - An easy way of to give a lot of detail and a way to show importance in a topic
7. Use short, easy-to-understand words
8. Avoid repeating the same word too often
9. Check your spelling - use spell checker
10. Check your grammar - use grammar checker
11. Check your work carefully

7.8 Forms of written communication

A) Reports

Reports are used to summarize actions regarding certain events or activities. During each phase of the system development life cycle, many reports are created to account for certain activities during a phase. Examples of these reports include performance and monitoring reports, system requirements document, system design specification, process report, work done and others.

B) Letters and Memos

In any business, you might use letters and memorandums to communicate with others. A letter contains the company's letterhead or return address, the date, the recipient's address, a subject line, salutation, message, closing and signature. A memo, by contrast, contains a date, subject line and a brief message but identifies the name of the sender and recipient without including addresses and is unsigned. Because of these differences, there are certain situations in which it is better to use a letter than a memo. A memo is brief and sticks to the facts. It is usually no more than a few paragraphs long and may be as short as a sentence or two. It provides instruction, information, or results.

A memo is not used to persuade the reader. If you wish to write an explanation or to convey reasons, arguments, or analysis to your reader, use a letter. A letter can be longer than a memo and, since you will be signing the letter, this makes it a proper forum for explaining your own analysis of a topic. For example, you might use a memo to inform your supervisor that sales were down by 10 percent in the

past month but use a letter to outline your analysis of the sales report and the reasons for the decrease. Since a letter is folded, sealed in an envelope and individually addressed, it is a more private form of communication than a memo. For this reason, a letter might be used to submit a resignation or complaint to someone in the same company. A memo is used when privacy within an office is not a major consideration. For example, a memo might provide instructions to several people within the office who are working on a common project. Because letters are more formal than memos, they are also used to communicate major announcements.

For example, if a business is announcing a merger, name change or new location, it might inform both its employees and its partners in business and other individuals outside of the company with a letter. Since the letter will contain the company's letterhead and contact information, it serves to further promote the company's image. Letters are used both internal and external but Memos are mostly used internally.

If you are writing to someone who is not an employee of your company, mail a letter rather than a memo. A letter includes the contact information the recipient may need to respond to you. The inclusion of an inside address, a salutation, closing and signature also makes a letter more formal and respectful for communicating with individuals outside of your company. A memo, on the other hand, does not include these elements and is better for communications within an office.

C) Electronic Communication

Electronic communication is a new system of communication especially in low developing nations where the use of technology is being considered as new aspect. The email and fax, social networks, text message, etc are different methods of electronically sending/delivering of messages. Only recently has the use of either electronic method been considered acceptable (and is still disputed by some) for delivering the formal business letter. Some questions still exist about if the electronic means is adequate for Legal things too. But since electronic communication can be manipulated to some stage, it requires more attention in use.

7.9 Channels of Communication

Communication channels refer to the lines along which communication flows and the physical means by which information is relayed within an organisation. These channels may be formal or informal. The flow of information in an organisation is better understood depending on the organisation structure and the information distribution in a hierarchical structure among different members of the organisation. An example of this is between managers, heads of departments and the employees.

Channels of communication are grouped into two categories namely formal and informal.

Formal communication

There are three formal channels identified. These include:

a) Downward communication:

Downward communication channel is where information flows from seniors to subordinates. An example is the managing director communicating with departmental heads, assistant managers, or supervisors. The content of messages relayed through this channel is in form of policies, decisions made and instructions.

The purpose/objectives of downward communication are to:

- Give specific directives about the job being entrusted to a subordinate.
- Explain organisational policies and procedures.
- Give the subordinates information about their jobs so that they understand the significance of their jobs in relation with the organisational goals.
- Point out problems that have been identified by the management.
- Inspire or motivate the employees for their performance.

The medium (methods) used to relay information in downward communication may include the following:

- Memos
- Letters
- Newsletters
- Circulars
- Notices
- Office manuals
- Meetings among others

b) Upward communication

This channel is used in passing information upwards from the bottom subordinates to the management. Contents of the message relayed may take the form of suggestions, complaints, and feedback. This channel is more consultative, and the methods used to communicate may include the following:

- Suggestion systems (suggestion boxes)
- Letters
- Routine reports
- Interviews
- Attitude surveys
- Open door policy
- Meetings among others

c) Horizontal communication

This type of communication takes place between departments, people of the same level in the management hierarchy of the organisation or individuals of different levels of hierarchy in different departments of the organisation. Horizontal communication may sometimes be referred to as lateral communication or diagonal communication. It is referred to as lateral unification when the exchange of information is between two people of the same level of hierarchy in an organisation. For instance, communication between two heads of department or two clerks in a department. On the other hand, it is referred to as diagonal communication when the exchange of information is between two individuals of different levels of hierarchy and who are from different departments. The methods of communication used in horizontal communication include:

- Periodical departmental meetings
- Letters
- Memos
- Reports among others

Informal channel of communication

The informal channel of communication is not officially sanctioned and is popularly referred to as grapevine. It runs in all directions without following the formal structure. The four categories of informal communication are:

- **Single strand:** This is where each one tells another.
- **Group or gossip chain:** This is where one tells all persons in his/her group.
- **Probability chain:** This is where each randomly tells a number of people.
- **Cluster chain:** This is when some tell selected others.

Grapevine satisfies the social needs of members, leads to more relaxed human relations, serves to fill the possible gaps in the formal communication and links even those people who do not fall in the official chain of command.

7.10 Selecting Channels of Communication

In order to ensure effective communications, it is of paramount importance to select a channel that aligns with the audience. Some of the factors to consider include:

1. Nature of Message:

The means of communication depends upon the nature of the message. Urgent, confidential, private, and important messages should be distinguished from ordinary, routine, open and less important messages and the means of communication are to be chosen accordingly.

2. Cost:

The cost of sending a message is also to be considered while selecting a mode of communication. The result obtained should justify the expenditure.

3. Record Keeping:

If the record of the communication is important it should be written, otherwise oral communication is sufficient.

4. Distance:

Distance is another factor for consideration. The mode of communication to be chosen depends on whether the message is to be sent to a nearby place or somewhere at a long distance.

5. Scale of Organisation:

Means of communication in large-scale business is different from that in the small-scale. In small business most communication is oral while in large business it is written.

6. Supporting Technology:

Both the sender and the receiver must have supported technological communication tool to make communication through a particular medium. Suppose, A sends an e-mail to B. To get the e-mail B should have a personal computer.

Again, to get a fax message one should possess a fax machine. Therefore, while selecting a means of communication one has to consider whether supporting technological tool is available at the other end.

7. **Urgency:**
Selection of the means of communication is to be made keeping in view the urgency of the communication. Time available is the main factor here. Higher cost may be justified for sending the message in time.
8. **Secrecy:**
If the message to be communicated is secret or confidential, such means are required to be adopted that can maintain secrecy. A telephone call can be overheard, an e-mail or fax may not be appropriate, and an office memo may be less confidential. In such cases, face-to-face talking may solve the problem.
9. **Safety:**
The sender must be careful about the safety of the message. He/she has to decide whether the message would be sent by ordinary post or by registered post; through courier or messenger, etc.
10. **Relationship:**
The relationship between the sender and recipient may be a decisive factor in the choice of the means of communication. Message of private nature may require personal contact whereas formal relationship demands official and conventional mode of communication.

7.11 Handling Telephone Communication

The telephone is a telecommunications device that transmits and receives sounds, usually the human voice. Telephones are a point-to-point communication system whose most basic function is to allow two people separated by large distances to talk to each other. Developed in the mid-1870s by Alexander Graham Bell and others, the telephone has long been considered indispensable to businesses, households and governments and is now one of the most common appliances used in the communication systems. "Telephone" has been

adapted to many languages and is now recognized around the world.

Telephones may be able to record spoken messages, send and receive text messages, take and display photographs or video, play music, and surf the Internet. The fact that customers cannot "see" you they rely on the tone of your voice and your words to form opinions. It becomes a requirement for us to choose the words to use carefully and keep your tone friendly and warm.

Things to consider when communicating over the telephone:

- Avoid keeping the customer on hold and if it becomes unavoidable;
 - Know when to put the caller on hold in case you don't have information with you;
 - Wait for a feedback;
- Be ready to offer help or alternatives to customers;
- Introduce yourself by telling the caller who you are, which clearing agent you belong to;
- Respond to telephone calls promptly;
- Tell the caller why and to whom you are transferring in case it happens, Always give the caller the (phone number of the person you are transferring to, the title and the name)
- Avoid expressions such as wait a minute, just a second etc.
- End the call politely by thanking the caller for their patience/call. Use words such as;
 - "Thank you, do you require any further assistance?"
 - "It has been a pleasure serving you".
 - "Thank you for your business/ interest in our services".
 - Record any important details that have been given.

Telephone communication allows people to discuss matters far quicker than sending of messages through messengers or postal services. Ultimately this results in far faster business through quicker decision making. In modern times where other alternatives exist for communication, telephony is still preferred by many as it allows faster interaction than email and is more personal than computer chatting. However, it can distort relationship if calling and receiving of a call does not exhibit professionalism in nature.

7.12 Learning Activities

You have been appointed the Communications and Customer Service Officer for Jambo Global Logistics Ltd. The organization has different types of logistics customers based in different parts of East Africa who are involved with export and imports of cargo. You have identified various issues in the organization including:

- A lack of a clear customer management policy
- A lack of customer engagement strategies
- A lack of customer communication plan
- A lack of a customer database.

While you realize you will have to establish systems, the first thing to focus on is getting to understanding your customers and establish communication linkages with them.

Required:

1. Analyse the possible different types of audiences for Jambo Global, their needs and characteristics
2. Develop a brief communication plan outline that you would use to establish communication linkages
3. What would be the most appropriate channels of communications for the Jambo Global Customers?

7.13 Self-Assessment Questions and Activities

1. What do you understand by effective communication?
2. Describe the different elements in the communication process. What issues would you take into consideration at each step of the communication process to ensure effective communications?
3. What would be the objectives of communication in a freight logistics firm?
4. What are the appropriate channels of communication that can be used in a freight logistics firm?

7.14 References

- a) Kehoe, D. (2011). Effective Communication Skills. The Great Courses
- b) Locker, K. and Kaczmarek, S. (2013). Business Communication: Building Critical Skills, 6th Edition. McGraw Hill Education
- c) Floyd, K. and Cardon, P. (2020). Business and Professional Communication, 1st Edition. McGraw Hill Education

8.0 BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

8.1 Specific Learning Outcomes

At the end of this topic the trainee should be able:

- i. Identify the barriers to communication
- ii. Explain the effects of communication barriers
- iii. Identify the sources / causes of communication barriers
- iv. Develop strategies to handle communication barriers

8.2 Barriers to Communication

Effective communication is realized when information moves speedily and smoothly in an uninterrupted flow. If the information (idea) that is present in the mind of the transmitter is transferred unchanged into the mind of the receiver, then a perfect act of communication has taken place.

However, communication breakdown often results due to various physical, psychological, and physiological factors (barriers). Such breakdowns are costly to the organization in two ways:

- They disrupt the efficient functioning of the enterprise.
- They may lead to friction and misunderstandings among the staff. This can lead to an adverse effect on morale.

The term barrier may be defined as the factors which obstruct proper communication (flow) and clear interpretation. The barriers may originate at three levels namely:

- a) The sender
- b) The medium
- c) The receiver

Barriers to communication may be classified into four major classes namely:

- **Psychological barriers:** The psychological barrier of communication is the influence of the psychological state of the sender and receiver, which creates an obstacle for effective communication. Communication is highly influenced by the mental condition that those communicating are in and is affected by mental disturbance. If the people involved in communication are not emotionally well, they won't be able

to communicate properly. The people who are involved in the communication matter as much as the message.

- **Physiological barriers:** A physiological barrier to communication is as a result of a sensory dysfunction, either on the part of the receiver or the sender. Speaking, hearing, and seeing are fundamental parts of effective communication. Provide alternative communication options and methods and ensure communication is possible for the deaf and blind.
- **Physical/environmental barriers:** Physical barrier is the environmental and natural condition that act as a barrier in communication in sending message from sender to receiver. Organizational environment or interior workspace design problems, technological problems and noise are parts of physical barriers. Disturbance in hearing due to thunders, telephone call disconnection, problems in television reception among others.
- **Semantic (language barriers):** These are related to language such as level of usage, thus denotative vs. connotative meanings due to difference. The meaning of words, signs and symbols might be different from one person to another, and the same word might have many meanings. Therefore, when a message is sent by a sender to a receiver, it might be interpreted wrongly in a communication process causing misunderstandings between them. It may arise due to language, education, culture, and place of origin (dialect or accent) or most likely the experiences of the sender and receiver.

8.3 Effect of Barriers to Communication

- Distorted information: Barriers may lead to the message becoming distorted and therefore risk wasting both time and/or money by causing confusion and misunderstanding. Effective communication involves overcoming these barriers and conveying a clear and concise message.
- Creates differences in perception from the information

- Affects the relationship between employees, management and also family as no one understands the other
- The needs of the receiver are not met
- Communication barrier leads to misunderstanding between sender and receiver
- Lack of feedback to the receiver
- Leads to customer complains leading to low sales.

8.4 Sources of Communication Barriers

- **Lack of awareness about the receiver's needs:** This may make the sender fail to communicate effectively. The sender should, therefore, understand the receiver in terms of his/her social and educational background in order to be able to make use of appropriate language and symbols. In the same dimension, lack of knowledge regarding the subject of discussion poses communication problems. Also, the difference/discrepancy between the levels of knowledge of the parties involved may pose a barrier to effective communication.
- **Undefined objective:** Lack of exact aim of communication by the sender may lead to ineffective communication. When the sender has not defined his/her objectives, then he/she may lack proper information development. His/her ideas may, therefore, lack proper logical development, hence affecting the message and the receiver's understanding.
- **Wrong choice of media:** The media of communication have their advantages and disadvantages. If the sender settles for an inappropriate medium, then it may act as a barrier to effective communication. If an employee wants to express his/her regrets to the supervisor over a misconduct, it is advisable to use face to face communication other than giving a written explanation.
- **Attitude and opinions:** Personal attitudes and opinions often act as a barrier to effective communication.
- **Emotions:** Emotions plays a vital role in both the sender and receiver in terms of the way they communicate and receive/interpret messages. If one is perplexed, worried, excited, afraid or nervous, thinking

will be affected (blurred) and this may make the sender fail to organize his message properly.

- **Status consciousness:** Status consciousness exists in every organization and is one of the major barriers to effective communication. This is mostly evident where the subordinate is too conscious of their inferior status.
- **Organizational barriers:** These occur when the communication lines within the organization or between organizations fail to allow communication to take place fully and accurately.
- **Human relation barriers:** These barriers occur when human relation problem goes beyond the level of a simple personality clash and becomes clear that two individuals are unable to work together. To solve this problem, it is advisable to transfer one of the people to another section where necessary, but this should be done without attributing blame to either person.

8.5 Mitigating Communication Barriers

Overcoming barriers to effective communication is the responsibility of both the sender and the receiver.

Sender's responsibility

The sender's responsibility includes the following:

- The sender must develop clarity of thought about the message to be conveyed. These thoughts must be carefully organized so that the message formulated covers the intended ideas clearly and completely.
- Use appropriate language suitable for the recipient.
- When communicating face to face, develop sensitivity to the body language. The sender should pay attention to the body language of the audience to understand them better; at the same time, it is also necessary to pay attention to body language of self so that it is supporting rather than conflicting with verbal message.
- Avoid communication under conditions of mental stress, for instance, when angry or too anxious.
- Use appropriate method of communication.
- Ensuring that the message is relayed at the right time and to the correct persons.

Receiver's responsibility

The receiver's responsibility includes the following:

- Stop talking when a message is being conveyed. This call for good listening skills.
- Put the talker at ease: Help a person feel free to talk.
- Show a talker that one wants to listen
- Remove distractions
- Be patient: Allow plenty of time. Do not interrupt a talker
- Ask questions: This encourages a talker and shows that you are listening.

8.6 Overcoming Barriers of Communication

There is lots of communication barriers faced these days by all. The message intended by the sender is not understood by the receiver in the same terms and sense and thus communication breakdown occurs. It is essential to deal and cope up with these communication barriers so as to ensure smooth and effective communication. However, these barriers of communication can be dealt with as follows.

1. **Eliminating differences in perception:**
The organization should ensure that it is recruiting right individuals on the job. It's the responsibility of the interviewer to ensure that the interviewee has command over the written and spoken language. There should be proper Induction program so that the policies of the company are clear to all the employees. There should be proper trainings conducted for required employees.
2. **Use of Simple Language:**
Use of simple and clear words should be emphasized. Use of ambiguous words and jargons should be avoided.
3. **Reduction and elimination of noise levels:**
Noise is the main communication barrier which must be overcome on priority basis. It is essential to identify the source of noise and then eliminate that source.
4. **Active Listening:**
Listen attentively and carefully; active listening involves attaching meaning to the message and create understanding to it. By asking questions the speaker can ensure whether his/her message is understood or not by the receiver in the same terms as intended by the speaker.
5. **Emotional State:**
During communication one should make effective use of body language. He/she should not show their emotions while communicating as the receiver might misinterpret the message being delivered. For example, if the conveyer of the message is in a bad mood, then the receiver might think that the information being delivered is not good.
6. **Simple Organizational Structure:**
The organizational structure should not be complex. The number of hierarchical levels should be optimum. There should be an ideal span of control within the organization. The simpler the organizational structure the more effective will be the communication.
7. **Avoid Information Overload:**
The managers should know how to prioritize their work. They should not overload themselves with the work. They should spend quality time with their subordinates and should listen to their problems and feedbacks actively.
8. **Give Constructive Feedback:**
Avoid giving negative feedback. The contents of the feedback might be negative, but it should be delivered constructively. Constructive feedback will lead to effective communication between the superior and subordinate.
9. **Proper Media Selection:**
The managers should properly select the medium of communication. Simple messages should be conveyed orally, like: face to face interaction or meetings. Use of written means of communication should be encouraged for delivering complex messages. For significant messages reminders can be given by using written means of communication such as Memos, Notices etc.
10. **Flexibility in meeting the targets:**
For effective communication in an organization the managers should ensure that the individuals are meeting their targets timely without skipping the formal channels of communication. There should not be much pressure on employees to meet their targets.

8.7 Learning Activities

Case Scenario 1:

You have been appointed the Communications and Customer Service Officer for Jambo Global Logistics Ltd. The organization has different types of logistics customers based in different parts of East Africa who are involved with export and imports of cargo. You have identified various issues in the organization including:

- Customer complaints due to slow response time on queries and information
- Sometimes contradicting sets of information being communicated by different employees of same organization to the customers
- A lack of a clear customer communication plan for the organization.

Required:

1. Identify the possible reasons as to the state of ineffective communications by Jambo Logistics to its customers
2. Develop strategies that would enhance and ensure effective communication to your customers.

Case Scenario 2:

The management team and field operations officers of clearing and freight forwarding firm had the ability to accomplish their work successful; however, seemed to encounter some communication hassles hence greatly jeopardized the reputation of clearing and freight forwarding firm, not to mention putting the customers on hold which negatively affected their business turnaround.

The Managing director, the Operations Manager and field officers sat down for a meeting to see what could be done to clarify the communication and customer service issues. The Managing Director spoke very clearly about what she expected of the clearing agents to do when they meet clients and when they interact with each other. They expressed to have understood what they were doing wrong and assured their Managing Director that they would “improve.” After the meeting, the Operations Manager asked clearing agents the steps to be taken to improve their performance. They looked puzzled at him and said, “We have no idea.” The Managing Director looked astonished; her mouth was literally hanging open. She was without words. She believed

she had been very clear. She believed the clearing agents had nodded in agreement to all of the well thought out plans she had presented, yet clearly now they did not.

The Operations Manager further asked the clearing agents a series of questions and led them through the necessary steps using descriptions and word choices they could easily comprehend. Further, clarified expectations, created measures of success, and established timeframes. With that now vividly in their minds, they were able to summarize their next implementation steps; the Clearing Agents left the meeting relieved. Over a reasonable period of time, evidence indicated that they had indeed learned some new communication skills and their customer relations had improved accordingly.

At the end of the meeting, they discussed different learning and management styles. The Managing Director was amazed how her message which had been so clearly intended and what she thought was so clearly sent, was not the message received or understood. This realization was a profound one for her. She vowed to check for understanding more often and especially when she interacted with the staff. She realized the role she had played in the breakdown of communication between them.

She saw how, as the person delivering a message, she had the responsibility to be sure the message had been received and understood. In the case of the clearing agents, she needed to reframe her message in terms that made sense to them, ask them to summarize it back to her, and then review his next steps, so both she and clearing agents would leave the communication event with the same understanding. Although she had believed herself to be a skilled communicator (and by many measures she was), she learned that in this isolated event, she had needed a new set of communication skills. She foresaw how she could also generalize these new skills with other people and different situations. She had added another strategy to her range of positive communication skills, one that would help her to be a better leader in the future.

Required:

1. Explain the communication barriers which can be identified from the case above?
2. Identify the communication skills the Managing Director was supposed to have in order to improve on her communication to her subordinates?
3. Suggest best ways of ensuring effective communication in organization.

8.8 Self-Assessment Questions and Activities

1. What are the barriers to communication that can face a firm in the freight and logistics sector?
2. What are the effects of communication barriers to an organization?
3. What are the sources / causes of communication barriers?

8.9 References

- a) Kehoe, D. (2011). Effective Communication Skills. The Great Courses
- b) Locker, K. and Kaczmarek, S. (2013). Business Communication: Building Critical Skills, 6th Edition. McGraw Hill Education
- c) Floyd, K. and Cardon, P. (2020). Business and Professional Communication, 1st Edition. McGraw Hill Education

9.0 EFFECTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

9.1 Specific Learning Outcomes

At the end of this topic the trainee should be able:

- i. Explain the meaning of effective listening
- ii. Evaluate the types of listening skills
- iii. Explain the barriers to effective listening
- iv. Apply effective listening techniques
- v. Explain questioning techniques

9.2 Overview of Effective Listening

Listening is the active process of receiving and responding to spoken (and sometimes unspoken) messages. It is the process of receiving, constructing meaning from and responding to spoken and/or non-verbal messages; to hear something with thoughtful attention.

Difference between hearing and listening

Hearing is simply the act of perceiving sound by the ear. Hearing occurs with or without consent. Listening is an action where one chooses to actively concentrate on what hear. In listening the brain processes the information into knowledge. Listening is not the same as hearing and hearing is not the same as listening.

Hearing is a physiological process that occurs when sound waves are processed by the central nervous system. Listening is a social cognitive activity that is affected by the past experiences and future expectations. Listening also differs from hearing in that listening is not limited to sound but involves the use of all senses. When we listen, we must hear, but we must also see and feel. To be effective listeners we must also be able to hear the words our partners utter, but we must also be able to pick up the non-verbal cues that tell us what they actually mean. Listening is often overlooked because people normally think improving on sending skills improves listening which is not the case. What comes into the minds of the people is giving more effective public presentations or speaking to those around them with more confidence and clarity. We seldom think about improving their ability to listen to what others have to say. Yet listening is vital skill in both personal and professional settings. In fact, listening has been linked to leadership effectiveness, managerial competence, and then development of rewarding relationships. Many of the communication problems

we face, both personally and professionally, are directed related to faulty listening.

Importance of listening

- An attentive listener stimulates better speaking by the speaker
- A good listener learns more than an indifferent listener
- A good listener can restructure vague speaking in a way that produces clearer meaning
- A good listener learns to detect prejudices, assumptions, and attitudes
- Communication is not complete without effective listening.

Benefits of Effective Listening

- Enhances productivity
- Improves relations
- Avoids conflict
- Improves understanding
- Improves negotiation skills
- Helps you stand out
- People will appreciate it

Features of Listening

- Listening is a mental activity
- It improves by consciousness and concentration
- It is a skill as it can be improved by experience
- Non-verbal communication also helps in listening
- Listening stimulates speaking
- Listening involves paying close attention to the sounds that come in way of communication.

Process of Listening

- **Receiving:** Receiving refers to the response caused by sound waves stimulating the sensory receptors of the ear.
- **Understanding:** It is the stage at which one learn what the speaker means
- **Remembering:** It is important listening process because it means that an individual has not only received and interpreted a message but has also added it to the mind's storage bank.
- **Evaluating:** It consists of judging the messages in some way. At times one may try to evaluate the speaker's underlying intentions or motives.

- **Responding:** This stage requires that the receiver complete the process through verbal and/or non-verbal feedback.

9.3 Types/Forms of Listening

- **Appreciative Listening:** Appreciative Listening for pleasure and enjoyment. It is listening to music, to a comedy routine. It describes how well speakers choose and use words, use humour, ask questions, and tell stories.
- **Sympathetic listening:** In sympathetic listening we care about the other person and show this concern in the way we pay close attention and express our sorrow for their ills and happiness at their joys.
- **Emphatic Listening:** Emphatic Listening provide emotional support for the speaker. It focuses on understanding and identifying with a person's situation, feelings.
- **Evaluative/ critical/ analytical listening:** It involves evaluation of the oral message or commentary and developing a line of thought. The listener interprets and analysis what he or she listens to in order to understand both the explicit as well as implicit meaning of the oral message. Thus, the main purpose of evaluative listening is to evaluate the content of the oral message to select appropriate information. It is also critical listening which is to evaluate a message for purposes of accepting or rejecting it. Evaluative listening is particularly pertinent when the other person is trying to persuade customers, perhaps to change behavior and maybe even to change beliefs. This is typically weighing up the pros and cons of an argument, determining whether it makes sense logically as well as whether it is helpful. Evaluative listening is also called critical, judgmental, or interpretive listening.
- **Discriminative Listening:** Discriminative listening involves identifying the difference between various sounds. Discriminative listening is the most basic type of listening, whereby the difference between difference sounds is identified. If one cannot hear differences, then one cannot make sense of the meaning

that is expressed by such differences. It also enables one to differentiate between familiar and unfamiliar language. Discrimination between sounds within one's language early, and later are unable to discriminate between the phonemes of other languages. This is one reason why a person from one country finds it difficult to speak another language perfectly, as they are unable distinguish the subtle sounds that are required in that language. Likewise, a person who cannot hear the subtleties of emotional variation in another person's voice will be less likely to be able to discern the emotions the other person is experiencing. Listening is a visual as well as auditory act, as one communicates much through body language.

- **Attentive/Active listening:** Active listening is a communication technique used in counselling, training, and conflict resolution. It requires that the listener fully concentrates, understands, responds, and then remembers what is being said. Active listening helps in understanding the message of a speaker. It focuses on accurately understanding the meaning of the speaker's words.
- **Focused listening:** It involves listening for specific information. This is the most common type of listening that are practiced in non – formal oral communicative situations.
- **Pretence listening:** It involves more hearing than listening. It means pretending through facial expressions that one is listening when actually one is not.
- **Selective listening:** It involves selecting the desired part of the message and ignoring the undesired part of the message.
- **Therapeutic listening:** In therapeutic listening, the listener has a purpose of not only empathizing with the speaker but also to use this deep connection in order to help the speaker understand, change or develop in some way. This not only happens when one goes to see a therapist but also in many social situations, where friends and family seek to both diagnose problems from listening and also to help the speaker cure themselves, perhaps by some cathartic process. This also happens in work situations, where managers, human resource people, trainers and coaches seek

to help employees learn and develop.

- **Dialogic listening:** The dialogic listening means learning through conversation and an engaged interchange of ideas and information in which one actively seek to learn more about the person and how they think. Dialogic listening is sometimes known as relational listening.
- **Relationship listening:** Sometimes the most important factor in listening is in order to develop or sustain a relationship. Relationship listening is also important in areas such as negotiation and sales.

9.4 Barriers to Effective Listening

Effective listening is arguably one of the most important skills to have nowadays. Personal relationships need effective listening skills to face complicated issues together. Businesspeople and employees need effective listening skills to solve complex problems quickly and stay competitive. There is need to understand and eliminate listening barriers that blocks deep, harmonious, and lasting relationships.

Barriers to listening take many forms. It is inevitable that barriers will exist in any interaction, but anything which stops concentration, allowing the mind to wander off the topic, must be recognized and overcome if fully successful communication is to take place.

- **Environmental barriers:** This can make people switch off from what is being said and concentration is focused on the surrounding. The focus is on issues such as the room too hot or too cold, the chair uncomfortable, the lighting too bright or too dim, bad ventilation; stuffy/smoky atmosphere, sights, noise and smells among others
- **Linguistic barriers:** Linguistic barriers derive from the speaker and make it difficult for them to be listened to. They can be summarized as follows: jargon or specialist language, complex sentences, complex vocabulary, hesitant manner, monotonous voice, inappropriate tone, badly organized material, delivery too fast, delivery too slow and ponderous, delivery too loud, delivery too quiet.
- **Psychological barriers:** Emotional states which are brought to the

communication or result from it can come between what is being said and effective listening and understanding such as own anxiety, frustration, inability to put across ideas, status difference, anger, prejudice among others.

- **Physiological barriers:** The physical condition of the listener can affect concentration and restrict the amount of information taken in such as headache, tiredness, poor eyesight, hearing impairment and discomfort, pain, illness among others.
- **Perceptual barriers:** The speaker and the listener sometimes see the same situation from a different point of view, and this can affect understanding e.g., parent and child. Examples of other perceptual barriers are: social/cultural background differences, attitude unexpected, expectations different, appearance of speaker, mannerisms and accents among others.
- **Content barrier:** This is what the speaker is saying which may be a barrier to the listener such as subject of the discussion does not have interest, speaker goes on for too long, speaker is saying what others don't want to hear, what people have heard it all before, content is too difficult/simplistic, content is repetitious among others.
- **Personal barriers:** The listener may put up personal barriers such as preoccupied with own problems, thinking about own response without hearing speaker, monopolizing the conversation, dominant speaking, looking for every opportunity to interrupt among others.

9.5 Effective Listening Techniques

It takes a lot of concentration and determination to be an active listener. Old habits are hard to break, and if ones listening skills are as bad as many peoples are, then there will be need to do a lot of work to break these bad habits. Effective listening techniques are used to help a person become a more effective listener such as:

- Create a receptive listening environment
- Focus on the speaker
- Withhold judgment
- Put yourself in the speaker's shoes
- Use feedback and listen with openness
- Ask appropriate questions

- Paying attention and relaxed
- Focus on key-points
- Being aware of both verbal and non-verbal messages
- Listen with an open mind
- Avoid false attention and pretending to listen
- Wait for the speaker to pause to ask clarifying question
- Provide feedback
- Defer Judgment since interrupting is a waste of time
- Respond appropriately since active listening is designed to encourage respect and understanding.

Therefore:

- Be prepared to listen. Concentrate on the speaker, and not on how to reply.
- Keep an open mind and avoid making judgements about the speaker.
- Concentrate on the main direction of the speaker's message. Try to understand broadly what they are trying to say overall, as well as the detail of the words that they are using.
- Where possible, avoid distractions. For example, if there is a lot of background noise, this calls for changing the venue/ place.
- Be objective.
- Do not think of next question while the other person is giving information.
- Do not dwell on one or two points at the expense of others. Try to use the overall picture and all the information available.
- Do not stereotype the speaker. Try not to let prejudices associated with, for example, gender, ethnicity, accent, social class, appearance, or dress, interfere with what is being said.

Listening Techniques

1. Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing involves repeating, in your own words, what you thought you heard the speaker say. The steps in paraphrasing are as follows:

- Step 1: Let the other person finish his or her thought.
- Step 2: Repeat in your own words what you think the person said.
- Step 3: Ask the person if that is what was meant.

- Step 4: If the answer is “yes,” continue the conversation.
- Step 5: If the answer is “no,” ask the person to restate what was meant.

The objective of paraphrasing is to ensure that you get the sense of the message the sender intended to send. When you paraphrase, deal with the facts rather than the emotions of the message. Paraphrasing is not repeating the speaker's words exactly.

Checking Perceptions

Perception checking is about feelings, more than facts. Focus on checking out what you perceive to be the emotions that motivate another person's communication. The concern isn't with what the person said (words) as much as it is with what the other person means (tone).

Listeners frequently miss the emotional part of a conversation. If you miss the feelings, you cannot sense the unique situation of the speaker. Feelings help us to use information to give good feedback. For example, an employee might seem upset in a conversation with you. You might assume from the conversation that the employee does not care much about his or her job. If you checked out this perception, you might find that the employee was simply anxious about an upcoming meeting for which they felt they needed more preparation.

Listening with Openness

It is difficult to listen when you are judging and finding fault. Judging and finding fault often result in the following:

- You don't grow intellectually because you only listen to your own viewpoints.
- You dismiss the other person because you disagree with their ideas.
- You upset people because you don't listen.
- You miss important information.
- The most important rule for listening with openness is to hear the whole statement, the entire communication, before judging. When you make early assessments, you don't have all the information.

Listening with Awareness

There are two components to listening with awareness:

- i. Compare what is being said to your own knowledge of history, people, and the way things are. Make note of what is said to see if it fits with known facts.

- ii. Does the person's tone of voice, emphasis, facial expression, and posture fit with the content of the communication? For example, if someone says they aren't angry, but they are clenching their fist and their voice is raised, the message doesn't make sense. Your job as a listener is to recognize the discrepancy.

Asking Questions

Know which questions to ask and when. If you could get every piece of information you want, what would you want to know? The answer to that will help you compose the right question.

9.6 Questioning Techniques

Questions provide answers to the curious mind, things that need reasoning, things people do not understand, and discovery of something new. Questions make people reflect on the way to deal with life and promote a better understanding of why things happen the way it should be.

Questioning techniques are referred to as learning skills that encourage asking questions and knowing the right answers. It is used by everyone in all the spheres of life, for instance, at home, at work, at social gatherings, at meetings, amongst friends, family, colleagues, and even in the presence of strangers. Proper questioning techniques lead to better interpersonal skills and successful communication. Asking the right question is at the heart of effective communications and information exchange. By using the right questions in a particular situation, one can improve a whole range of communications skills. It is used to gather better information and learn more and build stronger relationships, manage people more effectively and help others to learn too.

The need for questioning techniques

- Interaction – the most common form of interaction between teachers and students.
- Challenge – provide motivation by encouraging students to actively participate in learning.
- Influence - can cause integration of skills.
- Progress - asking questions help teacher to promote the level of the students.
- Assessment – the teacher can assess the effectiveness of teaching.

Types of questioning methods

- **Closed question:** Closed questions have very short answers like “yes” or “no” or answers with a word or two. They are usually asked to test if someone has understood certain policies, procedures, rules, regulations, explanations, discussions, lectures.
- **Open questions:** Open questions ask for elaborate/explanatory answers and they begin with what, why, how, describe, explain, where, which, when. They could be questions asking someone to explain what happened at a situation or place, asking why it happened, asking for details of an incident, history of some happenings, explanation about their circumstances, explanation of needs, thoughts about something, ideas, and feedback. Open questions help with a two-way conversation and builds up an interest in the conversation. Open-ended questions require a little more thought and generally encourage wider discussion and elaboration.
- **Probing questions:** These questions are useful for gaining clarification and encouraging others to provide more information about a subject. Probing questions are usually a series of questions that dig deeper and provide a fuller picture.
- **Leading questions:** These questions are designed to lead the respondent towards a certain desired positive or negative route in the workplace.
- **Loaded questions:** Loaded questions are seemingly straightforward, closed questions with a twist. They contain an assumption about the respondent. They are famously used by lawyers and journalists to trick their interviewee into admitting a fundamental truth they would otherwise be unwilling to disclose.
- **Recall and process questions:** Recall questions require the recipient to remember a fact. Process questions, on the other hand, require the respondent to add their own opinion to their answer. These types of questions can be used to test the respondent's depth of knowledge about a particular topic.

- **Rhetorical Questions:** Rhetorical questions are asked to keep people and audience engaged. It also helps people think, be creative and come up with ideas.
- **Clarifying Questions:** Clarifying questions are used to verify information once the discussion or talk is over. This is before the finalisation of the meeting or session in order to confirm what was discussed.

9.7 Learning Activities

Consider a situation when you communicated with a client or any person. In the situation, you expected some actions from the other party. However, what was executed was totally different than expected.

Required:

1. What would have affected the communication between your and the receiver? Why did the receiver do the opposite of what you expected?
2. What listening skills would you recommend in order to avoid such a situation in the future?

9.8 Self-Assessment Questions and Activities

1. Discuss the meaning and characteristics of effective listening
2. What are the different types of listening skills required of anyone working in the freight and logistics sector?
3. What would be some of the barriers to effective listening and how do we reduce such barriers?

9.9 References

- a) Kehoe, D. (2011). Effective Communication Skills. The Great Courses
- b) Locker, K. and Kaczmarek, S. (2013). Business Communication: Building Critical Skills, 6th Edition. McGraw Hill Education
- c) Floyd, K. and Cardon, P. (2020). Business and Professional Communication, 1st Edition. McGraw Hill Education

10.0 INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

10.1 Specific Learning Outcomes

At the end of this topic the trainee should be able:

- i. Explain the meaning of interpersonal communication
- ii. Explain the importance of interpersonal communication
- iii. Describe the principles of interpersonal communication
- iv. Identify types of Interpersonal communication skills

10.2 Meaning of Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communication is the process by which people exchange information through verbal and non-verbal messages. It often includes face-to-face exchange of information, in a form of voice, facial expressions, body language and gestures. The level of one's interpersonal communication skills is measured through the effectiveness of transferring messages to others. Effective interpersonal communication would help make the communication process effortless and smooth.

Interpersonal communication is used commonly within an organization which include daily internal employee's communication, client meetings, employee performance reviews and project discussions. In addition, online conversations today make a large portion of employees' interpersonal communication in the workplace. Interpersonal skills also include:

- Ability to listen and understand
- Problem solving
- Decision making
- Personal stress management.

Effective interpersonal communication requires:

- **Transparency:** As the leader of the team if not transparent in what is being done, interpersonal communication can never be effective.
- **Multiple channels to interact:** This is the sender to receiver. This needs personal presence and action, visual/non-verbal communication, words from person to person or groups, messages in written format, telephone, fax, and e-mail.

- **Clarity in communication:** As a leader of subordinate or peer should keep in mind that preciseness and clarity in what is communicated is important because if not clear interpersonal communication would fail.
- **Feedback:** If the team members are not open to receiving or giving feedback the team would feel demoralized hampering the interpersonal communication.

10.3 Importance of Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communication in the workplace plays an important role in employee satisfaction, motivation, collaboration, and business success. It helps in good interaction with different types of people. It is important in maintaining good relationship within family and with friends.

Interpersonal communication in the workplace plays an important role in employee satisfaction, motivation, collaboration, and business success.

1. Problem solving

Interpersonal communication skills are necessary because they allow people to discuss problems and weigh the pros and cons of alternatives before coming up with the final solution. For example, brainstorming exercises are situations in which interpersonal communication comes into play as it is very important that everyone feels respected and free to share their voice, ideas, and views.

2. Alignment with business goals

Poor communication between employers and employees can harm the business in many ways. When managers and leaders are unable to clearly communicate tasks, workers can quickly become frustrated and disconnected with the business goals. Moreover, many employees say that their managers don't give them clear directions and goals for their work. Therefore, managers should be able to, with proper communication as well as the right internal communication tools, continuously align employees with the business strategy.

3. Trust

Lack of trust and transparency are some of the most common causes of poor workplace communication. Interpersonal communication skills are crucial for improving trust and workplace communication,

and all employees, especially business leaders, should therefore improve communication with their employees.

4. Change management

Good interpersonal communication is very important during change management efforts within organizations. Effective employee communication helps employees better understand the change, align with it, and collaboratively work towards implementing the change successfully.

5. Company culture

Interpersonal relationships, especially when executed well, are important for an organizational culture to thrive. When employees possess good interpersonal communication skills, organizational culture becomes more synergic and positive. With bad interpersonal relationships, on the other hand, negativity, confusion, and conflicts become inevitable. This ultimately ruins the work environment, reduces employee productivity, and adversely affects the company's bottom line.

6. Employee recognition

Good interpersonal communication drives more employee recognition. When employees have good interpersonal relationships with each other and their managers, they are more likely to recognize each other's good work and give constructive feedback.

7. Workplace miscommunication

Managers who maintain professionalism, open workplace communication and a positive attitude are more likely to be seen as approachable by their employees. When employees feel like they can speak openly with decision-makers, workplace miscommunication, gossip and rumours are much less likely to happen.

8. Personal relationships

Interpersonal skills are extremely important for creating and maintaining meaningful personal relationships in the workplace. People with good interpersonal communication skills can, therefore, build healthy relationships with their colleagues and work much better as a team.

9. Effective management and leadership

The ability to foster interpersonal relationships, establish trust and communicate clearly are all crucial skills for an effective leader. When a manager has poor interpersonal communication skills, they

can expect to irritate and confuse employees. In fact, there is a greater need for managers to work on their interpersonal skills than there is for the average employee.

10. Employee success

Good interpersonal communication skills are also necessary for managers to help their employees do their jobs successfully. Leaders need to be able to pass on the right skills to the employees that will enable them to perform their tasks and achieve business goals. Moreover, they should be the ones to teach their employees interpersonal communication skills.

11. Conflict management

Conflict is normal at the workplace, and we can't always expect from our employees to resolve conflicts in a calm and timely manner. When conflicts like this arise, interpersonal communication becomes crucial in resolving them. Conflict management cannot happen without effective interpersonal communication. In fact, all conflict management strategies that use communication to soften situations in stressful environments are much more successful.

12. Career development

As many employers are looking for workers with good communication skills, continuous improvements of interpersonal communication skills can bring career progressions for many employees. In addition, the increasing prevalence of communication technologies means that employees and communicators must adapt to the new employee communication trends.

10.4 Principles of Interpersonal Communication

- Interpersonal communication is inescapable. That is, if one cannot communicate even the body sends a message when one is silent.
- Interpersonal communication is irreversible. This is communication verbally or non-verbally and cannot be asked back. One cannot reword it.
- Interpersonal communication is complicated. Words are actually symbols, given different meanings by different people under different circumstances.
- Interpersonal communication is contextual. Psychological, cultural,

situational, rational and environmental. When and where to speak will have a bearing on the meaning of a message and how it is received.

10.5 Types of Interpersonal Communication Skills

Interpersonal skills are the skills required to effectively communicate both verbally and non-verbally. Interpersonal skills are all about working with other people. Interpersonal skills are actually characteristic traits like manners, attitude, courtesy, habits, behavior and appearance which helps one to communicate and maintain relationship with others. Interpersonal communication skills are also known as life skills. Most interpersonal skills can be grouped under one of four main forms of communication: verbal, listening, written and non-verbal communication.

Some skills such as recognition of stress and attitude are important to all forms of interpersonal communication. Effective communication skills result in mutual understanding. Poor communication wastes time and resources, gets in the way of accomplishing goals and can sour relationships. These skills are explained below:

a) Verbal skills

Verbal skills refer to the extent to which a person can approach words, sentences, written texts verbs, adjectives as well as the extent to which he/she can comprehend meanings, produce synonyms and antonyms, know the meaning, and use of words, complete sentences with words omitted based on the word context and have a critical view towards written speech. A person's verbal skills reflect their general intelligence and their development guarantees at a great extent the attainment of organizational goals.

These kind of skills are partly inborn skills, each person has mother language inside him/her as a living organization and learns it in a subconscious and non-systematic way. This is also learnt in every moment of life through the interaction with other people. Other skill is acquired through knowledge from official obligatory public education (school) in order to develop a common structure as a base upon which the language can develop in a dynamic way throughout lives.

Verbal skills are not always interdependent to a person's educational level or grammatical knowledge but are a reflection verbal fluency and deeper comprehension of the language, the extent of which is each one's personal conquest.

Effective speaking involves three main areas: the words chosen, how to say them, and how to reinforce them with other non-verbal communication. All these affect the transmission of the message, and how it is received and understood by the audience. Therefore, how one speaks includes tone of voice and pace. Like non-verbal communication more generally, these send important messages to the audience, for example, about the level of interest and commitment, or whether one is nervous about a given reaction.

b) Listening skills

Active listening is an important skill. This is listening to the other person. Effective listening is vital for good verbal communication. There are a number of ways that can ensure that one listens more effectively. Effective listening is vital for good verbal communication. There are several ways that ensures that one can listen more effectively. These include:

- **Relaxation:** this is a calm self-confident manner that allows for more coherent verbal expression and gives the impression of an active listener.
- **Positive attitude:** This is state of happiness in a person during communication. All people prefer communicating with the happy, accepting person.
- **Empathy:** This is the ability to share someone else's feelings or experiences. This means by seeing, understanding, and respecting another's point of view, a person gain's respect, and the trust of others as a speaker and is seen as an attentive listener
- **Understanding stress in oneself and others:** This allows for self-monitoring of one's own verbal communication and a greater understanding of a speaker's motivations. When one uses verbal communication, one's tone of voice or word choice is affected by internal feelings of stress and as well understand when one is listening to someone who's speech is affected by stress. This allows one to compensate accordingly.

- **Assertiveness:** This quality is essential and fundamental during negotiation. The participant's express beliefs in a way others can understand but also respect the thoughts and feelings of all involved.
- **Teamwork:** This includes adaptability and flexibility in dealing with differing personalities and differing interpersonal skill levels.

c) Written skills

Writing skills include all the knowledge and abilities related to expressing ideas through the written word. The ability to clearly communicate ideas through writing is in high demand for employers in any industry. Well-written documents, emails and posts can persuade customers to purchase a product or convince investors to partner with a company. Technical knowledge about writing conventions, style guides and formatting for different situations are also an important part of writing skills. Knowing what situations call for different styles of writing and being able to set an appropriate tone over text are both important writing skills that any person can use at work.

These include:

- **Analysis:** Strong analytical and research skills are key in expressing new ideas and getting them accepted by co-workers and senior management.
- **Computer and technical literacy:** These skills are essential in the business world as most of the written communication and all analysis of data is done using a computer.
- **Professionalism:** This quality is important in all forms of interpersonal communication including written communication: standard formats for business correspondence are common and spelling mistakes and grammatical errors are unacceptable eroding a worker's value in the firm.

Writing skills are important because they allow people to get a point across without being physically present. Many employers get their first impression of future employees through the writing skills they display in their resume, cover letter and email communications.

Writing skills influence the quality of one's work and how others perceive one's professionalism, which have a direct effect on one's ability to get an interview and excel at work. Writing skills are transferrable, so developing a strong understanding of writing processes allows one to maintain clear communication and accurate documentation in any workplace.

d) Non-verbal interpersonal skills

Non-verbal Communication is the communication without words. Non-verbal communication is a process of communication through sending and receiving wordless messages. The power of non-verbal communication helps in creating an image in others mind and even one can express motions and feelings in front of others, which one is unable to express in words. These skills include:

- **Facial expressions.** The human face is extremely expressive, able to convey countless emotions without saying a word. And unlike some forms of non-verbal communication, facial expressions are universal. The facial expressions for happiness, sadness, anger, surprise, fear, and disgust are the same across cultures.
- **Body movement and posture:** This considering how one's perceptions of people are affected by the way they sit, walk, stand, or hold their hands. The way they move and carry themselves communicates a wealth of information to the world. This type of non-verbal communication includes posture, bearing, stance, and the subtle movements ones makes.
- **Gestures:** Gestures are woven into the fabric of one's daily lives. These include waving, point, beckon, or use of hands when arguing or speaking animatedly, often expressing oneself with gestures without thinking. However, the meaning of some gestures can be very different across cultures. While the "OK" sign made with the hand, for example, usually conveys a positive message in English-speaking countries, it's considered offensive in countries such as Germany, Russia, and Brazil.
- **Eye contact:** Since the visual sense is dominant for most people, eye contact is an especially important type of non-verbal communication. The way one looks at someone can communicate many things, including interest, affection, hostility, or

attraction. Eye contact is also important in maintaining the flow of conversation and for gauging the other person's interest and response.

- **Touch:** Touch brings about different messages given by a weak handshake, a warm bear hug, a patronizing pat on the head, or a controlling grip on the arm among others.
- **Space:** This includes a person standing too close and invading one's space or too far. There is need for physical space, although that need differs depending on the culture, the situation, and the closeness of the relationship. The use of physical space to communicate many different non-verbal messages, includes signals of intimacy and affection, aggression, or dominance.
- **Voice.** The voice is reflected in how a message is said not what one says the message. When one speaks, other people read the voice in addition to listening to the words. Things they pay attention to include timing and pace, how loud one speaks, tone and inflection, and sounds that convey understanding.

10.6 Learning Activities

You have been appointed the Communications Officer for Jambo Global Logistics Ltd. The organization has different types of logistics customers based in different parts of East Africa who are involved with export and imports of cargo. You have requested to make a presentation to the directors of the company on the "Application of Interpersonal Communication Skills for Business Success".

Required:

1. Identify the different interpersonal skills that an employee of a Jambo Logistics should possess
2. Based on the identified skills, discuss how the same would be applicable to Jambo Logistics for effective communications with the customers.
3. List down the Do's and Don'ts that the employees of Jambo Logistics should take in consideration when communicating with customers.

10.7 Self-Assessment Questions and Activities

1. What do you understand by interpersonal communication and why is this important in a freight and logistics firm?
2. Describe the principles of interpersonal communication
3. What are the types of Interpersonal communication skills?

10.8 References

- a) Kehoe, D. (2011). Effective Communication Skills. The Great Courses
- b) Locker, K. and Kaczmarek, S. (2013). Business Communication: Building Critical Skills, 6th Edition. McGraw Hill Education
- c) Floyd, K. and Cardon, P. (2020). Business and Professional Communication, 1st Edition. McGraw Hill Education

11.0 REPORT WRITING

11.1 Specific Learning Outcomes

At the end of this topic the trainee should be able:

- i. Explain the purpose and scope of reports
- ii. Identify the types of reports
- iii. Explain the structure and content of a report
- iv. Discuss the contents of a report

11.2 Purpose and Scope of Reports

A report is a basic management tool used in decision making and it carries information from someone who has it to someone who needs it. The purpose for which reports may be written include:

- To provide an account of something witnessed or investigated
- To inform the management about work progress
- Report performance
- To recommend improvements
- To meet statutory/legal requirements
- Act as an aid in decision making
- Monitor and control operations
- Used in obtaining funding
- Analyse facts.

11.3 Types of Reports

A report is a form of systematic presentation of information relating to an event, progress of action or some business activity. It is a written statement of results, events, conditions, progress, or interpretation of records.

There are two major types of Reports

1. Business Report
2. Field Report

11.4 Forms of Reports

There are two types namely oral and written reports. Oral reports are simple presentations of observations, impressions among others. Written reports are preferred because:

- An oral report can be denied but a written report has a permanent record
- An oral report tends to be vague while a written report is usually accurate and precise
- A written report can be circulated to many people

- Distortion of information is not possible in written reports
- Written reports can be referred to again and again

Written reports can be classified in various ways:

a) On the basis of legal formalities

Informal Reports

- They are written in form of a letter from one person to another
- Do not follow any prescribed format or procedure
- Do not have any uniform structure
- Prepared according to the convenience and requirements of the organization
- May be informative or recommendatory.

Formal Reports

A formal report is one which is prepared in a prescribed form and is presented according to an established procedure to a prescribed authority, and they include:

- **Statutory Reports:** A report prepared according to the form and procedure laid down by law e.g., auditors report.
- **Non – Statutory Reports:** A formal report, which is not required under any law, and is prepared to help management in policy making or taking other important decisions.

b) On the basis of frequency of issues

- **Periodic Reports/Routine Reports:** Prepared and presented at regular intervals in the usual business routine e.g., yearly.
- **Special Reports:** They are related to a single occasion or situation. They deal with non-recurrent issues/problems.

c) On the basis of subject

- **Fact finding reports:** it is concerned with gathering information
- **Problem determining report:** it is concerned with investigating causes of certain problems and making recommendations to solve them.
- **Performance reports:** It is concerned with attainment of objectives.

11.5 Business Reports

A business report conveys information to assist in business decision making. Some reports might present the actual solution to solve a business problem; other reports may record past business information that is used towards future business planning.

Report	Purpose
Periodic Operating Reports	To monitor and control production, sales, shipping, service, etc.
Situational Report	To describe one-time events, such as trips, conferences, and seminars.
Investigative/ Informational	To examine problems and supply facts – with little analysis.
Compliance	To respond to government agencies and laws.
Justification/ Recommendation	To make recommendations to management and become tools to solve problems and make decisions.
Yardstick	To establish criteria and evaluate alternatives by measuring against the “yardstick” criteria.
Feasibility	To analyze problems and predict whether alternatives will be practical or advisable.
Research Studies	To study problems scientifically by analyzing a problem, developing hypotheses, collecting data, analyzing data, and drawing conclusions.
Proposals	To offer to solve problems, investigate ideas, or sell products and services.

11.6 Components of the Reports

Reports are designed to convey and record information that will be of practical use to the readers. Reports should be organized into discrete units of specific and highly visible information. Good reports are documents that are accurate, objective, and complete. They should also be well written, clearly structured and expressed in a way that holds the reader’s attention and meets their expectations. A report is an orderly, objective message used to convey information from one organizational area to another or from one institution to another to assist in decision making or problem solving. It has the following characteristics

- Logically organized
- Objective in tone
- For a limited audience
- Brief and precise
- Accurate
- Clear
- Relevant
- Reader oriented
- Objective
- Complete
- Interesting/readable

11.7 Preparation of the Business Reports

There is need for planning for report writing even before beginning the research process. This enable the writer to save time and be focused on why and how the report is prepared. The report writing process goes through the following steps:

- Identifying the audience, purpose and due date
- Decide what the report will cover
- Determine how long each part of the report will take to prepare and in what order the parts will be completed
- Decide on the report style (layout and writing style). You will choose a writing style based on the audience, the level of formality of the report and the report’s purpose, among many other things
- Begin a research and collect source list for the final report
- Organize findings and write the report introduction
- Include results in the body of the report
- Form conclusions and recommendations if appropriate
- Enhance report with graphics

- Write the preliminary pages of the report (summary, table of contents, title page)
- Revise for most effective layout design and writing style

In generating report, especially business reports, the following steps are to be considered:

1. Determine the scope of the report
2. Consider the target audience (readers)
3. Gather and organize the supporting information (Research)
4. Analyze and weigh the supporting information
5. Determine the solution, findings and/or recommendations
6. Determine the report format.

Determine the scope of the report

Most reports are required to support specific organizational objectives, strategies, and decision-making. It is therefore critical that there is a clear connection in argument and evidence between the purpose of the report, the research and the subsequent solutions, findings, or recommendations. The greater the connection the greater the weight the report will have in supporting the decision-making process. When choosing a focus for a report, it is advisable to narrow the scope to a report length. The scope of the reports is determined by the factors which will be studied or included.

Consider the target audience.

A report must be aligned with the intended audience. Business reports normally have a number of different audience groups to reach so a report will often have a hierarchical structure to support different levels of detail. Many people may be involved in the decision-making process and they will have different levels of information requirement to support their decision-making process. In designing the report format and style the following target audience characteristics should be considered:

- Their need for the report (e.g., financial approval, operational planning, resource allocation).
- Education level i.e., their ability to understand and rationalize the document.
- Position in the organization i.e., authority for information contained in the document
- Knowledge of the report's topic (i.e., purpose).
- Responsibility or authority to make decisions based on the report.

- Personal demographics (i.e., age, alliances, attitudes).

It is advisable to compile a list of all intended readers and develop a profile for them. Audiences are basically of three types:

- **Primary Audience** – People who have to make decisions on the basis of the business report for example Commissioner General, head of Department, Commissioner of Customs, Etc.
- **Secondary Audience** – people who are affected by the actions the primary audiences would take in response to the position of the business report for example customs agents, employees, importers, and exporters Etc.
- **Immediate Audience** – People responsible for examining the business report, weighing its viability, and distributing the report to a broader audience for example Supervisors, station managers, line managers, operational managers, Etc.

In determining the number of versions of reports required where you have varying levels of audiences, the writer/author should consider the following audience decision needs:

- How much background (supporting factual data, analytical findings, solutions, and recommendations) will the audience need?
- Do they need to define any terms used within the report? If so, are they included in definition of terms or a glossary?
- What language (technical complexity) will be most appropriate for the target audience?
- How many and what kind of visual aids should be used for the target audience?
- What will the target audiences expect from the business report?
- Does the audience/reader prefer everything given in detail or merely a brief presentation that touches upon the highlights?

Gather and organize the supporting information

With a clear understanding of the purpose and scope of the report as well as whom the target audience is the next step is data collection and data organization. Data can be collected at two levels:

- **Primary Data** – data obtained from the original source for example data collected firsthand from customers, employees, observing & recording of business activities in real time, etc.

- Secondary data - information obtained from historical information sources or data which has been gathered from other studies or business processes.

At the time of gathering the information, it is critical to generate a methodology on how to record and organize (quality control) the information. Immense volumes of information are difficult to analyze if they are not organized.

To enable business reports audiences, make business decisions based on the report, it is also important to explain the procedures or methods that were used in the research process. This supports the data's credibility and in turn allows the decision makers to weigh the significance of the information.

In organizing the information one can use tables, graphs, charts, colours, diagrams, pictures etc to facilitate effective communication with the intended audience.

Analyze and weigh the supporting information

The purpose of analysis is to make sense of the information that has been gathered. The results of the analysis need to be balanced, justifiable and where possible quantifiable. Detailed facts and figures have to be interpreted by explaining what they mean, what significance they have to the purpose of the report and how significant they are to the audience's decision-making process. In practice, this main content section of the report should be presented in a summarized format and have references attached to the report for the detailed data and analysis.

Determine the solution, findings and /or recommendations

A business report should provide managers with the necessary information to support effective decision making to achieve organizational objectives. Report solutions, finding and recommendations provide a critique of information that will guide the process of decision making. It is critical that there is relationship between the research, analysis and subsequent outcomes that arise from the evidence.

Determining the report format

Before writing, organize your information into an outline form. You can formulate an outline of your report by choosing the major and supporting ideas, developing the details, and eliminating unnecessary

ideas you've gathered. This outline becomes the basic structure of your report.

11.8 Basic Principles in Preparing a Report

Regardless of the form that a report takes, it will be subjected to a set of basic rules or principles. These are to ensure that the report is logically constructed, and to encourage the writer to present it in an accepted format. These basic principles are:

- a) A title which indicates the general contents of the report.
- b) It should be addressed to the people or person for whom it is intended.
- c) The terms of reference, under which the report has been prepared should be stated. Where it is a regular routine report, headings are often pre-printed, and it is only necessary to amend them if they are changed.
- d) Some sort of introduction, preamble or background is useful before the main body of the report.
- e) The body of the report should contain:
 - The nature of any investigations carried out
 - Any limiting factors
 - A statement of the sources of information used
 - A statement of facts and opinions discovered during the investigation
 - Clear arguments and hypothesis arising from the investigations.
- f) Conclusions should be indicated if these are needed. They should be the subject of a separate heading or section. All conclusions should be supportable from the main research carried out.
- g) Make recommendations and they should be put separately under proper headings
- h) The report should be dated and signed, and the author's name appended to it.
- i) Report to include charts, statistics, graphs, and other material, and where these are extensive, they can be included as appendices. Where necessary also, other resources or bodies of information should be included as appendices.
- j) Where reports are extensive, it is usual to give an executive summary, and summary of conclusions and recommendations, right at the start.
- k) It is useful to give a table of contents

The purpose of taking this approach is to make the report easy and accessible to the reader. To ensure the report is easy and accessible to the readers:

- The report should be addressed to some definite authority
- It should contain a short and clear title to indicate the subject at a glance
- As the report is written on the advice or request, it should quote that in the terms of reference so that it is clear why the report is required.
- The body of the report should be planned and written in a logical sequence preferably with headings.
- The recommendations should be highlighted to attract attention/action of the reader.
- It should be signed and dated.

11.9 Structure and Contents of Business Reports

Some reports are produced on prepared forms e.g., visit and site reports. Scientific and technical reports follow clear structural conventions. Sometimes organizations have established procedures on how to write their reports. However, most formal business reports follow a similar structure;

1. Title page
2. Acknowledgement
3. Abstract/Executive Summary
4. Table of contents
5. Introduction
6. Discussion /Findings
7. Conclusions
8. Recommendations
9. Appendices
10. References
11. Bibliography

Title page

This normally includes;

- Company name, logo and address
- Title – the biggest and boldest element
- Reference number
- Author's name
- Subject & Number
- Date of Submission

Executive Summary

Concise summary of the essential elements of the report

- Purpose
- Scope

- Main points
- Conclusions
- Recommendations
- Independent (can be read on its own)
- Comprehensive (covers all the main points)
- Clear and concise
- Short, only 10-15% of the length of the report (maximum ONE side)
- Written in full sentences and paragraphs

An outline of how the report is organized in terms of headings and subheadings as well as page numbers. Use a format that is easy to refer and is able to give a clear picture of how the report is organized at a glance.

Introduction

States the purpose, assumptions, main argument, and structure of the report and also explains why the report is necessary.

Discussion

This is the main body of the report. Use headings to clearly identify the content and discuss in details main argument. It incorporates relevant theory using references as appropriate.

Conclusions

This is drawn from evidence, interpretation and evaluation presented in the discussion. Do not introduce new material here. It should follow logically from the discussion. Conclusions section should give a highlight of the Key points and NOT just another Executive Summary.

Recommendations

These are suggestions for possible actions based on the research. Recommendations to business community or other relevant groups as appropriate

11.10 Field Report

Field reports are reports that may be written in an office environment, but list results and other data obtained from a field. They are sometimes called field trip reports. An example of a field report would be a report written about observations during a study tour or excursion. This could be a report put together from notes taken literally in a field. But there are other types of field reports. A company may send an employee to various branches of the organization to collect information about how each branch functions in relation to the organizational network. For any field report, there are steps that you can take to help ensure that yours is effective and professional.

The steps followed in writing a field report

1. Take good notes when you're on your trip.
List dates with each observation you make. If the weather or any other factor has an influence on what you're observing, note the factor for inclusion in the report. If you do any interviews, write the names of interviewees and their job titles or function.
2. Begin writing your report after your field trip.
Start by writing your name, the date, and a title of the report. The title could simply be "Field Trip" followed by the date. If the field trip had a specific purpose, this should be included in the title.
3. Follow the title with a statement about why the field trip was made, the date(s) of the trip and a general summary of the observations or results from the trip. This can be under a section header such as "Overview."
4. Write the body of the report.
It can be written in a number of different ways, depending on the context of your trip. You could use an organizational structure such as the types of activities that were performed, the names of people interviewed or the species of animal that were observed. If nothing comes to mind, use a simple chronological order and write about what occurred day by day.
5. Finish your field report with a conclusion.
This can be of a personal nature but can be supported by the data and observations that were introduced in the body of the report.

The structure of reports depends on the type of a report for example:

a) Letter format/form

- Suitable for informal reports
- It should start with the heading/title, address, date, salutation

The body should have:

- Introduction – this shows the terms of reference for example who, what, when, deadline and statement of submission
- Procedure that is the methods used to gather information
- Findings that are the Facts, the use headings and numbering
- Conclusion (deductions) that is the logical implications of the findings

- Recommendations that are the suggestions for action to rectify a problem/decision making
- Complimentary close with the Signature, Name and Designation

b) Memorandum

MEMORANDUM

To: Date
From: (Title)
Ref:
Subject:
Terms of Reference
Procedure
Findings
Conclusion
Recommendations
Report Compiled by: Signature - Name

c) Schematic Format

A report written using the schematic format should consist of the following six major sections:

- Title
- Terms of reference
- Procedures e.g., in order to obtain the necessary information, the following procedures were adopted/used.
- Findings Facts/objective – use headings/ numbering
- Conclusion deductions/logical implications of the findings
- Recommendations (which must be based on the findings and Suggestions of action that should be taken to solve a problem or help in decision making.

The report should also bear a statement 'Report compiled by: followed by the Signature, Name and Designation of the writer, and the Date.

11.11 Learning Activities

You have been appointed the Communications and Customer Service Officer for Jambo Global Logistics Ltd. The organization has different types of logistics customers based in different parts of East Africa who are involved with export and imports of cargo. As part of your orientation, you visited some customers and spoke to other son phone as you tried to understand their expectations. From your engagement you have identified various issues and would like to communicate and recommend to management.

Required:

1. Identify the type of report you will write to management
2. Indicate the structure and possible contents for the report to management
3. Draft the contents of the report – at least a 5-page report.

11.12 Self-Assessment Questions and Activities

1. What are the uses of reports in business organizations?
2. What types of reports can be generated in the freight and logistics sector?
3. What are the key issues to consider when developing a report?

11.13 References

- a) Kehoe, D. (2011). Effective Communication Skills. The Great Courses
- b) Locker, K. and Kaczmarek, S. (2013). Business Communication: Building Critical Skills, 6th Edition. McGraw Hill Education
- c) Floyd, K. and Cardon, P. (2020). Business and Professional Communication, 1st Edition. McGraw Hill Education

[illegible]

NOTES

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

This publication was sponsored by:



TRADE
MARK
EAST AFRICA

Growing Prosperity Through Trade

www.trademarka.com



**Federation of East African Freight
Forwarders Associations (FEAFFA)**

Hillcrest Court, Waiyaki Way, Slip Road, Westlands
P.O. Box 22694 – 00400 Tom Mboya, Nairobi Kenya
Tel: +254 (0) 738 150 673, +254 (0) 738 165 318
Email: info@feaffa.com | Website: www.feaffa.com



Federation of East African Freight Forwarders Associations (FEAFFA)



@FEAFFA



/FEAFFA