

Types of Communication- by Ms. Lipsa Samal

1. Formal Communication

[Formal](#) communications are the one which flows through the official channels designed in the organizational chart. It may take place between a superior and a subordinate, a subordinate and a superior or among the same cadre employees or managers. These communications can be oral or in writing and are generally recorded and filed in the office.

Formal communication may be further classified as Vertical communication and Horizontal communication.

Vertical Communication

[Vertical Communications](#) as the name suggests flows vertically upwards or downwards through formal channels. Upward communication refers to the flow of communication from a subordinate to a superior whereas downward communication flows from a superior to a subordinate.

Application for grant of leave, submission of a progress report, request for loans etc. are some of the examples of upward communication. Sending notice to employees to attend a meeting, delegating work to the subordinates, informing them about the company policies, etc. are some examples of downward communication.

Horizontal Communication

Horizontal or lateral communication takes place between one division and another. For example, a production manager may contact the finance manager to discuss the delivery of raw material or its purchase.

Types of communication networks in formal communication:

- **Single chain:** In this type of network communications flows from every superior to his subordinate through a single chain.
- **Wheel:** In this network, all subordinates under one superior communicate through him only. They are not allowed to talk among themselves.
- **Circular:** In this type of network, the communication moves in a circle. Each person is able to communicate with his adjoining two persons only.
- **Free flow:** In this network, each person can communicate with any other person freely. There is no restriction.

- **Inverted V:** In this type of network, a subordinate is allowed to communicate with his immediate superior as well as his superior's superior also. However, in the latter case, only ordained communication takes place.

2. Informal Communication

Any communication that takes place without following the formal channels of communication is said to be [informal](#) communication. The Informal communication is often referred to as the 'grapevine' as it spreads throughout the organization and in all directions without any regard to the levels of authority.

The informal communication spreads rapidly, often gets distorted and it is very difficult to detect the source of such communication. It also leads to rumors which are not true. People's behavior is often affected by the rumors and informal discussions which sometimes may hamper the work environment.

However, sometimes these channels may be helpful as they carry information rapidly and, therefore, may be useful to the manager at times. Informal channels are also used by the managers to transmit information in order to know the reactions of his/her subordinates.

Learn more about [7 C's of Communication here in detail](#).

Types of Grapevine network:

- **Single strand:** In this network, each person communicates with the other in a sequence.
- **Gossip network:** In this type of network, each person communicates with all other persons on a non-selective basis.
- **Probability network:** In this network, the individual communicates randomly with other individuals.
- **Cluster Network:** In this network, the individual communicates with only those people whom he trusts. Out of these four types of networks, the Cluster network is the most popular in organizations.

Barriers to Communication

The [communication barriers](#) may prevent communication or carry incorrect meaning due to which misunderstandings may be created. Therefore, it is essential for a manager to identify such barriers and take appropriate measures to overcome them. The barriers to communication in organizations can be broadly grouped as follows:

1. Semantic Barriers

These are concerned with the problems and obstructions in the process of encoding and decoding of a message into words or impressions. Normally, such barriers result due to use of wrong words, faulty translations, different interpretations, etc.

For example, a manager has to communicate with workers who have no knowledge of the English language and on the other side, he is not well conversant with the Hindi language. Here, language is a barrier to communication as the manager may not be able to communicate properly with the workers.

2. Psychological Barriers

Emotional or psychological factors also act as barriers to communication. The state of mind of both sender and receiver of communication reflects in effective communication. A worried person cannot communicate properly and an angry recipient cannot understand the message properly.

Thus, at the time of communication, both the sender and the receiver need to be psychologically sound. Also, they should trust each other. If they do not believe each other, they cannot understand each other's message in its original sense.

3. Organizational Barriers

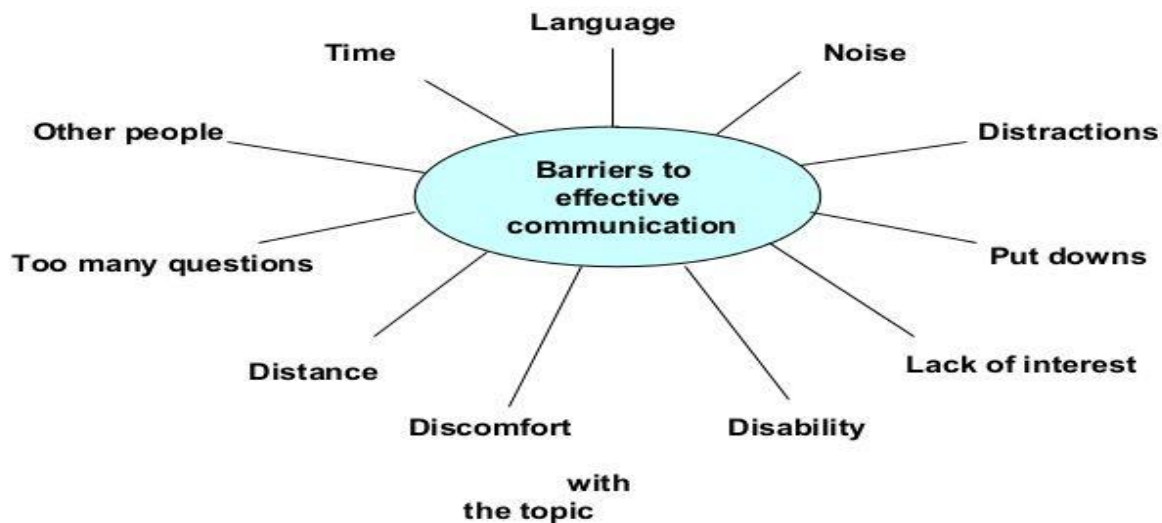
The factors related to organizational structure, rules and regulations authority relationships, etc. may sometimes act as barriers to effective communication. In an organization with a highly centralized pattern, people may not be encouraged to have free communication. Also, rigid rules and regulations and cumbersome procedures may also become a hurdle to communication.

4. Personal Barriers

The personal factors of both sender and receiver may act as a barrier to [effective communication](#). If a superior thinks that a particular communication may adversely affect his authority, he may suppress such communication.

Also, if the superiors do not have confidence in the competency of their subordinates, they may not ask for their advice. The subordinates may not be willing to offer useful suggestions in the absence of any reward or appreciation for a good suggestion.

Barriers to Effective Communication



1. Semantic barriers,
2. Psychological barriers,
3. Organisational barriers,
4. Personal barriers, and
5. Mechanical barriers.

1. Semantic Barriers:

This denotes barriers of language and symbols and their interpretation. Every language consists of symbols used to transmit meaning from one person to another. Even the Morse code and mathematical symbols are used in a language for communication purpose. The barriers are from the linguistic capability of the individual involved in the communication.

The following are the different types of semantic barriers:

i. Poor Quality of Message:

When a message is prepared, it must be consistent in all respects like – clarity, precision and usage of appropriate words to express the ‘idea’ to be transmitted. It should be in simple words, easily

understood by the receiver. Otherwise it becomes non-specific and the receiver will have a difficulty in following it properly.

ii. Faulty Transmission:

When message is received from the superior to the subordinate, the individual receiving it must be able to translate it to different categories of subordinates having the constraints of level of understanding and their IQ. It does require proper interpretation of the message received to help disseminate the information to the subordinates.

iii. Lack of Clarity:

In all the messages, there are certain ideas, which need to be understood correctly. In other words, the meaning between the lines of the message must be well-perceived by the receiver. If it is not, there is every likelihood of the message being misunderstood leading to confusion.

iv. Technical Language:

It is often seen that technical language is used by specialist persons in their communication. This may not be known by a common man. As far as possible, when communicating to common people, it must be in a simple language, common to all. For example, take the case of a doctor, who prescribes medicine to a patient and writes 'TDS' (an abbreviation of three times a day). An ordinary patient may not be able to understand this unless it is written in a simple language, or the abbreviation is explained to him.

2. Psychological Barriers:

In interpersonal communication, the psychological state of mind of the sender, as well as that of the receiver makes lot of difference. When an individual is under emotion, his tone overpowers the script of the message. This creates an obstacle in normal communication leading to emotional barriers.

Following are psychological barriers:

i. Premature Evaluation:

This premature evaluation is the possible outcome of message before it is transmitted to the receiver. Such an evaluation may prematurely conclude the message may not bring the desired result, thereby he withholds the message. This is an important psychological factor of communication barrier.

ii. Inadequate Attention:

Normally, in a communication this happens at the receiver's end due to carelessness and not listening properly what the person at the other end is telling. This takes place in fact to face communication or in attending telephones.

iii. Transmission Losses and Poor Retention:

When communication passes through various hands and levels in an organisation, the transmission of the message by various persons tends to become inaccurate or corrupt. This happens in written as well as vocal communication. In the latter, the receiver may not retain the message as it was transmitted to him due to poor retention capability, thus leading to confusion at a later stage.

iv. Undue Stress on Written Message:

In an organisation every executive believes that written message, instructions and orders would be better, since the chances of any miscarriage of the message are almost nil. When face to face communication of a message takes place between a superior and subordinate, it not only makes better understanding but is also effective. It does instil confidence in the subordinate in so far as execution of the orders instructions is concerned. No doubt, it is a better medium of communication than the written one.

v. Lack of Trust in the Sender by the Receiver:

When a communicator (sender) frequently alters the original communication, the receiver at the other end will normally delay the action warranted by the message. This happens due to uncertain decisions often taken by the sender. Thus, the communication becomes ineffective, for various alterations and additions. This is an example of lack of confidence on the part of the sender.

vi. Failure to Communicate:

At times, the superior/manager fails to communicate the desired information/order, etc. This may be the cause of flippant attitude of the sender or his apathy. For instance, the sender's over confidence that the message has already been conveyed to the people is likely to create confusion and embarrassment.

3. Organisational Barriers:

This depends upon the general organisational policy governing the communication network of the organisation. Such policy might be a written text explaining various aspects of communication, especially the upward, downward and lateral since it is desirable to bring an effective communication flow in the organisation.

The barrier on this aspect is discussed below:

i. Restrictions Imposed by Rules of Organisation:

Normally, the information is to be passed to higher ups through proper channel. This gets delayed while passing through the hierarchical ladder. Instructions in general for passing messages must be given. Also, specific instructions for handling important messages need to be explained to all in order to avoid delays.

ii. Status/Hierarchical Positions Restrict the Flow of Communication:

Status and/or position of an individual make a lot of difference in personal dealings. Superior/subordinate capacity in formal organisation also prevents free flow of communication. This happens especially in case of upward communication. A person from the lower rung in the hierarchy may find it difficult to approach directly the top executive of the organisation.

iii. Complex Situation of the Organisation:

Large organisations, where there are a number of levels in managerial posts for communication may get distorted. This takes place due to censoring of the message when transmitted in the upward direction; since people are usually hesitant to inform the superiors about the adverse aspects.

4. Personal Barriers:

These barriers are those, which occur in communication, according to personal constraints at various levels of organisation such as:

i. Attitude of Superiors:

Attitude of the superiors play as vital role in the communication process; whether it is upward or downward or in any other direction. Therefore, the attitude of superior, either favourable or unfavourable affects the flow of communication, i.e., from superior to subordinate and vice versa.

ii. Insistence on Following Proper Channel:

Superiors instruct their subordinates to follow the proper channel, while communicating. They do not want that a subordinate bypasses them and goes direct to the next higher authority. They always want to be in touch with the communication process, so as to help them to know what is happening in their jurisdiction.

During emergency situation, there may be a need to bypass the superior; however, the superior may not like it. He may prevent it and instruct the subordinates to keep him in the picture with whatever information / message being passed to higher up, as and when occasion arises.

iii. Lack of Confidence in Subordinate:

It is a general perception that subordinates are not competent enough to advise superiors, since they do not possess the capacity to do so. This apprehension makes the superior to have lack of

confidence in subordinates. However, this idea may not be correct, as there are more able subordinates than their superiors in many respects.

iv. Preoccupation of Superior:

A superior feels that there is no necessity to communicate him each and every matter, as he is always preoccupied with his own work. Supervisor's involvement with their subordinate is a major requirement for efficiency, which many superiors ignore due to lack of time as an excuse.

v. Lack of Awareness:

Inadequate knowledge about the importance of communication and its usefulness in various ways, at times, the superiors may not give desired attention to it. This may lead to restricted or poor transmission of communication affecting the organisation. This can lead to inefficiency and mismanagement.

vi. Hesitation to Communicate:

This happens to be a cause with subordinates not to communicate with their superiors. Subordinates show unwillingness to convey the superior certain information; since such part of information may have an adverse effect on them. Thus, the hesitation to communicate takes place.

5. Mechanical Barriers:

Mechanical barriers are another group of factors putting barriers in the smooth flow of communication.

They are:

- i. Inadequate arrangements for transmission of message
- ii. Poor office layout
- iii. Detective procedure and practices
- iv. Use of wrong medium.

i. Inadequate Arrangement for Transmission of Message:

The arrangements include proper coding and decoding facilities. This is normally carried out through coding machines and trained staff to operate such machines. When important information is sent under different classification, top secret, secret, confidential, etc., adequate care has to be taken in its transmission. It should not be leaked out to unauthorised persons. Safety and security of classified information need to be handled by responsible staff.

ii. Poor Office Layout:

A proper information centre is an inescapable necessity to transmit the messages with in the organisation and outside. Therefore, various types of information transmitting through like wireless sets, radio communication system, electronic machines- FAX, e-mail, etc., are required. The infrastructural facilities to accommodate these systems are very essential for effective communication. In their absence there can be various obstacles in the transmission of information.

iii. Defective Procedures and Practices:

There must be defined procedures for docketing of incoming and outgoing messages properly maintained in an information centre. Also, proper arrangements to allot priority messages like immediate, most immediate, etc., and their subsequent transmissions, if all these are not looked into, the very purpose of communicating will be defeated.

iv. Use of Wrong Medium:

This is another barrier in mechanical communication. It is the responsibility of the sender of the message to select the right medium. For example, let us take despatch of letters from one organisation to another at a distant place.

Whether the letter should go by an ordinary mail of Speed post, Courier, FAX or e-mail, depends on the exigency (urgency) of the action to be taken at the receiving end. This aspect needs to be decided by the sender himself at all times. Thus, the sender must select a proper medium of communication.

What are Barriers of Communication – 4 Major Barriers: Semantic Barriers, Psychological Barriers, Organisational Barriers and Personal Barriers

It can be broadly grouped as:

- i. Semantic barriers,
- ii. Psychological barriers,
- iii. Organisational barriers and
- iv. Personal barriers.

i. Semantic Barriers:

Semantics is the study of right choice of words. The semantic network of sender may be different from that of the receiver and therefore, the message may not be understood as intended.

The word 'profits' has different meaning — pre-tax profits or post-tax profits, fixed amount of profit or rate of return.

- (a) Symbols with different meanings – A word can have different meaning in different contexts. Wrong perception leads to communication problems.
- (b) Badly expressed message – It may happen on account of omission of needed words, inadequate vocabulary, usage of wrong words, etc.
- (c) Unclear assumptions – Certain assumptions of the communication are subject to different interpretations.
- (d) Technical Jargon – Sometimes people may not understand the actual meaning of technical jargon or language used by specialists.
- (e) Faulty translations – Sometimes mistakes may creep in if translator who is not proficient in both English and Hindi is involved in translating the communication.
- (f) Body language and gesture decoding – Communication may be wrongly perceived if there is no match between what is said and what is expressed in body movements.

ii. Psychological/Emotional barriers:

Communication will be disrupted if state of mind of both sender and receiver of communication is not in an ideal position.

- (a) Premature evaluation – If a person has pre-conceived notions against the communication, then he will evaluate the meaning of message before the sender completes his message.
- (b) Loss by transmission and poor retention – Successive transmission of the message results in inaccurate information. Usually people cannot retain the information for long time if they are inattentive or not interested.
- (c) Lack of attention – Non-listening of message due to pre-occupied mind of the receiver acts as a major psychological barrier.

iii. Organisational Barriers:

These are:

- (a) Organisational policy – Effectiveness of communication may be hampered if organisational policy is not supportive to free flow of communications.
- (b) Status – A status conscious manager may not allow his subordinates to express their feelings freely.
- (c) Rules and regulations – Rigid rules and cumbersome procedures may be a hurdle to communication.

(d) Complexity in organisation structure – Communication gets delayed and distorted if there are number of managerial levels in an organisation.

(e) Organisational facilities – Communications may be hampered if facilities for smooth, clear and timely communications are not provided.

iv. Personal Barriers:

These are:

(a) Fear of challenge to authority – A superior may withhold or suppress communication if he thinks that a particular communication may adversely affect his authority.

(b) Lack of confidence of superior on his subordinates – Superiors may not seek advice or opinions of their subordinates if they do not have confidence on the competency of their subordinates.

(c) Unwillingness to communicate – If subordinates perceive that it may adversely affect their interests, then they may not be prepared to communicate with their superiors.

(d) Lack of proper incentives – Subordinates may not take initiative to communicate if there is no motivation or incentive for communication.

Measures which can be used to overcome the barriers of communication are:

(a) Clarify the ideas before communication – Before communicating to employees, a manager should make an analysis of the subject matter/problem. The purpose of communication must be very clear.

(b) Consult others before communicating – A manager while making plan for communication should encourage participation of subordinates which will ensure their support and cooperation.

(c) Communicate according to the needs of receiver – First of all, the understanding level of employees should be considered and then adjustments be made in communication by the manager.

(d) Be aware of languages, tone and content of message – Language, tone and content of message should be so adjusted according to the situation that it is easily understood by the receiver and stimulates them.

(e) Convey things of help and value to listeners – To get good response from the subordinates, it should be ensured that the message relates to their interests.

(f) Ensure feedback – For success of communication, response of the listeners should be encouraged by the manager.

(g) Communicate for present as well as future – For communication to be successful, managers should incorporate existing commitments as well as future goals of the organisation.

(h) Follow up communication – Sometimes it is difficult to implement instructions in totality by the subordinates. To overcome this, regular follow up should be done by managers.

(i) Be a good listener – Lot of problems can be solved due to attentive listening quality of the manager.

What are Barriers of Communication – 3 Important Barriers: Physical Barriers, Psychological Barriers and Semantic Barriers

Managers frequently cite that communication breakdown is one of their most important problems. However, communication problems are often symptoms of more deeply rooted problems. For example, poor planning may be the cause of uncertainty about the direction of the firm.

Similarly, a poorly designed organisation structure may not clearly communicate organisational relationships. Vague performance standards may leave managers uncertain about what is expected of them. Thus, the perceptive manager will look for the causes of communication problems instead of just dealing with the symptoms. Barriers can exist in the sender, in the transmission of the message, in the receiver, or in the feedback.

Specific communication barriers are discussed here:

1. Limitation of the receiver's capacity
2. Distraction
3. Intrusion of unconscious or partly-conscious mechanism
4. Confused presentation and
5. Absence of communication facilities.

Three Broad Categories of Barriers to Communication:

1. Physical Barriers
2. Psychological Barriers:
3. Semantics Barriers.

1. Physical Barriers:

i. Distance – When two persons are at a distance apart, one cannot hear other's voice clearly. The poor person in Chennai and poor person in New-york will not contact each other through telephone with the fear of telephone bill.

ii. Lack of time – If the superior is very much busy, then he will not have time to meet subordinates due to lack of time.

iii. Noise – Too much noise will make men not able to hear the news.

iv. External disruptions – High Temperature and high humidity make men uneasy and so they may not be in a good mood to get information.

v. Organisational blocks – Two persons in different organisation cannot contact each other whenever they want.

2. Psychological Barriers:

i. It arises from differences in position in the organisational hierarchy.

ii. In upward communication, subordinate may hesitate to tell his superior unfavorable news, because he fears it may affect his relationship with his superior.

iii. Prejudices and biased- A worker cannot convince the biased supervisor.

iv. Premature evaluation

v. Difference existing between mind speeds and speaking speed

vi. Absence of mind

vii. Status blocks

viii. Intentional blocks, and

ix. Fear.

3. Semantic Barriers:

Words and symbols seldom have a single meaning. Words can be conveniently interpreted by the listener or reader. Symbols usually have a variety of meanings. We have to choose one meaning from among the many. Faulty expressions and faulty listening are also considered as semantic barriers.

We can see the following example for understanding the semantic barriers. Rama and Seetha saw the pet animals when they were playing in the park. In this sentence, there is a confusion. Who played in the ground? Whether Rama and Seetha played or Animals played? This type of confusion will be the barrier for communication. This type of barriers (confusion in word usage) should be avoided.

What are Barriers of Communication – Top 10 Barriers: Organisational Barriers, Status Barriers, Perceptual Barriers, Specialization, Pressure of Time and a Few Others

There are many communication barriers which tend to distort the messages that pass between sender and receiver. It leads to misunderstanding and conflict among the organisational members.

The following are major barriers of communication:

(i) Organisational Barriers:

The organisation hierarchy has a significant influence on the ability of the members of the organisation to communicate efficiently and with ease. The information received from top may not reach the bottom in the same shape.

Sometimes the managers divert the information meant for one person or group to another and also color the information. If there are no effective prescribed medium to communicate with each other's then there is a chance of barriers to effective communication.

(ii) Status Barriers:

The status of an organisational member is determined by the position he holds in the organisation. A middle level manager may worry so much about his senior and pay minimum attention to his subordinate's thoughts. A sense of inferiority complex in the mind of the subordinate does not allow him to seek clarification from the superior.

H. Kelly discovered few effects of status upon communication as follows:

(a) Low status and high status member – The low status members communicate more irrelevant information than high status members.

(b) High status persons appear to be restrained from communicating criticism, negative attitudes about their own job those of lower status.

(c) Communication with high status persons – The trend to serve as a substitute for upward locomotion on the part of low status persons who have, little or no possibility of real upward locomotion. The organisational interaction and communication are thus influenced by the status and the role expectations.

(d) Poor Supervision – when a supervisor suspects his subordinates or acts as a self-appointed censor or listens his subordinates with close minds, the communication is blocked.

(iii) Perceptual Barriers:

One of the most common sources of communication barrier is individual perception. A person receiving a message may interpret it in the light of his own background and ability because there is a mutual distrust of misunderstanding between the sender and the receiver of the message. On

the other hand, if there is openness in relationship, everything that is communicated will be readily believed.

(iv) Filtering of Information:

The any attempt to alter and colour information to present a more favorable impression is called filtering. The subordinates pass on only that information to their supervisors which will project them in a favorable light which the superior wants to hear. This distortion of communication becomes more sever when an employee is due for promotion or wage increase.

(v) Specialisation:

It tends to separate people even when they work side by side. Different functions special interests and job jargon can make people feel that they line indifferent worlds. The sectional interest and departmental loyalty prevent employees from looking at organisational problems in a broader perspective and prevent them from listening to other's point of view.

(vi) Pressure of Time:

The managers particularly those at higher work under great pressure of time and they cannot afford to interact and communicate frequently with their subordinates. Such time pressure can create communication problem between them.

(vii) Unc clarified Assumption:

The information contained in message is generally backed by certain assumptions. The sender may have been clear about the assumptions but unless they are shared with the receiver, there is likely to be a case of incomplete communication, leading to different interpretations. Hence it is necessary for the communicator, to clarify the assumptions underlying his message.

(viii) Semantic Barriers:

Semantic refers to the relationship of signs to their reference. It is the study of meaning in language. The words usually have a variety of meanings and the sender and the receiver have to choose one meaning from among many. The Oxford English Dictionary show an average of over 25 different meanings for each of the 500 most frequently used words in the English language. When two individuals attach different meanings to a word, a breakdown in communication can occur. The use of jargon can also create a barrier to communication.

The Pictures are visual aids worth thousand words. An organisation uses extensive use of picture like blueprints, charts, maps, and films. A viewer may come to know the whole story when he sees themes. Sometimes picture may create confusion in the mind of an observer.

(ix) Mechanical Barriers:

Mechanical barriers include – (a) inadequate arrangement for transmission of news, facts and figures, (b) Poor office layout (c) defective procedures and practices, and (d) the use of wrong media lead to poor communication. They all vitiate the message in several ways. It may result in message.

(x) Inattention:

Sometime the persons do not pay adequate attention to the message. They do not listen the spoken words attentively. The communication has no impact on those who are unwilling to listen. Inattention arises due to lack of interest, over stimulation and time pressure.

Communication is a Two-Way Traffic:

The organisation is effective when its communication machinery is effective. It is very important to understand the nature and behavior of the people on the one hand and to implement the policies and objectives of the organisation on the other hand in order to achieve the goal of the organisation.

Two-way traffic means that the effective communication system provides the liberty to both parties management and worker to convey their ideas, facts, opinions and thoughts etc., to other party.

The communication process should not provide the manager a privilege to communicate the orders and directions to the workers to get the work done as it is revealed by classical theory of organisation behavior named as Theory 'X' by McGregor but the workers must also be given a right to approach the management and convey their feelings like complaints, grievances, opinions, suggestions as far these are concerned with the organisation.

This two way traffic will be advantageous to both. Sometimes one party had a bad image of the communicator and he may carry the version of the message according to the image of the communicator in the mind of recipient. This image can be erased through proper communication from the other side.

Thus, the establishment of two-way traffic will improve the morale of the workers on the one hand because they have their say in the management and it will improve the working of the organisation on the other hand. It is very essential to two- way communication, i.e., down ward from the management to workers and upward from the workers to the management. In this way, we can say that the management is composed of two- way traffic communication.