4 Primary Sources of Workplace Communication

❖ *Oral-* *This is the most effective means of communication because you can see each other's body language and make eye contact. It is the fastest and easiest to use, but requires that you listen well and sometimes take notes.*

❖ *Written-* *Involves expressing yourself clearly, using proper language that resonates with the intended audience, and making the intended point succinctly. Effective writing allows the reader to clearly understand what you are saying.*

❖ *Electronic-* *Enables employees to maintain an ongoing dialogue to share ideas, even when they can't meet at the same time; this is especially valuable in a global marketplace.*

❖ *Visual-* *Will not replace the written or spoken word, but it is increasingly used to augment the written/spoken word to give meaning, extra depth, value, and longevity to critical information. It aids understanding and engagement in vision and mission.*

Effective communication plays an important role in business to inform and influence behavior.
Communication channels refer to the **medium** you use to send a message, such as the telephone or email.
Effective communication requires selecting an appropriate medium to send your message.

When selecting a medium, it is important to consider the type and nature of the information being communicated. (Nobody wants to get fired in an email, nor do they want complex data explained on a phone call.)

Ways Information Flows in a Business
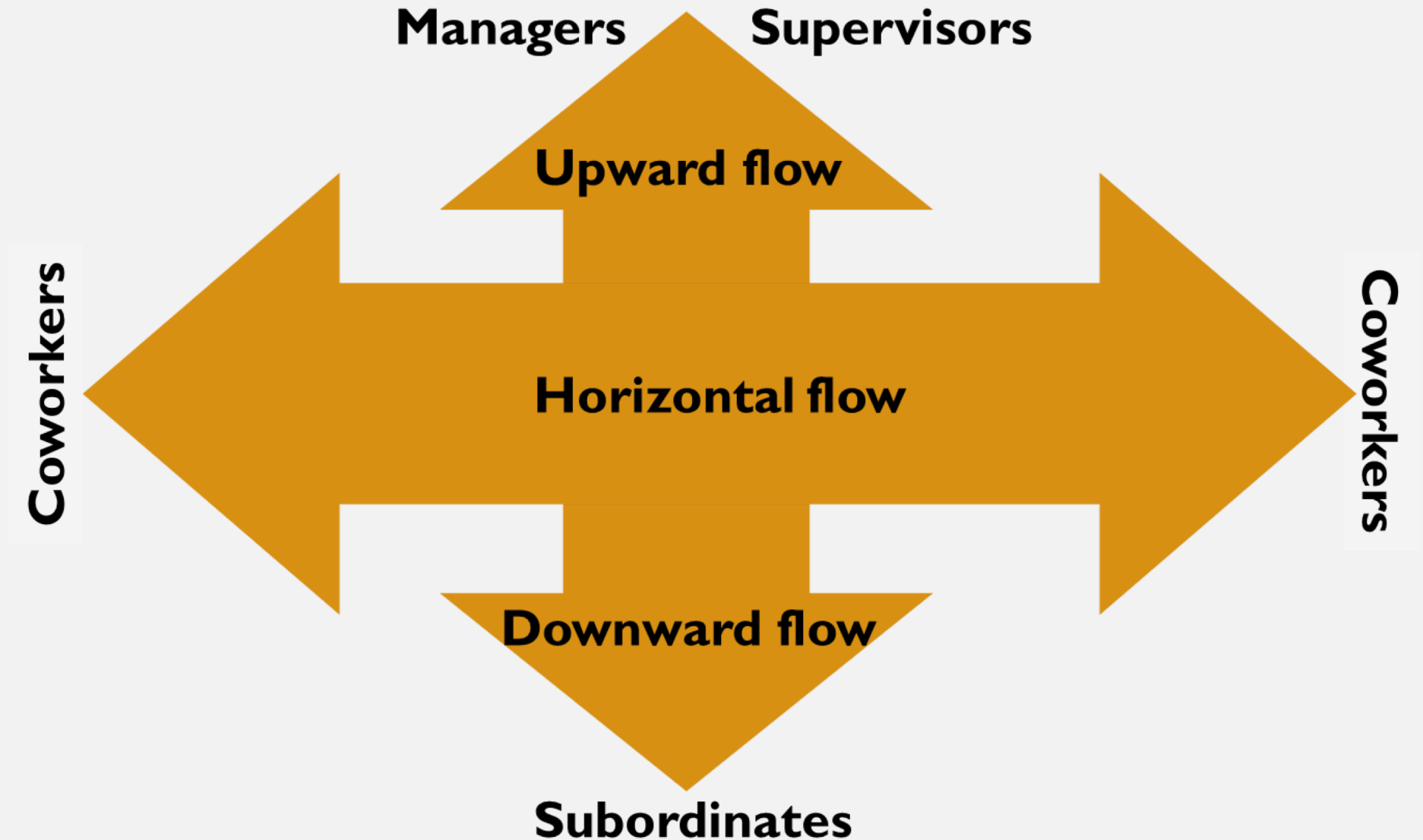
Oral Communication

Oral channels of communication include:

➤ Face-to-Face conversations

➤ Telephone Communication

➤ Company/Team/Staff Meetings

There are 4 C's to employ in Face-to-Face conversations:

1. **Consistency-** Make sure your words match your tone of voice, facial expressions, and body language.

2. **Clarity-** Don't assume people understand what you said, confirm it by asking "Did I explain this clearly?" Choose your words carefully, it's not what you say, it's what people hear.

3. **Concise-** People's time is important, so don't elaborate unless asked, get to the point of the conversation.

4. **Confident-** Communicating with confidence adds more weight to your words, evokes trust in others, and allows you to talk about difficult workplace issues.

Telephone Communication

There is always the right way of making or answering calls you must adhere to, especially if you are representing a client or a company. The way you handle calls is the reflection of customer's feedback. It is essential to ensure that every call is properly handled with professionalism and excellence.

Telephone Etiquette:

- ✓ Always answer a phone by saying "good morning'' or "hello''; introduce yourself politely by stating your name and the company you are representing.
- ✓ Answer promptly. Callers don't like to wait too long for the phone to be answered, try to answer telephone calls by the third ring.
- ✓ Avoid sounding overly aggressive, anxious or pushy. It is highly important to keep a tone that conveys confidence and authority. Be pleasant to others during a call even if you feel yourself getting frustrated.
- ✓ Plan ahead before placing a call. Expect or anticipate being placed in a voicemail system so plan your questions and messages and make them as direct and concise as possible to persuade the person you are calling to respond.

Telephone Etiquette (cont.):

- ✓ *Speak slowly and clearly, especially when leaving messages. It is necessary to leave your name and phone number, including area code, when leaving a message. Don't mumble!*
- ✓ *Never allow interruptions to interfere with calls. If interruptions are inevitable, you need to excuse yourself properly for a moment, and never forget to say thank you for waiting for you on the line.*
- ✓ *Return phone messages promptly, preferably the same day. Transcribe the message, including the name of the caller, reason for the call, and the number where the caller can be reached.*
- ✓ *Listen to all messages before you begin returning calls.*
- ✓ *Update your outgoing voicemail message regularly. Greetings should include your name, title, and company, along with a brief message stating that you are not available right now.*
- ✓ *When you are going to be out of the office, change message to notify callers that you are out of the office and when you will return. Include an alternate contact name and number they can call if they need immediate assistance.*
- ✓ *Avoid distracting behaviors when talking on the phone.*
- ✓ *Calling a business at or very near closing time is inconsiderate.*

Company/Team/Staff Meetings

Although we are all busy at work, occasionally you still need to make time to attend meetings. It is important to conduct yourself in a respectful and professional manner.

Staff Meeting Etiquette:

- ✓ *Avoid multi-tasking.* *Don't bring other work that is not related to the meeting topics being discussed. Leave all other work for another time.*
- ✓ *Avoid side conversations.* *It is simply impolite and downright rude to hold a side conversation while a fellow employee is trying to conduct a meeting.*
- ✓ *Stay until the end.* *If you have another important engagement and plan on leaving a meeting early, it is best to let everyone know at the start of your prior commitments and need to leave early.*
- ✓ *Never interrupt others.* *When someone is talking, pay attention and listen.*
- ✓ *Never hijack or change the agenda.* *If you disagree with the meeting agenda or feel that there is something else that should be discussed, then it is best to voice your feelings before the start of the meeting.*
- ✓ *Leave you lunch at your desk.* *Avoid all forms of food and eating during a meeting.*
- ✓ *Keep your phone on silent.* *It is best to keep your cell phone off the table and place your ringtone on vibrate.*

Written Communication

After face-to-face and phone conversations, in writing is one of the most frequent ways businesses and employees communicate with each other. These can include reports, policy manuals, Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's), and position descriptions.

➤ *How you present yourself in writing is extremely important to how your coworkers perceive your level of professionalism. Being able to communicate in writing, in a professional manner, and having good etiquette will affect your entire career.*

➤ *When writing communication in a professional environment you should always use complete sentences and proper grammar.*

➤ *You should never use slang or profanity in professional communications. Remember that you represent the company in every communication.*

➤ *Written communication should be concise, but don't shorten it just to save space. Be concise, don't use 2 words when one will do.*

➤ *Unless you can guarantee that the person receiving your message is familiar with abbreviations or acronyms, you should avoid using them. Or write out the whole name first and place the acronym in parenthesis afterwards. Ie: Luzerne County Community College (LCCC)*

Electronic business communication typically takes the form of: e-mails, memos, job postings, newsletters, and flyers.

Electronic communication can be very beneficial if used effectively. Knowing the proper medium to communicate your message is important to effective electronic communication. Email is a common communication method for sharing information with businesses. However, email is not always the best method of communication when sending to mass amounts of people. Many recipients of mass email will delete the email without reading it.

E-mail is a useful communication approach that instantly delivers messages between computers. Unfortunately, there is sometimes a lack of attention to exactly who has access to certain information, and to whom such information is being transmitted.

Electronic Communication

The average US employee spends about a quarter of the work week combing through the hundreds of e-mails we all send and receive every day.

➢ *When sending email, consider your employer. Your level of formality should be consistent with your company's brand.*

➢ *Know your audience- your relationship to the recipient will determine the level of formality. Are they customers, executives, vendors, work buddies?*

➢ *Never include anything in an e-mail that you wouldn't want to see made public. It takes just a few clicks for a recipient to forward your message to others, or inadvertently copy someone in a reply. It's just as easy for you to send an email to the wrong person.*

➢ *Nothing is confidential on workplace computers. A 2015 survey from the American Management Association found that at least 66% of U.S. companies monitor employee internet use, 45% log keystrokes, and 43% track employee emails.*

Rules for Email Etiquette:

✓ *Answer Swiftly-* The golden rule for email is to reply within 24 hours, and preferably within the same working day. If your response email is complicated, just send an email confirming receipt and letting them know that you will get back to them.

✓ *Use a meaningful Subject Line-* People decide whether to open an email based on the subject line. Make sure that the subject line is relevant and specific to the content of the email.

✓ *Don't abuse "Reply to All"-* Nobody wants to read emails that don't pertain to them. Only use the "reply to all" if you really need your response to be seen by each person who received the original email.

✓ *Use a Signature Block-* Provide your reader with some information about you. Generally, this would state your full name, title, the company name, and your contact information, including a phone number.

✓ *Include the E-mail Thread-* Use 'reply' instead of 'new mail' to include the original mail in your reply. This saves the recipient time looking for related emails in their inbox.

✓ *Proofread before you send-* Treat emails like any official company document and proofread for spelling and grammatical errors.

Rules for E-mail Etiquette (cont.):
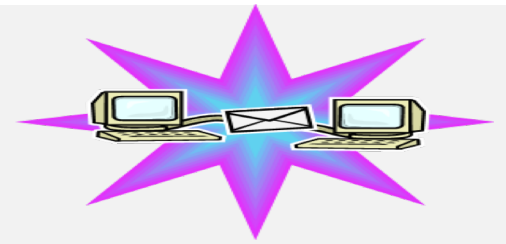
- ✓ *Use Professional Salutations-* Use 'Hi', 'Hello', 'Good morning', or 'Good afternoon'; never use 'Hey', 'Hi guys', and certainly never 'Yo'.
- ✓ *Leave out the Humor-* Humor can easily get lost in translation without being able to read tone or facial expressions. Don't use abbreviations and emoticons to try to relay humor (ie: LOL, ☺, :D).
- ✓ *Keep your Fonts Classic-* Your messages should be easy for others to read, use 10 or 12 point type and easy to read font such as Ariel, Calibri, and Times New Roman.
- ✓ *Don't Attach Unnecessary Files-* Only send files that are productive and make sure virus software is in place to scan outgoing e-mails. Customers would not be happy to receive documents riddled with viruses.
- ✓ *Be Concise-* Don't make the message longer than it needs to be, get to the point. Avoid long, complex sentences. Make sure you answer all questions asked of you so you don't need to send another response.
- ✓ *Never write in all Capitals-* WRITING IN ALL CAPITALS SEEMS LIKE YOU ARE SHOUTING!! Using excessive exclamation points also gives the appearance of being too emotional or immature. Use one, if necessary, to express excitement.

Visual Communication

Visual communication plays an important role in every organization, whether they know it or not. It is estimated that 65% of people are what we call "visual learners," meaning that they are able to retain information better when it is presented visually, rather than through text.
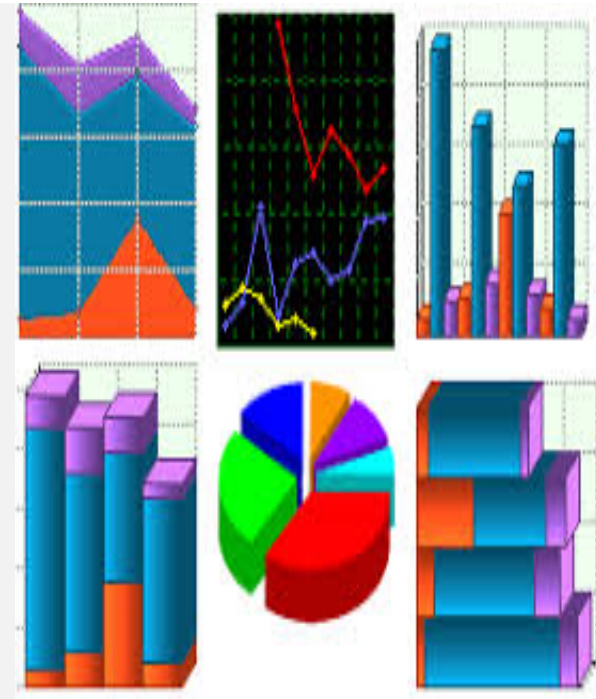
Types of Visual Communication include: PowerPoint presentations, Graphs & Charts, Training & Educational videos, and Informational displays.

Tips for Effective Visual Communication:

- *Good Design ensures presentations are beautiful and effective.*
- *Use no more than 5 colors in any layout & only to highlight important information.*
- *All fonts should be legible & appropriate for the communication style.*
- *Keep significant negative space, don't clutter up with too much information.*
- *Illustrations should match tone and subject matter.*
- *Items should be appropriately sized especially data which can become skewed.*

The vast majority of problems in business are caused by ineffective communication in one form or another.

Effective communication causes productivity to increase, errors to decrease, and increases job satisfaction levels in employees. Effective workplace communication ensures that all the organizational objectives are achieved.

The bottom line is that good communication isn't just about being able to more accurately and concisely present information and ideas. It's also not just about mitigating conflict or creating a more positive team environment. Communication is integral to sales, client relationships, team development, company culture, employee engagement, and innovative thought.