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# EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS AS PANACEA FOR BUSINESS FAILURES

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## **Abstract**

*The topic is Effective Communication Skills as Panacea for Business Failures. It uses sociological instrument to rescue business failures due to poor application of communication skills. Empirical studies prove that many businesses fail due to inefficient management and poor usage of communication skills. This paper high lights correct applications of the three main channels of business communication skills which are oral, written, and non – verbal. Every entrepreneur is expected to communicate with his clientele by presenting the company's view with sincerity, facts and figures using appropriate language. Both within and outside of the organization, language plays important role in fostering understanding among members of and customers to an organization. Recommendation is that business language must be simple, informative, and courteous to increase intimacy, trust and support among business men and women.*

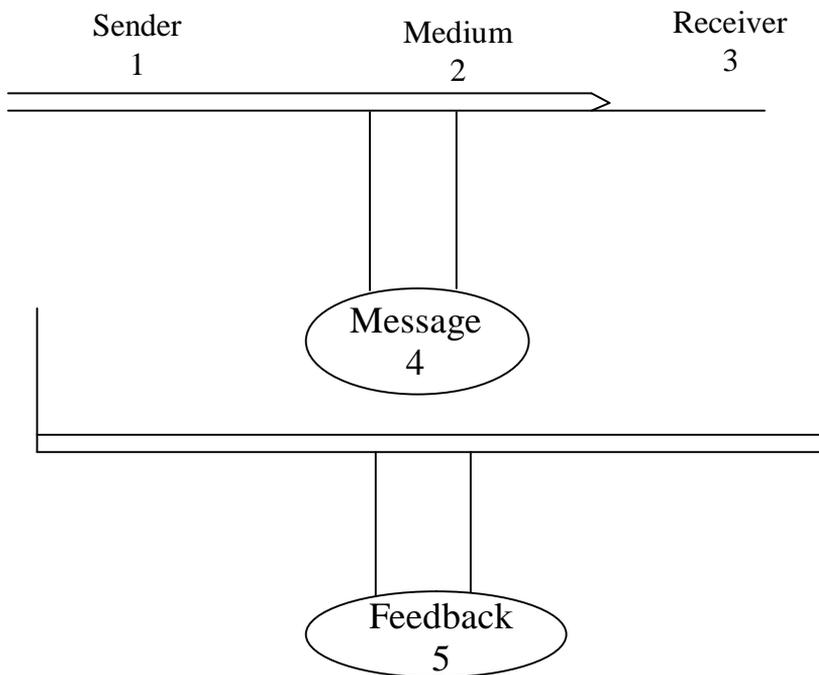
## **The Concepts of Communication and Business**

This paper revolves around communication and business. Communication is the activity or process of giving information to people. It is a proven fact that communication is a slippery term to define. Researchers have defined communication from diverse points of view and according to disciplines. Advanced Learners' English

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Dictionary (2001: 225) defines communication, “as the activity or process of expressing ideas or feelings in giving people some information”. From the linguistic point of view, Okotie (2011: 27) quoted crystal (1997: 2) who defined communication, “as the transmission and reception of information (message) between a source and a receiver using signaling body language like facial expression, nods or feelings.” Truly, communication is rendered where there is something to express. Akporherhe (2006: 3) presents the following:



**A Diagram of an Ideal Communication Process**

Gaikward (2010) maintains that, “communication applies to every work place, organization and other places people interact with one another”. What he said is deduced from the fact that an ideal communication process helps in developing efficient management, organizational skills, and establishes healthy work attitudes that ensure a sustainable service delivery and business success.

In a layman’s idea, business means a targeted profitable venture between one another. BBC English Dictionary (1992:153) sees business “as a work relating to the production, buying and selling of goods and services” it is evident that when people or

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companies do business, an opportunity has been created for dealers to meet their clients who are partners in production of goods, promotion of sales, and other service delivery. Azih (2007:146) strongly believes that, “business helps in the development of occupational knowledge, attitudes and skills in clerical and stenographic tasks, bookkeeping and accounting, data processing, marketing and sales, office administration, business ownership and management”. All these relate to some of the provisions of The National Policy on Education (1977) revised in (2004) which among other things recognizes Business Education as one of the disciplines that help to:

- i. Inspire the students with a desire for advancement and self employment both at school and in later life.
- ii. Provide economic understanding.
- iii. Produce a person who is occupationally competent.
- iv. Reduce the rate of drop-outs and reduce the rate of unemployment among Nigerian Youths.

This paper is in support of Stephen and Rogers (2007:98) who see business from a structural perspective:

Business is structured according to the organization of power and responsibility. The very shape of business is determined by who is in charge of what and who reports to who? The lessons learnt in business can be applied on a broader basis to our life in society. If you can get it right at the office, you can get it right everywhere.

The strength of success or failure of every business is dependent upon what is read, spoken or written about that business.

### **Reasons for Business Failures**

Onwe, S. O.; Charity, D. N. & Ukeje, I.O. (2011:197) enumerated the most basic reasons for business failure as followed: wrong fixing of prices on services and products can affect healthy position of a company, abnormal profit, economic factor, disaster, fraud, poor supervision of staff, and poor policy formulation and implementation.

### **Communication as Panacea for Business Failures**

According to Lawal, O. A.; Ezeah, F.O.C.; Yaro, J. E.; Aderiye, D. D. & Akindede, C.O. (2006:54), “Communication refers to the exchange of information, new ideas, opinion etc. There are various methods of communication, but speech and writing constitute man’s most important methods of communication. Efficient and reliable communications are panacea for business failures”.

### **Channels of Communication**

There are three channels of communication; such are oral, written and non-verbal.

**Oral Communication** refers to spoken words. Odoemenam and Eze, (2007) reported that Oral Communication (OC) is a face to face conversation, interviews, meeting interactions, conference, and telephoning. The major advantage of oral communication is that it is rapid, and provides immediate feedback. Oral communication gives no time to reason on facts or take decision thoroughly before transmission.

**Written communication (RC)** involves written symbols like letters, memos, reports, and minutes among other business correspondences.

**Letters** may be written to request for goods and services, to respond to customers' inquiries, and occasionally to announce employees' promotion, to convey management plans, policies, goals and targets etc. Most business organization outfits have standardized letterhead for their correspondence. If you are writing for an organization that does not have letterhead, your address will be at the top right hand side of your writing sheet, and that of your receiver on the left. Your letter would normally have a salutation which may be "Dear Chief Akpa", "Dear John" "Director", "Dear Sir" etc. It must have a topic or title of the subject matter of the letter, its body gives details of the subject matter, it will have a complimentary close, your name and signature.

**The Memorandum (Memo)** is for internal circulation, sometimes written on standardized letter heads. It normally deals with one subject matter or topic of interest to members of staff or a unit, section, department, or the entire organization. Each memo usually has a topic (title), a source, and intended receiver, date, and possibly reference number. It must bear the sender's name and signature at the bottom of the memo.

**The Memorandum of Understanding** being written report that is prepared for a person or a committee in order to provide them with information about a particular matter. It is an informal diplomatic communication between governments which often summarizes a particular point of view. The memorandum of agreement is specifically written by a lawyer or a solicitor, but it is discussed here as one of the business writings. Examples are land or house sellers and buyer's agreement, second or third party purchase or transfer of vehicle ownership agreement or landlord and tenancy agreement as exemplified by Egburuonu (1994:1) when he emphasized on creation of landlords and tenants relationship.

Landlords and tenants relationship may be created orally but it is better written because of the inherent difficulties involved in proving oral agreements during disputes.

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It is generally advisable that parties intending to enter into landlord and tenant relationship, i.e. a tenant desirous to rent a house from a landlord, must endeavor to do so in writing. The written agreement between the landlord and tenant must clearly state the right and obligation of both parties.

The said tenancy agreement must not be one sided. It must balance the interest of both the landlord and the tenant. Although in practice, most tenancy agreements are often drafted by the landlord's solicitors, and sent to the tenant for signature. A tenant has the legal right to refuse to sign the agreement until he has consulted his own solicitor with a copy of the draft agreement in order to receive proper advice before appending his signature. The solicitor may on behalf of the tenant, enter into negotiation with the landlord's solicitor to ensure that the interest of his client (the tenant) is adequately protected as much as not jeopardizing that of the landlord.

Every memorandum of Agreement between landlord and tenant must have what Egburuonu (1994) in his *Basic Rights of Tenants under the Nigeria Law* referred to as *Validity of Tenancy Agreement* which must state the following facts:

- (i) The date on which the agreement is made.
- (ii) The name of both the landlord, the tenant, their respective addresses and locations.
- (iii) The commencement date of the tenancy.
- (iv) The nature, size and location of the tenement, i.e. house or land.
- (v) The type of tenancy, i.e. whether weekly, monthly, quarterly or yearly tenancy.
- (vi) The rent payable, method of payment, and the amount already paid.
- (vii) The right and obligations of the landlord, and his covenant with the tenant.
- (viii) The rights and obligations of the tenant and his covenant with the landlord.
- (ix) Both the landlord and the tenant must sign the agreement.
- (x) Finally, there must be witness to sign the agreements' to authenticate the validity of the agreement.

**Report** is considered in the opinion of Soola (1995) who quotes Chappell and Reads (1974:138) saying report is a document in which a given problem is examined for the purpose of conveying information, reporting findings, putting forward ideas, and sometimes making recommendation intended to serve as a basis for action.

**Types of Reports** are classified by the types of functions they perform. Reports that are weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annually are *periodical*. Those written to evaluate ongoing projects are *progress reports*. When a report is a product of a commission or panel of inquiry into fraud, mismanagement and protest, it becomes *investigative*. There are field trip report, technical, proposal and duty reports. **Elements of a good report** are brevity, objectivity, completeness, clarity and coherence.

**Minutes of Meeting** are among business reports whether in a regular, emergency, executive or special committee meeting must show an evidence of summary writing because of a lot of discussions, and arguments that take place during meeting proceedings. Minutes must reflect what were discussed in a meeting, and must sound impersonal. It must be orderly according to the layout of the meeting's agenda. It must give accurate and complete details of the issues discussed, it must be presented in a suitable language in present perfect tense or in simple past tense, full of passive than active voice.

**Non Verbal-Communication** involves the use of gestures and para-linguistic codes that are evident when people speak. Their words are usually accompanied by non-verbal cues like sound or signs, frowns, nods, beckoning, cry, handshake, eye-contact, laughter, smell or touch. These give additional information to what is in the mind of the sender.

### **Types of Communication and their Functions**

The five main types of communication are:

**Interpersonal Communication** functions in face to face situation where two persons pass information to each other, exchange ideas or rub minds together over an issue.

**Intrapersonal Communication** functions within an individual. In other words, the person communicates to himself, and becomes sender and receiver at the same time. It involves thoughts, feelings and conceptions of one's mindset.

**Mass Communication** functions in sending messages to a larger number of people through modern mass communication channels like newspaper, magazines, radio, television, face book and internet. The receiver does not have the opportunity of immediate response to messages received even if it favours or disfavours him.

**Group Communication** functions when a group of people share common feelings, purpose or goal, and discuss issues or problems of common interest. This can take place in seminars, conferences, meetings, workshops or any other related forum.

**Public Communication** functions in public places where a speaker addresses the public which attendance is not restricted. Examples of public communication are political rallies, public lectures and symposia.

### **Conclusion**

Communication skills as panacea for business failures are very timely, mostly now that many entrepreneurs as well as students have lost their bearings in business communication. The implication is that many businesses collapse and lead to the

economic meltdown that creates almost unbearable pain as a result of abject poverty and massive unemployment in Nigeria. Again, lack of knowledge, ignorance or misapplication of business communication skills have resulted to many customers and entrepreneurs languishing in litigation. The points highlighted here are quite invaluable for business personnel to use them to forestall failure of businesses and raise the standard of living in the society.

### **Recommendations**

The basic requirement of business communication skills are summarized in the check list of business writing principles by Murphy and Peck (1976) as quoted orally by Soola (1995:96) that “there are competence, conciseness, clarity, concreteness, consideration, and courtesy”.

**Correctness** applies to the use of appropriate level of language in order not to antagonize your customer or reader. Business correspondence requires accurate words, fact, and figures. Maintain acceptable level of writing mechanics or punctuations. Your expressions must be short, unambiguous and conversational.

**Conciseness** means saying what you have to say in the fewest words without breaking the principle of completeness and courtesy. Business has a busy world where time is money. Avoid wordy expressions, include only facts and data that are very simple, informative and not misleading.

**Clarity** means being clear to show evidence that make customer to understand your message. Construct short effective sentences in paragraph units, use examples and illustrations where necessary.

**Completeness** occurs when your business letter contains the needs of your customer or receiver. Always use the 5 *Ws* on communication. Writing requests, announcement or similar informative messages must specify what you need, when you need it, to whom, and where it should be sent, and how payment should be effected.

**Concreteness** is being specific, definitive and vivid. Use active or doing verbs to perform the action. For example, say that “The Board of Directors warned”, instead of “A warning was issued by ...” say that “We will appreciate your presence at the tradefair instead of “your presence will be appreciated...”

**Consideration** points at the language usage, content and your ability to attract the attention of your receiver. Remember that superiors, subordinates, dealers, suppliers, consumers, and share-holders expect fair and honest dealings. Be fair to all, and avoid undue favouritism to anybody.

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**Courtesy** is the bedrock of a successful business. Your reader judges you and your organization on the basis of the tone of your writing. Avoid those statements that infuriate, irritate, hurt and be little your reader. You may lose your staff and customers if your insult them. If you are courteous in business, you not only retain high level of patronage and friendship, but you may win more customers, friends, and well-wishers. Courtesy in your written business communication demands that you be sincerely tactful, thoughtful, and appreciative.

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