**COMMON BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION**

1. **PERCEPTION**

Different people perceive things differently. The perception barrier occurs where people are extra sensitive to things that are important to them to. It is thus essential that you take into consideration the perceptions of the audience that could be linked to different aspects such as tradition, personal experiences, culture, triggers and cues, preferences among other things. Having different points of view on a matter is healthy however where it causes biases and blinds objectivity, then it can create barriers to effective communication. People differ, meaning their perceptions on the same issue or situation will also likely be different. This is a fact which must be taken in to consideration when communicating. Perception barriers to communication take different forms including filtering, stereotyping, selective perception, emotional disconnects, lack of source familiarity or credibility. Mindful communication and a positive attitude are central to breaking down perception barriers.

1. **LACK OF TRUST**

Trust is the life blood to effective communication. Any communication that ignores the foundational importance of trust is highly likely to fail. If people don't trust their leaders, communication won't be effective. According to research by The Workforce Institute, 64% of employees say trust has a direct impact on their sense of belonging at work, 58% say it impacts their career choices while 55% say it impacts their mental health and well-being.[[1]](#footnote-1) If you are a person or an organization that does not keep to your words, there is already a laid down barrier in communication. Trust has to be built. This can be achieved through active listening, being dependable as well as providing useful and progressive feedback.

1. **EMOTIONAL BARRIERS**

Emotional barriers stem out of a lack of control of emotional control or awareness. Emotional intelligence plays a critical role in determining the ease and comfort with which people communicate. Emotional barriers create mental block that in turn influence perception. People’s beliefs, past experiences as well as conditioned behaviour shape their perceptions and emotions which in turn impacts effective communication. Some people may find it difficult to express their opinions on certain issues such as religion, politics, disabilities (mental and physical) while others may utterly fail to know how to package their communication to accommodate other people’s emotions and perceptions.

1. **CULTURAL DIFFERENCES**

Cultural barriers can occur as a result of language and psychological differences, conflicting values, geographical distance, belief systems, ethnocentrism, stereotyping and conflicting values. Expectations and prejudice may lead to false assumptions or stereotypes. Language use and social norms vary enormously from culture to culture and this could hamper effective communication especially in a world that has now been flattened. Harnessed well however, cultural diversity has the power to produce more powerful and innovative results.

1. **LANGUAGE BARRIER**

Language barrier, resulting from differences in language, dialect and accents is one of the main barriers to effective communication.

1. **USE OF JARGONS**

Closely linked to language barrier, the use of over-complicated, unfamiliar and or technical terms can generate confusion and obscure meaning of the sender’s message. It is important to remain aware of the audience and to use a simple and direct narrative while communicating.

1. **PHYSICAL BARRIERS**

Physical barriers refer to the factors or elements that inhibit effective exchanges such as social distancing, remote work, desk less nature of work, closed office doors, non-conducive surroundings including weather and temperature among others.

1. **GENDER BARRIERS**

These barriers can be inherent or they may also be related to gender stereotypes and the difference in upbringing between men and women. Notably, not all men and women communicate the same for instance with males tending to believe that verbal communication should have a clear purpose while the females tend to use communication as an opportunity to express their emotions, several traits that tend to be more common in one gender or the other have been identified. Having a good understanding of such trends and tendencies is central to creating and fostering open and effective communication.

1. **PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIERS**

These refer to any psychological condition that has an impact on the effectiveness communication. They arise as a result of peoples’ prevailing emotional or mental state that in turn inhibit communication. Psychological barriers can be triggered by situations such as lack of sleep, stress, mental illness and can result in fear of expression, over-excitement and even emotional instability

**SOLUTIONS TO COMMUNICATION BARRIERS**

1. Educate your team about gender and gender biases
2. Encourage diversity and inclusivity. This is also linked to tackling the issue of cultural diversity. The use of regular training sessions for staff to learn about different cultures and to open up their mind is important.
3. Learning about your audience and ask how they prefer to be addressed
4. Create and foster gender-neutral policies
5. Checking whether it is a good time and place to communicate.
6. Being clear, simple, specific and using language that others can easily understand.
7. Communicating one thing at a time. Do not over load your listeners. Give them ample time to absorb what you are trying to pass across as well as to contribute to the discussions and give feedback.
8. Respecting a person’s desire not to communicate.
9. Checking that the person has understood you correctly
10. Consistency of messages is imperative. Information delivered to receivers and how it is packaged should not be self -contradictory it should align to the organisational vision, mission, goals, agreements, programs and culture.
11. Active listening – To communicate effectively, both the sender and the receiver of the message need to be active and good listeners.
12. Choosing the right communication method. The mode of communication should be acceptable, available and accessible to both the sender and receiver of the message.
13. Keep an assertive but positive and humane attitude. This include the tone of your voice as well as general body language including facial expressions, use of gestures etc.
14. Setting up a mechanism of proper feedback that others feel safe to use.

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1. https://workforceinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Trust-in-the-Modern-Workplace-Final.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-1)