

# Warwickshire and Birmingham Wing Air Training Corps



## Junior NCO Leadership Development Course

# COMMUNICATION



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## INTRODUCTION

1. We have seen that communication is an important part of the NCOs role. In performing your role you will be using verbal communication skills socially, to handle cadet welfare and getting things done. This course gives an introduction to communications generally but especially verbal communication. However, it is recognised that during your career as a JNCO you may be required to give a presentation. An introduction to the basics of giving presentations is therefore included.

## EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

2. Effective communication can be defined as:

“The imparting of information so that the recipient fully understands it.”

3. Communication is, therefore, a dual activity with a responsibility on the sender to ensure the message is as clear and concise as possible and a responsibility on the recipient to ensure that full concentration is given to understanding the message.

## REASONS FOR COMMUNICATING

4. There are several reasons for communicating with others, each is important in various circumstances. These reasons can be described as follows:
  - a. **Giving or Seeking Information.** Giving information can be in the form of a brief, a lecture or simply an informal chat with friends. Seeking information can arise in a disciplinary situation, an interview or simply asking friends which portable CD player they recommend. Giving information is the basis of initiating action in the autocratic leadership style while seeking information is the basis of decision making in the democratic style of leadership. This type of communication supports the task and individual needs.
  - b. **Effecting Changes in Behaviour or Attitudes.** This function, you may recall, relates to the leadership style. It is about getting your team to do what you want them to do and like it. This can range from specific instructions to gentle persuasion, however it is done communication is the art of imparting your wishes so that the recipient understands and accepts them. This type of communication supports the team and individual needs.
  - c. **Expressing Feelings.** This is done to support the individual needs, such as welfare, training, praise and motivation.

## THE STEPS OF COMMUNICATION

5. Communication is about sending a message to someone who needs or wants it. The communication process is shown in Figure 8.1. The first step is to decide on the message to be sent. This then has to be coded so it can be sent to the recipient. There are several ways of coding a message as follows:
  - a. **Sounds.** This is the most widely used form of communication. Verbal communication in the form of words is quick, easy and instant feedback can be given by the recipient. It is possible to give a very powerful message if the speech is accompanied by attitudes and gestures. Sounds other than speech can be used to convey a message, a well timed grunt or a scream can sometimes broadcast more information than a whole sentence. However, on the negative side, a spoken message requires instant analysis. As there is usually no permanent record it is not possible to refer back to the message content at a later time.
  - b. **Symbols.** The most commonly used symbols for communication is the alphabet to form the written word. In the same way as different languages use different words for the same object or event then different alphabets are used around the World. However, symbols for communication can also include pictorial information such as the European Road Signs which are designed to communicate with several nationalities in a common manner. The written communication has the benefit of being a permanent record of the message which gives time for analysis and can be reviewed later with no loss of meaning. It can also be sent to a large number of people in different locations and over great distances. The drawbacks with written communications is that they are impersonal with none of the additional cues available from the senders tone of voice and gestures, which could lead to ambiguity. A further problem is that the written words take time to produce and send which also results in a slow feedback from the recipient.
  - c. **Attitudes and Gestures.** Most commonly called body language the way we act and move our limbs and bodies can strongly re-enforce the verbal communications already discussed.
6. Once coded the message is sent to the recipient. However, the problems of communication continue, sometimes the message may be garbled or even lost before it reaches the recipient! When the message is received it has to be decoded before it can be analysed and understood. If the recipient does not have the same understanding of the code as the sender then the message will not be understood or even worse misunderstood. An extreme example where the message will not be understood is sending a letter in English to someone who only understands Japanese. An example where the message may be understood is sending a message in English to the same Japanese who has only partially learnt English.
7. This means that the sender must ensure that the message is coded in a way so that the recipient can decode it without any errors. The golden rule, therefore, in any communication is that it must be phrased for the recipient's benefit not for the senders.

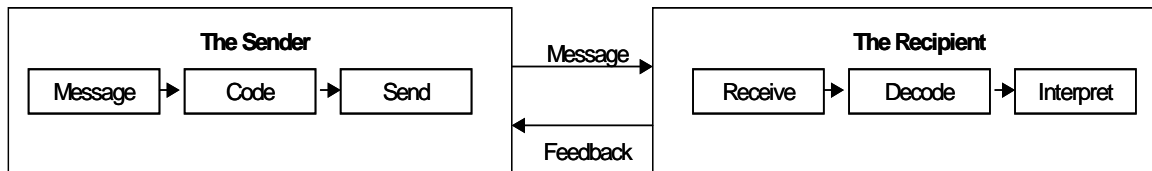


Figure 8.1 The Communication Process.

## HOW TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION

8. Irrespective of the mode of communication there are some things the sender and recipient can do to improve the chances of successful communication.
9. For the sender it is important to put the recipient at ease and to avoid building barriers to communication. This can be done by:
  - a. Not talking down to the recipient and not forcing prejudice through difference in rank.
  - b. Not using slang or jargon that the recipient may not understand.
  - c. Providing information in easily managed packages.
  - d. Providing information in a logical flow to aid understanding.
  - e. Minimising any external distraction to the main form of communication.
  - f. Asking
  - g. or and listening to feedback as to what the recipient understands from your message.
10. The recipient can improve communication by making the sender's job as easy as possible. This can be done by:
  - a. Listening with attention to what is being said.
  - b. Putting the sender at ease to make the communication less formal.
  - c. Showing interest in what is being said.
  - d. Don't interrupt.
  - e. Not being distracted by other events.
  - f. Asking questions at the end.
  - g. Not losing your temper if you do not understand or disagree.
  - h. Giving feedback in your own words on what you understood from the message.

## GIVING A PRESENTATION

11. We have looked at the techniques of briefing for specific tasks using SMEAC and if you have reached the Staff Cadet classification you will have been exposed to the principles of Instructional Technique for taking lessons. However, it is often necessary to communicate information to a large number of people at the same time that does not fall into the category of a task brief or lesson. The usual way of doing this is in the form of a presentation. The aim of this section is to give you the basic techniques of presenting information.

## AIM OF THE PRESENTATION

12. Before preparing a presentation it is necessary to decide on the aim of the presentation. This is important because if the audience have asked you to give the presentation then they are already motivated to listen. If, however, you have decided that they need to know the information then you will need to explain to them why they need to listen. An important factor in any presentation is how much time is available to get the information across.

## FORMAT OF THE PRESENTATION

13. A presentation is a means of communicating information to a large group. For the audience to fully understand this information the presentation must be clear and concise. The presentation must use both verbal and visual information for the audience to have the highest retention of the content. To make the message clear the presentation must be structured so that the audience knows what to expect. The usual structure is:
  - a. Introduction
  - b. Main Body
  - c. Summary
  - d. Questions
14. **Introduction.** The introduction should include; who you are, what you are going to talk about, why it is of interest to them and how long it will take.
15. **Main Body.** The main body of the presentation contains the information you want to get across to the audience. This part of the presentation is like telling a story. It should follow a logical path and draw conclusions at the end of each section. The order in which you present information is often important if you want to avoid confusing the audience.
16. **Summary.** This part of the presentation is important because it draws together all the points that have been made in one summary that allows the audience to review the entire presentation. One danger is that you are tempted to go through all the discussions again, this should be avoided, concentrate on the conclusions from each section of the main body.

17. **Questions.** At this point ask for any questions from the audience. Give them time to think before you collect together your papers and leave the podium! Answer any questions politely but in the shortest possible manner. If the audience needs more information they will generally ask.

## **USE OF VISUAL AIDS**

18. The use of good visual aids can treble the amount of information the audience retains. Many types of visual aids can be used but it is important that they contribute to the presentation and not detract from it. Some examples of typical visual aids are:
- a. Blackboard
  - b. Whiteboard
  - c. Flipchart
  - d. Overhead Projector
19. These visual aids are usually available at your Squadron. The amount of time you have to prepare your visual aids and how often the presentation will be given will determine the type of visual aids you use.

## **PREPARING VISUAL AIDS**

20. Visual aids (VAs) are not a substitute for you presenting the information. The single greatest error made by the majority of presenters is to put up an OHP full of text and to proceed to read directly from it word for word. This is an insult to your audience, as they can read it for themselves. It is also a waste of your time since you could have simply given a handout of the same information.
21. The visual aids must complement what you are presenting and assist you in getting your message across. Some basic rules for visual aids are:
- a. **Diagrams.** Use them wherever possible, remember “ a picture paints a thousand words”.
  - b. **Graphs.** These should be used instead of tables of data. Trends are more easily determined from graphs.
  - c. **Readability.** Use a suitable sized lettering so that the audience at the back can clearly read the VAs.
  - d. **Clarity.** Don’t cram too much information on a single page or slide. The audience will not be able to pick out the important relationships.
  - e. **Bullet Lists.** If you have to use bullet lists limit them to about 5 lines and 7 words per line.

- f. **Borders.** Beware using stylish borders with complex logos. They become boring after the first few slides and detract from the main message.

## TECHNIQUES

22. However good your presentation structure and visual aids are, you can still fail to get your message across if your presentation techniques are poor. Good presentation techniques can sometimes improve an otherwise average presentation. There are several things you should do to enhance your presentation.
  - a. **Preparation.** The presentation will be as good as your preparation, remember the 5 P's (Preparation prevents pretty poor performance). Make sure you know what you are going to say and try not to use complex sentences. Rehearse the presentation to make sure all the VAs are correct and check how long it takes.
  - b. **Personal Style.** The audience will use what they see and what they hear to interpret the presentation. It is important that you do not distract the audience from the visual aids. Develop a loud clear voice which stops short of a shout. Draw your audience into the presentation by making eye-contact with each, in turn. Make sure you keep to your allotted time or the audience will lose interest.

## SUMMARY

23. Leaders cannot do their job without good communication skills. Communication is a two-way exercise, the sender must ensure that the message can be understood by the recipient. The recipient must make the sender's job as easy as possible.
24. Verbal communication is the main method for getting a message across but you may have to take part in giving a presentation. You must know your subject and the three key steps are to "tell them what you're going to tell them, tell them, and tell them what you told them" or as it known GESTALT.

# NOTES