The Seven C’s of Effective Communication

To compose a written or oral message you must apply certain communication principles.

These are called the seven C’s of effective communication.

• Completeness
• Conciseness
• Consideration
• Concreteness
• Clarity
• Courtesy
• Correctness

The seven C’s apply to both written and oral communications. Although we deal here with these principles on a sentence level, they are applicable to all forms of communications. To some extent the principles overlap because they are based on a common concern for the audience, whether the audience consists of listeners or readers.

Completeness

Your message is complete when it contains all the facts, readers or listeners need for the reaction you desire. Communication senders need to assess their message from eyes of the receivers to be sure they have included all the relevant information.

Benefits of Completeness

Complete messages are more likely to bring the desired results. They do a better job at building goodwill. Communication that seems inconsequential can become very important if information they contain is complete and effective.

Keep the following guidelines in mind
• Provide all necessary information
• Answer all questions asked
• Give something extra, when desired

Provide all the necessary information

Answer the five Ws that make the message clear.
• Who
• What
• When
• Where
• Why
When requesting a merchandise, make sure

- What you want?
  - When you need it?
  - To whom and where it is to be sent?
  - And how the payment would be made?

**Answer all the questions asked**

- Look for questions
- Some may appear buried within a paragraph
- Locate them and answer them precisely

A colleague or a perspective customer’s reactions to an incomplete answer is likely to be unfavorable. The customer may think that the respondent is careless or purposely trying to conceal a weak spot. In general “omissions cast suspicions” whether you are answering an inquiry about your product or recommending a former employee to a new job.

If you have no information on a particular question, say so clearly.
If you have unfavorable information in answer to certain questions, handle your reply with both tact and honesty.

**Example**

- In one instance a Software distributor when replying to a customer’s letter answered only four of seven questions. Because the original questions were somewhat hidden and buried in five long paragraphs, the respondent apparently overlooked them. The reply was incomplete and unfriendly and caused the distributor to lose business.

- Sometimes before you can answer a question, you need certain specific information from the inquirer.
  - If so it is a good idea to list the needed details on a reply form that the inquirer can fill out and return to you.
  - In this way both your answer and that of your respondent will be complete.

**Give something extra when desired**

Use your good judgment in offering additional material if sender’s message was incomplete. But the words ‘when desirable’ are essential.
You must take great care not to waste the reader’s time with superfluous information.
Communication Probe

• Credibility of the communicator has been systematically analyzed over the years, often as relating to the speaker.
• Several classic but still relevant studies suggest that five decisions are made regarding a communication source (listed in the next slide).

**Credibility**

• Competence
  - Does the audience perceive the message sender as communicating honestly?
• Character
• Composure
  - Does the sender give the impression of being calm and collected?
• Sociability
  - Does the sender come across as a likable individual?
• Extroversion
  - Does the source exhibit outgoing tendencies rather than timidity?

**Example**

You are the president of a Community welfare center, and receive the following message:

*I'm new to the city and would like to consider joining your welfare center. As I will be visiting the center within the next month, will you please tell me where the next meeting will be held?*

If you answer only this question your letter would be incomplete. You should add information about a welcome message, information about parking space, date, day and time of meeting. Your message will then have something extra that the reader really needs and appreciates.

**Example**

**Fax 1 Incomplete Question**

Please fax me the in return the departures from Lahore to Karachi on 8 May.

In reply to the fax you would have to “give something extra”, as to times of day, airline flying that route, costs and departure and arrival times.

**Example**

**Fax 2 Incomplete Question**

How come my request for an interview letter didn’t receive a response.

  - When was the letter sent?
  - Who sent it?
  - To whom it was sent?

In other words, in responding to Fax 2 would require a return letter or a fax seeking answers to the above questions.
Incomplete letter to a Savings Depositor

Thank you for the confidence you have shown us by the account you have recently opened.
Sohail Munir
Muslim Commercial Bank

Revised and Complete letter

Thank you for the confidence you have shown in Muslim Commercial Bank by the saving account you recently opened. Our goal is to make our services to you both pleasurable and helpful.
You are most welcome to come in whenever we can assist you.
Sohail Munir
Muslim Commercial Bank

Check list
• Remember the five W’s.
• Answer all questions.
  - Stated questions from the questionnaire
  - Implied questions from the questionnaire
  - Give extra information when desirable.

Conciseness

Conciseness is saying what you want to say in the fewest possible words without sacrificing the other C qualities.

  • A concise message saves time and expense for both the sender and the receiver.
  • It increases emphasis in the message.
  • It shows respect for the recipient by not cluttering them unnecessary information.

To achieve conciseness, observe the following suggestions.

  • Eliminate wordy expressions
  • Include only relevant material
  • Avoid unnecessary repetition

Eliminate wordy expressions

Use single-word substitutes instead of phrases whenever possible without changing meaning.

Wordy : At this time
Concise : Now

Wordy : Due to the fact that
Concise : because
Use single-word substitutes instead of phrases whenever possible without changing meaning.

Wordy: have need for
Concise: Need

Wordy: In due course
Concise: Soon

- **Omit trite, unnecessary expressions**

Wordy: Please be advised that your admission statement has been received.
Concise: Your admission statement has been received.

Wordy: Allow me to say, how helpful your response was.
Concise: Your last response was helpful.

- **Replace wordy conventional statements with concise ones.**

Wordy: Please find attached the list you requested.
Concise: The list you requested is attached.

Wordy: Such refreshing comments are few and far between.
Concise: Such refreshing comments are scarce.

- **Avoid overusing empty phrases.**

Wordy: There are four rules that should be observed.
Concise: Four rules must be observed.

Wordy: It was known by Mr. Usman that we must reduce the size of our inventory.
Concise: Mr. Usman knew we must reduce our inventory.

- **Omit “which” and “that” clause wherever possible.**

Wordy: She bought desks that are of the executive type.
Concise: She bought executive type desks.

Wordy: The receipt that is enclosed documents your purchase.
Concise: The enclosed receipt documents your purchase.

- **Eliminate unnecessary prepositional phrase.**

Wordy: The issue of most relevance is teamwork.
Concise: The most relevant issue is teamwork.

Wordy: In most cases the date of the inquiry is indicated in the upper right corner.
Concise: The policy date is in the upper right corner.
Limit your passive voice.

Wordy: The total balance due will be found on Page 2 of this report.
Concise: The balance due is on page 2 of this report.

Wordy: The reports are to be submitted by employees prior to 5:00 p.m.; at which time they will be received by Ali.
Concise: Please submit your reports to Ali by 5:00 p.m.

Include only relevant material

1. Stick to the purpose of the message.
2. Delete irrelevant words and rambling sentences.
3. Omit information obvious to the reader.
4. Avoid long introductions, unnecessary explanations, pompous words and gushy politeness.
5. Get to the important point tactfully and concisely.

Example

Wordy: We hereby wish to let you know that our company is pleased with the confidence you have reposed in us.
Concise: We appreciate your confidence.

Avoid unnecessary Repetition

Unnecessary repetition leads to dullness.

1. Use short names when you have mentioned the long one once. For Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital, use Shaukat Khanum or simply the Hospital.
2. Use initials instead of repeating long names. Instead of using Pakistan International Airlines, use PIA.
3. Cut out needless repetition of phrases or sentences.

Sometimes it is possible to combine two or even three sentences using subordinate clauses or phrases.

Example

The following letter is from a business executive in a Company for 5 years

Will you ship us some time, anytime during the month of October would be fine, or even November if you are rushed (November would suit us just as well, in fact a little bit better) 300 of the regular Dell Computers.

Thank you in advance for sending these along in parcel post, and not in express, as express is too expensive.

Concise Version of the Letter

Please ship parcel post, before the end of November 300 Dell Computers.