



**CIPRIANI COLLEGE**  
OF LABOUR AND CO-OPERATIVE STUDIES

**COMMUNICATION AND THE WORKPLACE**

# **WORK MATTERS**

## **COLUMN**

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# Communication and the Workplace

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Effective communication fosters a collaborative and productive organization with aligned team members. George Bernard Shaw once stated “The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.” This is an excellent example of describing the importance of clear and precise communication to provide the best results. Per contra, there are a great deal of communication barriers that prohibit the smooth transition including language, cultural, technological, psychological, organizational and physical barriers. These obstructions can often lead to negative effects which harm the organization’s flow, for example workplace conflict and misunderstandings. Hence, there is a need to address these barriers for a healthy and inclusive organization.

With the rise of immigration rates, the outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic and political conflicts worldwide, businesses are becoming more diverse than ever. Language barriers arise in the workplace when immigrants are hired due to their previous experience, but they are not able to understand or comprehend the culture and language of their teammates. For example, there has been a struggle integrating the influx of Venezuelan migrants into the workforce of Trinidad and Tobago. Trinbagonians are known for their bluntness when communicating and conflict has risen when they are not immediately understood. These misinterpretations lead to stained reputations of organizations and are a loss of revenue to them. Techniques such as using clear visuals, providing language training, using a translator when necessary and patience can help overcome or lessen these language barriers.

Cultural differences influence how people communicate, interpret messages, and respond to feedback. Variations in cultural norms, values, and expectations such as levels of formality, interpretation of body language and religious observations can create misunderstandings. For instance, direct communication styles favored in some cultures might be perceived as rude or confrontational

in cultures that prioritize indirect communication. Some ways to overcome these are encouraging a culturally diverse environment, being open minded and avoiding stereotypes.

Clearly technology has revolutionized the workplace significantly, however, technology can also become a barrier to communication. With the introduction to emails, zoom calls/ meetings and instant messaging, employees find it easier to communicate digitally. However, when this is done, information overload occurs, non-verbal cues can be missed and interpretations can be misleading, thus creating the opportunity for disagreements and miscommunication. To combat these issues, communicating offline, investing in ongoing training and mitigating disruptions are all methods of resolving technological barriers.

Psychological barriers of communication may also occur and include factors such as stress, anxiety, or lack of confidence, and can affect how employees communicate. Fear of being judged or misunderstood may lead to situations such as individuals withholding information, speaking less, or avoiding communication altogether. Some easy and useful solutions to guide this process include checking whether it is a good time and place to communicate with the person, communicating one thing at a time and checking that the person has understood correctly.

It is customary to have hierarchical status in every company, however if not practiced correctly, it can add to organizational barriers. When individuals take advantage of the power they possess, employees become frustrated and defeated which results in reluctance to collaborate among other negative actions. To combat this barrier, it is suggested that the company instills a culture of active listening, constructive criticism and team building exercises. As a result of doing this, communication flows effortlessly and action plans are easier to accomplish.

The physical layout of a workplace can influence communication and teamwork. Open plan offices

may encourage collaboration but can also result in distractions. On the other hand, isolated cubicles or remote work setups may lead to feelings of disconnection among team members. Promoting open workspace designs, practicing personal communication, maintaining technical mediums and reducing noise are some of the measures that can give assistance to this barrier and encourage productive teamwork.

In conclusion, it is shown that teamwork is null without communication and the unintentional barriers that are introduced in the workplace can hinder productivity, collaboration, and employee satisfaction. However, by identifying these barriers and implementing targeted strategies, organizations can create an environment where effective communication thrives, and the company allows itself to be more profitable. Addressing language, cultural, technological, psychological, organizational, and physical barriers require a proactive and inclusive approach. When communication flows freely, teams can achieve their full potential, contributing to the overall success of the organization.