

Course Learning Outcomes for Unit V

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

6. Compare ways to improve human communication to build effective teams and groups.
 - 6.1 Describe Parker's four types of team players as related to a historic figure.
 - 6.2 Connect how selected historic figures fit into a respective type.
 - 6.3 Establish how you will handle the differences between different team makeup during each phase of development.

Course/Unit Learning Outcomes	Learning Activity
6.1	Unit Lesson Unit V Essay
6.2	Unit V Essay
6.3	Unit Lesson Chapter 9, pp. 273-295 Chapter 10, pp. 317-332 Video: <i>Team Building Basics</i> Video: <i>Process of Team Building</i> Unit V Essay

Required Unit Resources

Chapter 9: Communicating Effectively With Others, pp. 273-295

Chapter 10: Working in Groups and Teams, pp. 317-332 (stopping at Individual Styles and Team Development)

In order to access the following resources, click the links below.

Watch the following segments from the full video referenced below:

- [Team Building Basics \(Segment 2 of 8\)](#)
- [Process of Team Building \(Segment 4 of 8\)](#)

Meridian Education Corporation (Producer). (1996). *All for one: Team building in action* [Video]. Films on Demand.
<https://libraryresources.columbiasouthern.edu/login?auth=CAS&url=https://fod.infobase.com/PortalPlayerlists.aspx?wID=273866&xtid=24675>

The transcript for these videos can be found by clicking on "Transcript" in the gray bar to the right of the video in the Films on Demand database.

Unit Lesson

Clear and constructive communication within public organizations is essential both for ensuring that organizational tasks are adequately completed and to ensure that those within the organizations are living enjoyable and fruitful lives (Denhardt et al., 2016). Indeed, according to Garnett et al. (2008), communication has very powerful and indirect influences on public sector performance. Communication is not always easy, and miscommunication can become rampant within organizations. It is vital that all parties understand established common meanings. According to Denhardt et al. (2016), this reality presents a number of important implications, which are described below.

- At times, messages are unintentionally ambiguous with the sender thinking that he or she has communicated clearly while the receiver assumes that he or she has interpreted things correctly; however, both turn out to be wrong in their assumptions.
- Messages may be intentionally ambiguous, especially when people face multiple or conflicting goals, volatile conditions, tenuous relationships, and where elite positions are threatened.
- Expressed or implied emotions can affect the manner in which a message is interpreted.
- Messages can be interpreted differently in different frames of reference where different contexts can distort or give multiple meanings.
- Messages can serve different functions, so understanding the context of messages will help to derive the type of meaning that a message possesses.
- Power affects communications, with perceived or realized power imbalances affecting how messages may be presented or interpreted.
- Communication always possesses a degree of tension that is commonplace in all human behaviors and interactions.

One of the most effective ways to improve communication efforts is to identify the barriers to communication that exist and work to break them down. Not only can intent and real meaning be misconstrued, but it also is important to note when organization or occupation-specific jargon is employed, it is unclear or unknown to those outside the organization. There is the potential for communication breakdown. Filtering information to make it sound or appear to be more favorable is another barrier to unobstructed communication. Additionally, the most appropriate medium (e.g., oral, written, electronic communication) may not be utilized, which can cause messages to be warped. In certain cases, especially with newer or emerging technologies, such as social media communication tools, there is still resistance. This resistance could be due to misunderstandings or other reasons (Bryer & Zavattaro, 2011). In addition, the different natures, experiences, states of mind, and expectations of individuals will result in them interpreting messages in different ways.

In public sector organizations, accurately communicating messages should be a main priority, if not the top priority. Employees should also attempt to communicate in a supportive manner (Denhardt et al., 2016). Supportive communication involves conveying necessary information while also attempting to foster interpersonal relationships at the same time. Denhardt et al. (2016) note supportive communication is characterized through a number of different considerations:

- being problem-oriented as opposed to people-oriented;
- being descriptive as opposed to evaluative;
- being specific, not general;
- being conjunctive, not disjunctive;
- validating, not demeaning;
- owning, not disowning; and
- accepting two ways, not one way.

Further, Denhardt et al. (2016) note more specifically the following four things to consider.

- Although electronic and other nonverbal communication continues to grow in popularity, effective speaking remains paramount to productive communication, particularly in situations where immediate feedback is necessary.
- When communicating, it is important to realize that both rational and emotional messages are being conveyed.

- Different vocal tones can lead to vastly different perceptions of what is being said and can result in different emotional reactions from recipients. Additionally, content must be appropriate in regard to what needs to be known by the recipient in relation to what they want to know.
- Managing both tone and content while also attempting to be empathetic to the needs of others can lead to more effective and productive communication efforts.

In public organizations, managers and other employees often try to persuade others to accept or acknowledge a particular point of view. One tactic that assists persuasive communication is establishing credibility or becoming perceived as trustworthy or particularly adept at a task (Denhardt et al., 2016). Another consideration is for those conveying messages to know their audiences and to appeal to them in a manner that is most consistent or expected as most welcomed by them.

On the other side of the communication spectrum, listening in an appropriate manner is of utmost importance. Some would argue it to be the most important aspect of effective communication. Although listening is an often misunderstood aspect of communication, it is an area where, with appropriate effort, vast improvements can occur. Active listening involves engaging in certain actions to explicitly convey that the intended message is being received (Rogers & Farson, 1976). This is accomplished by establishing a purpose for listening. For example, one could ask oneself the following question: How can the information conveyed help to better accomplish a particular task? Listeners can also attempt to suspend judgement on a particular topic until the entire message has been conveyed while also being mindful of, yet resisting, distractions. Listeners can confirm that the message has been properly understood by rephrasing the message back to the speaker and pointing out the most important themes that are being conveyed to them.



Terms associated with organizational theory

As important as verbal and written communication is, there is so much information being transmitted via nonverbal communication or via body language because every movement of our bodies has the potential to communicate a message that may be more honest than a spoken word (Denhardt et al., 2016). It is of great importance to realize that certain gestures, movements, or other related body language possess regional or cultural significance that may be vastly different depending on the location or company. Vocal tone and distance between conversation participants also can express certain messages or feelings in ways that words are unable to express. Touching is also an important classification of nonverbal communication but must be managed the most closely since unwanted touching, or touching that is perceived to be inappropriate, can communicate wrong signals.

Electronic communication has grown to become important in discussions about common and popular communication methods. Some scholars, such as David Brown (2005), assert that electronic government is one of the most important developments in public administration in recent decades. In the public sector and other organizations, electronic communications has worked to flatten organizations, making people—especially higher-ranking figures—more accessible while also allowing for messages to be sent and received by large numbers of employees simultaneously (Denhardt et al., 2016). Managers and leaders within public organizations must balance the positive aspects of electronic communication with the generally impersonal nature that characterizes these media forms, knowing when to engage in more direct or in-person communication practices.

The public sector possesses a number of different specialized communication tactics that employees may choose to explore in order to become more proficient in their positions as well as with their personal endeavors. These tactics are listed below.

- Coaching and personal counseling is used to identify and address work-related issues early and to prevent them from negatively affecting personal development and organizational operations. It can involve correcting existing problems, motivating employees, providing guidance, and identifying issues or areas that would require preventative measures (McConnell, 1997). Clear expectations should be established and communicated. In meetings with the boss and subordinates, possible or existing work problems should be directly addressed.
- Helping relationships happen when helpers serve as an expert resource in providing necessary information or services. A helper is someone who diagnoses problems or prescribes solutions and builds equitable relationships while emphasizing the type of help that is necessary in the relationship (Schein, 2009). Helping relationships can also involve mediators who meet with you and a party that you are currently having a disagreement with to come to an acceptable, positive solution.
- The power of dialogue is working toward a mutual understanding in group and intergroup communication settings. It is intended to achieve collaboration as opposed to making and winning arguments (Roberts, 2002). This involves processes where you actively try to convey your thoughts while being equally concerned with hearing, comprehending, and being mindful of the thoughts of others. It is less debating and more formulating.
- Conducting effective meetings involves only conducting meetings when they are absolutely necessary, having a clear purpose or meaning for the meeting, seeking suggestions from others regarding what the meeting agenda should be comprised of, starting the meeting on time, soliciting ideas from all meeting participants, ending meetings at the appropriate time, summarizing what was discussed and accomplished, and distributing minutes as quickly as possible to remind participants of follow-up steps (Denhardt et al., 2016). As a facilitator, be mindful of others' time and responsibilities when contemplating a meeting and finding out which times and items of discussion are most relevant. As a participant, be prompt with providing personal insight or perspectives on meeting schedule and agendas and be an active participant, engaging in the meeting in a participatory manner.
- Writing memos, reports, and proposals involves writing clearly and effectively communicating, and this high-importance effort can be more difficult than verbal communication due to the fact that it is much more difficult to convey tone without voice or physical gestures. Written items can be saved and reread with much greater ease than verbal transcripts. To effectively communicate in a written medium, authors must know the audience and its expectations and what must be communicated in the written product. There should be a degree of clarity, a degree of courtesy, a sense of conciseness, confidence, correct information, and a generally conversational tone involved (Sussman & Depp, 1984). This also involves developing a relationship with workers in order to know the best tone to adopt in written communication with employees or with supervisors.

With an increasingly diverse workforce, there are expected changes that have been and are continuously being made to work environments. Thomas and Ely (1996) argue that the existence of diversity by itself will increase organization effectiveness with higher morale and greater access to all areas of the market cheered for as the result of an increasingly diverse workforce. As the world and associated practices become increasingly globalized, perfecting intercultural communication becomes increasingly important. Because of this reality, becoming well-versed in cultural awareness should be at the forefront of communication efforts. Developing cultural competence is difficult due to the required development of a multitude of new skills as well as ever-present shifts in attitudes that result from the undertaking as well as a commitment to both awareness of and an acceptance of cultural differences (Denhardt et al., 2016). This can be especially difficult when cultural norms of one society clash or are generally incongruent with those of another. Additionally, being aware of one's own culture and the associated nuances and unique characteristics that it possesses, particularly as it relates to other cultures, is vital to developing adept cultural competence.

Although we have witnessed great advancements for the public workforce in becoming increasingly accepting of women and minorities, there are still obstacles that these groups continue to face. Women, in particular, face challenges of work-life balance that often include perceived responsibilities of fulfilling traditional gender roles and accepting certain longstanding stereotypes about their abilities to lead. Organizations must also consider the ramifications of generational diversity or the presence of both younger and older workers within organizations. Organizations should be mindful of different ways that those from different generations perceive themselves as well as trends associated with their respective time periods that can affect their personal traits and professional outlooks (Dychtwald et al., 2006).

As people increasingly find themselves as members of teams or in team environments, public sector organizations are adopting more team-based approaches as opposed to traditional hierarchies (Denhardt et al., 2016). Teams are comprised of groups of people who possess high degrees of interdependency in

attempting to accomplish a particular task and who must have a meaningful purpose, goal, common approach, and mutual accountability to tasks (Denhardt et al., 2016; Smith & Katzenbach, 1993).

Technology and increased emphases on stakeholders have contributed to the popularity of teams, although there is still growing resistance to teams as individual accountability and culture continues to permeate in American society. Evidence supports that failing to commit to working in a team-based environment can lead to less-than-optimal outcomes (Denhardt et al., 2016).

Take a look at the image of a standard U.S. Army infantry fire team. The team is composed of a team leader, usually a sergeant, a grenadier, an automatic rifleman, and a rifleman. Have you ever thought about the teamwork involved within that group? What if someone fails? What if someone does not buy in? What would happen if soldiers were not a part of a team?



Consider Maier's (1967)

reasons on why teams are more effective than individual actors in the context of the fire

Have you ever considered the teamwork involved within the U.S. Army?
(ArmAwiki, n.d.)

team. In the field, when posted in strategic locations, team members are able to produce greater amounts and different pieces of information than what individual team members would be able to formulate. Team leaders can explain team roles, increasing individual team members' understanding of his role while interaction with other team members can raise awareness on the importance of each team component. Infantry team leaders must be involved with motivating their subordinates and the shared sense of honor and achieving team goals helps to motivate all team members. If the team members possess personal biases or direction, other members can be harmed, making unified team goals paramount. Finally, if the team leader is open to suggestions and to listening to his team's perspectives, alternative approaches can be adopted for achieving specific team objectives to support higher unit or Army objectives.

If we consider the Hackman (1990) perspectives, it is quickly apparent that there are major considerations that teams and team members must be mindful of. The Army is known for its established structure, and the fire team is no different. The social system that the team exists in is well-established and creates boundaries that separate the team from other teams within the larger squad, platoon, etc., and, in many cases, the team operates in a semi-autonomous manner. Additionally, since the fire team will be given orders designed to achieve a certain objective, members have a collective responsibility to meet the objectives although team leaders will generally bear the lion's share of these responsibilities. Finally, as stated above, teams operate in an organizational context, represented by the organizational structure of the Army, serving the objectives of the larger unit organizations that they are part of.

All teams are not created equally or classified in the same manner. Denhardt et al. (2016) establish six major types of teams, which are listed below.

1. Top management teams are responsible for establishing overall mission or the big picture of an organization.
2. Project teams are formed by top management teams and given specific missions, ultimately providing management with their findings and recommendations.
3. Cross-functional teams work to break down organizational barriers and to bring together members from different parts of the organization.
4. Process improvement teams are small groups that work together to improve the overall effectiveness or productivity of particular projects or processes.
5. Self-directed teams work within the boundaries, stated objectives, and goals of the organization to accomplish various tasks without direct supervision in most cases.
6. Virtual teams are assembled with members who may be large distances away to address issues.

Assembling teams and assigning tasks is not always so simple, and emphasis must be placed on the implementation of teams with managers considering long-term needs and goals that the team will fulfill for the organization. Jones and Beyerlein (1998) state that teams must possess a clearly articulated purpose, goals clarity, protected space and time to complete tasks, and proper support systems in order to operate at the most effective capacity. It can be difficult to determine whether or not a particular team initiative will be successful. Interestingly, one of the most important concepts associated with ensuring team success involves proper performance evaluation systems (Denhardt et al., 2016). By allowing teams to be involved with appraisal activities as well as giving teams opportunities to evaluate other teams' work, team members can gain more insight into what is expected of them and what it takes to be successful. Additionally, size and structure of teams affect team effectiveness as does the length of time that the team is active, the amount and type of diversity the teams possess, and the degree of emotional intelligence that team members possess. Team members should also be properly trained as those with more appropriate training and skillsets will generally be more effective and will possess adept communication skills (Wellins et al., 1991).

In order to maximize team performance, Levasseur (2011) suggests that there are seven steps that are helpful, which are listed below.

1. Acknowledge the importance of the tasks being conducted from the outset.
2. Establish ground rules.
3. Develop a shared vision for the team goal.
4. Use collaborative processes.
5. Use action research.
6. Manage conflict as it arises.
7. Involve those who will be affected by predicted changes.

When looking at the process of team development, Tuckman (1965) suggests four main stages, which are listed below.

1. Forming stage: This defines a sense of security and direction for and within the team.
2. Storming stage: This stage involves questioning the legitimacy and leadership of the team. Teams must learn to cope with differences of opinion and conflict during this stage or risk mission failure.
3. Norming stage: This is the establishment of team norms and increased efforts to adapt to and adopt the norms.
4. Performing stage: When the team is finally able to function as a highly effective unit, although team members continue to question how they can be a more effective group.

In addition to paying close attention to the assembling of teams, measuring team effectiveness can also be important to sustained success. Hackman (1990) suggests that an effort be made to be mindful of productive outputs that result from teamwork as well as the degree to which the tasks increase the team's ability to be productive with future endeavors. As such, process and personal outcomes must be taken into account (Gibson, 2005). Ultimately, teams that are proven to show high levels of trust and commitment are the same ones that have proven to be most successful at accomplishing assigned tasks (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993). Additionally, creating and fostering team development should not simply be about developing the highest-performing team possible as the establishment of an ethical culture of trust and teamwork, or the collaborative community should also be a major priority (Adler et al., 2011).

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Suggested Unit Resources

Continue reading the following sections in your textbook for more in depth discussion of these units' concepts.

Chapter 9: Communicating Effectively With Others, pp. 267-272, 295-310

Chapter 10: Working in Groups and Teams, pp. 311-317, 332-347

In order to access the following resource, click the link below:

This article concisely breaks down different factors and compositions of teams and explains how they perform within organizational settings.

Guzzo, R. A., & Dickson, M. W. (1996). [Teams in organizations: Recent research on performance and effectiveness](https://libraryresources.columbiasouthern.edu/login?auth=CAS&url=http://go.galegroup.com/libraryresources.columbiasouthern.edu/ps/i.do?p=AONE&sw=w&u=oran95108&v=2.1&it=r&id=GALE%7CA18014716&asid=e5e63e1e31269eb0512b39f8b60dbaeb). *Annual Review of Psychology*, 47, 307–338.
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