

## Lecture 4:

### I. Research Methods; Obtaining Information

1. Business Information
2. Effective Information Search: Primary and Secondary Data
3. Receiving Information
4. Analysing, Selecting and Preparing Information
5. Taking Notes
6. Making Notes
7. Summary and Precis

- 1. Business Information** The Oxford Dictionary definition of “*information*” reads: “facts told, heard or discovered about sb/sth; knowledge: *give/provide/pass on/receive/ obtain/collect information on/about sb/sth.*”  
**Data becomes information after it has been received and analysed/processed by the recipient.** Data processing may involve classifying, selecting, sorting, analyzing, etc.

Business information is any information, which relates to business organizations and their activities. This includes information about business in general, as well as information generated by and about individual organizations.

Business information should be:

- Clear
- Concise
- Complete
- Relevant:
  - to the subject matter
  - to the recipient
- verifiable
- timely
- cost-effective
- appropriately communicated

Information is the living blood of any organization, making possible the coordination and regulation of organizational activities both *internally* (coordination and records of activities, bookkeeping, information on staff, etc.) and *externally* (keeping records of transactions with suppliers, customers and contractors, reports to investors, outside agencies like the State Revenue Department, local government agencies, etc.).

- 2. Effective Information Search: Primary and Secondary Data** All business information, written or oral, should be based on facts. There are two kinds of facts: primary data and secondary data.

*Primary data* are those that you or your staff collect without someone else’s interpretation of that information. Items of this nature include raw data, memoirs, questionnaire returns, artifacts, diaries, interviews, and the like.

*Secondary data* are those that others have previously reported in journals, books, magazines, pamphlets, newspapers, public opinion polls, etc.

For one **to be effective** in one's **search for relevant information**, one **must**:

- identify the **problem**, or **what** the information should be about, i.e., identify the subject matter and the purpose of looking for it.
- Develop a **strategy** for the search; this will dictate the type of information that needs to be collected (primary, or secondary, or both).

In order to find secondary information, one must be familiar with the methods, or ways of storing it.

**Organisations Providing Information** include varied sources ( mass media: newspapers, TV, Information Bureax, News Agencies, reference books, libraries, etc.).

**Using the Library:** There are several systems of classifying material store in any library:

- **The author index** is arranged alphabetically by authors' surnames (and the initials, if the surname is the same).
- **The subject index**, also arranged alphabetically by subject and its subdivisions.
- **The classified index** contains cards in numerical order (the disadvantage of this is, one must know the number!)

### **3. Receiving Information**

Looking and listening: Sight and hearing are two of the sensory methods by which we 'take in' information. Remember that *looking* at something does not necessarily mean *seeing* it, as well as *listening* does not always mean *hearing*. We have *information* only if our brain has *processed the data supplying it*.

The basic conditions required for data processing are:

- Purpose, or motivation
- Concentration
- Patience

**Reading** is one of the most important skills one must have in order to be able to receive data and process information. Analytical approach in processing data available is most important. You will read more efficiently if you 'go for the essentials' at each stage of the task, i.e., if you *prioritize* issues.

**Reading routine:**

- Identify your *objectives*
- *Scan* to get the rough idea of the *content* of the material
- Separate the *essential* from the *irrelevant* – prioritize

- 4. Analysing, or Selecting and Preparing Information** In order to select required information, one must be able to analyse and prioritize all available data. This, in turn, requires certain skills in
- Scanning, or ‘getting the drift’ of the data received
  - Identifying the ‘essence’
  - Recording the essential points for later processing and analysis
- 5. Taking Notes.** There are a few useful practices that should be adopted for effective note-taking:
- Choose a suitable storage method
  - Leave plenty of space for further comments
  - Start with your source and subject
  - Look for key words and phrases
  - Revise your notes as soon as possible after taking them
  - Know why, on what and for whom you are taking notes – before you start.
- 6. Making Notes:** This involves the analysis and recording of the most important points made. One should develop one’s own ‘system of shorthand’ for key words, e.g., b/4 = before,  $\Rightarrow$  for therefore,  $\angle$  for less than, etc. The use of standard symbols and abbreviations should also be made.  
Structure your notes.
- 7. Summary and Precis** The objective of summary is to reflect the original source in a much shortened form.  
It must be clear, complete, and precise. In summary:
- Include all the essential points
  - Include only the essential points
  - Include only the author’s ideas
  - Preserve the logical sequence of ideas

## **II. The Planning Process in Communication; Writing with Force and Clarity**

1. The Planning Process in Communication
2. Scope, Limitations, and Depth
3. Drawing up the Tentative Outline
4. Outlining Methods
5. Orders of Development
6. Types of Outlines
7. Writing the First Draft
8. Choosing the Words
9. Choosing the Sentences
10. Choosing the Paragraphs

- 11. Qualities of Writing Style
- 12. Editing Suggestions
- 13. Readability Formulas
- 14. Ten Suggestions for Clear Writing
- 15. The Final Paper

In this lecture we shall discuss the process of writing. The objective is to develop your abilities so that you consistently write with clarity, conciseness, and coherence. We shall review the time-saving value of planning and outlining prior to writing the first draft, and consider different types of outlines.

We shall also examine the discipline of writing, the skills involved there, the tasks of editing, and a method for determining easy readability or comprehension of material. Finally, we shall review the factors involved in writing the final draft.

### 1. The Planning Process in Communication

Planning and organizing are the keys to success in most activities, from constructing a building, taking a 2000-mile trip, or performing a surgical procedure, to writing a report, letter, or proposal. Few daily activities are carried through without a plan; unfortunately, though, many people attempt to write without planning.

In communication, the planning process consists of clearly defining the problems to be solved, recognizing the purpose of the communication, and identifying the audience to which the communication is directed. Interestingly enough, many people begin their research, or even their writing, without knowing precisely the problem they are concerned with.

**Example:** Sales are declining in the Campbell Corporation and the president of the firm requests a report. Before one can prepare a report on declining sales, it is vital to determine the precise problem or cause of the problem. The decline could be due to higher sales prices, ineffective advertising, poor sales representatives, increased competition, or any one of a number of other causes. If the report writer offers a solution based on an incorrect cause, certainly little would be achieved in the way of solving the problem. The first step is to determine accurately the precise problem: sales prices? Advertising? Sales personnel? Competition? Or what?

The report writer's second step is to determine the purpose of the report. The purpose could be to *inform* the reader, *persuade* the reader, offer a *comparison* between two or more situations to the reader, or *explain* a process or technique to the reader. For example, if the writer simply wants to inform a potential buyer of technical details of a product or service, he would be unwise to attempt to persuade the buyer to take a specific action.

The report writer's third step is to determine who will be reading the report. Certainly, the complexity of presentation, the choice of graphs, the depth of analysis, and the details covered vary according to whether the reader of the report is a stockholder or a member of the audit committee.



## 2. Scope, Limitations, and Depth

The planning process also includes an analysis by the writer of how deeply he or she wishes to examine the topic. At the same time, the writer must define the limitations of the topic in order to avoid going too far afield and including irrelevant material. If the writer has carefully recognized the purpose of the piece of writing and who the reader is, then defining the depth and limitations of the topic is not difficult.

## 3. Drawing up the Tentative Outline

Once the writer knows the precise problem, the limits of the problem, and who the reader is, the writer should draw up a tentative plan or outline.

The outline serves as a guide for research, thinking, and organizing. It permits the writer to

- Check the logic of the plan
- Evaluate the relative proportion of each section
- Check the completeness of the coverage
- Determine if the order of development is correct
- Save time (it requires less time to change an outline than a finished presentation)

## 4. Outlining Methods

An outline may use a *number-letter system*:

1.
  - A.
  - B.
    - 1.
    2.
      - a.
      - b.

2.

or a *decimal system*:

1.
  - 1.1
  - 1.2
    - 1.21
    - 1.22
      - 1.221
      - 1.222

or simply *informal indentation*:

- Advertising Media Used
  - Newspapers
  - Magazines
    - Monthlies
    - Weeklies
  - Radio
    - A.M. stations
    - F.M. stations
  - TV
    - Public Broadcasting Channels
    - Commercial Channels

### Example: Number-Letter Outline

1. Sea Travel as a Vacation

- A. Travel by passenger freighter
  - B. Travel by cruise ship
    - 1. The advantages and cost of using a national cruise line
    - 2. The advantages and cost of using a foreign cruise line
      - a. The Australian lines available
      - b. Other lines available
2. Auto Motoring as a Vacation

## 5. Orders of Development

A consistent order of development should be used in the outline, and orders usually should not be mixed. Orders of development include

- Inductive
- Deductive
- Chronological
- Geographical
- Analysis and synthesis
- Spatial
- Directional
- Simple to complex

## 6. Types of Outlines

There are three major types of outlines:

- Topic outline
- Sentence outline
- Paragraph outline

The easiest and most frequently used type is the topic outline. The topic outline may be drawn up quickly and easily, with little time needed to formulate complete sentences and paragraphs. Points listed in a topic outline may be moved from one section to another easily.

### Example: Topic Outline (decimal system)

- 1. Incentive systems to increase productivity
  - 1.1 Merchandise awards
  - 1.2 Money awards
    - 1.21 On the basis of sales
    - 1.22 On the basis of production
      - 1.221 Cost savings secured
      - 1.222 Increased units over base
- 2. Equipment changes to increase productivity

## 7. Writing the First Draft

Once the writer has carefully thought through the topic, defined the problem and purpose of the communication, identified the reader, and drawn up a tentative outline, he/she is ready to write the first draft.

Turning out that first draft should be carried through in a satisfactory writing environment. For most of us that means a clear desk, plenty of paper, and no distractions. Others might add soft background music. Whatever your cup of tea, the environment should be arranged as expertly as possible to set the right climate for you.

## 8. Choosing the Words

Although the choice of words is absolutely vital to evoke the precise image in the reader's mind, the writer should be primarily concerned with getting ideas and concepts on paper as quickly and as completely as possible when writing the first draft. At a later time the exact word can be found, the alliterative phrase can be developed, or the simile or metaphor injected.

## 9. Choosing the Sentences

Even in the first draft, the writer should become accustomed to using complex sentences so that the writing has variety and rhythm. Certainly, there is nothing wrong with simple and compound sentences. However, using too many of either gives writing an air of repetition, or dullness, or boredom.

The complex sentence may be short or long, fast or slow, soft or loud. In a word, it has *variety*, and variety is one of the factors that make writing interesting.

## 10. Choosing the Paragraphs

### Paragraphs may be

- Expository (providing explanation)
- Informational
- Transitional (making a bridge)
- Emphatic, or
- Persuasive.

## 11. Qualities of Writing Style

*Unity* is the quality of "oneness" that a piece of writing possesses. All ideas are related to a central idea; irrelevant material is discarded.

*Coherence* is the logical interconnection of ideas so they flow smoothly and easily together.

*Courtesy* and *consideration* of the reader's needs, viewpoints, and desires are important in writing style.

*Emphasis* is the writing skill that brings key ideas or concepts into sharp focus. It may be secured by proportion, placement, repetition, attention-catching words, or use of type styles (bold, italics, etc.).

*Imagination* is the writing quality that permits the reader to see, feel, smell, or hear the incident, conversation, or activity that the writer "draws" with words.

## 12. Editing Suggestions

**Once the material has been written, it should be reviewed and edited.**

### Edit for

- Coherence
- Clarity
- Conciseness
- Emphasis
- Readability
- Format

## 13. Readability Formulas



There are several formulas for judging readability of material. The “Fog Index” already discussed in Lecture 3: Using the Language, is the most popular. In this system, the lower the readability index, the easier is the comprehension. A level of 8 is easy to comprehend; a level of 16 is quite difficult; over 20 is very difficult.

**14. Ten Suggestions for Clear Writing** (these were made by Robert Gunning, the author of the Fog Index):

- Keep sentences short, on the average
- Prefer the simple to the complex
- Prefer the familiar word
- Avoid unnecessary words
- Put action in your verbs
- Write as you talk
- Use terms your reader can picture
- Tie in with your reader’s experience
- Make full use of variety
- Write to express, not to impress

**15. The Final Paper**

The final paper should be checked to determine if all the following items are excellent:

- Topic headings to help the reader comprehend the material
- White space to improve appearance and readability
- Appendix, charts, and supplements (make sure that all data contained in these elements are necessary and that all irrelevant data have been eliminated)
- Preface to set the stage properly
- Bindings to present the paper attractively.

**Study Questions**

Can you explain ....?

- The items to be aware of when planning a written communication
- The value of a tentative outline
- Outlining methods
- Outline types
- The qualities of writing style
- What to edit for in a piece of written communication
- Gunning’s ten suggestions for clear writing
- What to check in the final paper

## Summary:

1. In planning written communication, be sure to define the problem accurately, recognize the purpose of communication, and identify the specific audience to whom the message is directed. In other words, identify:
  - The subject, or *what* you want to say
  - The purpose, or *why* you want to say it, and
  - The audience, or *to whom* you want to say it.
2. Planning also means limiting the scope of discussion. Once the parameters of the topic are established, the writer should determine in what depth to examine the topic.
3. The writer should draw up a tentative outline in order to check the logic of the design, evaluate the relative proportion of each section, check the completeness of coverage, review the order of development, and, overall, save time if changes are needed.
4. Outlining methods include: number-letter system, decimal system, and simple informal indentation.
5. Types of outlining include
  - a. Topic outline
  - b. Sentence outline
  - c. Paragraph outline
6. The topic may be developed through any one of the following orders:
  - a. Inductive
  - b. Deductive
  - c. Chronological
  - d. Geographical
  - e. Analysis & synthesis
  - f. Spatial
  - g. Directional
  - h. Simple to complex
7. The first draft should be written quickly, using the tentative guideline for a guide.
8. Words, sentences and paragraphs should be selected carefully.
9. For best results, the writer should be aware of the following qualities of writing style:
  - a. Unity
  - b. Coherence
  - c. Courtesy
  - d. Emphasis
  - e. Imagination
10. After writing the first draft, the writer should edit it for
  - a. Coherence
  - b. Clarity
  - c. Emphasis
  - d. Readability

11. A readability formula is designed to measure the level of difficulty of reader comprehension of a written piece. Robert Gunning is the author of a well-known readability formula, the Fog Index.
12. Gunning has ten suggestions for achieving conciseness and clarity in writing. His major points are:
  - a. Keep sentences short, on the average.
  - b. Avoid unnecessary words
  - c. Write to express, not to impress.