Organizational Communication

• Effective communication is essential in all organizations in which people deal with one another.

• Communicator is a major role of today’s manager.

• Communication is identified as the number one problem in management.
  – The lack of communication is the employee’s complaint about immediate supervisors.
The Process

• Communication is a process involving several independent and dynamic elements.

• The process generally involves five steps:
  – The sender
  – The message
  – The channel (medium)
  – The receiver
  – Feedback
The Sender

- The initiator in the communication process.
- In policing there are factors that often impact the process
  - Perceived authority and credibility strongly influence how much attention a message will receive.
The Message

- The heart of the communication process.
- A purpose or idea is to be conveyed affected by
  - The clarity of the message
  - The alertness of the receiver
  - The complexity and length of the message
  - The organization of the information
The Channel

• Several channels or media are often available.
  – Spoken
    • Includes nonverbal communication
  – Written
  – Combination
The Receiver

- Communication is complete when another party receives the message and understands it properly.  
  - As it was intended

- Perceptual distortions of various types act as filters that can prevent a message from being received as intended.
Feedback

- The message(s) sent back from the receiver to the sender.
- Considered by many to be the most important step in the process.
- Without feedback it is difficult to determine whether a message has been received and understood.
Additional factors

- Two factors that can positively or negatively impact the process
  - Environment
    - Organizational culture – a key environmental factor
      - Attitudes
      - Atmosphere
  - Noise
    - Involves distractions
      - Auditory
      - Emotions
      - Stress
      - Fear
Barriers to communication

• Barriers often are the result of a breakdown in the process.
• These barriers involve the
  – Sender
  – Receiver
  – Other
Sender barriers

• The sender is not clear about what is to be accomplished
• Incorrect assumptions that the receiver has the requisite knowledge
• Using a medium not suited for the message
• Incorrectly interpreted feedback
• Improper use of language
• Improper analysis of the audience
Receiver barriers

- Poor listener, observer, reader
- Jumps to conclusions
- Hears or sees only part of the message
- Tends to reject messages that contradict beliefs and assumptions
- Other concerns or emotional barriers
Other barriers

- Noise
- Temperature
- Physical distractions
- Sender-receiver relationship
Organizational communication

- Organizational communication is usually created by establishing formal systems of responsibility and explicit delegations of duties.
- Formal communication follows the accepted patterns of hierarchical structure.
- Most police managers prefer formal communications regardless of how cumbersome it may be.
Downward communication

- Used by management for sending
  - Orders
  - Directives
  - Goals
  - Policies
  - Procedures
  - Memorandums
There are five types of downward communication:

- Job instruction
  - Relating to the performance of a certain task
- Job rationale
  - Relating a certain task to organizational tasks
- Procedures and practices
- Feedback
  - Appraisal of how individuals perform assigned tasks
- Indoctrination
  - Designed to motivate
How effective is it?

• From most to least effective
  – Oral and written combined
  – Oral only
  – Written only
  – Bulletin board
  – Grapevine
Upward communication

- Police managers do not always welcome UC with open arms
- UC alerts the manager to
  - Resistance within the organization
  - The temperament and habits of supervisors and employees
- Physical distance between supervisor and subordinate impedes UC
- Other barriers involve the attitudes of supervisors and their listening behavior.
Horizontal communication

- When formal channels are not open, informal channels (HC) are sure to thrive.
- HC is much easier and more natural to achieve than vertical communication.
- HC often furnishes the emotional and social bond that helps to build espirit de corps.
The Grapevine

- The best-known system for transmitting informal communication.
- Most effective characteristics
  - Highly selective
  - Discriminating
- Operates mostly at the work place
- Supplements and relates to formal communication
- Considered valuable in that it gives management insight into attitudes and provides a safety valve for employee emotions and helps spread useful information.
Operates in four ways

- Single strand
  - A tells B who tells C and so on.

- Gossip chain
  - A seeks and tells everyone

- Probability chain
  - A randomly tells D and F and D and F communicate to others in similar fashion

- Cluster chain
  - A tells selected people who tell one or two others
Interpersonal communication

• Formal and informal leaders must be persuasive and dynamic communicators.
• Generally involves two categories:
  – Speaking and writing
  – Nonverbal
Speaking & Writing

- Be credible
- Gear the message to the listener
- Persuade group members of the benefits of change
- Use heavy-impact and emotion-provoking words
- Back up conclusions with data
- Minimize language errors
- Write crisp, clear memos and reports – front-load the message
- Use a power-oriented linguistic style
Nonverbal

- Is important because leadership involves emotion and words alone cannot communicate convincingly
- Perhaps as much as 90% of the message is communicated nonverbally
  - Does not mean that 90% of communication is nonverbal
- Consider
  - Posture
  - Tone
  - Eye contact
Group vs. Interpersonal

- Group communication involves interaction among three (3) or more individuals in a face-to-face situation.
  - This definition does not set limits on the size of the group.
  - Practical considerations would define a maximum number for effective interaction.
  - Between 3 – 20 is a natural size.
    - In excess of 20 the ability to influence diminishes.
Group Interaction

• Four phases:
  – Orientation
    • Group members attempt to get to know each other
  – Conflict
    • Involves disagreement. Characterized by polarization and controversy.
  – Emergence
    • More of an emphasis on positive statements.
  – Reinforcement
    • Group members comment on the positive aspects of the group and its problem-solving ability.
Oral or Written

- Written
  - There tends to be considerable difference in the written word within complex organizations.
  - Police administrators increasingly rely on written communication as the dominant medium.
  - The tendency for rules and regulations in police organizations lends itself to the reliance on written communication.
  - Civil liability has had a significant impact
  - Administrative due process as well
• Oral
  – Offers distinct advantages to written
    • Probe for exactness
    • Ask for clarification
    • Immediate feedback
  – Highly suitable for situations when instruction is temporary.