


COMMUNICATION AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT

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PART 2 - 3: BASIC PRINCIPLES,



In the first 2 lessons, we will analyze briefly the basic principles of communication, with the purpose to better understand how people interact with each other.



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WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

written communication starts about 3.500 B.C. in Mesopotamia (Babylon area, now mostly Iraq) and it undergoes many evolutions (and revolutions) up to present days. We say «written» meaning «related to an alphabet» and to a «codified grammar»

WHY WRITTEN ?

A famous latin quote says: «*verba volant, scripta manent*»

(literally: «spoken words fly away while written words will remain»)

Obviously, the first and most important peculiarity of written communication is that communication will reach more «receivers» in space and time than oral communication.

THE «EA-NASIR» LETTER OF COMPLAINT

What is considered the most ancient «letter of complaint» in the World is the «EA-NASIR letter» and it was discovered in the ruins of Ur (Iraq). It is dated about 1750 B.C. (now kept in the British Museum)

It's 11,5 x 5 X 2,6 c, clay tablet, filled with cuneiform writings, and contains a complaint from a customer (called «Nanni») to its supplier (called «Ea-Nasir»).

There are rather angry language tones in it, saying that Ea-Nasir provided bad copper supplies, prices raised immotivately and other «bad stuff»,



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HERE IS A FULL RESUME OF THE LETTER

Tell Ea-nasir: Nanni sends the following message:

When you came, you said to me as follows : "I will give Gimil-Sin (when he comes) fine quality copper ingots." You left then but you did not do what you promised me. You put ingots which were not good before my messenger (Sit-Sin) and said: "If you want to take them, take them; if you do not want to take them, go away!"

What do you take me for, that you treat somebody like me with such contempt? I have sent as messengers gentlemen like ourselves to collect the bag with my money (deposited with you) but you have treated me with contempt by sending them back to me empty-handed several times, and that through enemy territory. Is there anyone among the merchants who trade with Telmun who has treated me in this way? You alone treat my messenger with contempt! On account of that one (trifling) mina of silver which I owe(?) you, you feel free to speak in such a way, while I have given to the palace on your behalf 1,080 pounds of copper, and Sumi-abum has likewise given 1,080 pounds of copper, apart from what we both have had written on a sealed tablet to be kept in the temple of Shamash.

How have you treated me for that copper? You have withheld my money bag from me in enemy territory; it is now up to you to restore (my money) to me in full.

Take cognizance that (from now on) I will not accept here any copper from you that is not of fine quality. I shall (from now on) select and take the ingots individually in my own yard, and I shall exercise against you my right of rejection because you have treated me with contempt.

(Leo Oppenheim, Letters from Mesopotamia)



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WHAT WAS THE REASON FOR THE COMPLAINT?

The MAIN reason was **NOT** to have the money back (of course, Nanni wants his money back, but that's not the point)

The MAIN reason was to send a written message so Ea-Nasir might **CLEARLY UNDERSTAND** why he was upset, receiving it **FROM A LONG DISTANCE**, and the message **WOULD BE KEPT FOR LONG TIME**

Also, it implies in the message that Ea-Nasir is a «**dishonorable person**»



WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

In the example showed, we can see clearly that written communication can:

- 1- **be addressed (or read) potentially to everyone in the World** (if the receiver knows the language)
- 2 – **be kept for a long time**, so other people can receive the message, even years later (until today, so more than 2300 years, in this specific case)
- 3- **reach receivers also at long distances** (from Ur to London, in this specific case)

And...

- 4- **NO distortion or noise in the message** (potentially)



WRITTEN COMMUNICATION (R) EVOLUTIONS

For most researchers, there are three (3) main REVOLUTIONS/EVOLUTIONS in written communication:

- 1- The emerging through the use of pictograms – communication is «static»
- 2- Writing began to appear on clay, wax, papyrus and finally paper, together with **adaptable alphabets** – In this step written communication began to be «mobile»
- 3- Final (actual) stage: transfer of information through controlled electromagnetic pulses (radio, microwaves, infrared) and other electronic signals

Some authors add a fourth (4) revolution between 2) and 3), occurred with the discovering of printing press that made communication not only «mobile» but also «accessible» and «cheaper». That made information spread across population, giving access to knowledge for all

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

- Written communication is lesser sensitive to «noise» and misunderstandings
- Written words are chosen with more accuracy than verbal communication



Exceptions

- Instant messaging, social media, e-mails

They are considered something between written and verbal communication

Written as «channel» but Verbal concerning «structure» and «codes/symbols»

INSTANT MESSAGING AND SOCIAL MEDIA REQUIRES SPECIFIC SKILLS AND ATTENTION



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WHAT IS «NOISE» IN COMMUNICATION?

For «noise», we usually intend «**interferences** in **decoding** a **message** sent by a **sender** through a **channel**».

To better understand how «noise» works, we first have to analyze the structure of communication.



STRUCTURE OF COMMUNICATION - 1

We can assume that communication «is a process by which a meaning is assigned and conveyed to create shared understanding».

This «process» requires lot of skills

- Interpersonal processing
- Listening (or reading, in written communication)
- Observing
- Speaking (or writing, in written communication)
- Questioning
- Analyzing
- Gesturing
- Evaluating

STRUCTURE OF COMMUNICATION - 2

There are many «models» to describe this process, all with strenghts and weaknesses. We can say there's not a «perfect model»: each one focus on a specific part or emphatize some aspects.

For our purposes, I chose the «Berlo Model» because it explains in a clearer and easier way how communication works and, in my opinion, is the most «complete».

The «Berlo Model» was developed by **David Berlo** in 1960 and it is also called «**The SMCR Model of Communication**», which is derived from Shannon and Weaver's model

SHANNON AND WEAVER'S MODEL

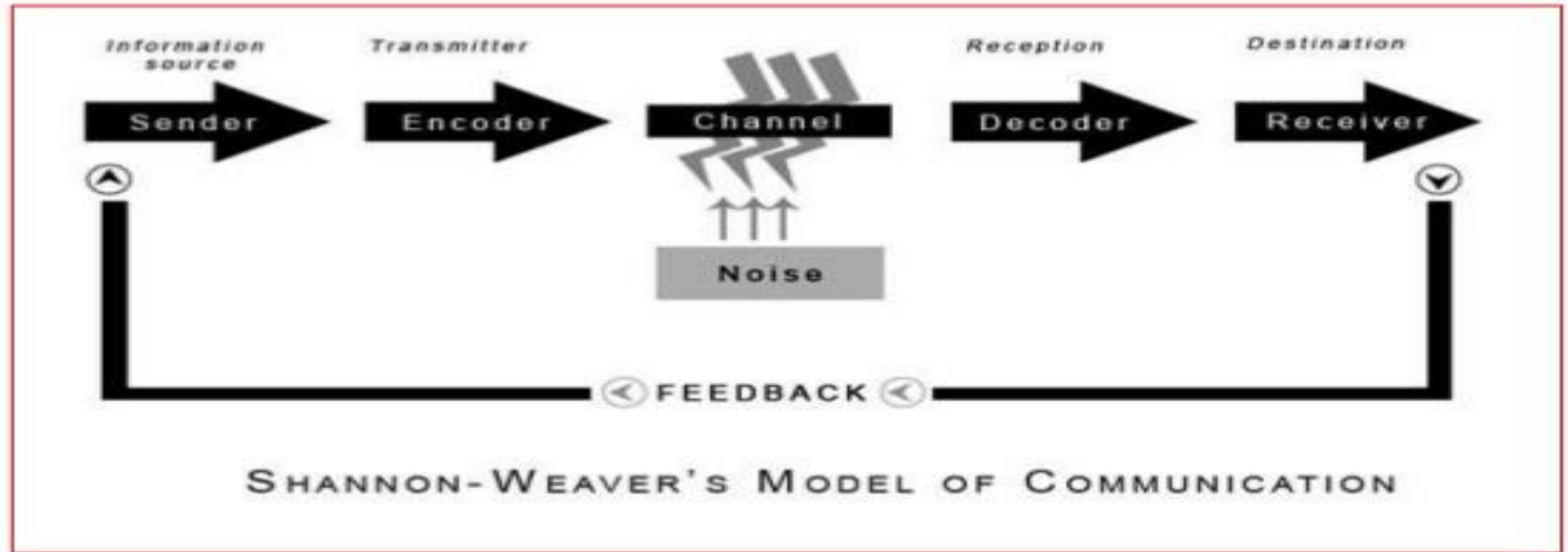


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Shannon and Weaver model



BERLO MODEL SMCR

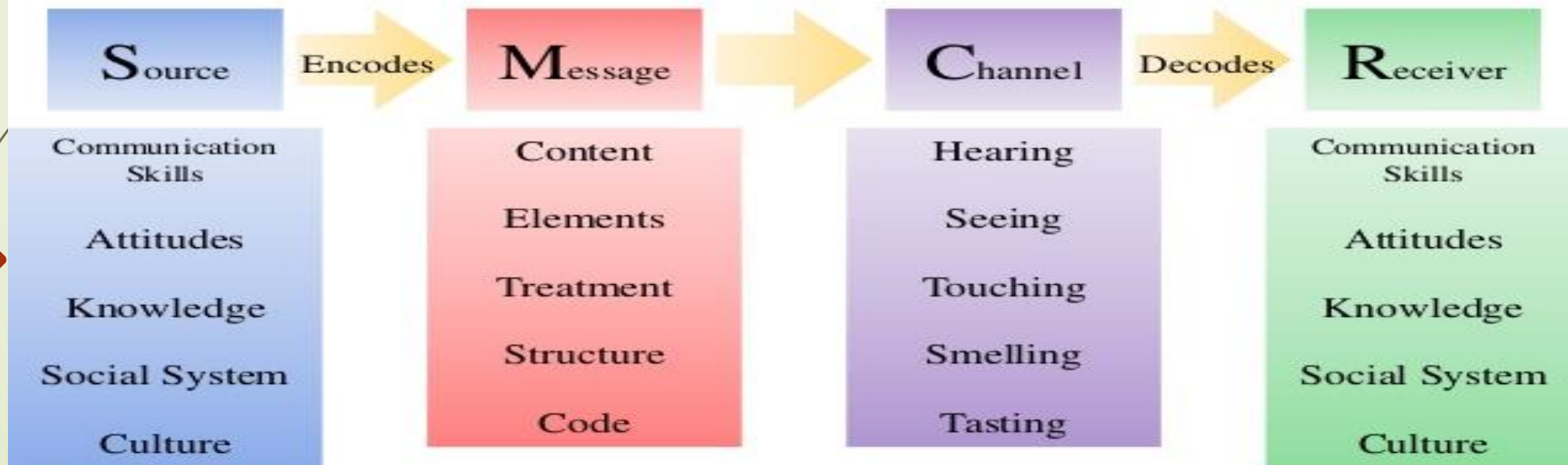


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The S-M-C-R Model of Communication





...AND BACK TO «NOISE»

For «noise», we usually intend «**interferences in decoding a message sent by a sender through a channel**».

So, we can resume the process as follow:

- SENDER (the «source»)
- MESSAGE (the message)
- CHANNEL (the «media» used)
- RECEIVER (the «destination»)

As shown in the Shannon-Weaver model, «**noise**» **interfers basically only on «channel»**



EXAMPLES OF «NOISE»

- **ENVIRONMENTAL NOISE** (real noise)
- **PHYSIOLOGICAL NOISE** (physical illness)
- **SEMANTIC NOISE** (different interpretations)
- **SYNTACTICAL NOISE** (mistakes in grammar)
- **ORGANIZATIONAL NOISE** (poorly structured)
- **CULTURAL NOISE** (stereotypical assumptions)
- **PSYCHOLOGICAL NOISE** (emotions, disorders)

- **NOTE: DON'T CONFUSE «NOISE» WITH «BIAS»** (we'll see)

REDUCING NOISE

We can't eliminate all the «noises», but we can (and we **MUST**) reduce noises, to increase comprehension.

Commonly, we use three techniques:

- REDUNDANCY (repeating the message using different words, examples)
- ACKNOWLEDGMENTS (feedbacks – did I explain myself well? – Is it ok? – Do you agree? Etc.)
- DISAMBIGUATION (noise reduction in case of multiple meanings – semantic noise)

BIAS

While «noise» is an interference from external or material sources and affects only the «channel», «Bias»(es) are interferences too but **they are immaterial** (mental, emotional etc.) and **they interfere on the cognitive process**, so they affect the «sender», the «receiver» and often also the «message».

Cognitive biases are «systematic patterns of deviation from norm or rationality in judgement»

Usually they are divided into :

- **HOT biases (motivational)**
- **COLD biases (cognitive)**

BIAS

There are many families of biases. We just list some of them:

- **Decision-making, beliefs and behavioral biases**
- **Social biases**
- **Memory errors and biases**

NOTE: many biases are effects of information processing rules
(mental shortcuts, preconceptions, prejudices)
are also called «Heuristics»



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HEURISTICS

The Cambridge English dictionary gives this definition to the word «Heuristics»:

“a way of solving problems by discovering things yourself and learning from your own experiences”



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Thanks for your kind
attention