COMMUNICATION NETWORK

Organizational members connect into a various number of groups and as members of the group, they interact with each other in a specific manner. The path along which they interact is called the communication network. It is a type of pattern in which information flows between the members of the group.

It also indicates the form of single-channel and multiple channels of communication to regulate the flow of information and ensure that information reaches the desired destination. It indicates the times through which information flows between peoples.

A communication network refers to how information flows within the organization. Information within an organization generally flows through a system, rather than being a free flow. Communication networks are regular patterns of person-to-person relationships through which information flows in an organization. This means that the flow of information is managed, regulated and structured.

Communication has different types of paths or networks like: **On the basis of <u>SYSTEM</u> - <u>DIRECTION</u>-And <u>CHANNEL.</u>**

On SYSTEM	**On DIRECTION**	**On CHANNEL**
1. Formal Communication	1. Up- ward	1. Y network
2. Informal Communication	2. Down- ward	2. Wheel Network
	3. Horizontal	3. Chain Network
	4. Vertical	4. Circle Network
		5. All Channel Network

A) ON THE BASIS OF SYSTEM:

1) Formal Communication Network – *A formal communication network is one which is created by management and described with the help of an organizational chart. An organizational chart specifies the hierarchy and the reporting system in the organization. Therefore, in a formal network, information is passed on only through official channels such as memos, bulletins and intranet (email within the organization).*

(1) Chain   (2) Wheel   (3) Circular   (4) Free Flow   (5) Inverted V

Formal Communication Network
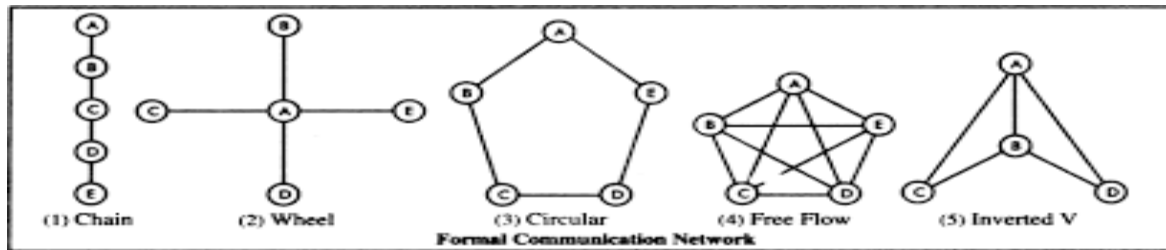
CHARACTERISTICS: *The important features or characteristics of formal communication are as follows:*

- **Well defined rules and regulations**: *Formal communication has well-defined rules and regulations.*
- **Bindings:** *Employees of the formal organization is bounded to follow formal rules and regulations.*
- **Chain of command:** *Proper chain of command is followed by formal communication.*
- **Delegation of authority**: *Authority is delegated by the superiors to the subordinates through this communication.*
- **Use as a reference**: *Documents of the formal communication is recorded by the organization. S, these recorded documents are used as a source of the employees.*
- **Recognition:** *Formal communication occurs among the employees of the organizational structure. So it has recognition.*
- **Task-related**: *All types of formal compunction within the employees should be task related.*
- **Routine Communication**: *Generally formal communication is a routine communication of the employees.*
- **Cooperation and co-ordination:** *Formal communication is a part of cooperation and coordination.*
- **Status symbol**: *Formal communication of the employees shows the status symbol.*

2) Informal Communication Network – *Another name for informal networks is the "grapevine". In this type of network, information does not flow in a particular direction, as we have seen with formal networks. The information is also not passed on through official channels such as memos, notices or bulletin boards. The information need not be circulated within the organization, but could be passed on outside the work environment, wherever co-workers or colleagues meet socially. Thus, informal networks are based more on friendship, shared personal or career interests.*

CHARACTERISTICS:

The important features or characteristics of grapevine or informal communication are as follows:

- **Un-official channel of communication**: Since an informal communication network does not follow any rules or formalities. So, it is an unofficial channel of communication.
- **Not controlled by management**: The grapevine is not controlled by management. The grapevine is mainly controlled by the employees themselves. As employees control the grapevine information, sometimes the information may be accurate and sometimes the information may be inaccurate.
- **More reliable information**: Most employees perceive and believe that the grapevine contains more reliable information than the information received from upper management. What employees may or may not realize is that many times the grapevine contains false information.
- **Flexibility:** Informal communication is more flexible than formal communication because it is free from all type of formalities.
- **Oral way of communication**: Informal communication technique more uses oral way of communication rather than written communication.
- **Rapid communication**: Informal communication transmits very fast. Especially miss-inflation or rumor spread rapidly to others is the organization.
- **Distortion of meaning**: Something the meaning and the subject matter of the information is distorted in this system g.
- **Influential:** Informal communication is very much influential type of communication is distorted in this system.
- **Free form accountability**: The exchange of message in informal communication is free from accountability to the authority or top executives of the organization.
- **Spontaneous:** Informal communication is the process of spontaneous exchange of information between two or more person at different status within the organizational structure.
- **Multidirectional:** Informal communication is multidirectional in nature. The grapevine may be largely available to simply serve the interests of the people it involves. Many times, employees use the grapevine to begin rumors that serve their own interests, with little regard to the people they affect.

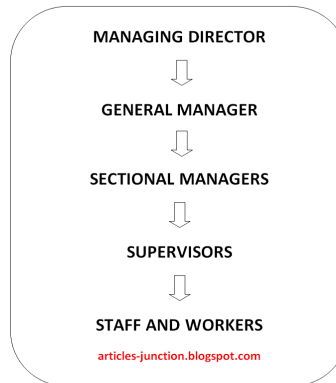**B) ON THE BASIS OF DIRECTION**:

1) Upward Communication – *This may be defined as information that flows from subordinates to superiors. Some of the reasons for upward communication include discussing work related problems, giving suggestions for improvement and sharing feelings about the job and co-workers.*

This type of communication has both benefits and disadvantages. One of the biggest benefits is problem-solving. Once a subordinate has brought a problem to his superior's notice, chances are that the problem will not recur, since the subordinate learns from his superior how to tackle it the next time. Thus, his ability to solve new problems and therefore his managerial ability, improves. Another benefit that could arise from upward communication is that valuable ideas and suggestions may sometimes come from lower level employees. Therefore organizations should encourage this kind of communication. A third benefit is that employees learn to accept the decisions of management and thereby work as a team.
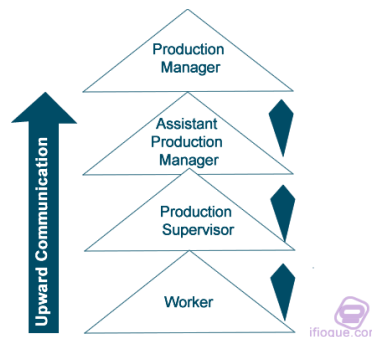
2) Downward Communication – *This may be defined as information that flows from superiors to subordinates. The most common reasons for downward communication are for giving job instructions, explaining company rules, policies and procedures and giving feedback regarding job performance. A number of studies have indicated that regular downward communication in the form of feedback given to employees is the most important factor affecting job satisfaction. Therefore organizations today are trying to encourage more of this type of communication.*

There are both benefits and disadvantages associated with this type of communication. Downward communication that provides regular feedback will be beneficial if the feedback or review of performance is constructive. A constructive review is one where a manager "counsels" an employee, or advises him on how to improve his performance. On the other hand, a destructive review can destroy employee morale and confidence. Regular downward communication also creates a climate of transparency or openness, where information is passed on through official channels, rather than through rumors.Thirdly, downward communication boosts employee morale, since it indicates that management is involved in their progress.

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                    MANAGING DIRECTOR
                          ⇩
                    GENERAL MANAGER
                          ⇩
                  SECTIONAL MANAGERS
                          ⇩
                     SUPERVISORS
                          ⇩
                  STAFF AND WORKERS
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3) Horizontal Communication – *This type of communication is also known as "lateral" communication. It may be defined as communication that takes place between co-workers in the same department, or in different departments, with different areas of responsibility. For example, Sales Managers and Advertising Managers in the Marketing department, or Marketing Managers and Finance Managers. The reasons for this type of communication are for coordination of tasks, sharing of information regarding goals of the organization, resolving interpersonal or work related problems and building rapport.*

The biggest potential benefit of horizontal communication is the sense of teamwork that is created. Regular communication of this type ensures that all co-workers work together towards achieving a common goal in the overall interest of the organization. The biggest potential problem is that conflicts such as ego clashes are bound to arise, when co-workers at the same level communicate on a regular basis.

In spite of these problems, horizontal or lateral communication has become more important in today's business scenario than upward or downward communication. This is because the "organizational pyramid" indicating the different hierarchies or levels in an organization has flattened. This is illustrated by the diagrams given below.
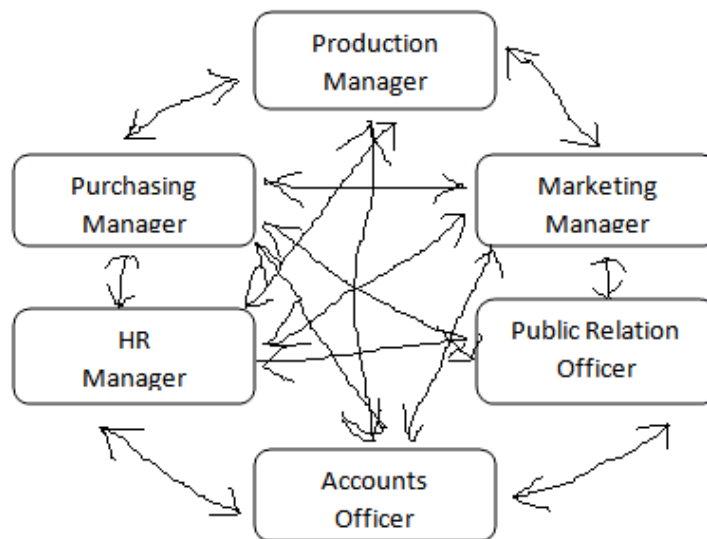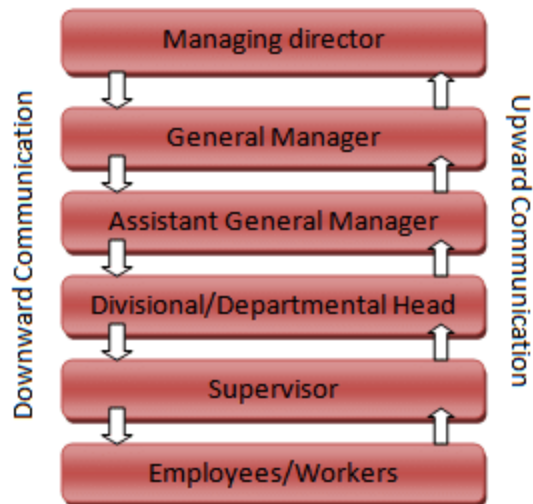
Figure: The flow of Horizontal communication

So, Horizontal communication is the communication where information or messages flows among the similar or same level statuses of people in the organizational structure.

4) Vertical Communication

Vertical communication is the communication where information or messages flows between or among the subordinates and superiors of the organizational.

So, vertical communication is the communication where information or messages flows within the top level of the organizational structure and bottom level of the organizational structure.

Figure: The flow of vertical communication

C) ON THE BASIS OF CHANNEL:

1. Y network :

Here A is the main person who communicates or transfers our information with B, C, and D. It follows the formal chain of authority where an upward and downward type of communication takes place in the organizational hierarchy.

In this, an individual can easily communicate with both superior and subordinates.

Characteristics of the Y network:
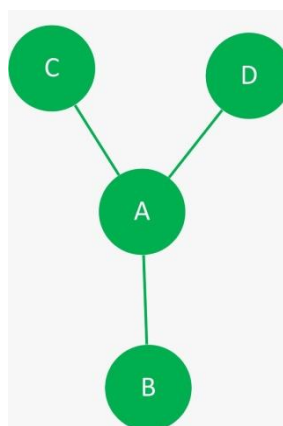
(i) Sequential in nature.

(ii) Centralization process.

(iii) Flexible in nature.

2. Wheel Networks

In this network, all information, and messages flow through A, who is at the center at the wheel. A communicates with other members of the group like B, C, D, and E, while members cannot
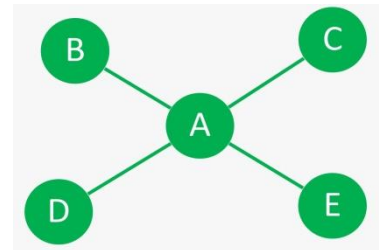
communicate with each other.

This network of communication is found in highly formal organization structures where the task-aimed approach to leadership is preferred to employee-oriented approach.

The employer (senior) communicates the information to employees while the employees (junior) do not communicate amongst themselves.

Characteristics of Wheel Network:

(i) Information passes only from authority.

(ii) Less chance of misunderstanding.

(iii) Follow the process of goal-oriented approach.

3. Chain networks

Chain network is similar to the Y network, chain network mostly follows a formal chain of command or authority where the information flows vertically upwards or downwards.

A manager and employee communicate with each other through the vertical chain of authority or command, both upwards and downwards. Information perversion is not likely to take place but a communication system becomes time-consuming.

Characteristics of Chain Network:

(i) Equal to the Y network.

(ii) Follow the process of the formal channel of authority.
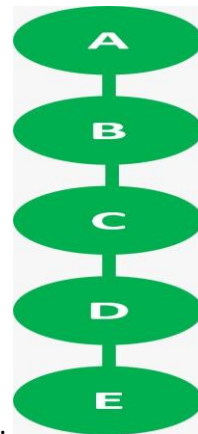
(iii) Step-by-step process

4. Circle network:

This circle network is similar to a chain network except that information flows in a circular form or direction rather than vertical form or direction. A can communicate simultaneously with two different persons, B, and C but to communicate with D, he has to pass the information with through B or C, and E.

All five individuals cannot directly communicate with each other. In this network, the lowest level of worker can communicate with the top level of manager. (A could be the top level of manager and C could be the lowest level of worker).In this network, the formal channel of command is not followed.
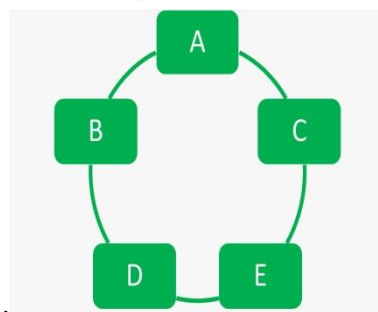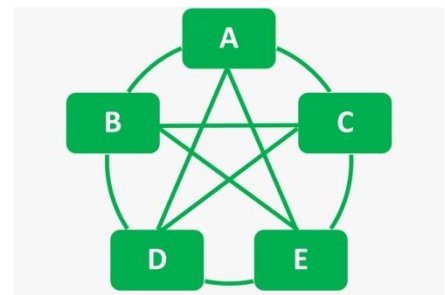
Characteristics of Circle Network:

(i) Equal to the chain network.

(ii) In this channel, a person can talk to two people at the same time.

5. All channel or star network:

All the individuals in this network communicate with each other freely, permanently, and regularly.

It follows the informal channel of command or communication and provides optimum satisfaction to our individuals. Information flows very fast, though there may be a problem of coordination.

There is a single path of communication in a single-channel network for a particular position and information flows through that path only to various persons. There is usually an official path of better communication where information transfers "through proper channel" between the manager and the employee. All information transfers through concerned managers or employees only.

Characteristics of Star Network:

(i) Only important information flows through this path.

(ii) It reduces the chances of miscommunication.

(iii) Superior control the activities of subordinates through effective communication networks.