Client and Customer Communication Whitepaper

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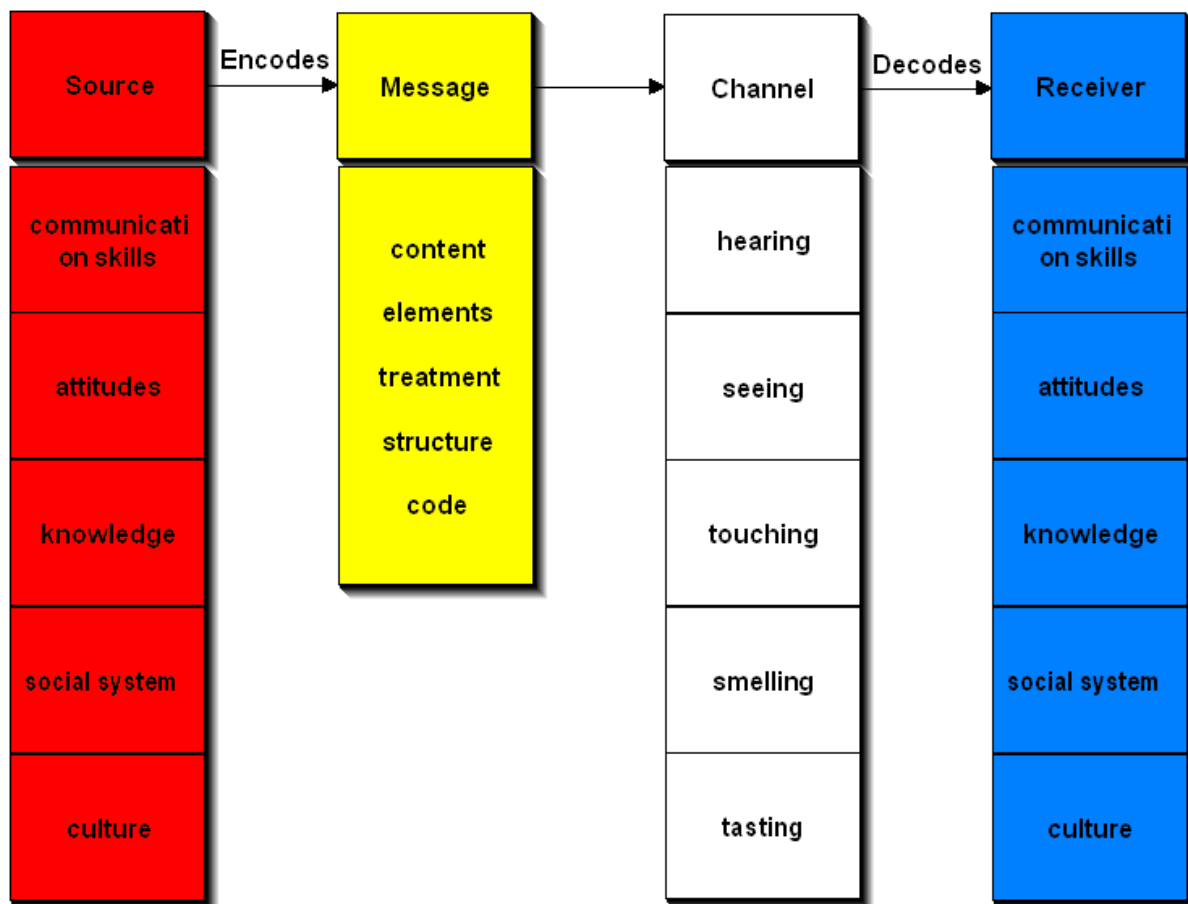
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There is no single and uniform communication method that can be used each and every time to communicate from person to person. Each receiver of information is a varied as the sender. Reasonable effort must be taken to diagnose the individuals and environments involved in communication to ensure successful results.

David Berlo;'s theory of communication was derived from the Shannon-Weaver model and became popular in 1960, especially with marketers because of its focus on message creation and manipulation. Despite its drawbacks, I find it a good way to initially organize thinking before communicating.

Berlo's Model of Communication

Source	Encodes → Message	Channel	Decodes → Receiver
communication skills	content	hearing	communication skills
attitudes	elements treatment structure	seeing	attitudes
knowledge	code	touching	knowledge
social system		smelling	social system
culture		tasting	culture

A Source encodes a message for a channel to a receiver who decodes the message:
S-M-C-R Model.

Taking customer service representatives, for example, as initiating sources, one can easily see the importance of discovering the communication skills and needs of the customer, as well as their attitude and knowledge level involved in a project <u>before</u> communicating. Having to only rely on hearing and sight channels makes the task easier.

The Diagnosis

I recommend workers use the matrix below to determine where their customers land on it to ensure the customers receive the frequency and type of communication they desire.

Communication Matrix

High - Low   **High - High**

* I need consistent information flow from you * Please deliver information in timely fashion * I will call you if I have questions	* I want to hear from you often * Email me anything you think may interest me * Call after you have emailed me something
* I have no need to communicate with you * I do not need anything from you * If I need anything from you, I will let you know	* I do not need to hear from you often * If something important comes up, I want to know * Call and email if this happens

Low - Low   **Low - High**

Questions for clients at outset of project

1. We send a lot of information electronically via email or link to download information. Is this ok with you? Are you the best person to be receiving this information or should it go to someone else on your team?
2. How frequently would you like to hear from me?
3. Do you prefer email or phone call?

4. How often would you like to be notified of upcoming deadlines? Email or phone? Both?
5. Do you prefer scheduled phone calls or ad-hoc calls as issues arise?
6. I prefer to send email in response to questions that arise to ensure written documentation trail. Is this ok? Do you want me to follow up such emails with a phone call or should I defer to you to call me when you feel a call is warranted?

These should be sufficient workers to be able to place the customer in a quadrant of the matrix and communicate with them accordingly. Ideally this will cut down on escalation issues as they relate to customer communications.