

CHAPTER 1

APPLIANCES USED FOR COMMUNICATION

This chapter will take you through a basic introduction about the latest communication devices and other ways to communicate that are currently being utilized by the business world today.

FACSIMILE

The Fax machine is a device for transmitting copies of printed pages through telephone lines. Photographs, artworks and illustrations can also be transmitted using a fax machine. How does it happen?

The Fax machine is a machine that is connected through a modem (modulator-demodulator). It has a keypad with all the digits to dial the receiver's number.

It is necessary that the other person also has a fax machine to receive the documents. All the fax machines have a number. This number is similar to a telephone number. The sender has to dial the receiver's fax number, insert the documents into the machine and press the start button. If the sender and the receiver are in different cities or countries, the city codes and country codes also should be dialed before the number.

The machine scans the page. It makes an electronic representation of the text and graphics, compresses the data to save transmission time and then transmits the data. The receiving machine decrypts the signals and uses its in-built printer to produce an exact photocopy of the original page. The receiving fax machine has a special roll of paper that is relatively more expensive than ordinary paper.

A fax permits quick exchange of documents between offices. By and large, the documents that are sent via fax are not confidential, since they are open to public view, although important documents like certificates, agreements and testimonials can be sent.

Mostly all modern fax machines have telephone facilities; photocopy facilities and voice mail facilities, which can be activated by pressing relevant buttons.

The received fax copy contains the time, date and fax number of the sender's machine. The sender's fax machine will give a confirmation report after it has transmitted the document. It will also give a report in case an error has been encountered and the document has not been sent.

In present times, faxes can also be sent through the computer if the required software has been installed. There should also be a telephone line and a modem at hand. It can send a document, which is keyed in on the computer. It cannot transmit a document, which is in the tangible form.

Advantages of using a fax

1. Documents can be sent and received almost instantly.
2. Picture documents can also be sent.
3. It is a comparatively cheaper method of sending documents.(less than courier)

Disadvantages of using a fax

1. Original documents cannot be sent.
2. It is more expensive than ordinary post.
3. It is not confidential.
4. It is dependent on telephone connections.

WORD PROCESSOR

A word processor is basically a computerized typewriter. It combines the attributes of a computer and a typewriter and has greatly simplified the process of written communication. As we type on the keyboard, the result appears on the screen. A word processor can perform the following functions—

1. Edit the text
2. Proofread
3. Rearrange the text without retyping
4. Adjust the lines according to the desired format
5. Check for wrong spellings
6. Find any word or term in the entire text
7. Replace any particular term or word with any other term or word
8. Prepare indexes
9. Perform mail merge
10. Sort according to alphabetic order

11. Store the written matter on any storage device
12. Retrieve the document whenever required
13. Get special formatting done *e.g.*, headings, margins, fonts, text sizes, bold and underline options
14. It has an inbuilt thesaurus and dictionary.

This device translate the user's language into the machine language and then back to the user's language. The main part is the processor or computer, as we call it. It can be connected to different types of input-output devices depending on the user's choice. The various options are:-

Output devices: Printer, Monitor, CD, Floppy Diskette, Pen drive, Magnetic tape, etc.

Input devices: Keyboard, CD, Floppy Diskette, Pen drive etc.

Word processors can be fitted with different software so that they can perform many other functions, such as send faxes, send and receive E-mail, permit printing, teleconferencing, video conferencing and many others. A word processor is used very well in writing 'form letters'.

It is used to turn out smartly written letters. Various letters, carefully drafted for accuracy and precision can be stored in the memory. We can personalize addresses for different people and reproduce them in any number. Paragraphs can be added or deleted as required. We can also add a couple of lines, which are different for different people.

The keyboard is similar to the keyboard of a typewriter, with some special function keys. For example, F1, F2,...F12 etc. It also has a key for deletion, capital letters, going to the page end, line end etc.

Thus, we can see that a word processor is very useful for the day to day working of any organization. Through it, we can get maximum output in minimum time, keep the information stored, and retrieve it whenever required.

TELEPHONE

In today's modern business world, telephone is one of the most commonly used means of communication. It has been around from almost a century and it has still not got outdated. People still pick up a telephone instrument to make a telephone call. Being one of the most common means of oral communication, it is used to place and take orders, to exchange information, to simply build up goodwill, get business contacts and many other things. It is an indispensable instrument for every office. The telephone as a convenient instrument can be used from the comforts of an office to get in touch with anyone around the world.

How does it work?

Telephones are connected via telecommunication wireless lines to the satellite. Wired technology is used to bring it down to our houses. It is a network, which connects billions of

households and offices across the world. Instruments are required at the callers and receiver's end, which are in itself becoming extremely hi-tech. We can see fancy looking telephone instruments of different shapes and sizes both with a modern or antique look. They come in various colors with multiple line facilities. Commonly, telephone receivers are connected to the main instrument, though they are available in cordless models too.

The telephone helps the business manager in the following ways—

1. Helping him to save on time. He need not wait for letters to reach in their own sweet time. He can pick up a phone and speak to the relevant people.
2. He can get an immediate feedback from his customers or others within or outside his company.
3. Sometimes making a telephone call is the ideal thing to do. It is less personal than a visit and more personalized than a letter.

The popular facilities of telephone services are

- ISD or International Subscriber Dialing allows the user to call up numbers outside the borders of the country. This facility can be used if you do not want to go through the telephone exchange and operators. The ISD code is different for each country. All countries have a unique international code. You can find them in the first few pages of telephone directories and in well-illustrated diaries.

| | |
|-------|-------|
| India | 0091 |
| Dubai | 00971 |
| USA | 001 |

How to dial?

Dial the country code. Then dial the city code. Then dial the personal telephone number.

- STD or Subscriber Trunk Dialing allows the user to call any number within your own country. There is an STD code, which is prefixed if you do not want to go through the operators and the telephone exchange. Each city, town or village has its particular STD code. These can be found in telephone directories and many diaries. Some STD codes are

| | |
|-----------|-----|
| New Delhi | 011 |
| Mumbai | 022 |
| Kolkata | 033 |
| Chennai | 044 |

How will you use an STD code?

When you have to dial a number in another city, you must—

Dial the STD code of that place. Then dial the personal telephone number.

Technological advances have made the telephone instruments so sophisticated that they can also provide a number of services.

- An Answering Machine can take a message for you, if in case you are not available to answer the call. This is an externally fitted instrument, which is connected to your telephone. You can record your message requesting the caller to leave his message for you. It can record up to a limited number of messages, which are different for different answering machines. When you are available, you can rewind the machine and find out and call back the people who had contacted you, if you so desire.
- Conference facility permits 3 or more people from all over the world to carry on a conversation simultaneously. This is indeed advantageous as it saves you the trouble of reporting the whole conversation again and again to all the parties. If they join in the discussion via the conference facility, they can contribute their ideas at that time itself.
- Caller identity feature can be added on, if there is a display facility on the telephone instrument itself. This shows the number from which the call is being made. It can also show the name of the caller. More and more people are increasingly using this facility across the world.

Advantages of telephone

1. It is convenient.
2. It is economical, both to buy and to use.
3. It has many add-on facilities, *e.g.*, Caller ID, Answering machine etc.
4. It is easy to use.
5. It can help you get in touch with anyone around the world.
6. You can get immediate feedback.
7. Subtle variations can be communicated over the phone and we can know others feelings.
8. It saves time. You do not have to go somewhere to talk to someone. Talking can be accomplished over the phone.

Disadvantages of telephone

1. It can reduce privacy.
2. Wrong numbers can become a problem.
3. A telephone can be misused.
4. The communication is dependent only on the voice. Face-to-face communication is not possible.
5. A telephone conversation does not provide a legal record of the conversation.

MOBILE PHONE

The Cellular or mobile phone fulfills the same functions of a phone. It helps people to keep in touch with any others whenever they want, irrespective of wherever they may be. The technology is however different. It is a portable unit that can be carried anywhere with the user. A person can use a mobile phone whilst he is travelling between cities or between home and office or for that matter anywhere. Each phone has a SIM card, which can be bought from a service provider. For example Hutch, Reliance, etc. The SIM card has a unique number. It is fitted into the mobile phone handset, which makes it ready for use. It is the SIM card, which has the number and not the mobile phone so it can be transferred from one handset to another, if needed. The cell phone signals do not carry everywhere. In some fortified buildings, underground parking etc. the signal may be weak and the phone may not be able to work.

Modern cellular phones have various facilities apart from being instruments for making phone calls. You can access the Internet through your handset; you can book tickets for movies, matches and plays. You can also keep getting updated on various events like cricket scores, weather conditions etc. There are also facilities like voice mail, teleconferencing and SMS which can be used via a cell phone. SMS has become a very popular and inexpensive way of communication in today's world. Right from students, to businessmen, Doctors to housewives, all are hooked on to the SMS facility. This facility allows us to type text messages to the person whom we wish to contact. This message can be transmitted within seconds to the other phone. It can also be saved and sent to a number of other people.

The mobile phone has made business more flexible. It has freed many people from the confines of their offices and tables to be able to operate from wherever they want. For people like share brokers and agents who want to stay in touch with their work all the time, the mobile phone has come as a real advantage. It is now possible to contact people who are travelling or who are out of their rooms. Nowadays, it is a common sight to see people combining business with pleasure with the help of a mobile phone.

Mobile phone usage costs are reducing in a big way. With more and more competition between companies for providing connection services the consumer is at an advantage.

Advantages of a mobile phone

1. You can keep in touch with others even if you are in a vehicle or at some other office.
2. You can send SMSs.
3. The message reaches all over the world in a short time.
4. Businessmen can carry out transactions from any place.
5. It is handy to carry around.

Disadvantages of a mobile phone

1. They may prove dangerous to our health.
2. It is disturbing, since people can always track you down. Privacy is lost.
3. It is small and can get lost easily.

e-MAIL

Electronic mail is currently the most common form of communication for both business and personal purposes. It requires a computer at the sender and receiver's ends, a modem and an Internet connection. The advantage of using e-mail over other forms of communication is that, you do not have to pay for each e-mail that you send or receive. This is if you already have subscribed to an Internet connection.

The process of sending e-mail

1. Log on to the Internet.
2. Type in your user name and correct password.
3. Go to the site from which you want to send or receive the mail.
4. It could be Outlook Express (which is specific to a computer) or any popular site *e.g.*, Sify, Hotmail, Rediff etc.
5. You could be either replying to messages or composing new messages. In either case, go to your chosen options.
6. Type out the message either directly or as an attachment of Microsoft word or Excel or any picture document.
7. Send the mail by clicking on the appropriate button.
8. Mail can also be read and replied to.
9. You can also copy the same mail to a number of other people.
10. It is also possible to forward a mail that you have received to others.

The advantages of e-mail are that you do not have incremental and additional charges *e.g.*, STD and ISD charges. Even if you have to send mails to long distances, your cost does not go up. Once you pay for usage of the network, you do not have to pay anything more. However, if you are using net access booths and Internet café's, you have to pay for your usage time. Besides the issue of cost, e-mail also has speed working to its advantage. Many documents and pictures can be sent almost immediately to many people simultaneously. Once the document is received through e-mail, it can be edited on the screen itself and sent back. Thus, approvals can be got, recipes can be exchanged, minutes of meetings can be confirmed, agenda can be fixed up and a host of other functions can be performed using e-mail.

Setting up an e-mail account for yourself

Connect yourself to the Internet. Open a relevant page of any search engine that provides

e-mail service. The screens are completely interactive and user-friendly. After filling in the complete details which they ask for, you have to click on a SUBMIT button. The identification or your ID needs to be relevant to yourself. Typically it helps if it is something that others can remember easily about you. Your password is also important. You should remember it at all times. To avoid forgetting, you can keep a password that can be remembered by YOU easily. Your e-mail ID should be easy to remember by OTHERS. Whenever you access mail, you have to key in your ID and password. You can have an e-mail account even if you do not own a computer. If you do not have one already, go to the nearest cyber café and create one for yourself today!

Advantages of e-mail

1. It makes information more accessible.
2. e-mail provides for faster and speedier procedures in an organization. It is the quickest way of transmitting messages.
3. It does not waste time on social niceties and references.
4. It does not impose upon the users *e.g.*, the user can read the mail at any time. He need not jump up and read the mail as soon as it arrives. This happens with the telephone. It must be attended to as soon as it rings.
5. If messages have to be sent across different time zones *e.g.*, India to USA, it can be conveniently done via the e-mail. We do not have to think whether the recipient will be sleeping or awake in office or at home. The person at the other end can read the message when he goes to work the next morning.
6. e-mail messages can be sent to large number of people simultaneously, or only to a selected few, depending on the message. It will also reach all of them at the same time.
7. e-mails are supposed to be highly confidential and secure. It is difficult to tamper and read messages that are on others e-mail ID's.
8. e-mail messages can be easily stored and retrieved for future reference.
9. e-mail has greatly contributed to relationship building, since it has now become easier to keep in touch. Photos, jokes and anecdotes can be exchanged with minimal effort.

Disadvantages of e-mail

1. All type of messages cannot be sent by e-mail. A firing or a reprimand cannot be given and should not be given over the e-mail.
2. It is dependent on telecommunication lines. In rural areas specially, where connectivity is not very good, it poses a problem.
3. It requires power supply to be able to be used. Sometimes, it happens that after typing out the whole message, the power supply fails and the complete message gets erased. In such cases, it is advisable to have a UPS installed to the computer.
4. It might be difficult to learn by some. But once learnt, it becomes a habit.

CONFERENCING

Conferencing means bringing people together for a meeting and a discussion. Earlier conferencing could only take place without technology. People used to assemble together in a room, and meet for a conference. Now, with the globalization of business, business partners are spread over distant geographical locations. It is not always possible for all of them to travel long distances for a short meeting. Technology has come in a big way to help solve this problem. Now you have

1. Conferencing via e-mail
2. Teleconferencing or audio conferencing
3. Video conferencing

Conferencing via e-mail

An important ability of e-mail is to enable ongoing electronic conferences. People all over the world can meet to hear new ideas, new papers and new issues and discuss them in a group. e-mail provides 'discussion lists' or 'groups'. All these included people are interested in the topic at hand. If people are interested in a particular topic, *e.g.*, the Iraq war, or the Twenty-20 tournament they can mutually discuss it and give their views to the others who are on the list for that particular subject. Interested people can subscribe to the conference. Every time someone sends in a contribution or discussion point, it automatically gets distributed to all people on the list. All those who want, can respond to the new idea. It does not make demands on your time, since it can be read and replied to at leisure.

Teleconferencing

If you hold a conference where all the parties are connected via the telephone, it is called teleconferencing or audio-conferencing. It is most productive and quite inexpensive. It is also called 'the phone meeting'. It does not need anything apart from a telephone. It is easy to use, since most of us are familiar with using the telephone. It does not cost much and so can be done anytime. It takes only a few minutes to set up a teleconference. It can easily be carried on since you have telephones all over the world. One person starts the teleconference and keeps calling up people and adding on whomever he wants or whoever is relevant to the topic at hand. The person who starts the teleconference should have more than one telephone lines on one instrument.

Advantages

1. You can converse with more than one person at the same time.
2. Time is saved. You do not have to repeat the same conversation to many people.
3. It is not costly.
4. It can connect people who are far apart, even in other cities.
5. It is through the satellite system, so voice clarity is good.
6. People do not have to be formally dressed for the conference.

Disadvantages

1. We cannot see the people whom we are talking to.
2. The expressions cannot be seen.
3. Cross connections can be there.

Video-conferencing

This allows you to go even further than audio conferencing. It is almost like the real thing. Video conferencing allows people to hear and also see each other at the same time. It is fully interactive and is almost like a face-to-face meeting. With new technology, it is possible to connect more than two locations. It brings people in eye and voice contact from all parts of the globe. However, the cost of the equipment is high and people have to go to the video conferencing location. This facility is provided at public places, since all companies cannot afford to set it up on their own. However, some multinationals can boast of having it.

The basic equipment that is used is: monitor, camera, microphone, speaker, codec (compressor-decompressor), equipment control pad at each location, and network services to connect the locations. All the equipment is becoming less expensive and user-friendlier as more and more manufacturers compete for their share in the market.

You would have seen video conferencing during live telecasts, when the television studio tries to keep in touch with the event venue directly. *e.g.*, Cricket matches, election interviews of the candidates from where they are contesting, etc.

Advantages

1. It leads to more affordable conferencing if the members are scattered over the globe
2. It is almost like communicating face-to-face
3. The discussions become more meaningful than interactions over the telephone
People get a feeling of being 'connected'
4. Retention is better and more long lasting
5. It enriches communication in many ways
6. Video conferencing allows people to keep in touch more frequently at a cost lower than travelling
7. It can be used for customer servicing
8. It facilitates group work among distant teammates
9. Non-verbal communication is also possible.

Disadvantages

1. It is expensive
2. There is less awareness.

INTERNET

The Internet is a global collection of people and computers, linked by telephone lines, radio links and satellite links. Data is also conveyed through telephone wires. There is no single person or company that owns and controls the Internet. There are, however several governing bodies that frame rules for Internet usage. They establish protocols and oversee the system so that that it is not violated and misused.

In present times, the Internet has become all pervasive and people all over the world access it for different information and other services. The size, scope and speed of the Internet are continuously changing for the better, and in turn, it is helping people by serving them in an enhanced way.

The history of the internet

Many people think that the Internet is a modern innovation. But, this is not true. It has been around for over 25 years. The United States of America initiated it during the cold war. It was called the ARPANET. The project was to create a nation wide computer network, which would continue to work even if a part of it was destroyed in a nuclear blast or a natural disaster. Over the next 2 decades *i.e.*, till the 1980's the network developed and become useful to many other professionals like scientists, academicians, and government research bodies. Organizations, which were not related to each other, also started sharing information and established contact with databases of other companies.

The nature of the Internet changed dramatically in 1992. A new computer program called NCSA Mosaic at the National Center for Supercomputing Applications at the University of Illinois. This was the first web browser. With the web browser in use, it became easier to access different web sites, and soon the different Websites began to include video clippings and sound files. They became more user friendly and started incorporating information which people across the world wanted.

Slowly and gradually, the US Government also started pulling out of Internet management and it became the prerogative of corporations. These companies started offering Internet access to the general public. In fact, they started making money out of it through advertisements and general subscriptions. That was the beginning of the Internet's incredible expansion. The number of web user's increased to tens of millions by the year 2000.

In India, VSNL began to provide Internet connections in 1995. That is when the market for PC's also spiraled as more and more people started recognizing the usage of the Internet and started buying desktop computers. Nowadays, we have BSNL and others also providing Internet connections across India. They give out annual subscriptions and manage the servers and different accounts. It is possible to renew the accounts when they are over, by paying a nominal payment. For those who do not own a computer, there are cyber café's and other commercial centers that rent Internet facilities by the hour.

We will enumerate different uses of the Internet —

1. It helps people to keep in touch with each other at any part of the world, including many remote areas.
2. Electronic Commerce can be carried on through the Internet.
3. People can join group discussions on any subject.
4. We can exchange electronic mail with friends, relatives, customers and other business associates.
5. We can request and provide help for a multitude of problems.
6. It is possible to gather valuable feedback in a faster way and also get suggestions from customers etc.
7. We can use it to publicize and advertise our goods and services.
8. We can get educated through a variety of information that is present at the click of the mouse.
9. It helps us to get clips and pictures for various project and research work.
10. It is possible to plan trips and do bookings of hotels and airlines etc., through the Internet.
11. People also operate their bank accounts using the Internet.
12. Stockbroker's are able to carryout their transactions of buying and selling shares and debiting and crediting customer accounts easily.
13. Foreign exchange trading has been considerably ease with the Internet providing real time rated for various currencies of the world.
14. Trading in commodities is much easier now, using the information from the Internet.
15. Examination marks and results are posted on the net and people can access them from wherever they are.

These, and many other uses of the Internet are providing people with global opportunities, which were not there previously. More and more people are gearing up and getting equipped for the Internet enabled global age.

TELEX

Telex (Teleprinter Exchange) is the name given by the Post Office people to a machine whereby, written messages can be communicated from one place to another. It is a worldwide teletype service, which provides instantaneous communication through a direct dial, Teleprinter-to-Teleprinter System.

Messages can be sent or received throughout the day and night. This is a comparatively old system of communication, which was introduced in 1958. It is however in use today also. Organizations like airports, ports, stock exchanges, railway stations etc., which require moment-to-moment information to be sent, uses a telex. It is however, fast being replaced by the Computer facilitated Internet.

How does it work?

You can get a telex connection from the post office. Each subscriber has a unique identification code. The teleprinter is fitted with a keyboard, which is used to type the messages. It also has a transmitter for sending and receiving the messages. The machine is fitted with a roll of paper, and messages can be sent and received continuously. When we type out a message at our end, the same message is typed out at the receiver's end at the same time. The machine need not be manned. The messages are received on their own, and can be read at a later convenient time. If by chance, the receiver is on the machine at the time a message is being received, he can type out his/her reply and thus can carry on a two-way dialogue communication.

Telex messages are charged on the basis of the time taken for transmission and the distance between the sender and receiver. The billing meter switches on as soon as the connection is made. In order to save money, telex users have devised abbreviations and word contractions so that more text can be sent with the same amount of money.

Advantages

1. It is a cheaper method of communication
2. A two-way dialogue is possible
3. Since it is typed, you have proof of what the other person has said

Disadvantages

1. It is normally not bought for home use
2. It is slower than faxing documents
3. It is not confidential

MAIL

Amongst all the hi-tech, modern and fast means of communication, there is still an olden system, which is very much in use during present times. This is the good, old postal mail system. Of course, postal departments have upgraded their services and added more value added packages to their repertoire. It is hard to ignore the joy and charm of the letter delivered by the postman.

The postal service in India uses rail, road and airline methods to transfer letters from one place to another. It is usually a government owned service in most countries. Value additions are—

- Registered mail
- Registered parcel
- Acknowledgement Due (AD) letters
- Quick Mail Service (QMS)

Speed post

Express delivery

Under Certificate of Posting, etc.

All the services come with an added charge and have their various pros and cons. Speed post guarantees faster delivery and is available only from some cities. Also all post offices do not provide this service.

The postal department earns revenue through stamps and special charges for special services. Postal services also transport non-documents as parcels, which can be sent as registered or non-registered items.

Advantages

1. It is a convenient method of communication
2. It is cheap
3. It has a wide access *i.e.*, we can send documents and letters to rural and remote areas also.
4. Original documents can be sent safely
5. It is delivered at the doorstep
6. It is possible to trace out lost documents, if they are registered.

Disadvantages

1. It is not as user-friendly as other private services
2. Delays are common.

TELEGRAM

Telegrams are also known as cables. It is used for the quick transmission of messages. They are regularly used to convey messages like greetings and condolences. They were more popular a decade ago and its usage has decreased considerably because of competition for the ubiquitous 'telephone' and mobile phone.

Messages can be transmitted both inland and overseas to other countries, which still continue the same facility.

When a telegram is sent with the help of a phone, it is called a phonogram. If you look through the first few pages of the telephone directory, you will find phonogram numbers. You have to dial them and dictate your message and the address of the receiver. The bill for the phonogram comes along with the telephone bill.

Telegram offices are interconnected, so we can send messages quickly across India.

How to send a telegram?

- Go to a post office/telegraph office. (All post offices do not have this facility)
- Ask for the telegram form

- Fill in the receivers name, address and contact number
- Write out your message
- Submit it with the charges
- The post office/telegraph office will do the rest

Points to keep in mind while sending a telegram

1. Be brief, but do not be so brief that you cannot be understood
2. The message must contain the main points only
3. Remember, you are charged for each word that you write
4. You can also use standard abbreviations for standard words and messages *e.g.*, IMMEDIATELY = immediately, RYL = regarding your letter, etc.
5. Punctuation is not used in a telegram since it adds to the cost. Only the full stop is used.
6. Prepositions like 'and', 'that', etc. are avoided. Only the main verbs and nouns are used that can convey the meaning of the message.
7. The message should be written in capital letters on the form. This is to prevent misinterpretation.
8. Every telegram must be followed with a letter. The letter can convey in detail the whole issue at length.
9. Abbreviations are used for individual words and 2 or 3 words put together
10. Ambiguity should be avoided, since the purpose is not to add to the confusion.
11. Some words like can't and won't, can be understood without the apostrophe. So, the apostrophe can be avoided.
12. The message should be written in capital letters on the form. This is to prevent misinterpretation.
13. Every telegram must be followed with a letter to the receiver. The letter can convey in detail, the whole issue at length.
14. Abbreviations are used for individual words and 2 or 3 words put together.
15. The name and the address should also be kept to the minimum number of words. So, Mr. Mrs., Messer's, etc. should not be included.
16. Since there are so many restrictions with punctuation, it is important to use the right words that do not convey an ambiguous meaning to the reader. For example, NO STUDENT GOOD can be interpreted as—

'No, Student is good'

OR

'No student is good.'

The problem of drafting a telegram is to produce a clearly understandable message in the minimum number of words, without using punctuation.

COURIER

Courier services are privately owned and operated. In fact they are big companies in their own rights. Many of them like DHL and BLUEDART are so huge, that they own a fleet of aircraft and road transport lorries to transport their goods and documents. Courier services ensure and assure door-to-door collection and delivery. This is amongst the more expensive means of communication, but in some cases, where original documents are required, it is the only option. Courier companies are national, international and even local, limited to a particular city or area. Charges are varied, as each courier service prizes themselves for quality service, prompt deliveries and providing proof of deliveries. Normally, couriers base their charges on the weight of the document with a minimum stipulated charge. They also carry non-documents but avoid restricted items. Couriers insist on the sender declaring the goods that they are sending and they are known to carry fragile items with remarkable care.

Advantages

1. It is a fast means of transporting documents
2. Original papers can be sent
3. Samples can also be sent
4. They are delivered to the person who is named on the address
5. Proof of delivery can be obtained.

Disadvantages

1. Samples may get stolen
2. It is expensive.

FRANKING MACHINE

This is a special machine used for impressing stamps on the envelopes of letters. A franking mark can also be impressed on postal packages. If the number of outgoing covers is large, it becomes very tedious to buy stamps for each individual cover and stick them on them. In this situation, a franking machine comes in as a handy help. The franking machine is an appliance, which can be seen at big post offices.

How does it work?

The machine consists of a meter, which is fixed and locked by the post office. The user can pay an amount to the postal authorities and they enable the franking machine. The covers are placed together and the machine starts franking each and every one of them according to

the pre-fixed amount of Rs.5.00 per cover or otherwise. Normally there are 2 marks that you can see on a franked cover. One is the value amount and the other one is a seal. The franking machine also prints the date and the name of the post office. Both are of different colours and can be distinguished separately. When the amount paid by the user is exhausted, the machine automatically stops working and it has to be reset by the authorities, if more covers are to be franked.

Franking machines save time and labour involved in manually affixing stamps. They also help to avoid the irregularities in the handling of stamps.

Uses

1. Greeting cards can be franked
2. Sales letters from companies can be franked
3. Correspondence to shareholders can be franked
4. Letters from bank customers can be franked.

PAGER

A pager is a relatively modern device, which facilitates one-way communication. Pagers are small rectangular appliances that can be carried by the users. A unique number identifies them. Commercial companies provide pager services for a charge, which can be a rental or depending on usage, or a combination of both. The pager screen can display alphanumeric characters. If we wish to pass on a message to a pager owner, we dial his number, which connects us to the service provider. The person on duty takes the message that we want to convey. The sender can then disconnect and the service provider will flash our message to the pager owner, whom we want to contact. The person who is carrying the pager will get a beep, indicating that he has got a message. He can read the message and act accordingly.

The disadvantage of a pager is that provides for one-way communication only. A pager owner can only receive messages; he cannot send any. For sending, he needs a telephone. However, if his job involves only receiving instructions, a pager is a better option since it is cheaper than a mobile phone. A pager can also be used to trace a person for his whereabouts. Only brief messages can be communicated over the pager.

One has to become a member/subscriber by paying a certain amount for the equipment and the initial charges.

DICTAPHONE

Dictating a letter is also mechanized in many offices. The dictaphone is also called a dictating machine. It works on the principle of a gramophone. This is a machine that records speeches on a magnetic disk or tape. The recording can then be played back and copied on paper. The

officer dictating the letter has to speak through a mouthpiece. Cassette tapes are used widely to play back the dictation. The typist plays the recording in a device called the transcriber and listens through earphones. Some dictating machines have a built in transcriber, others, use a separate unit.

Some companies have centralized dictaphone systems, which allow people to dictate from distant locations to the central office.

Time is saved and a person can give dictation at any time. It is very handy for people who are on the move and cannot adhere to regular office hours. You need not have the services of a typist or secretary at hand to do your work. Some machines are so lightweight and small, that they can be carried on business trips.

Merits

1. It helps to save time. The manager need not wait for the typist to be available.
2. They are portable and can be carried anywhere.
3. It is convenient. It helps in making business simpler.
4. The number of clerks and typists can be reduced.
5. Executives can dictate at any speed.

Demerits

1. Personal contact is absent.
2. It is difficult to make changes.
3. Original records cannot be maintained, as the tapes are reused.
4. For efficient operation, the executive should be good at dictation. He should not change his words very often. He should also not give long pauses, or else the tape will be wasted.

PBX, PABX, EPABX

PBX-is the abbreviation for 'Private Branch Exchange.'

It is a telephone system that is usually installed in an office. It provides many extensions within an office complex. A PBX can be thought of as a mini version of a telephone company's central office switch. The main purpose of a PBX is that it allows users to share a certain number of external phone lines. The office does not have to provide a separate external connection for each user.

Advantages of a PBX

1. Increased efficiency
2. Cost savings
3. Special PBX features

A PBX can usually handle 0-75 lines with no problem. Larger PBX's can handle up to 100-20,000 lines. That means that you can connect up to 100 people from the same central exchange.

A PBX includes-

1. Multiple telephone lines that terminate at the PBX.
2. A computer with memory that manages the switching of the calls within the PBX and in and out of it.
3. The network of lines within the PBX.
4. Usually a console or a switchboard for a human operator.

An internal call on a PBX usually consists of dialing a 3, 4 or 5 digit number. If you need to speak to someone outside the office, you have to go through what is called the 'trunk'. To access these trunks, you have to press a 1 or 2 trunk access code. This can be "0" or "9" or otherwise. Once you dial this, you will get the dial tone and then you can dial the external number.

The PBX shares external lines. If there are 100 people working in the office, it is uneconomical to take 100 external lines. The PBX administrator would probably take 10-20 lines. But the decision is based on the requirement of the employees and the type of business.

What are the special features of a PBX?

1. Forwarding
2. Conferencing
3. Call pick up groups
4. Intercoms
5. Transferring
6. Voice mail system for all the connections

When you pick up an extension on your table and dial the first digit, the PBX understands whether it is an external or an internal (intercom) call. Then it begins the routing process. If it is internal, it sends it within the PBX not using any external line. If it is external, it starts to look at the number you are dialing and sends the information to the billing department.

PABX: Private Automatic Branch Exchange is the combination of the PBX and the automatic dial. It has the advantage of being more automated than the basic PBX. It has the same and even more facilities. The PABX has an added advantage; it can function with fewer operators.

Since almost all private Exchanges today are automatic, the abbreviation 'PBX' usually implies a 'PABX'.

EPABX-Electronic Private Automatic Branch Exchange provides high-speed telephony features for organizations. It is similar to the PBX in concept but it is electronic. Because of this, the possibility of a breakdown is rare. It has a higher ease of operation too.

Cost effectiveness of various devices

Business communication is expensive. Its cost can increase or decrease when technology is involved. We can compare devices and methods for their costs and other advantages. In some situations, time is at a premium. Then, cost is not considered at all. In other cases, where routine communication is to be done and there are a number of people to be communicated with, it is important that all advantages and disadvantages of the device are considered and compared before using them.

Telephone and mobile phone

The initial cost of a mobile phone is more than a landline, but it is available more easily. Many shops sell the latest models of mobile phones, which have many more facilities than fixed phones. Regarding usage rates, mobile calls were very expensive to start with. However, now in 2007, making and receiving calls is very cheap on mobile phones. This is because of strong competition that has come in, as many players—both private and government—are there in the field. They all offer the same services and so the customer gets the ultimate benefit.

In fact, both landline calls and mobile calls cost almost the same money. Companies and individuals should choose the device which best suits their needs and the needs of the individual employees.

Fax and post

Using a fax has an advantage of the receiver getting the document immediately. If the document is sent by post, it will reach without getting distorted and you can send the original copy. But, it will reach late. It will take a minimum of 2 days. On comparing costs, it is obvious that sending by fax costs much more than sending as an ordinary letter. A fax uses telephone lines, so you have to pay a rental plus a usage rate, depending on where the fax is being sent. However, if you use registered post, the cost will go up. There is a registered A.D. facility also, which increases the cost marginally.

Post and courier

In India, post is the sole prerogative of the government. They keep the postal charges low, so that it is affordable for the lower income group also. Couriers are private players. They are more expensive. We have global communication companies like Blue Dart and FedEx also operating in our country. Sending documents and samples by courier is definitely more expensive than using the postal service. However, the postal department has also become conscious about competition and has introduced a service called 'SPEEDPOST.' This is similar to a courier service and cost-wise; it is similar to courier services. It reaches the documents to the addressee as fast a courier does. Both SPEEDPOST and couriers are similar in terms of cost and speed, but ordinary post is cheaper and slower.

e-mail and post

Earlier all correspondence was carried on through post only. With the advent of the computer, and even more so, Internet, communication has become faster. It has also become more expensive if you consider the total cost incurred. Even though using e-mail is cheap, you have to buy a computer and pay for an Internet connection. If your company is frequently using Internet facilities, it is advisable to go in for your personalized connections. However, if the occasion to use e-mail is rare, depending on your business, you can use the e-mail facilities on hire. These are provided by Internet parlors for small per hour rentals. Post is cheaper on a per mail basis but it does not have the advantage of speed and instant communication and feedback.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Section A

1. Write short notes on—
 - (i) Television
 - (ii) Documentaries
 - (iii) Fax machine
 - (iv) Word processor
 - (v) Franking machine

Section B

1. What is e-mail? Mention its advantages and disadvantages.
2. When do you use video conferencing?
3. Write about how the Internet is helping business.
4. What points should be kept in mind while sending a telegram?

Section C

1. Compare and contrast ordinary mail and courier service as a method of sending mail.
2. What is a PBX? Explain how it works.
3. Intercom is a facility provided by the PBX system. Explain.

**This page
intentionally left
blank**