

1 38. Managerial 2 Communications

3 by [Peter Drucker](#) in [Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices](#)

4 More Talk; and Less Communication – What We Have Learned – The Fundamentals – Communication Is Perception – Communication Is Expectation – Communication Makes Demands – Communication and Information Are Different – Information Presupposes Communication – Why Downward Communications Cannot Work – The Limitations of “Listening” – The Demands of the Information Explosion – What Can Managers Do? – Management by Objectives, Performance Appraisal and Management Letter as Communications Tools – Communications, the Mode of Organization

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6 We have more attempts at communications today, that is, more attempts to talk to others, and a surfeit of communications media, unimaginable to the men who, around the time of World War I, started to work on the problems of communicating in organizations.

7 Communications in management has become a central concern to students and practitioners in all institutions – business, the military, public administration, hospital, university, and research.

8 In no other area have intelligent men and women worked harder or with greater dedication than psychologists, human relations experts, managers, and management students have worked on improving communications in our major institutions. ...

9 Yet communications has proven as elusive as the Unicorn.

10 The noise level has gone up so fast that no one can really listen any more to all that babble about communications.

- 10 But there is clearly less and less communicating.
- 11 The communications gap within institutions and between groups in society has been widening steadily-to the point where it threatens to become an unbridgeable gulf of total misunderstanding. ...
- 12 In the meantime, there is an information explosion.
- 13 Every professional and every executive – in fact, everyone except the deaf-mute – suddenly has access to data in inexhaustible abundance.
- 14 All of us feel – and overeat – very much like the little boy who has been left alone in the candy store.
- 15 But what has to be done to make this cornucopia of data redound to information, let alone to knowledge?
- 16 We get a great many answers.
- 17 But the one thing clear so far is that no one really has an answer.
- 18 Despite information theory and data processing, no one yet has actually seen, let alone used, an "information system," or a "data base."
- 19 The one thing we do know, though, is that the abundance of information changes the communications problem and makes it both more urgent and even less tractable.
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- 21 There is a tendency today to give up on communications.
- 22 In psychology, for instance, the fashion today is the T-group with its sensitivity training.
- 23 The avowed aim is not communications, but self-awareness.
- 24 T-groups focus on the "I" and not on the "Thou."

- 25 Ten or twenty years ago the rhetoric stressed "empathy"; now it stresses "doing one's thing."
- 26 However needed self-knowledge may be, communication is needed at least as much (if indeed self-knowledge is possible without action on others, that is, without communications).^m
- 27 Despite the sorry state of communications in theory and practice, we have learned a good deal about information and communications.
- 28 Most of it, though, has not come out of the work on communications to which we have devoted so much time and energy.
- 29 It has been the by-product of work in a large number of seemingly unrelated fields, from learning theory to genetics and electronic engineering.
- 30 We equally have a lot of experience – though mostly of failure – in a good many practical situations in all kinds of institutions.
- 31 We may indeed never understand "communications."
- 32 But "communications in organizations" – call it managerial communications – we do know something about by now.^m
- 33 We are, to be sure, still far away from mastery of communications, even in organizations.
- 34 What knowledge we have about communications is scattered and, as a rule, not accessible, let alone in applicable form.
- 35 But at least we increasingly know what does not work, and, sometimes, why it does not work.

- 36 Indeed we can say bluntly that most of today's brave attempts at communication in organizations – whether business, labor unions, government agencies, or universities – is based on assumptions that have been proven to be invalid – and that, therefore, these efforts cannot have results.
- 37 And perhaps we can even anticipate what might work.

38 ***What We Have Learned***

39 We have learned, mostly through doing the wrong things,
four fundamentals of communications.

40 1. Communication is perception.

41 2. Communication is expectation.

42 3. Communication makes demands.

43 4. Communication and information are different and
indeed largely opposite – yet interdependent.

44 1. *Communication is perception.*

45 An old riddle posed by the mystics of many religions –
the Zen Buddhists, the Sufis of Islam, and the Rabbis of
the Talmud – asks: “Is there a sound in the forest if a tree
crashes down and no one is around to hear it?”

46 We now know that the right answer to this is no.

47 There are sound waves.

48 But there is no sound unless someone perceives it.

49 Sound is created by perception.

50 Sound is communication. ...

51 This may seem trite; after all, the mystics of old already
knew this, for they too always answered that there is no
sound unless someone can hear it.

52 Yet the implications of this rather trite statement are great
indeed. ...

53 First, it means that it is the recipient who communicates.

- 54 The so-called communicator, the person who emits the communication, does not communicate.
- 55 He utters.
- 56 Unless there is someone who hears, there is no communication.
- 57 There is only noise.
- 58 The communicator speaks or writes or sings – but he does not communicate.
- 59 Indeed, he cannot communicate.
- 60 He can only make it possible, or impossible, for a recipient – or rather, “percipient” – to perceive. ...
- 61 Perception, we know, is not logic.
- 62 It is experience.
- 63 This means, in the first place, that one always perceives a configuration.
- 64 One cannot perceive single specifics.
- 65 They are always part of a total picture.
- 66 The “silent language,”*1 that is, the gestures, the tone of voice, the environment altogether, not to mention the cultural and social referents, cannot be dissociated from the spoken language.
- 67 In fact, without them the spoken word has no meaning and cannot communicate. ...
- 68 It is not only that the same words, e.g., “I enjoyed meeting you,” will be heard as having a wide variety of meanings.

- 69 Whether they are heard as warmth or as icy cold, as endearment or as rejection depends on their setting in the "silent language," such as the tone of voice or the occasion.
- 70 More important is that by itself, that is, without being part of the total configuration of occasion, value, "silent language," and so on, the phrase has no meaning at all.
- 71 By itself it cannot make possible communication.
- 72 It cannot be understood.
- 73 Indeed it cannot be heard.
- 74 To paraphrase an old proverb of the human-relations school: "One cannot communicate a word; the whole man always comes with it."
- 75 But we know about perception also that one can perceive only what one is capable of perceiving.
- 76 Just as the human ear does not hear sounds above a certain pitch, so does human perception altogether not perceive what is beyond its range of perception.
- 77 It may, of course, hear physically, or see visually, but it cannot accept it.
- 78 It cannot become communication. ...
- 79 This is a fancy way of stating something the teachers of rhetoric have known for a very long time – though the practitioners of communications tend to forget it again and again. ...
- 80 In Plato's *Phaedo* which, among other things, is also the earliest extant treatise on rhetoric, Socrates points out that one has to talk to people in terms of their own experience, that is, that one has to use carpenters' metaphors when talking to carpenters, and so on.

- 81 One can communicate only in the recipient's language or in his terms.
- 82 And the terms have to be experience-based.
- 83 It, therefore, does very little good to try to explain terms to people.
- 84 They will not be able to receive them if they are not terms of their own experience.
- 85 They simply exceed their perception capacity. ...
- 86 The connection between experience, perception, and concept formation – that is, cognition – is, we now know, infinitely subtler and richer than any earlier philosopher imagined.
- 87 But one fact is proven and comes out strongly in the most disparate work, e.g., that of Piaget (in Switzerland), that of B.F. Skinner, and that of Jerome Bruner (both at Harvard).
- 88 Percept and concept in the learner, whether child or adult, are not separate.
- 89 We cannot perceive unless we also conceive.
- 90 But we also cannot form concepts unless we can perceive.
- 91 To communicate a concept is impossible unless the recipient can perceive it, that is, unless it is within his perception. ...
- 92 There is a very old saying among writers: "Difficulties with a sentence mean confused thinking.
- 93 It is not the sentence that needs straightening out, it is the thought behind it."

- 94 In writing we attempt, first, to communicate with ourselves.
- 95 An "unclear sentence" is one that exceeds our own capacity for perception.
- 96 Working on the sentence, that is, working on what is normally called communications, cannot solve the problem.
- 97 We have to work on our own concepts first to be able to understand what we are trying to say – and only then can we write the sentence. ...
- 98 In communicating, whatever the medium, the first question has to be "Is this communication within the recipient's range of perception?"
- 99 Can he receive it?" ...
- 100 The "range of perception" is, of course, physiological and largely (though not entirely) set by physical limitations of man's animal body.
- 101 When we speak of communication, however, the most important limitations on perception are usually cultural and emotional rather than physical. ...
- 102 That fanatics are not being convinced by rational arguments, we have known for thousands of years.
- 103 Now we are beginning to understand that it is not "argument" that is lacking.
- 104 Fanatics do not have the ability to perceive a communication which goes beyond their range of emotions.

- 105 First their emotions would have to be altered.
- 106 In other words, no one is really "in touch with reality," if by that we mean that he has complete openness to evidence.
- 107 The distinction between "sanity" and "paranoia" does not lie in the ability to perceive, but in the ability to learn, that is, in the ability to change one's emotions on the basis of experience. ...
- 108 That perception is conditioned by what we are capable of perceiving was realized forty years ago by the most quoted but probably least heeded of all students of organization, Mary Parker Follett (e.g., especially in her collected essays, *Dynamic Administration*, Harper's, 1941).
- 109 Follett taught that a disagreement or a conflict is likely not to be about the answers, or indeed about anything ostensible.
- 110 It is, in most cases, the result of incongruity in perceptions.
- 111 What A sees so vividly, B does not see at all.
- 112 And, therefore, what A argues, has no pertinence to B's concerns, and vice versa.
- 113 Both, Follett argued, are likely to see reality.
- 114 But each is likely to see a different aspect of it.
- 115 The world, and not only the material world, is multidimensional.
- 116 Yet one can see only one dimension at a time. ...

- 117 One rarely realizes that there could be other dimensions, and that something that is so obvious to us and so clearly validated by our emotional experience has other dimensions, a "back" and "sides," which are entirely different and which, therefore, lead to entirely different perceptions.
- 118 The story I mentioned earlier about the blind men and the elephant in which each one, encountering this strange beast, feels one of the elephant's parts, his leg, his trunk, his hide, and reports an entirely different conclusion, and holds to it tenaciously, is simply a metaphor of the human condition.
- 119 There is no possibility of communication until this is understood and until he who has felt the hide of the elephant goes over to him who has felt the leg and feels the leg himself.
- 120 There is no possibility of communications, in other words, unless we first know what the recipient, the true communicator, can see and why.
- 121 *2. Communication is expectation.*
- 122 We perceive, as a rule, what we expect to perceive.
- 123 We see largely what we expect to see, and we hear largely what we expect to hear.
- 124 That the unexpected may be resented is not the important thing – though most of the work on communications in business and government thinks it is.
- 125 What is truly important is that the unexpected is usually not received at all.
- 126 It is not seen or heard, but ignored.
- 127 Or it is misunderstood, that is, mis-seen or mis-heard as the expected. ...

- 128 On this we now have a century or more of experimentation.
- 129 The results are unambiguous.
- 130 The human mind attempts to fit impressions and stimuli into a frame of expectations.
- 131 It resists vigorously any attempts to make it “change its mind,” that is, to perceive what it does not expect to perceive or not to perceive what it expects to perceive.
- 132 It is, of course, possible to alert the human mind to the fact that what it perceives is contrary to its expectations.
- 133 But this first requires that we understand what it expects to perceive.
- 134 It then requires that there be an unmistakable signal – “this is different,” that is, a shock which breaks continuity.
- 135 A gradual change in which the mind is supposedly led by small, incremental steps to realize that what is perceived is not what it expects to perceive will not work.
- 136 It will rather reinforce the expectations and will make it even more certain that what will be perceived is what the recipient expects to perceive. ...
- 137 Before we can communicate, we must, therefore, know what the recipient expects to see and hear.
- 138 Only then can we know whether communication can utilize his expectations – and what they are – or whether there is need for the “shock of alienation,” for an “awakening” that breaks through the recipient’s expectations and forces him to realize that the unexpected is happening.
- 139 **3. *Communication makes demands.***

- 140 Many years ago psychologists stumbled on a strange phenomenon in their studies of memory, a phenomenon that, at first, upset all their hypotheses.
- 141 In order to test memory, the psychologists compiled a list of words to be shown to their experimental subjects for varying times as a test of their retention capacity.
- 142 As control, a list of nonsense words, mere jumbles of letters, was devised.
- 143 Much to the surprise of these early experimenters almost a century ago or so, their subjects (mostly students, of course) showed totally uneven memory retention of individual words.
- 144 More surprising, they showed amazingly high retention of the nonsense words.
- 145 The explanation of the first phenomenon is fairly obvious.
- 146 Words are not mere information.
- 147 They do carry emotional charges.
- 148 And, therefore words with unpleasant or threatening associations tend to be suppressed, words with pleasant associations retained.
- 149 In fact, this selective retention by emotional association has since been used to construct tests for emotional disorders and for personality profiles. ...
- 150 The relatively high retention rate of nonsense words was a greater puzzle.
- 151 It was expected that no one would really remember words that had no meaning at all.
- 152 But it has become clear over the years that the memory for these words, though limited, exists precisely because these words have no meaning.

- 153 For this reason, they make no demand.
- 154 They are truly neutral.
- 155 With respect to them, memory could be said to be truly "mechanical," showing neither emotional preference nor emotional rejection. ...
- 156 A similar phenomenon, known to every newspaper editor, is the amazingly high readership and retention of the "fillers," the little three- or five-line bits of irrelevant incidental information that are used to "balance" a page.
- 157 Why should anybody want to read, let alone remember, that it first became fashionable to wear different-colored hose on each leg at the court of some long-forgotten duke?
- 158 Or, when and where baking powder was first used?
- 159 Yet there is no doubt that these little tidbits of irrelevancy are read and, above all, that they are remembered, far better than almost anything else in the daily paper except the screaming headlines of the catastrophes.
- 160 The answer is that the fillers make no demands.
- 161 It is their total irrelevancy that accounts for their being remembered. ...
- 162 Communication is always "propaganda."
- 163 The emitter always wants "to get something across."
- 164 Propaganda, we now know, is both a great deal more powerful than the rationalists with their belief in "open discussion" believe, and a great deal less powerful than the myth-makers of propaganda, e.g., Dr. Goebbels in the Nazi regime, believed and wanted us to believe.

- 165 Indeed the danger of total propaganda is not that the propaganda will be believed.
- 166 The danger is that nothing will be believed and that every communication becomes suspect.
- 167 In the end, no communication is being received.
- 168 Everything anyone says is considered a demand and is resisted, resented, and in effect not heard at all.
- 169 The end results of total propaganda are not fanatics, but cynics – but this, of course, may be even greater and more dangerous corruption. ...
- 170 Communication, in other words, always makes demands.
- 171 It always demands that the recipient become somebody, do something, believe something.
- 172 It always appeals to motivation.
- 173 If, in other words, communication fits in with the aspirations, the values, the purposes of the recipient, it is powerful.
- 174 If it goes against his aspirations, his values, his motivations, it is likely not to be received at all or, at best, to be resisted.
- 175 Of course, at its most powerful, communication brings about "conversion," that is, a change of personality, of values, beliefs, aspirations.
- 176 But this is the rare, existential event, and one against which the basic psychological forces of every human being are strongly organized.
- 177 Even the Lord, the Bible reports, first had to strike Saul blind before he could raise him up as Paul.
- 178 Communications aiming at conversion demand surrender.

179 By and large, therefore, there is no communication unless
the message can key in to the recipient's own values, at
least to some degree.

180 4. *Communication and information are different and
indeed largely opposite – yet interdependent.*

181 Where communication is perception, information is logic.

182 As such, information is purely formal and has no meaning.

183 It is impersonal rather than interpersonal.

184 The more it can be freed of the human component, that is,
of such things as emotions and values, expectations and
perceptions, the more valid and reliable does it become.

185 Indeed it becomes increasingly informative. ...

186 All through history, the problem has been how to glean a
little information out of communications, that is, out of
relationships between people, based on perception.

187 All through history, the problem has been to isolate the
information content from an abundance of perception.

188 Now, all of a sudden, we have the capacity to provide
information – both because of the conceptual work of the
logicians (especially the symbolic logic of Russell and
Whitehead, which appeared in 1910), and because of the
technical work on data processing and data storage, that
is, especially because of the computer and its tremendous
capacity to store, manipulate, and transmit data.

189 Now, in other words, we have the opposite problem from
the one mankind has always been struggling with.

190 Now we have the problem of handling information per se,
devoid of any communication content. ...

- 191 The requirements for effective information are the opposite of those for effective communication.
- 192 Information is, for instance, always specific.
- 193 We perceive a configuration in communications; but we convey specific individual data in the information process.
- 194 Indeed, information is, above all, a principle of economy.
- 195 The fewer data needed, the better the information.
- 196 And an overload of information, that is, anything much beyond what is truly needed, leads to information blackout.
- 197 It does not enrich, but impoverishes. ...
- 198 At the same time, information presupposes communication.
- 199 Information is always encoded.
- 200 To be received, let alone to be used, the code must be known and understood by the recipient.
- 201 This requires prior agreement, that is, some communication.
- 202 At the very least, the recipient has to know what the data pertain to.
- 203 Are the figures on a piece of computer tape the height of mountaintops or the cash balances of Federal Reserve member banks?
- 204 In either case, the recipient would have to know what mountains are or what banks are to get any information out of the data. ...

- 205 The prototype information system may well have been the peculiar language known as *Armee Deutsch* (Army German) which served as language of command in the Imperial Austrian Army prior to 1918.
- 206 A polyglot army in which officers, noncommissioned officers, and men often had no language in common, it functioned remarkably well with fewer than two hundred specific words – “fire,” for instance, or “at ease,” each of which had only one totally unambiguous meaning.
- 207 The meaning was always an action.
- 208 And the words were learned in and through actions, i.e., in what behaviorists now call “operant conditioning.”
- 209 The tensions in the Austrian Army after many decades of nationalist turmoil were very great indeed.
- 210 Social intercourse between members of different nationalities serving in the same unit became increasingly difficult, if not impossible.
- 211 But to the very end, the information system functioned.
- 212 It was completely formal; completely rigid: completely logical in that each word had only one possible meaning: all rested on completely pre-established communication regarding the specific response to a certain set of sound waves.
- 213 This example, however, shows also that the effectiveness of an information system depends on the willingness and ability to think through carefully what information is needed by whom for what purposes, and then on the systematic creation of communication among the various parties to the system as to the meaning of each specific input and output.
- 214 The effectiveness, in other words, depends on the pre-establishment of communication. ...

- 215 Communication communicates the more levels of meaning it has and the less it lends itself to quantification. ...
- 216 Medieval esthetics held that a work of art communicates on a number of levels, at least three if not four: the literal; the metaphorical; the allegorical; and the symbolic.
- 217 The work of art that most consciously converted this theory into artistic practice was Dante's *Divina Commedia*.
- 218 If by "information" we mean something that can be quantified, then the *Divina Commedia* is without any information content whatever.
- 219 But it is precisely the ambiguity, the multiplicity of levels on which this book can be read, from being a fairy tale to being a grand synthesis of metaphysics, that makes it the overpowering work of art it is and the immediate communication which it has been to generations of readers. ...
- 220 Communications, in other words, may not be dependent on information.
- 221 Indeed the most perfect communications may be purely "shared experiences," without any logic whatever.
- 222 Perception has primacy rather than information.
- 223 This summary of what we have learned is gross oversimplification.
- 224 It glosses over some of the most hotly contested issues in psychology and perception.
- 225 Indeed it may well brush aside most of the issues which the students of learning and of perception, would consider central and important. ...

- 226 But the aim has not been to survey these big areas.
- 227 My concern here is not with learning or with perception.
- 228 It is with communications, and in particular, with communications in the large organization, be it business enterprise, government agency, university, or armed service. ^m
- 229 This summary might also be criticized for being trite, if not obvious.
- 230 No one, it might be said, could possibly be surprised at its statements.
- 231 They say what "everybody knows."
- 232 But whether this be so or not, it is not what "everybody does."
- 233 On the contrary, the logical implication for communications in organizations of these apparently simple and obvious statements is at odds with current practice and indeed denies validity to the honest and serious efforts we have been making to communicate for many decades now.

234 ***Why Downward Communications
Cannot Work***

235 What, then, can our knowledge and our experience teach us about communications in organizations, about the reasons for our failures, and about the prerequisites for success in the future? ..

236 For centuries we have attempted communication "downward."

237 This, however, cannot work, no matter how hard and how intelligently we try.

238 It cannot work, first, because it focuses on what we want to say.

239 It assumes, in other words, that the utterer communicates.

240 But we know that all he does is utter.

241 Communication is the act of the recipient.

242 What we have been trying to do is to work on the emitter, specifically on the manager, the administrator, the commander, to make him capable of being a better communicator.

243 But all one can communicate downward are commands, that is, prearranged signals.

244 One cannot communicate downward anything connected with understanding, let alone with motivation.

245 This requires communication upward, from those who perceive to those who want to reach their perception. ..

246 This does not mean that managers should stop working on clarity in what they say or write.

- 247 Far from it.
- 248 But it does mean that how we say something comes only after we have learned what to say.
- 249 And this cannot be found out by "talking to," no matter how well it is being done.
- 250 "Letters to the Employees," no matter how well done, will be a waste unless the writer knows what employees can perceive, expect to perceive, and want to do.
- 251 They are a waste unless they are based on the recipient's rather than the emitter's perception. ...
- 252 But "listening" does not work either. The Human Relations School of Elton Mayo, forty years ago, recognized the failure of the traditional approach to communications. Its answer*² was to enjoin listening.
- 253 Instead of starting out with what "we," that is, the executive, want to "get across," the executive should start out by finding out what subordinates want to know, are interested in, are, in other words, receptive to.
- 254 To this day, the human relations prescription, though rarely practiced, remains the classic formula. ...
- 255 Of course, listening is a prerequisite to communication.
- 256 But it is not adequate, and it cannot, by itself, work.
- 257 Listening assumes that the superior will understand what he is being told.
- 258 It assumes, in other words, that the subordinates can communicate.
- 259 It is hard to see, however, why the subordinate should be able to do what his superior cannot do.

- 260 In fact, there is no reason for assuming he can.
- 261 There is no reason, in other words, to believe that listening results any less in misunderstanding and miscommunications than does talking.
- 262 In addition, the theory of listening does not take into account that communications is demands.
- 263 It does not bring out the subordinate's preferences and desires, his values and aspirations.
- 264 It may explain the reasons for misunderstanding.
- 265 But it does not lay down a basis for understanding. ...
- 266 This is not to say that listening is wrong, any more than the futility of downward communications furnishes any argument against attempts to write well, to say things clearly and simply, and to speak the language of those whom one addresses rather than one's own jargon.
- 267 Indeed, the realization that communications have to be upward – or rather that they have to start with the recipient rather than the emitter, which underlies the concept of listening – is absolutely sound and vital.
- 268 But listening is only the starting point. ...
- 269 More and better information does not solve the communications problem, does not bridge the communications gap.
- 270 On the contrary, the more information, the greater is the need for functioning and effective communication.
- 271 The more information, in other words, the greater is the communications gap likely to be.
- 272 The information explosion demands functioning communications. ...

- 273 The more impersonal and formal the information process in the first place, the more will it depend on prior agreement on meaning and application, that is, on communications.
- 274 In the second place, the more effective the information process, the more impersonal and formal will it become; the more will it separate human beings and thereby require separate, but also much greater, efforts, to re-establish the human relationship, the relationship of communication.
- 275 It may be said that the effectiveness of the information process will depend increasingly on our ability to communicate, and that, in the absence of effective communication – that is, in the present situation – the information revolution cannot really produce information.
- 276 All it can produce is data. ...
- 277 The information explosion is the most compelling reason to go to work on communications.
- 278 Indeed, the frightening communications gap all around us – between management and workers; between business and government; between faculty and students, and between both of them and university administration; between producers and consumers, and so on – may well reflect in some measure the tremendous increase in information without a commensurate increase in communications.

279 ***What Can Managers Do?***

280 Can we then say anything constructive about communication?

281 Can we do anything?

282 We can say that communication has to start from the intended recipient of communications rather than from the emitter.

283 In terms of traditional organization we have to start upward.

284 Downward communications cannot work and do not work.

285 They come *after* upward communications have successfully been established.

286 They are reaction rather than action; response rather than initiative. ...

287 But we can also say that it is not enough to listen.

288 The upward communications must be focused on something that both recipient and emitter can perceive, focused on something that is common to both of them.

289 They must be focused on what already motivates the intended recipient.

290 They must, from the beginning, be informed by his values, beliefs, and aspirations. ...

291 [Management by objectives](#) is thus a prerequisite for functioning communication.

292 [The purpose and objectives of a business](#) ↓

- 293 It requires the subordinate to think through and present to the superior his own conclusions as to what major contribution to the organization – or to the unit within the organization – he should be expected to perform and should be held accountable for. ...
- 294 What the subordinate comes up with is rarely what the superior expects.
- 295 Indeed, the first aim of the exercise is precisely to bring out the divergence in perception between superior and subordinate.
- 296 But the perception is focused, and focused on something that is real to both parties.
- 297 To realize that they see the same reality differently is in itself already communication. ...
- 298 Management by objectives gives to the intended recipient of communication – in this case the subordinate – access to experience that enables him to understand.
- 299 He is given access to the reality of decision-making, the problems of priorities, the choice between what one likes to do and what the situation demands, and above all, the responsibility for a decision.
- 300 He may not see the situation the same way the superior does – in fact, he rarely will or even should.
- 301 But he may gain an understanding of the complexity of the superior's situation and of the fact that the complexity is not of the superior's making, but is inherent in the situation itself. ...

- 302 And these communications, even if they end in a “no” to the subordinate’s conclusions, are firmly focused on the aspirations, values, and motivation of the intended recipient.
- 303 In fact, they start out with the question “What would you want to do?”
- 304 They may then end up with the command “This is what I tell you to do.”
- 305 But at least they force the superior to realize that he is overriding the desires of the subordinate.
- 306 It forces him to explain, if not to try to persuade.
- 307 At least he knows that he has a problem – and so does the subordinate. ...
- 308 A performance appraisal based on what a man can do and has done well; or a discussion on a man’s development direction, are similarly foundations for communications.
- 309 They start out with the subordinate’s concerns, express his perception, and focus his expectations.
- 310 They make communications his tool rather than a demand on him. ...
- 311 These are only examples, and rather insignificant ones at that.
- 312 But perhaps they illustrate the main conclusion to which our experience with communications – largely an experience of failure – and all the work on learning, memory, perception, and motivation point: communication requires shared experience. ...

313 There can be no communication if it is conceived as going from the "I" to the "Thou."

314 Communication works only from one member of "us" to another.

315 Communication in organization – and this may be the true lesson of our communication failure and the true measure of our communication need – is not a means of organization.

316 It is the mode of organization.

317 _____

318 ¹ AS Edward T. Hall called it in the title of his pioneering work (Doubleday, 1959).

319 ² Especially as developed in Mayo's two famous books, The Human Problems of an Industrial Civilization (Harvard Business School, 1933) and The Social Problems of an Industrial Civilization (Harvard Business School, 1945).