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Semester: Autumn 2026

ALLAMA IQBAL OPEN UNIVERSITY, ISLAMABAD

(Department of Computer Science)

Course: Professional Communication (3578) • Level: Postgraduate

Semester: Autumn 2026

Assignment No. 1

Total Marks: 100 • Pass Marks: 50

SOLVED ASSIGNMENT GUIDE — For Study & Reference

Note: This guide is prepared for study and reference purposes only. Students are advised to read the relevant units of the course book, understand the concepts, examples and arguments given here, and then write the assignment in their own words. Copying this guide word for word is not allowed and will not develop the professional communication skills this course is designed to build.

Question 1: Effective Communication, Success and Goal-Oriented Communication (20 Marks)

Question as printed: a) How does effective communication influence personal and professional success? b) What are the key elements that make communication meaningful and goal-oriented? (20)

Introduction

Communication is the process by which people create, exchange and interpret meanings through verbal and non-verbal messages. Almost everything a person achieves in family life, education, work and society depends on how well that process works. A brilliant idea that

cannot be explained remains useless, a skilled worker who cannot cooperate with colleagues remains undervalued, and a leader who cannot listen, persuade and give feedback cannot lead for long. Effective communication is therefore not a decorative soft skill added to real ability; it is the channel through which real ability becomes visible, useful and rewarded. Part (a) of this question examines how effective communication influences personal and professional success, while part (b) identifies the key elements that make communication meaningful and goal-oriented rather than vague, accidental or wasteful.

Part (a): How Effective Communication Influences Personal Success

In personal life, effective communication builds and protects relationships. Family members, friends and neighbours constantly negotiate needs, feelings, expectations and disagreements. A person who listens carefully, speaks respectfully, chooses the right moment and checks that the other person has understood is far more likely to be trusted and supported. Misunderstanding, by contrast, is one of the most common roots of personal conflict: a careless remark, a message sent in anger, or a long silence where an explanation was needed can damage a relationship that took years to build. Clear and empathetic communication resolves such problems early, before they harden into resentment.

Effective communication also strengthens self-confidence and personal identity. The ability to express needs, opinions and boundaries honestly, without aggression and without fear, is known as assertive communication. Assertive people can refuse an unfair demand politely, ask for help when they need it, and take part in discussions without either dominating others or disappearing into silence. This confidence carries into education, where students who ask

questions, present ideas and write clearly learn faster, and into everyday problem-solving, where a person who can gather information, explain a difficulty to the right official, doctor, teacher or employer, and follow up politely is much more likely to get the problem solved.

How Effective Communication Influences Professional Success

In professional life the influence is even more direct, because organisations are, in a real sense, networks of communication. Managers spend most of their working day communicating: instructing, reporting, negotiating, chairing meetings, handling complaints and coordinating teams. Studies of managerial work consistently show that communication occupies the largest share of a manager's time, which means that a manager's communication skill is, to a large extent, the manager's professional skill. Employees who write precise emails, present proposals convincingly and report problems early are noticed, trusted with responsibility and promoted faster than equally qualified colleagues who cannot do these things.

Teamwork depends entirely on communication. A project succeeds when goals are shared, roles are clear, progress is reported honestly and difficulties are raised in time for help to arrive. Effective communicators make this possible: they confirm instructions instead of assuming them, share credit, give constructive feedback and keep everyone informed. Customer relations depend on communication in the same way. A client who feels listened to, receives clear information about price, time and quality, and is told the truth when something goes wrong will usually remain loyal; a client who is ignored, confused or misled will leave and will warn others. For professionals such as teachers, doctors, engineers, salespersons and computer specialists, technical knowledge earns the job, but communication decides how far the person rises in it.

Table 1: How effective communication supports success in different areas of life

Area of life	What effective communication does	Result when it is weak
Personal relationships	Builds trust, resolves conflict, expresses needs and feelings respectfully	Misunderstanding, quarrels, broken relationships
Education	Helps students question, discuss, present and write clearly	Passive learning, poor results despite ability
Career and promotion	Makes ability visible; supports leadership, teamwork and reporting	Overlooked talent, stalled promotion
Business and clients	Creates confidence, loyalty and repeat business	Lost customers, damaged reputation
Leadership	Shares vision, motivates staff, coordinates action	Confusion, low morale, failed plans

Part (b): Key Elements That Make Communication Meaningful and Goal-Oriented

Communication becomes meaningful when the receiver understands the message in the sense the sender intended, and it becomes goal-oriented when it is planned to achieve a definite purpose. Several elements must work together for this to happen. The first is a clear purpose. Before speaking or writing, the communicator should know exactly what result is wanted: to inform, to persuade, to instruct, to request action, to build goodwill, or to solve a problem. A

message without a purpose drifts; a message with a purpose can be organised, timed and judged by whether it achieved its aim.

The second element is understanding of the audience. The same information must be presented differently to an expert and to a beginner, to a senior manager and to a new trainee, to a satisfied customer and to an angry one. Audience analysis means considering the receiver's knowledge, interest, attitude, language level and likely questions, and then shaping the message accordingly. The third element is clarity and simplicity of encoding: short sentences, familiar words, logical order, concrete examples and avoidance of unnecessary jargon. Closely related is completeness and accuracy: the receiver must be given all the essential facts, and those facts must be correct, because a clear message that is incomplete or wrong is worse than no message at all.

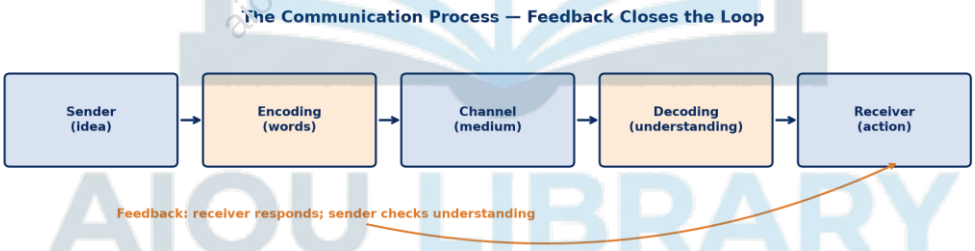

Figure 1: The communication process. Meaning is created only when decoding matches encoding, and feedback confirms that it has.

The fourth element is the choice of the right channel and medium. Urgent, sensitive or complex matters usually need a rich channel such as a face-to-face meeting or a video call, where tone, expression and immediate questions are possible. Routine information, by contrast, travels well by email or notice, which also leaves a record. Choosing the wrong channel, for example breaking bad news by a short text message or discussing a complex design only through brief

chat messages, weakens even a well-written message. The fifth element is listening and feedback. Communication is a two-way process; the sender must watch and listen for the receiver's response, invite questions, paraphrase and confirm understanding, and be ready to explain again in a different way. Without feedback the sender never knows whether meaning was actually shared.

Two further elements hold all the others together: credibility and courtesy, and correct timing. A communicator who is known to be honest, competent and fair is believed before the message is even examined, while courtesy, respectful tone, proper greetings and genuine attention to the receiver's feelings keep the relationship healthy enough for the message to be accepted. Timing matters because even a perfect message fails if it arrives too late, too early, or at a moment when the receiver cannot attend to it. When purpose, audience awareness, clarity, completeness, suitable channel, feedback, credibility, courtesy and timing are present together, communication is both meaningful, because shared understanding is achieved, and goal-oriented, because that understanding is directed towards a planned result.

Conclusion

To conclude, effective communication influences success at every level: it protects personal relationships, builds confidence, makes professional ability visible, enables teamwork and leadership, and wins the trust of clients and employers. Its power, however, is not automatic. Communication achieves these results only when it is meaningful and goal-oriented, built on a clear purpose, knowledge of the audience, clear and complete encoding, a suitable channel, active listening and feedback, and the credibility, courtesy and timing that keep human

relationships intact. Students of professional communication should therefore treat every important message as a small planned project: decide the goal, study the receiver, organise the message, choose the channel, and check the response. Success, personal and professional, follows those who master this discipline.

Question 2: Communication Barriers in Organisations and How to Overcome Them (20 Marks)

Question as printed: a) Why do communication barriers occur in organizations, and how do they affect performance? b) How can individuals overcome these barriers to ensure clarity and understanding? (20)

Introduction

No message travels from sender to receiver in perfect condition. Between intention and understanding stand many obstacles, called communication barriers, which distort, delay, block or change the meaning of messages inside organisations. Some barriers arise from language, some from human psychology, some from the structure of the organisation itself, and some from the physical environment and technology. Because organisations run on instructions, reports, orders, data and feedback, even small distortions can multiply as a message passes from person to person, producing wrong decisions, wasted effort and damaged morale. Part (a) explains why barriers occur and how they affect performance, and part (b) describes how individuals can overcome them to ensure clarity and understanding.

Part (a): Why Communication Barriers Occur

Semantic and Language Barriers

Semantic barriers arise from words and symbols themselves. Many words have several meanings, technical jargon is understood only by specialists, and abbreviations, idioms and poorly chosen expressions mean different things to different people. A manager who tells a new employee to submit a report 'as soon as possible' may mean today, while the employee understands it as within the week. Faulty translation between languages, vague instructions, complicated sentences and badly organised messages all belong to this group. In multilingual workplaces, including most Pakistani organisations where English, Urdu and regional languages meet, semantic barriers are a daily reality.

Psychological and Personal Barriers

Psychological barriers arise inside the minds of sender and receiver. Emotions such as anger, fear, excitement or anxiety change both how a message is sent and how it is heard; a frightened employee hears a routine question as an accusation. Prejudice and stereotyping lead receivers to judge the person instead of the message. Selective perception means people notice only what confirms what they already believe, while premature evaluation, judging before the message is complete, and simple inattention or poor listening cut understanding short. Differences in status add a further filter: subordinates often tell seniors only what they think seniors want to hear, and seniors sometimes dismiss useful information because it comes from a junior.

Organisational and Physical Barriers

Organisational barriers are built into the structure of the workplace. In a long chain of command, a message is re-told at every level and, like a whisper in the game of Chinese whispers, arrives distorted; bad news in particular tends to be softened as it travels upward, so top management may never learn the true position. Too many levels, rigid rules, departmental rivalry, information overload, and a culture that punishes honest feedback all block the free flow of communication. Physical and technological barriers complete the picture: noise, distance between offices or sites, poor telephone or internet connections, faulty equipment, and messages lost in an overflowing inbox can prevent a message from arriving at all.

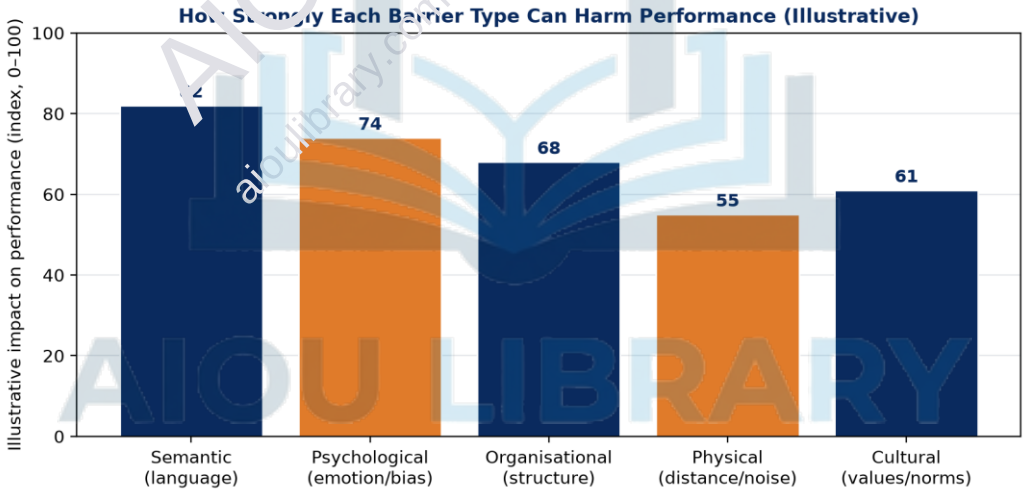

Figure 2: Barrier types differ in strength, but all of them tax performance. The values are illustrative, showing relative seriousness for classroom discussion.

How Barriers Affect Performance

The effect of these barriers on performance is direct and measurable in daily work. Distorted instructions produce defective work, rework and waste of material and time. Delayed

information produces missed deadlines and lost opportunities, because decisions are taken on old or incomplete data. When feedback does not travel upward honestly, management plans on false assumptions and small problems grow into crises before they are noticed. Barriers also damage people: employees who feel uninformed or unheard lose motivation and trust, rumours and the informal grapevine fill the gap left by official silence, conflict between departments increases, and good staff begin to leave. Finally, barriers harm the organisation's outside image, since a customer who receives contradictory information from two departments experiences the barrier as incompetence. In short, communication barriers convert directly into cost, delay, error and low morale.

Table 2: Main barriers, their causes and their effects

Barrier type	Typical cause	Typical effect on performance
Semantic	Jargon, ambiguity, poor drafting, language differences	Wrong interpretation, rework, delay
Psychological	Emotion, prejudice, selective perception, poor listening	Conflict, mistrust, ignored messages
Organisational	Long chains, overload, fear of giving bad news	Distorted reports, late decisions
Physical / technological	Noise, distance, faulty systems, overflowing inbox	Lost or late messages, missed deadlines
Cultural	Different values, gestures, directness and etiquette	Offence, misunderstanding in diverse teams

Part (b): How Individuals Can Overcome Barriers

Individuals cannot rebuild the whole organisation, but they can do a great deal to protect their own communication. The first step is to simplify and clarify the message itself: use plain, familiar words, short sentences and a logical order; define technical terms; give one instruction at a time; and put the most important point first. Where a misunderstanding would be costly, the message should be given in writing as well as orally, so that the receiver can re-read it. The second step is to know the audience and adapt to it: consider the receiver's language, knowledge and position, avoid expressions the receiver may not share, and, in a multilingual setting, confirm key points in the language the receiver understands best.

The third and most powerful step is active listening combined with feedback. A good listener gives full attention, does not interrupt, asks clarifying questions, and paraphrases the message back: 'If I understand correctly, you want the figures by Thursday.' The sender, in turn, should invite and check feedback rather than assuming understanding, asking the receiver to repeat the action required or summarising the agreement at the end of the discussion. Empathy supports both roles: trying to see the matter from the other person's position reduces prejudice, emotional reaction and status fear, and keeps the discussion focused on the problem rather than on personalities.

Individuals should also choose the channel deliberately, control the environment, and manage themselves. Sensitive or complex matters deserve a quiet face-to-face conversation rather than a hurried message; routine confirmations belong in writing. Where noise, interruption or time pressure threatens understanding, the individual can move the conversation, schedule it

properly and switch off distractions. Emotionally charged messages should never be sent in anger; drafting, waiting and re-reading removes most psychological distortion. Finally, credibility must be protected over time: a person who is consistently accurate, honest and courteous finds that barriers fall before the message is even sent, because receivers trust the source. Where a barrier is structural, for example a broken system or an overloaded reporting line, the individual's duty is to report it clearly to management rather than silently working around it forever.

Conclusion

To conclude, communication barriers occur because language is imperfect, human minds filter and distort, organisational structures stretch and overload messages, and physical and technical conditions fail. Left alone, they produce error, delay, cost, conflict and low morale, which is why performance suffers wherever barriers are strong. Individuals can overcome most of them by writing and speaking plainly, adapting to the audience, listening actively, confirming understanding through feedback, choosing channels wisely, controlling emotion and environment, and building a reputation for honesty. Clarity is rarely an accident; it is the result of deliberate effort by both sender and receiver, and organisations that train and reward that effort communicate, and perform, far better than those that leave communication to chance.

Question 3: Culture, Ethics and Decision-Making in Global Communication (20 Marks)

Question as printed: a) How does culture influence communication in a global business environment? b) Why is ethical communication important, and how can ethical dilemmas affect decision-making? (20)

Introduction

Modern business is global. Software teams in Lahore serve clients in London, Pakistani exporters negotiate with buyers in Dubai and New York, and a single video meeting may join colleagues from five countries and four time zones. In such an environment communication is never culturally neutral: every message is sent and received through the filter of culture, the shared values, beliefs, customs and habits of a group. At the same time, global business constantly tests honesty, fairness and responsibility, so communication must also be ethical. Part (a) explains how culture influences communication in a global business environment, and part (b) explains why ethical communication is important and how ethical dilemmas affect decision-making.

Part (a): How Culture Influences Communication

Culture influences, first, the directness of communication. Scholars commonly distinguish high-context cultures, where much meaning is carried by situation, relationship, tone and what is left unsaid, from low-context cultures, where meaning is expected to be stated explicitly in words. Many Asian, Middle Eastern and Latin American business cultures lean towards the high-

context style, valuing harmony, indirect refusal and careful politeness, while much of North America and northern Europe leans towards the low-context style, valuing frankness, brevity and getting straight to the point. Neither style is wrong, but mixing them without awareness causes real damage: a direct 'no' may sound rude and aggressive to one partner, while an indirect 'we will try our best' may be heard by the other as a firm promise, and each side blames the other when expectations collide.

Second, culture shapes attitudes towards hierarchy, time and individual responsibility. In high power-distance cultures, juniors are expected to show deference, avoid contradicting seniors in public and communicate through proper channels; in low power-distance cultures, a junior may openly question a manager's proposal in a meeting, and silence may be read as agreement or even disengagement. Attitudes to time differ just as sharply: monochronic cultures treat schedules and deadlines as commitments and lateness as disrespect, while polychronic cultures treat time more flexibly and value relationships above punctuality. Individualist cultures reward personal achievement and direct personal feedback, while collectivist cultures protect group harmony and the face, the public dignity, of every member, so criticism is given privately and indirectly, if at all.

Third, culture governs language and non-verbal behaviour. Even when global teams share English, differences in accent, idiom, humour and formality create misunderstanding, and translation can quietly change legal and commercial meanings. Non-verbal signals vary even more: eye contact that signals honesty in one culture signals challenge in another; gestures, personal distance, physical contact, dress, gift-giving and the role of silence all carry culture-specific meanings. Business rituals, small talk before business, the exchange of cards,

hospitality, religious observances and holidays, also differ, and ignoring them can offend a partner before the real agenda is even reached. The practical conclusion is that global communicators need cultural intelligence: knowledge of the other culture, mindfulness in the encounter, and the humility to ask, observe and adapt rather than assume that one's own way is the universal way.

Table 3: Cultural dimensions and their effect on business communication

Cultural dimension	One pattern	Opposite pattern	Risk if ignored
Context	High-context: indirect, meaning in situation	Low-context: explicit, meaning in words	False promises, perceived rudeness
Power distance	High: deference to seniors, formal channels	Low: open questioning at all levels	Silence misread; offence to seniors
Time	Polychronic: flexible, relationship first	Monochronic: strict schedules	Missed deadlines, impatience, mistrust
Individual / collective	Collectivist: protect face and group harmony	Individualist: direct personal feedback	Public criticism destroys cooperation
Non-verbal norms	Varying eye contact, distance, gestures	Different local expectations	Offence without a word being spoken

Part (b): Why Ethical Communication Is Important

Ethical communication is communication that is honest, accurate, fair, respectful and responsible in its effects. It is important, first, because all business rests on trust. Customers buy, banks lend, employees commit and partners invest on the basis of what an organisation says about its products, prices, quality and intentions. Honest communication builds the reputation that makes this trust possible, while a single exposed deception, a false advertisement, a hidden defect, a manipulated report, can destroy in days a reputation built over years. Ethical communication also protects decision quality inside the organisation: managers can only decide well if the reports reaching them are truthful, and employees can only work safely if instructions and warnings are complete and accurate.

Second, ethical communication is a legal and social responsibility. Laws against fraud, false advertising, insider dealing and defamation all regulate communication, and beyond the law, organisations owe honest dealing to employees, customers, suppliers and the wider community. Respectful communication, free of discrimination, harassment and manipulation, protects human dignity at work and preserves the relationships on which long-term business depends. In the long run ethics is also practical: organisations known for straight dealing attract better staff, loyal customers and patient investors, while those known for clever dishonesty must spend ever more on control, litigation and repair.

How Ethical Dilemmas Affect Decision-Making

An ethical dilemma arises when every available course of action involves a moral cost: honesty may harm a colleague, loyalty to the employer may conflict with duty to the customer, or short-

term survival may tempt management to hide a problem. Typical communication dilemmas include whether to disclose a product defect that the customer has not noticed, how much of a company's difficulty to tell staff without causing panic, whether to soften a report to protect one's team, and how to advertise a genuine advantage without misleading by omission. Such dilemmas affect decision-making in several ways. They slow decisions down, because managers must weigh values as well as profits. They create stress and disagreement, because honest people rank values differently. And they tempt decision-makers towards rationalisation, selective disclosure and euphemism, language that hides the moral reality of the act, such as calling job cuts 'rightsizing' without acknowledging the human cost.

Handled badly, dilemmas produce decisions that are profitable for a quarter and ruinous for a decade: concealed defects become scandals, massaged figures become fraud cases, and suppressed bad news becomes a crisis that can no longer be controlled. Handled well, with clear ethical principles, consultation, transparency about the conflict itself and a willingness to accept short-term cost, dilemmas can actually strengthen decisions, because a decision that survives ethical scrutiny is usually also clearer, more defensible and more sustainable. Professional communicators help by insisting on complete facts, honest wording, a record of what was decided and why, and channels through which concerns can be raised safely. It must be added that where a dilemma involves religious rulings or legal liability in a specific case, organisations should consult qualified scholars and legal advisers rather than relying on general discussion; this answer treats the subject academically, as a matter of professional practice.

Conclusion

To conclude, culture influences global communication through directness, hierarchy, time, individualism and non-verbal norms, and the global manager who ignores these patterns will misunderstand and offend without intending to. Ethical communication matters because trust, decision quality, legal safety and human dignity all depend on messages that are honest, fair and responsible. Ethical dilemmas are unavoidable in business, and they affect decision-making by adding moral weight, disagreement and temptation to every choice; organisations that face them openly, with principles and honest language, decide better and last longer. In a global environment, cultural sensitivity and ethical integrity are therefore not separate virtues but two sides of the same professional discipline: respecting the other person, in their own terms, and telling them the truth.

Question 4: Technology and Organisational Communication (20 Marks)

Question as printed: a) How has technology transformed communication within organizations? b) What challenges do organizations face when adopting new communication technologies? (20)

Introduction

Few changes in organisational life have been as rapid or as deep as the transformation of communication by technology. Within a single working generation, the typed memo carried by a peon, the paper file moving slowly from desk to desk, and the scheduled telephone call have

been joined, and in many places replaced, by email, instant messaging, video conferencing, shared documents, project platforms, enterprise social networks and mobile applications. Work that once required people to be in the same building at the same time can now be done by a team spread across cities and continents. Part (a) describes how technology has transformed communication within organisations, and part (b) examines the challenges organisations face when adopting new communication technologies.

Part (a): How Technology Has Transformed Communication

The first transformation is speed. Messages that once took days now take seconds, and this changes the tempo of every organisational process: approvals, customer responses, crisis handling and coordination between departments all accelerate. Closely connected is reach. Technology has removed geography as a barrier to routine communication; a head office can brief branch staff nationwide in one video call, a manager can supervise remote and field staff continuously, and organisations can employ talent far beyond their own city. The COVID-19 period demonstrated this dramatically, as organisations that had treated remote communication as an experiment moved whole operations online within weeks and discovered that much office work could continue without the office.

The second transformation is richness and variety of channels. Organisations now choose among text, voice, video, shared screens, collaborative documents edited by several people at once, recorded presentations watched at a convenient time, and dashboards that communicate performance data continuously without any meeting at all. Communication has also become more horizontal and democratic: enterprise platforms allow an employee to reach senior

management, join cross-department groups and share knowledge publicly, weakening the old pattern in which information flowed only downward through the chain of command. Knowledge management has changed with it, because discussions, decisions and documents stored in searchable digital form remain available to new staff long after the original conversation ends, instead of disappearing into individual memory and paper files.

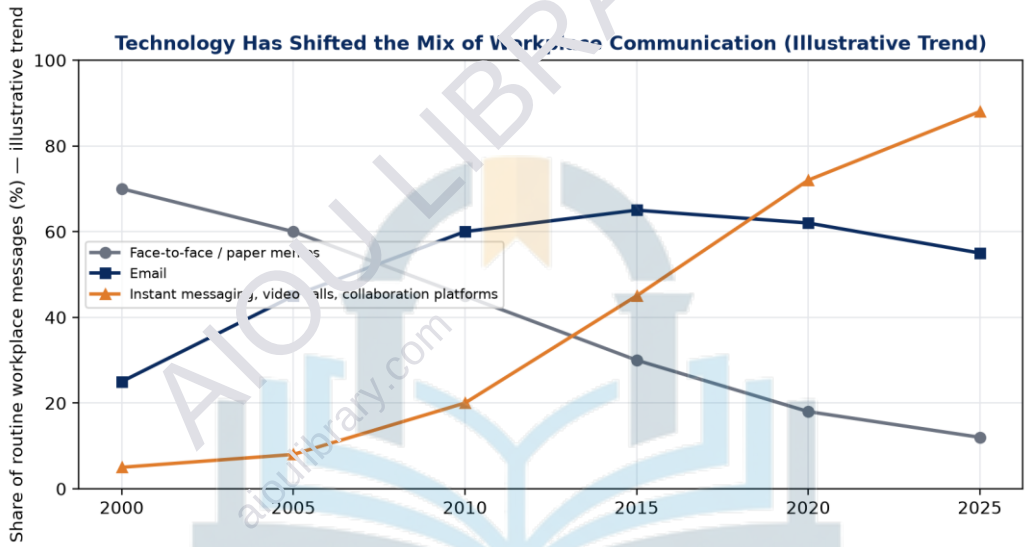

Figure 3: The changing mix of workplace channels. Figures are an illustrative trend for discussion, not survey data.

The third transformation is in the amount, measurability and permanence of communication. Digital systems generate records: emails, chat logs, task histories and meeting recordings that can be searched, audited and analysed. Managers can see whether messages were delivered, tasks acknowledged and deadlines met, and customers can be answered through integrated systems that track every enquiry. Technology has also enabled new forms of work organisation built entirely on communication: virtual teams, hybrid working, hot-desking, outsourced support operating across time zones, and direct communication between organisations and

their customers through websites and social media, bypassing traditional gatekeepers. In short, technology has made organisational communication faster, wider, richer, more recorded and less dependent on place and hierarchy than at any previous time.

Table 4: Communication before and after modern technology

Aspect	Traditional pattern	Technology-enabled pattern
Speed	Memos and letters taking hours or days	Instant messages and same-minute approvals
Reach	Same building or city; travel for meetings	Nationwide and global teams by video call
Direction	Mainly downward through hierarchy	Upward, horizontal and public channels as well
Records	Paper files, hard to search	Searchable digital archives and audit trails
Work pattern	Fixed office, fixed hours	Remote, hybrid and flexible working

Part (b): Challenges in Adopting New Communication Technologies

These gains are real, but adoption brings serious challenges, the first of which is human resistance and the skills gap. Employees differ widely in digital confidence; older or less trained staff may fear new systems, make errors, or quietly continue with old methods, so the organisation ends up running two systems and gaining the benefits of neither. Training, patient support and time to adjust are therefore as important as the software itself. Related to this is

information overload: when every tool generates notifications, group messages and copied emails all day, employees spend their attention on processing messages instead of doing the work the messages are about, and genuinely urgent items are buried under routine noise.

The second group of challenges concerns security, privacy and control. Every new channel is a new opening for leaked data, phishing, unauthorised access and accidental disclosure, and organisations must set passwords, permissions, retention rules and acceptable-use policies, and enforce them without making the tools unusable. Employees, for their part, may reasonably worry about monitoring, since the same systems that coordinate work can also track location, activity and private conversations. A third challenge is the loss of richness and human connection: text messages carry no tone of voice, video meetings tire participants, and a workplace that communicates only through screens can weaken trust, informal learning and the casual conversations in which many problems are first noticed and solved. Misunderstandings multiply precisely because the channel feels easy and quick.

Finally, there are financial, technical and managerial challenges. Licences, devices, connectivity and support cost money, and in regions with unreliable electricity or internet the most advanced platform is worthless at the moment it is most needed. Systems from different vendors may not integrate, updates change familiar interfaces, and dependence on a single provider creates risk. Managers must also write new rules for a new world: which tool is used for what, how quickly replies are expected, whether staff may be contacted after hours, and how records are kept for decisions taken in chat. Organisations that adopt technology without answering these questions gain speed but lose clarity. Successful adoption therefore treats technology as a change in human behaviour, not merely a purchase: pilot the tool, train the

people, set the etiquette, protect the data, and keep a human channel open for the conversations that matter most.

Conclusion

To conclude, technology has transformed organisational communication by making it instantaneous, global, multi-channel, searchable and far less bound by hierarchy and place, and organisations that use it well coordinate faster and serve customers better than those that do not. Yet adoption challenges, resistance and skills gaps, overload, security and privacy risks, loss of personal richness, cost and weak governance, mean that technology alone guarantees nothing. The organisations that benefit most are those that match each tool to a real communication need, invest in people as much as in platforms, and preserve the human judgement that no system can supply. Technology changes the channels; professional communication skill decides whether what flows through them is understanding or merely noise.

Question 5: Email as an Essential Tool — and the Problems of Misuse (20 Marks)

Question as printed: a) Why is email considered an essential communication tool in modern organizations? b) How can misuse of email and internet tools create communication problems? (20)

Introduction

Of all the technologies discussed in this course, email remains the backbone of formal communication in most organisations. Chat applications are faster for small exchanges and video is richer for discussion, but email still carries the job offer, the contract, the official instruction, the report and the complaint, the messages on which organisations legally and practically run. It is therefore important to understand both sides of this tool: why it has become essential, and how its misuse, together with the misuse of internet tools generally, creates serious communication problems. Part (a) explains the essential role of email, and part (b) examines the problems created by misuse.

Part (a): Why Email Is Essential in Modern Organisations

Email's first strength is that it is written, recorded and retrievable. An email states who said what, to whom, and when; it can be filed, searched, forwarded to a person who needs the same information, and produced later as evidence of an instruction, an agreement or a warning. Organisations run on such records: approvals, quotations, orders, HR decisions and customer commitments made by email can be verified months later in a way that a corridor conversation cannot. This documentary quality is the main reason email, rather than any faster tool, remains the standard for official communication.

Its second strength is that it is asynchronous and economical. Sender and receiver do not need to be present at the same moment, which makes email ideal across shifts, branches and time zones: a question sent from Karachi in the evening is answered from London the next morning, and neither party was interrupted. Email is also cheap and scalable: the same message can

reach one person or one thousand at almost no extra cost, with attachments carrying reports, drawings, spreadsheets and photographs that once required a courier. For routine distribution, announcements, circulars and documentation, no older channel approaches its efficiency.

Third, email supports thoughtfulness and professionalism when used well. Unlike a spoken reply, an email can be drafted, checked, corrected and structured before sending; the writer can organise points, attach evidence and choose a tone appropriate to the reader. Threaded subject lines keep a discussion together, folders and search make a personal archive, and integration with calendars and task systems turns messages directly into meetings and assignments. For external communication, a properly written email from an official address also represents the organisation: its clarity, courtesy and accuracy shape the reader's judgement of the whole business. These combined qualities, record, reach, economy, reflection and representation, explain why email is considered essential rather than merely convenient.

Table 5: What email does best, and where other tools serve better

Communication need	Best-served by email?	Reason / better alternative
Official instruction or approval	Yes	Written, dated, retrievable record
Sending reports and documents	Yes	Attachments with a covering explanation
Urgent two-minute clarification	No — call or chat	Email may sit unread; speed matters more
Sensitive personal discussion	No — face to face	Tone and trust need a rich channel

Announcement to all staff	Yes	Reaches everyone with a permanent copy
Brainstorming and negotiation	No — meeting / video	Needs rapid exchange and non-verbal cues

Part (b): How Misuse of Email and Internet Tools Creates Problems

The same qualities that make email powerful make its misuse damaging, because a careless message is also permanent, forwardable and widely distributable. The most common problem is sheer volume and careless copying. Employees receive far more email than they can read carefully, especially when senders copy whole departments on every message, reply to all without need, and use email for matters a two-minute conversation would settle. The result is overload: important messages are missed, replies are delayed, and staff develop the habit of skimming everything, including messages that deserved full attention. The organisation appears to communicate more while understanding less.

A second problem is poor writing and wrong tone. Emails written in haste, with unclear subjects, missing context, spelling errors and abrupt or emotional language, create misunderstanding that the sender rarely sees, because the offended or confused reader may simply go silent. Angry messages sent in the heat of the moment, sarcasm that reads as insult in plain text, and forwarding a private message without permission have ended working relationships and, in documented cases worldwide, careers. A related misuse is informality where formality is required: treating a client or senior official with chat-style casualness damages the organisation's professional image.

A third problem concerns the wider misuse of internet tools at work. Excessive personal browsing, social media and messaging during working hours consume attention and bandwidth and blur the boundary between private and official life. Security misuse is more serious still: opening phishing attachments, using weak or shared passwords, sending confidential files to personal accounts, or discussing client data on insecure platforms can expose the whole organisation to fraud, data loss and legal liability. Unverified forwarding of rumours and misinformation, inside the office and on public platforms, damages credibility and can defame individuals. Finally, misuse creates legal and ethical exposure, because emails are discoverable records: a joking reference to wrongdoing, a discriminatory remark or a careless promise in an email can be produced in a dispute long after the writer has forgotten it. The remedy is a clear acceptable-use policy, training in email etiquette, disciplined habits such as checking the recipient list, subject line and tone before sending, keeping confidential matter off insecure channels, and the personal rule that nothing should be emailed that the writer would not wish to see forwarded.

Conclusion

To conclude, email is essential in modern organisations because it provides a written, searchable and legally useful record, reaches any number of people across time and place at negligible cost, allows considered and professional drafting, and represents the organisation to the outside world. Misused, however, it produces overload, misunderstanding, damaged relationships, wasted working time, security breaches and permanent records of careless words, and the wider misuse of internet tools adds distraction, misinformation and legal risk.

The professional lesson is not to use email less in total, but to use it deliberately: the right matters in email, the right tone in every line, and the discipline to pause before pressing send.

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