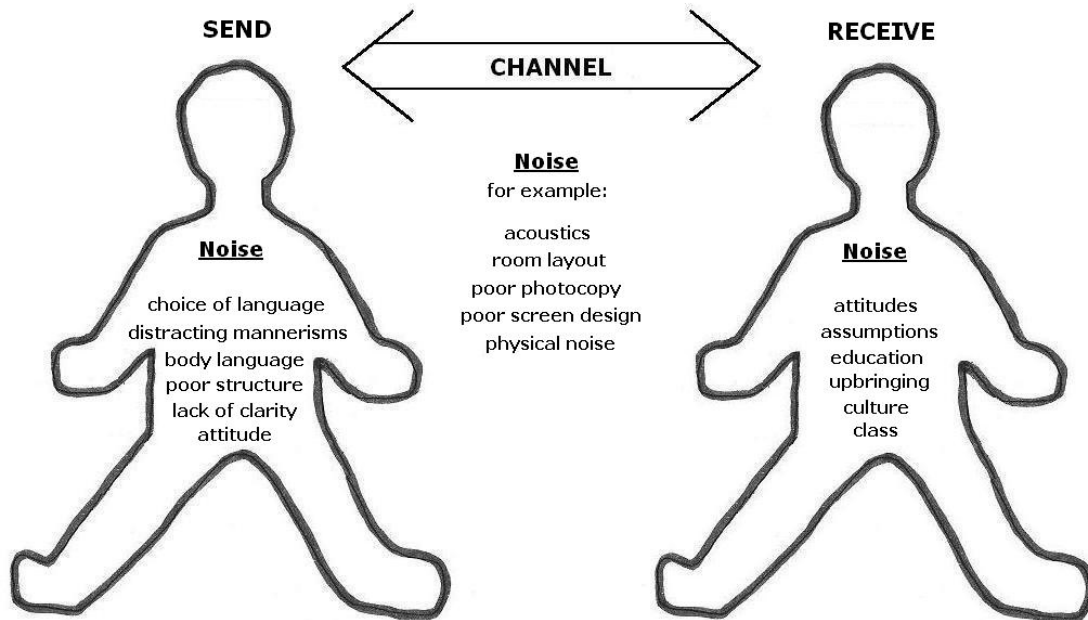


Co-operantics

People skills for co-operatives

Communications: a two-way process



The graphic above shows the two-way nature of communications: speaking/listening, reading/writing - across a channel: air-waves, paper, computer screen. Of course we are sending and receiving messages at the same time, across different kinds of channels - but if we break the process down into its constituent parts, we can more easily identify how to make it more effective.

Noise is anything that is an obstacle to the effective transmission of messages. For example, if I take the minutes of my co-op meeting, then make a poor photocopy of it to send to members, I am introducing "noise" which will interfere with the message contained in those minutes, by making them harder to read. If I assume that everyone "reading" my website will be reading with their eyes, I am making an assumption about who might find the material useful, thereby introducing "noise" in the "channel" (my website) which will prevent my messages reaching a wider audience, including those with impaired vision.

Noise can exist in the sender, the receiver and in the channel, for example:

- ★ Room acoustics
- ★ Physical noise outside or inside the room
- ★ Room layout
- ★ Assumptions
- ★ Education
- ★ Cultural background
- ★ Poorly produced written materials (typing mistakes, use of blank space, too much text and not enough graphic material, too many fonts etc)
- ★ Body language, distracting mannerisms

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To be a good communicator then, the trick is to minimise noise. You can do this by consciously trying to eliminating “noise” when you are sending messages (speaking, writing, composing emails etc).

Tips for sending:

- ★ Keep your messages concise, clear, structured and congruent with your body language
- ★ Check your assumptions about your audience
- ★ Use appropriate language
- ★ Ask for feedback and questions

Tips for receiving:

- ★ Listen actively
- ★ Check your assumptions about the speaker/writer
- ★ Give feedback; ask questions