



## Deck Plate Leadership Series Communication Skills

**USCG Leadership Competency:** Leading Others: Effective Communications

**Learning Outcomes:**

- Describe the importance of communication and the communication model.
- Describe the impact of miscommunication in the flotilla/division.

**Time Required:** 25 – 30 minutes

**Facilitator Activities:** Present slides, providing amplifying information from material below. Facilitate discussion with last slide – Where are We as a Flotilla? Slides can be copied three-to-a-page with line for notes if projector is not available.

*The purpose of communication is to get your message across to others clearly and unambiguously.*

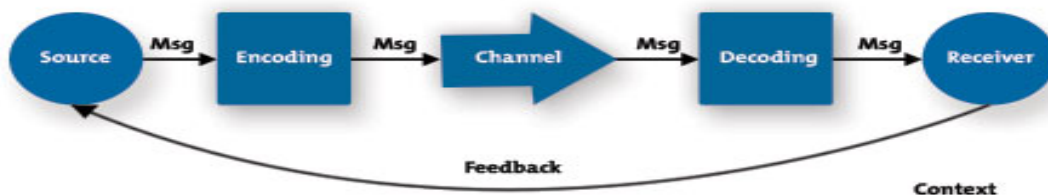
**Overview Information for the Facilitator:**

Communication involves effort from both the sender of the message and the receiver. And it's a process that can be fraught with error, with messages often misinterpreted by the recipient. When this isn't detected, it can cause tremendous confusion, wasted effort and missed opportunity. In fact, communication is only successful when both the sender and the receiver understand the same information as a result of the communication.

In spite of the increasing importance placed on communication skills, many individuals continue to struggle, unable to communicate their thoughts and ideas effectively – whether in verbal or written format.

Communications Skills – The Importance of Removing Barriers

Communication barriers can pop-up at every stage of the communication process (which consists of **sender, message, channel, receiver, feedback** and **context** – see the diagram below) and have the potential to create misunderstanding and confusion.



From "**The Mathematical Theory of Communication**," Copyright 1949, 1998, by the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois.

To be an effective communicator follow the process less:



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Source... You need to be clear about why you're communicating, and what you want to communicate.

Message... The message is the information that you want to communicate.

Encoding... This is the process of transferring the information you want to communicate into a form that can be sent and correctly decoded at the other end. Your success in encoding depends partly on your ability to convey information clearly and simply, but also on your ability to anticipate and eliminate sources of confusion (for example, cultural issues, mistaken assumptions, and missing information.)

Channel... Messages are conveyed through channels, with verbal including face-to-face meetings, telephone and videoconferencing; and written including letters, emails, memos, and reports.

Decoding... Successful decoding, also a skill, (involving, for example, taking the time to read a message carefully, or listen actively to it.) Just as confusion can arise from errors in encoding, it can also arise from decoding errors.

Receiver... Your message is delivered to individual members of your audience. No doubt, you have in mind the actions or reactions you hope your message will get from this audience. Keep in mind, though, that each of these individuals enters into the communication process with ideas and feelings that will undoubtedly influence their understanding of your message, and their response.

Feedback... Your audience will provide you with feedback, verbal and nonverbal reactions to your communicated message.

Context... The situation in which your message is delivered is the context. This may include the surrounding environment or broader culture (corporate culture, international cultures, and so on).

### Removing Barriers at All These Stages

To deliver your messages effectively, you must commit to breaking down the barriers that exist in each of these stages of the communication process.

If your message is too lengthy, disorganized, or contains errors, you can expect the message to be misunderstood and misinterpreted.

Barriers in context tend to stem from senders offering too much information too fast. When in doubt here, less is oftentimes more.

Once you understand this, you need to work to understand your audience's culture, making sure you can converse and deliver your message to people of different backgrounds and cultures within your own organization, in this country and even abroad.

You can take a communication quiz to see how well you communicate at:

[http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newCS\\_99.htm](http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newCS_99.htm)