

Training Commons Modules

Introduction



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Training Commons Modules

Introduction

Prepared by Dr. Usha Vyasulu Reddy



The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) has, for 20 years now, supported many pioneering efforts in the global telecentre movement. This includes the small seed planted in Pondicherry in 1997 in the form of a telecentre under the Information Village Research Project of M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF). This has now germinated into the 'Mission 2007: Every Village a Knowledge Centre' movement, presenting to the entire world a new hope for rejuvenating telecentres as a means to empower people, especially the marginalised. This effort has also brought in a paradigm shift in the information and communication technology (ICT) world – the fact that ICTs are not about technology, but about providing knowledge connectivity for those who most need it.

The MSSRF, under the chairmanship of Prof. M.S. Swaminathan, has indeed made it possible for India to contemplate the implementation of more than 1,00,000 telecentres, covering each of the 2,40,000 Panchayat villages in India. The partners of Mission 2007 have been successful in sensitising

decision-makers in the public and private sectors to the need for investing in the entire ecosystem of telecentres. The Mission 2007 ecosystem is best explained in the 5C approach of Professor Swaminathan, and efforts are under way to strengthen each of the 5Cs – connectivity; content; care and management; coordination; and, capacity-building – through appropriate investment mechanisms.

To strengthen the capacity-building component of the Mission 2007 ecosystem, telecentre.org – with the help of the partners of Mission 2007 – has conceptualised a project called 'Training Commons' to achieve two objectives:

- To encourage organisations engaged in telecentre training to document their efforts and evolve training content so that it can be used as curriculum by others; and,
- To help organisations willing to share their curriculum and knowledge by creating a consortium called Training Commons, founded on the ethos of knowledge-sharing and partnerships.

The idea mooted at the Mission 2007 partners meet in Chennai in October 2005 resulted in a telecentre.org-led project called 'Mission 2007 Training Commons' in February 2006.



A survey conducted in January 2006 helped telecentre.org to identify the most strongly-felt training needs, especially the five distinct skill-sets seen to be pre-requisites for managing telecentres in an efficient manner. These were clearly to complement the existing skill-sets of telecentre managers, often referred to as 'rural knowledge workers' in the parlance of Mission 2007. These are: communication skills, rural marketing skills, rural entrepreneurship skills, community development skills and, most important, the information management skills specific to the needs of the community.

This apart, telecentre managers have expressed interest in enhancing their knowledge about hardware, software and their maintenance, as well as competency in spoken English.

The two-year effort of the Mission 2007 Training Commons project involved scores of partners who were willing to share their knowledge, resources and expertise in the formation of the curriculum presented here. The partners – including the Nasscom Foundation, Plan International-India, M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, World Corps, Development Alternatives and Splash! Communications – are happy to present the first version of the Training Commons curriculum for the benefit of all those engaged in telecentre work to use, adapt and give feedback to the movement.

Needless to say, the first version is bound to have 'gaps', allowing scope for improvement. The best support that could be offered by telecentre organisations is constructive criticism and value-addition to the first version. Interested organisations are most welcome to interact with telecentre.org and the founding partners of Training Commons in this important cause.

On behalf of telecentre.org and Training Commons partners, I am privileged to present the first version of the telecentre curriculum, with gratitude expressed to all those who laboured to produce the curriculum. I am also thankful to our investors, Microsoft, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the International Development Research Centre, Canada, who have constantly reposed their faith in this initiative.

Basheerhamad Shadrach
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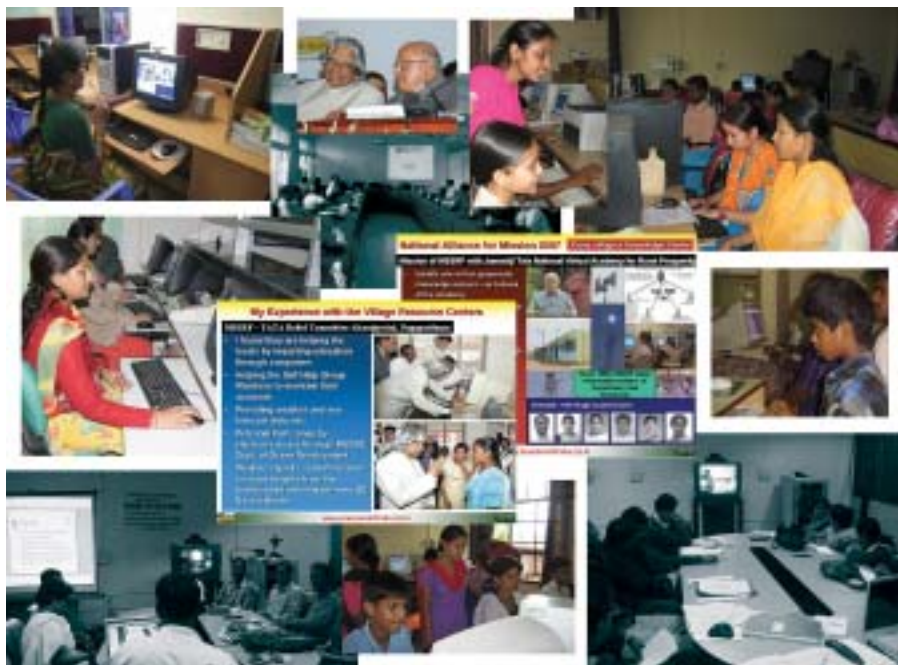
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Background to Training Commons

The importance of the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in helping to accelerate development and to reduce the digital divide has been widely recognised and has been included as Target 18 of Goal 8 of the Millennium Development Goals accepted by the global community in 2000. Within ICTs, telecentres have been seen as potential solutions to achieve these goals because of their ability to provide desperately-needed access to knowledge for remote and marginalised communities. A significant number of such centres have been piloted and imple-

mented by various international, governmental and non-governmental development agencies across the globe.

While many agencies funded telecentres growth, the IDRC pioneered in empowering people, particularly those in rural areas, with information flow, through funding MSSRF for an information village research project about a decade ago in 1998 in Pondicherry, India. Subsequent to sustained advocacy campaigns and sensitising bureaucracy, non-governmental organisations, CSOs and people through Mission 2007, the Govern-



ment of India is in the process of creating nearly 1,00,000 information kiosks under the banner of Common Service Centres. This information infrastructure would act as people-oriented information delivery and service points.

In India, the national alliance for Mission 2007 has set as its goal "a knowledge centre in every village". Over a million people need to be trained in coming years to run rural knowledge centres and kiosks.

In order to support this effort, Mission 2007 partners and telecentre.org will undertake a joint initiative aimed at increasing their capacity to deliver training for knowledge centre managers.

This project is being operated under the umbrella of Mission 2007, a coalition of more than 150 organisations committed to dramatically growing the number of telecentres in India over the coming years. Mission 2007 partners will play a central role in the development and delivery of this project. During the pilot, they will lead the curriculum development process. Later on, they will take on full management and leadership of the initiative.

Assuming a national policy commitment and an enabling environment, the success of telecentres depends on a range of important factors which include sustainability, community relevance, community partnerships and business plan-

ning, to cite just a few. Often mentioned but largely undeveloped is the training associated with telecentre management, an issue that relates to all of the issues mentioned.

India is at the cutting edge when it comes to the development of entrepreneurial telecentre initiatives. The Training Commons will enable the growth of telecentres in India and will play a central role in the delivery of the effort. During the pilot stages, where attention has to focus on training and capacity development, the partners will play a lead role in the curriculum development process. Later on, they will take on full management and leadership of the initiative.

Building on the experience of existing initiatives, the Training Commons curriculum includes sections on Entrepreneurship, Grassroot Communication, Infomediary Skills and Grassroot Marketing.

Telecentre.org is a web portal dedicated exclusively to promoting the telecentres, their needs, their voices and their agenda. Telecentre.org, which is managed by IDRC, has thus formed the hub from which the development of training materials will be managed.

Partners of Training Commons

Telecentre.org has pioneered the idea of developing training/course modules that would enable dissemination of relevant information to the community through trained telecentre operators or service providers. The managers of telecentres would be selected from among the local communities and they need to acquire the multifarious skills that are needed to run the telecentres efficiently.

The training/course modules are developed from the real-life experiences of development sector organisations that have exposure or have set up and run telecentres in different parts of India. Through the training/course modules the 'students' (people from the local communities) are assisted in developing a variety of skills that they will draw upon to deliver results on the ground.

The curriculum/course development team is responsible for:

- Gathering content in its jurisdiction, and
- Developing and writing documents for the course.

The four modules prepared were: Grassroots Marketing, Grassroots Communications, Info-mediary Skills and Entrepreneurship.

The partners in the training and capacity-building effort are all

acknowledged as experienced institutions in their respective fields. They included:

Nasscom Foundation (NF)
www.nasscomfoundation.org

Nasscom Foundation is the social development arm of Nasscom (National Association of Software and Service Companies), the internationally recognised trade body of the Indian IT industry. Based in New Delhi, it was created as part of the vision of an early Nasscom leader, Dewang Mehta, who felt: "It is not important for everybody to sit on a computer and tap the keyboard; what is important is to bring the benefits of information technology to the common people of the country."

NF has two cross-cutting functional areas – ICT for Development and corporate social responsibility (CSR) within the IT industry. With respect to ICT for Development, NF is engaged in a number of multifaceted yet intensive initiatives, which leverage the power of partnerships. NF plays the role of a catalyst in bringing together implementing agencies, industry, government bodies and people at the grassroots level for integrated develop-

NASSCOM
FOUNDATION

ment boosted through the use of ICT. NF believes that ICT helps underserved populations access information, services and opportunities that collectively build their capacities to realise their full potential.

Many of Nasscom's member companies have been engaged in CSR initiatives. NF intends to become a catalyst, encouraging members to do more, capturing best practices, and promoting and assisting their replication. In addition, NF aims to facilitate and strengthen the CSR space to a wider understanding of contribution to development and towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Given its domain expertise, Nasscom has contributed the manual on Info-Mediary Skills to the Training Commons partnership.

**Development Alternatives (DA)
/ TARahaat**
www.devalt.org
www.tarahaat.com

The vision of the organisation is to empower people to achieve their aspirations by using ICT.

The DA Group comprises Development Alternatives and its associate organisations in India: Technology and Action for Rural Advancement (TARA), TARAhaat Information and Marketing Services Ltd, TARA Nirman Kendra and Decentralised Energy Systems India Ltd. The DA Group, a pioneering sustainable



development enterprise, was established in 1983 as a not-for-profit research, development and action organisation.

Over the years, the DA Group has built up several initiatives and networks at the field level in different parts of the country. Its partnerships, established with more than 500 non-governmental organisations and rural entrepreneurs across Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar and Maharashtra, will be of particular interest to the VRC Programme.

TARAhaat was established as a social enterprise dedicated to bridging the digital divide between rural communities and the mainstream economy. It provides village communities, particularly the youth, access to information and livelihood opportunities comparable to those available in urban India. A broad portfolio of services is offered through TARAkendras – the community knowledge-cum-business centres. Initial focus has been on vocational training, community development, information and e-governance through a host of programmes customised for local communities (for example, TARAchetna, TARAMeljol). The next generation of services focusses on the promotion of micro and small

enterprises through a unique Enterprise Development Programme.

A sustainable business model underpins the entire network. Customers pay a fair price while multiple revenue streams ensure financial viability of each TARAKendra. The unique franchising model ensures that the bulk of the profits reside with the local franchisee, accelerating the growth of the centre. A robust training and support structure ensures the operational success of franchisees. At the same time, the social enterprise model ensures a balance between revenue and delivery of social services.

TARAhaat's contribution as a partner to the Training Commons initiative has been in the development of the manual on Grassroots Marketing.

World Corps India (WCI)
www.worldcorpsindia.org

WCI is a non-governmental and non-profit organisation with a mission of "training young people worldwide to become effective business and social entrepreneurs, community leaders and global citizens. World Corps India offers training to young people – called World Corp Professionals (WCPs), in the age group of 18-35, mostly from rural areas – to help in poverty alleviation, environ-



mental protection and sustainable development, and global peace building."

The manual on Entrepreneurship has been contributed by World Corp India.

PLAN International India
www.plan-international.org

Founded 70 years ago, Plan is one of the oldest and largest international development agencies in the world. Plan works in 49 developing countries across Africa, Asia and the Americas.



Plan directly supports more than 15,00,000 children and their families, and indirectly supports an estimated further 90,00,000 people who live in communities that are working with Plan.

Plan is independent, with no religious, political or governmental affiliations. Plan works with children, their families, communities, organisations and local governments to implement programmes at the grassroots level in health, education, water and sanitation, income generation and cross-cultural communication.

The manual on Grassroots Communications is the contribution of Plan International to the Training Commons initiative.

The Curriculum Development Process

At the best of times, with a wealth of background information available, curriculum development is a difficult process. Drafting the curriculum and writing the content in a training package of this kind is even more difficult as several questions emerge, causing considerable confusion. There are a number of questions that need to be answered even before the process of development and writing begins. For instance: **Who are the audience?**

- Who are the people targeted to be the beneficiaries of this training/course?
- What and how much do they know of the subjects?
- What do they want to learn?
- Why do they want to learn new or more things?
- What are their responsibilities?
- What is their preference for a media for learning?

We know at this stage that telecentre managers will not come from distant cities and universities or have advanced degrees and training. We know that managers of telecentres will be from among the local communities and, based on their aptitude, they would be interested in a small business, which could include a telecentre. Other questions also came up.

- What should be considered as 'knowing'? Should it be a behavioral issue, or should it be

considered as an integrated procedure of knowledge and the mind?

- Who shall control the selection and distribution of knowledge?
- How is the control of knowledge linked to the existing and unequal distribution of power, goods and services in society?
- What is the worth of knowledge?
- How shall the subject-specific knowledge be made accessible to people?
- How do we link the subject knowledge to personal experience? And how do we 'artfully' design curriculum?

As these questions were answered, others emerged, causing some confusion.

- What are modules expected to achieve?
- What is the usefulness of the modules?
- What do the modules want the learners to learn and think?

As a result of all the concerns that emerged, a process of curriculum development and training/course modules was initiated, based on the real-life experience of people who are in the development sector and have the necessary exposure, or have set up and run telecentres in different parts of India. The training/course modules have necessarily to be practical as the 'students' (that is, people from the

local communities) would be assisted in developing a variety of skills that have to deliver results on the ground. So the choice of developing these training/course modules naturally leads to people who have actually worked with local communities in the context of a development programme.

This is why different partners have taken on the responsibility of developing content in a complete module. Each module developer has its domain knowledge and expertise as well as its own style of presentation, and this reflects in the way the modules are written.

Another question that also emerged is of the kind of structure the package should have. Should it be a course that can be offered through any one of India's open universities? Or should the manuals be designed in such a way that each stands alone, but links to each other so that the telecentre manager can refer to and use individual manuals and sections?

To provide both unity and structural independence, each subject is treated as a module. Each module (manual) has an introduction; each chapter has clearly stated learning objectives, with the knowledge and skills needed, and those to be learned, clearly identified.

Course/training development process

The process of course development included:

- Formation of curriculum/course development teams
- A review process
- Field validation
- Authorised use
- Continual updating

The five partners chosen were expected to have expertise in the subject area/course under development, in curriculum planning and design, in pedagogy, in assessment and evaluation. A qualified writer or language editor with excellent oral and written communication skills as well as a background in the subject area was a part of the **curriculum/course development team**. The team was responsible for:

- Gathering and coordinating all relevant research (for example, curricula/subject in its jurisdiction, subject area/course content, learning theory and evaluation tools).
- Developing and writing documents, taking into consideration all relevant research, expertise and module requirements.

The subject/module developers took into consideration many factors, including content and context, examples, language, flow, coherence, relevance, implications of the values, purposes and principles, illustrations, body of the report, illustrative materials,

footnotes/endnotes, PowerPoint presentations, references and bibliography.

Partners met at two **meetings to review** and fine-tune the materials. Expert consultants especially contracted for the task contributed in the two all-partners' meeting held in Delhi with suggestions/inputs towards the curriculum refinement process of the four modules –Grassroots Marketing, Grassroots Communications, Info-mediary Skills, and Entrepreneurship – developed by the partner organisations and also reviewed drafts of the four modules.

The review process included representatives from non-governmental organisations, and communication and development partners as module developers to provide feedback to draft review document. Feedback from review panels was used to improve the document under development.

The material was then handed over to instructional and graphic designers to prepare an attractive layout and design. Their contribution is invaluable because it helps to simplify complex ideas and content and makes the content easy to read and follow.

Now that first versions of the modules are ready, their **field validation** will be undertaken, which will see them used and tested in the real usage environment. Based on input from

telecentre operators/managers, who will be asked to provide feedback on the learning resources, the implementation process and on module upgradation, the necessary improvements will then be carried out on the modules.

Authorised use occurs once the modules have been field tested and revised as necessary. It is then released for authorised use by an institution.

The university offering the course would eventually certify those who undergo the training programme using these modules. In many developing countries, university certification – degrees and diplomas – is thought to be restricted as recognition for some 'intellectual' effort and such certification may be helpful for telecentre operators when they have to interact with funding and other partner organisations in their immediate community and at the state level.

Continual updating will ensure that the module subjects are dynamic; it will reflect the changing demands of society and ensure that the knowledge and skills students acquire remain relevant.

Statement about the Draft Curriculum

What is presented before you is the first version of the curriculum. We are aware that there are shortcomings and weaknesses but these can be corrected, modified and adapted after we receive feedback from you, the users.

The four manuals, each with several chapters, may make you feel that:

- **There is too much information all at once.** To adjust to the amount of information, we recommend that you do one manual and one chapter at a time. Proceed at your own pace, go back and forward in the content until you understand the basic points. Scribble notes and questions you may have on the margins and be sure to send them to us.
- **There are differences in the way each manual is written.** Yes, this is because several partners have worked independently and together and the diversity of experience of the partners is reflected here. That may seem like a drawback, but it is the richness of the experience and the knowledge that makes the manuals so useful.
- **The content is difficult to understand.** There is actually quite a bit of technical knowledge that is general on the one hand and subject-specific on the other. But these are generic skills which will help you, no matter what small business you want to start. The subject-specific skills are also equally necessary. Together we hope that they will enhance your capacities as an information and communication technology service provider.
- **The language is difficult.** Yes, that is true, but efforts are on to translate the manuals and we soon hope that you will have them in your own language.

So, we present these four manuals on different aspects of telecentre management and operation. As time goes by, we hope to provide you with much more specific content in forthcoming manuals.

We consider this work in progress and we hope you will help us to refine and redefine telecentre management and operation through your valuable feedback and comments.

A Background Note and How to Use the Manuals

I hope that this set of manuals can change your life by making it both economically productive and socially and personally meaningful. As a result of the capacity building that this set of manuals enables, you could well be on the forefront of what is known today as the knowledge society. You can also become a leader and a bridge in your community as you become the link between your village and the world outside. You can become a job creator instead of simply a job seeker.

Many famous people today talk about 'thinking globally and acting locally'. When you finish this course, this really is what we hope you will be able to do. That is, the world becomes the stage that you reach for, but you do it in the comfort of your own home, your village, community and, in fact, without having to spend large sums of money for travel.

Is this possible? Yes, indeed. How? Let us see.

Before I begin to take you on a journey that could very well change your life, I think it is necessary that we talk a little about our recent history and where we started, where we are going, and how we will reach there.

Where it all started

All the countries in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa became independent after World War II, starting with India and Pakistan in 1947. This process of new countries emerging from colonisation into independence continued for about three decades. The newly independent countries found themselves in conditions of great poverty and underdevelopment. It is not surprising that they began to look around for the best tools at their disposal to bring the benefits of development to their citizens.

Look around you in your home. You

will probably see a radio and a television set. You will also perhaps see a telephone, mobile or landline. If you are very lucky, you may see a computer. At the same time or another in the past, all these media which are so much part of our lives today were new to the country, to the village and community. And when they were new, they were used as much for simple communication and entertainment as for education and knowledge. There was not much known about them then but today we have the experience of knowing what these media can do for our lives. These are what are known as 'information and communication

technologies' (ICTs). We can further subdivide them into: (a) broadcast, that is, audio and video such as radio and television; and (b) digital technologies, such as computer and web-based technologies. We know today, from decades of experience, that these technologies have the power to transform societies. A good example is of how information technology (IT) and IT-enabled services have changed the face of Indian industry, making India one of the fastest growing economies in the world today.

The landmarks

When the famous science fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke, who currently lives in Sri Lanka, wrote in 1945 about wireless broadcasting¹, one could not think about satellites and computers and the changes these would bring about in our lives within a short span of 50 years. But, as early as 1955, India began using radio to bring the benefits of new knowledge to farmers in the villages. This effort

was known as the Radio Rural Forum. Farmers in villages would gather around the village radio and listen to programmes on agriculture. They would then discuss the information they had gathered, clarify their doubts through letters to the programme makers, get answers, try out new farming techniques. What is important is that the use of radio in the 1950s and television in the 1960s through the Krishi Darshan programmes had a very important role in bringing about the green Revolution and self-sufficiency in food. Radio became a common village resource that people turned to.

In a widely quoted paper in 1964, Dr. Vikram Sarabhai, then head of India's Space Research Organisation, outlined India's perspective on the use of communication technologies for development purposes, and stated² that:

"...in any developing country, one of the prime ingredients of development is the dissemination of information: information about new fertilisers, seeds, insecticides, cropping patterns, and so on. The process of education is basically related to an information dissemination process... mass media are clearly the main component in this system of information transfer... therefore, television is ideal as a medium to convey information and news to the masses of population, on whom such an audio-visual medium would have a profound effect."



Farmers have long benefitted from the adoption of communication technologies such as radio and television.

He further added that India's national goals involved:

“...leapfrogging from a state of economic backwardness and social disabilities attempting to achieve in a few decades a change which has historically taken centuries in other lands. This involves innovation at all levels.”

Sarabhai's perspective has formed the basis for many of India's experiments in the use of communication technologies for development and is, in fact, fundamental to our understanding of telecentres and also regarding what these manuals are all about.

It was also in the 1960s that scientists at the Indian Space Research Organisation began working out the details of the most ambitious experiment in the use of technology for development – the Satellite Instructional Television Experiment, or SITE as it came to be known, which became operational in 1975-76.

SITE has remained to this day the major watershed in technology applications in education and development. No one had tried such a massive experiment before and people wondered if it could succeed. A giant leap from zero to satellite communications, SITE was the first and largest experiment in human communication. Conducted in six clusters in six Indian states, SITE covered 2,600 villages in varying degrees of backwardness.

“...in any developing country, one of the prime ingredients of development is the dissemination of information.”

Vikram Sarabhai, 1969



On a community television set in villages that had never seen a television before, villagers could sit around and could now see news, educational and recreational programmes. SITE opened a window to the world. Today, the fact that there is television in every corner of the country is a natural consequence of the SITE experiment.

Where we are today

Major innovations and changes were taking place in the 1980s, quite separate from each other, but which together have transformed the way in which we communicate with each other and the rest of the world. This was the synthesis of the satellite with the computer, of sound and picture and convergence (coming together in such a way that many media fuse seamlessly into one powerful blended medium that is available on one simple machine). We now call these new media ICTs and *digital media* and **telecentres** (to which I will familiarise you later in this introduction and which you will learn to set up, manage and run as successful small enterprises). They are one way in which new technologies



The new digital media are potentially more open, and can be owned and operated by an individual or social group.

have been used, and you can see this in a kiosk in your own village.

Seeing the opportunities offered by these new technologies, countries and governments opened up the field of telecommunications and dramatically changed our understanding of the world (in much the same way as the telegraph, telephone, automobile, radio and television had transformed earlier societies). So suddenly, within the short span of a decade, we have not just public call offices and STD booths but mobile phones and Internet cafés – available at a very low price in rural settings.

What are these new media or technologies that are transformationally different? In older media such as print, radio and television, regulation, shaping of content and delivery methodologies essentially remained one-way media and in public hands. As listeners and viewers, we heard

and saw only what others chose to show us. Essentially, they were slow and were also sensitive to geography and distance and costly. Sometimes their quality was poor. The new digital media are potentially more open and can be owned and operated by an individual or social group. Ownership of the media now has shifted to the hands of the person who can control the remote or the mouse or the mobile phone and who, therefore, can choose the purpose for which the medium is being used. At the same time, the user can define the medium in terms of one's own needs and wants. Everybody, rich or poor, can receive the same quality of information anywhere and anytime.

Today, all over the world, in both developed and developing societies, ICTs are seen as powerful tools to help the poor, those most in need of information and knowledge but least able to afford it, to have access to and benefit from the knowledge that can be reached through these ICTs. One such facility, which brings everything together, is the telecentre, which can be located even in a remote or inaccessible community.

Recognising this, several countries including ours have launched new programmes to create such knowledge resources in every village. In India, this effort is called Mission 2007; in Bangladesh, it is termed Mission 2011.

The telecentre

Like its predecessors (the community radio set and the community television), the telecentre can be a common village resource, that is, a facility that will benefit everyone in the village. A current definition of a telecentre³ is:

A telecentre is a community centre that offers shared access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) for the purpose of community level development and poverty reduction. Telecentres are being promoted as an answer to the problems of the digital divide because of which large sections of society do not enjoy access to ICTs and are therefore at risk of being excluded from the socio-economic benefits that such access brings. Typically, telecentres contain computers connected to the Internet, along with a variety of other technologies, and they are located in communities where domestic ownership of such

equipment is not affordable. They are staffed by people who help the community use the equipment for a range of purposes, but especially for improving its well-being, in terms of better education, health care, agriculture, and enterprise opportunities. Telecentres are known by different terms such as telecottages, community e-centres, multipurpose community telecentres, multimedia community centres, village information shops, info-kiosks and community knowledge centres. Telecentres are, by their development focus, distinguished from cyber cafés, which exist only for profit, without concern as to how the technology is used.

In other words, telecentres can be seen as strategically located facilities providing public access to ICT-based services and applications. There are many varieties of telecentres in the world, but almost all telecentres seek to address the issues of access by providing technology, developing human capacity and encouraging social and economic development. Depending on the size and extent of the services provided, these centres are usually operated by a manager and a small number of staff who may be part-timer workers or volunteers.



A telecentre is a community centre that offers shared access to ICTs for the purpose of community level development and poverty reduction.

They do not exist for profit, although they do need to

have the resources to sustain themselves.

There are many types of telecentres. In some places, telecentres may provide simple basic services such as phone calls and faxes, photocopying and printing, typing services, and maybe some book-keeping for very small businesses. Such telecentres have a lot of potential for becoming successful commercial operations and for developing into multipurpose telecentres where a variety of services can be provided.

Some may be cyber cafés where a person could access the Internet. These also have very good potential for developing into multipurpose telecentres and providing valuable community service, and also be commercially successful.

In other places, they may be 'info-shops' where a person could access information for a price, for example, agri-clinics for agriculture information. e-Chaupal is one such effort funded by a private company. Others may be small institutes providing training in computer and word processing, while also providing access to the Internet.

Still others may be providing government services, that is, a place where one can not only access government information such as property records, but also pay taxes and bills. Such e-government facilities in villages can save a lot of time, money and energy for villagers while also being commercially viable for the telecentre operator. One such successful initiative is the e-Seva project in Andhra Pradesh.



Top left: Villagers at an e-Chaupal in Rajasthan; and two views of an e-Seva Kendra in Korba, Chattisgarh. These are two of many forms that a telecentre could adopt.

And finally, there is a model that can be run successfully as a small micro enterprise by an entrepreneur in a village. Read the following quotation from *The New York Times*⁴:

...One such public-minded civil servant is Amit Agarwal, the creator of the model computer project in the state of Madhya Pradesh. It is Mr. Agarwal who has taken power out of the hands of bureaucrats and given it to village entrepreneurs. Mr. Agarwal, 29, the chief executive of the Dhar district council, said he believed that while low-level bureaucrats might be tempted to demand bribes, an entrepreneur being paid to provide the records retrieved on a computer would be more inclined to work hard. He has set up a model project in his district, one of India's poorest, where young men have a franchise from the state to distribute daily crop prices and commonly needed state records for a small fee. Mr. Agarwal predicts that revenue-generating computer projects like his will spread more quickly than those that depend on scarce state funds. "This is the paternalistic welfare model that the country has been slowly discarding over the past decade as not having worked," Mr. Agarwal said.

Since the project was set up in January, 22 villages have each bought a computer, a modem, a printer and a battery for \$1,500 with their own money and agreed to provide a small booth to house

the setup. In each case, the state then picked a young person from the village with at least a 10th-grade education to operate the computer and gave him a franchise to sell information from the state's computer network. For 25 to 35 cents, villagers buy printouts of documents that they might have spent days trying to get from local bureaucrats: land records, caste certificates and proof of income, among others. For another 25 cents, any citizen can send a complaint to the state by e-mail – my pension didn't arrive, my child's teacher didn't show up, my village hand pump doesn't work – and the state guarantees a reply within a week. And for 10 cents, a farmer can get a printout listing the prices of any agricultural commodity sold at surrounding markets.

At Bagdi village, wizened, sun-beaten farmers filed in to collect the day's price lists for wheat, garlic and whatever other crops they had to sell. They all said their knowledge of the rates improved their negotiating leverage with middlemen. "If the price he offers suits me, I'll sell it to him," said Satya Narayan Khati, who grows wheat on his three acres. "Otherwise, I'll take it to market myself." In Bagdi, the computer booth is operated by Deepak Patel, 20, a gaunt, lanky son of a farmer. Mr. Patel still helps milk the cows and bring in the harvest, but he prefers his computers. After just a few months, he is already making

a good living from the long hours he spends selling printouts. When people come in to e-mail a complaint to the state, Mr. Patel writes out their grievances for them, since most residents of the district are illiterate. In his booth, as in every computer centre visited in Madhya Pradesh and Pondicherry, children crowd in, clamouring for a chance to play on this machine that their elders call a magic box. "It's better than farming," Mr. Patel said. "Through this you feel connected to the rest of the world."

This is the model we are promoting through these manuals. That is because, although many different models for telecentres exist, until and unless they are run as a business enterprise which also serves a major local need, telecentres will not survive for long on funding either from international aid agencies, government support or national or local non-governmental organisations.

There are many global examples of both successes and failures in telecentres. Many of the failed

Essentials for the Success of a Telecentre

To succeed, a telecentre must change, as suggested by experts⁵:

FROM

An unrecognised resource

Low usage

A narrow focus on technology

A few services

An optional service

Individual sites

A backroom or add-on service

A drop-in centre

Government business done

Top-down management

TO

The first point of call

Significant usage

A very broad focus on service delivery

A wide range of services and partnerships

A service needed by the community

A network

A centre for collocation of services

A service and information centre

Government services provided in association with the community

An essential service

models are in developing countries. When we look carefully at the reasons, we find that we can identify some as a result of a lack of knowhow about:

- **Financing and sustainability**

- How to raise resources, marketing and business planning, pricing, competition.

- **Ownership and operating models**

- How to set up and operate telecentres as a useful community resource.

- **Human resources** – Many telecentre managers and staff are not appropriately paid for their work. The telecentres typically rely heavily on volunteers. Both factors lead to difficulties in motivating and retaining staff.

- **Training and capacity-building**

- Managers and staff are often not trained in advanced operations. They have to struggle with a lack of good knowledge about different aspects of managing a telecentre while, at the same time, learning about different aspects such as entrepreneurship and marketing, community mobilisation, and information and communication skills.

organisations for their daily operation and survival. While this is a good model to follow in the beginning, there is always a problem when such external support, whether by way of grants or technical assistance, ends. The telecentre can easily collapse without the external support. For this reason, it is increasingly necessary that the telecentre operate like a small business, run by a local initiative to succeed. A person in a village or small community who is setting out to start a small business needs a lot of specialised support, whether it is for maintaining accounts or for building up a customer base. For this reason, it is clear that the kind of training support that is needed is 'knowledge and knowhow'. The right knowledge can make the difference between success and failure. One international expert⁶ has argued that "without knowledgeable, community-oriented telecentre staff, who really want to share the tools and capacity of the information society, no telecentre can hope to succeed."

What kind of training support do telecentres and telecentres operators need? This is a good question which merits serious consideration from all of us.

For many years, telecentres were supported either by international agencies or non-governmental

An Introduction to the Manuals

These manuals will address various questions in four main areas – grassroots marketing; grassroots communications, entrepreneurship, and info-mediary skills (managing telecentres). The manuals will seek to provide valuable information that will help both trainers of telecentre managers and the managers themselves learn about different aspects of telecentre management, to become more knowledgeable, and to gain some specialised skills so that they can make a success out of the telecentres they run.

Before describing the manuals to you, there is need for some explanation. As you read through the manuals and do the exercises suggested, you may wonder about the following issues:

- There is a lot of general information and skills that are imparted. This is indeed correct and quite a lot of knowledge support given in the manuals can be applied to almost any small business, not just telecentres. We recognise that in providing you with general knowledge, we may have omitted some specialised knowledge, for instance, about how to cost a telecentre. That is true, but we have to recognise that different places have different costs; costs of technologies can change from time to time. And therefore, the manuals show you more than just how to cost a telecentre and you can use the knowledge for business efforts other than that of the telecentre alone.
- Is the manual meant for a specialist or a teacher or is it meant for you? We feel that it could be of benefit to both the trainer and the telecentre operator who, we hope, in turn, will become a trainer in due course.
- This looks like a course for which a certificate is given. You are right. The manuals have been designed in such a way that they can serve you well just by giving you important knowledge and at the same time they can be part of a course. The long-term objective is to make them a part of a course that you can take and get some certification for.
- There is too much technical knowledge. Perhaps this is correct, but technical knowledge is needed to run a small business and we felt that by not putting in the technical knowledge we would be leaving out important information that you need or could use.
- The language is hard and difficult to follow. Yes, this is possible. We recognise that this may be a weakness and, therefore, I suggest two things. Let us know as soon as you can what you have found difficult and when revising these manuals in the

next version, we will take care of your concerns. Also, keep a dictionary with you and look up the words you find difficult. By doing this, you will understand the language and the terms used and, side-by-side, your language skills will improve considerably.

There are four main manuals which are part of this package. They can be used independently or as part of a larger package. I would suggest you follow the order in which I describe them to you here. It is, however, necessary that you go through and understand all the content in all four manuals.

Grassroots Marketing

The module on Grassroot Marketing has seven chapters or subsections designed to explain, in simple terms, the principles of marketing. When anyone sets up a small business, he or she does so in the expectation that it will be a success and that it will not only pay for its costs of operation, but also allow for a profit. That is why businesses, small and big, are run and there is

no reason why a telecentre should not be run as a small business.

To do so, however, one needs to learn the basics of marketing, that is, understand the concepts of marketing; what the differences are between urban and rural markets; and what grassroots marketing is. One also needs to understand who our customers will be; how we will know their needs for services; what our telecentre, as a business, will provide for them; how we will budget our telecentre and how we will price our services; how we will manage accounts; what a marketing campaign is; how we will deliver our services; and how we will determine if we are successful.

Each chapter is important and you should complete all of them in sequence, but blend them with your own knowledge and experience of your own community. This will make the content more relevant and immediately useful.

Grassroots Communications

Another module is on Grassroot Communication, where we go beyond what courses colleges offer and explain not just basic principles of communication but what it means to communicate in a rural setting. Remember, rural conditions are very different from urban settings and one has to be creative, even if radio, television and other urban media are present.





A telecentre is essentially a tool that can be used effectively by the operator or manager to both communicate with the community and to also help the community to reach the outside world. This makes the telecentre operator a bridge and a link and makes work extremely satisfying. Imagine how happy you will feel if you could help a villager access the knowledge of a doctor in a city for urgent medical treatment, without spending a lot of money and time, simply by using your telecentre.

In this module, we help you to learn not just about how to communicate, but also provide you with the knowledge and skills to help you write better, to take photographs, to create comic strips, make small radio programmes and even use your computers to make small digital stories. In many ways, when you combine these skills with the knowledge of the rural community that you already possess, you will be well ahead of your urban counterparts. And you will also learn the skills to earn additional income through your creative activities.

Each chapter is important, learn and practise the skills because only practice can make you perfect. Do not be afraid to make mistakes because mistakes are part of learning, and in a digital setting, these can be easily corrected.

Entrepreneurship

This manual, which introduces you to the relevant knowledge and skills, is very important. In Indian languages, the term '*antarprerana*' or inner drive is sometimes seen as the key motivating factor for success. Many well-known people – such as Dhirubhai Ambani, who established the Reliance group of companies, or Subhash Chandra, the founder of the Zee Television Network – were people from rural backgrounds and it was their inner drive to succeed that motivated their actions.

Inner drive and a desire for achievement is important, but it is equally essential that we understand what knowledge and skills we need to help us to start a new ICT enterprise. We should also know how we can identify these



skills within ourselves, and the pitfalls and precautions that one has to take when establishing a new business.

When it comes to a special effort such as a telecentre, we need to learn how to develop a business idea, do a quick market survey and create a business plan that can be used to find initial funding support for our efforts. We also need to know and learn how to be a leader, how to motivate our staff, and how to make our small telecentre business grow.

Info-mediary Skills

As a telecentre operator, you will be a mediator or a go-between of information and knowledge. In other words, you will help your village community to access information using the telecentre. You would have to understand their requirements, find the information they need and provide it to them. For this, you would have to understand the role of an info-mediary, develop some special personality traits, learn about information and communication technologies, and also how to use information within your community.

The chapters in this manual will take you step by step through the process. This chapter is specially designed keeping telecentre operators in mind, and without the information provided here, you will not be able to make a success of your telecentre business.



There is a structure for each manual and the chapters within it. There is an introduction to each manual. At the beginning of each chapter within the manual, you will see what the authors are trying to achieve in clearly stated objectives, and you will be able to check your own progress against those.

In addition, there are boxes which contain examples, additional information and tips and suggestions to help you understand the content. Read the text and also the boxes which provide further explanations. Drawings, pictures and charts guide and help you along.

At the end of the chapter is a summary of main points covered. You may also find a glossary of defining terms. In addition, you will find a set of self study exercises and questions to help you check for yourself that you have understood the chapter. Take all of these helpful hints seriously. If you find you cannot answer a question, go back to the text where it was explained and try again.

Don't give up.

An Invitation to Participate

We invite you, as individuals who are interested in setting up telecentres and as organisations that will help grassroots telecentre operators and managers to access training, to participate in this effort. You could, at the simplest, go through the manuals and provide us valuable feedback on how we could improve the materials and make them more relevant, how we could increase access to this learning provided through the manuals

As an institution, you may want to offer the material in the manuals as a course. We welcome your engagement and would like to work with you on making that possible.

As a non-governmental organisation, you may want to use the manuals as training materials. We encourage you to do so as it is one of the major objectives of the Training Commons initiative. At the same time, we request you to send us the feedback that you receive from your trainees and your own comments. We are particularly interested in any gaps or missing elements you may find as these can be addressed by all of us partners. This will help us improve the manual in the next version.

So please use the manuals in any way you wish, and do get back to us. We value your joining us in the effort to make the telecentre movement a success and in helping to make a difference in your community or village.

Endnotes

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Prof. Usha Vyasulu Reddi

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Her strength is in the cross-cutting sectors of education and gender, and the use and application of information and communication technologies for development.

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Mission 2007 partners



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Telecentre Management Training Manual
Grassroots Marketing

Version 1 (prepared by Mission 2007 partners)

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Contents

■ 4

Concept of Grassroot Marketing

Marketing is an integral part of any enterprise. To develop a strong understanding of marketing, it is important that one must know the fundamental concepts and terms used in marketing such as 'product' and 'service', the difference between the two, the concept of marketing mix, the 4Ps of product marketing and the 7Ps of service marketing.

■ 18

Concept of a Telecentre

At the grassroots, people do not have access to information and ICT-enabled products and services. A telecentre is a retail delivery point, which offers ICT-enabled products and services to grassroots communities.

■ 26

Who are Your Customers?

Segmentation is all about dividing a market into homogeneous groups of people. It helps marketers decide which segments of the market to focus their marketing efforts on. Consumer behaviour is a complex phenomenon. It deals with what people buy, why they buy, when they buy and from where they buy.

■ 38

How to Reach Your Customers

A photograph is worth a thousand words' is a popular saying. It is very important to master the science and art of photography to use it as a medium of communication at the grassroots level.

■ 50

Personal Selling

From a telecentre's perspective, personal selling assumes great importance. The chapter explains in detail how to plan a sale, the things that one should know about one's customers and the business environment. It also touches upon the basic concepts of body language and its interpretation, which are important for any sales person to know.

■ 60

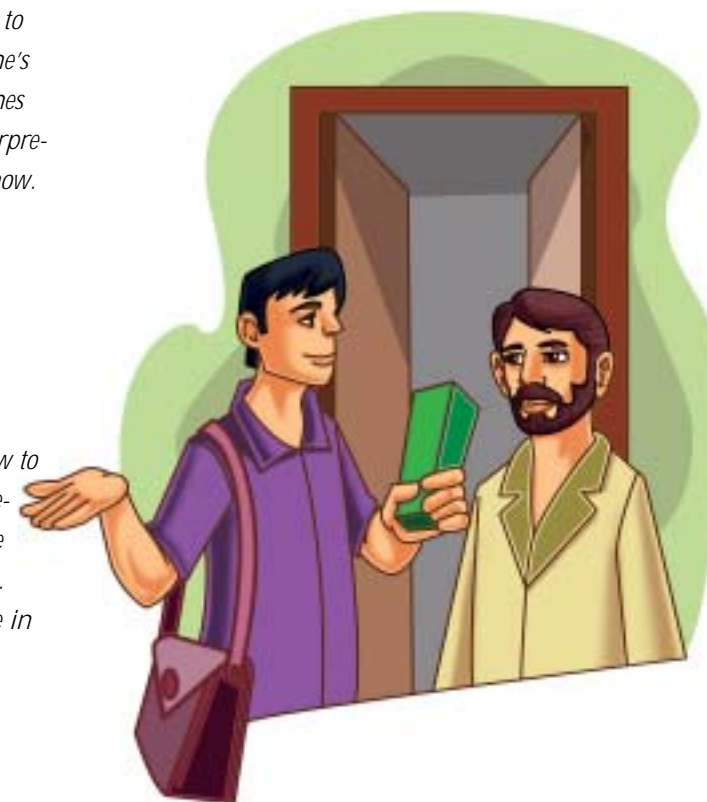
How to Plan for a Successful Promotional Programme

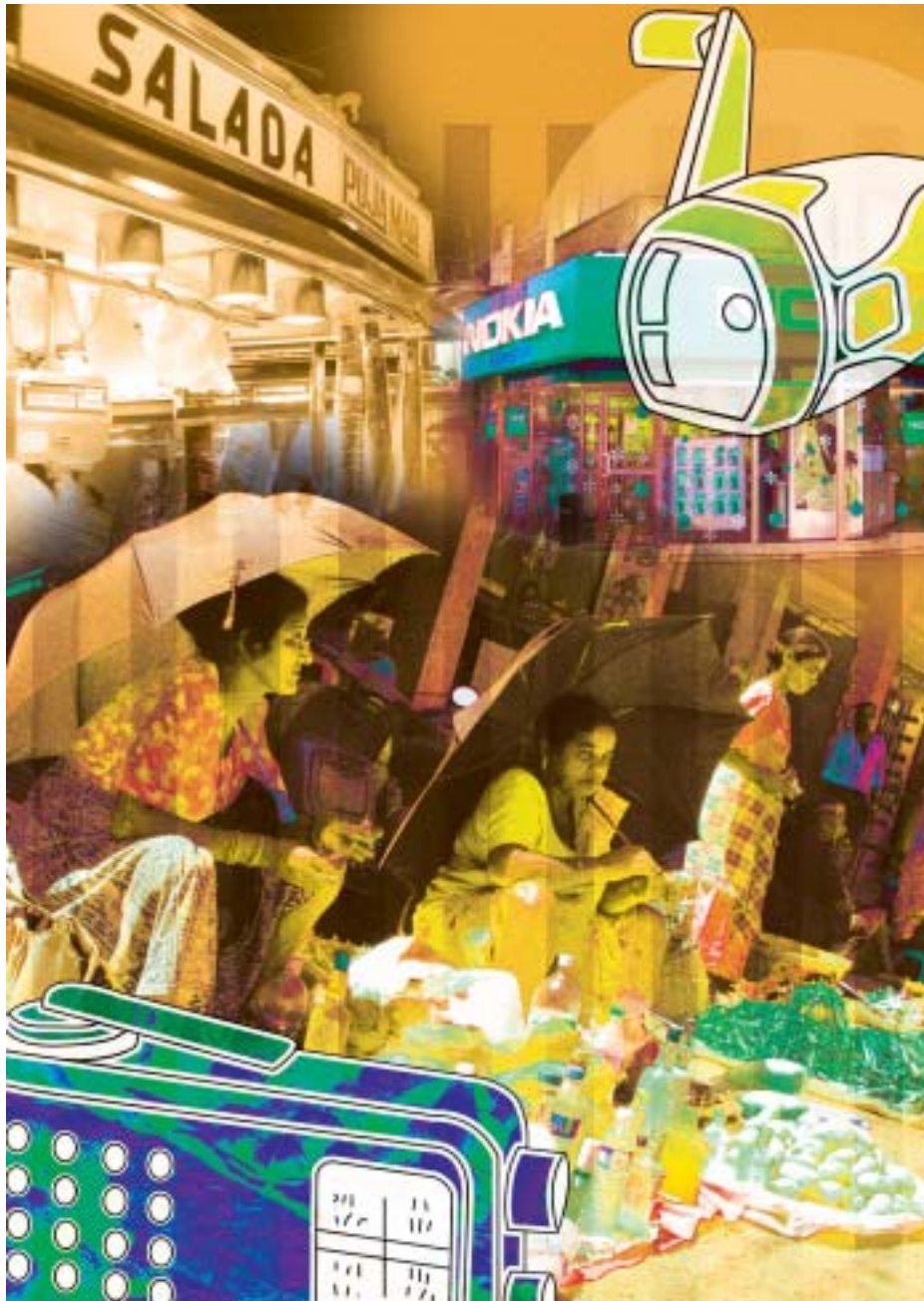
Having learnt and understood the basic concepts of marketing, a telecentre operator should also know how to implement them effectively and measure their effectiveness. This chapter will teach you how to plan effective promotional programmes to pull traffic to a telecentre. You will also learn about a budget and its importance in planning and executing a promotional programme.

■ 66

Effective Delivery of Products and Services

Having well-defined and smooth processes are essential for any organisation to succeed. This is also true for any telecentre. In this chapter, we will discuss about the importance of having smooth processes. The chapter also highlights the importance of qualified and skilled staff in ensuring the smooth delivery of products and services from a telecentre.





Concept of Grassroot Marketing

Marketing is an integral part of an enterprise – business or social. In this chapter, we will learn about the basic concepts of 'marketing' and 'market' from a business perspective. To develop a strong understanding of marketing, it is important that one must know the fundamental concepts and terms used in marketing such as 'product' and 'service', the difference between the two, the concept of marketing mix, the 4Ps of product marketing and the 7Ps of service marketing. Understanding the concepts of need, want and demand is vitally important. From a marketing perspective, it will help us to understand the needs of our customers better. The second half of the chapter deals with the concept of grassroots marketing. It discusses features of rural market as well as the concepts of social marketing and Customer Relationship Management.

By the end of this chapter, you should be able to understand:

- **The concept of a market in business terms**
- **The concept of marketing**
- **The concept of grassroots marketing**
- **Differences between urban and rural marketing**
- **Benefits of grassroots marketing**
- **The concept of social marketing**
- **The concept of Customer Relationship Management**

Marketing is vitally important to the success of any organisation. The concept of marketing is applicable equally to businesses and non-profit organisations. It revolves mainly around the customer.

Simply stated, in marketing, "The customer is king".

However, to understand the concept of marketing, it is important to understand the concept of market first.

Market

The word 'market' is used in a number of ways. In day-to-day usage, we define market as a place where buyers and sellers meet, goods and services are offered for sale, and transfer of ownership of goods occurs. For example, a vegetable market, a cloth market, a furniture market, etc.

However, in business, the term **market** has a slightly different meaning. It refers to a group of customers that is interested in buying a product or a service and also has the resources (money) to buy that product or service. The customers can be people or organisations. Let us understand the term market with the help of an example:

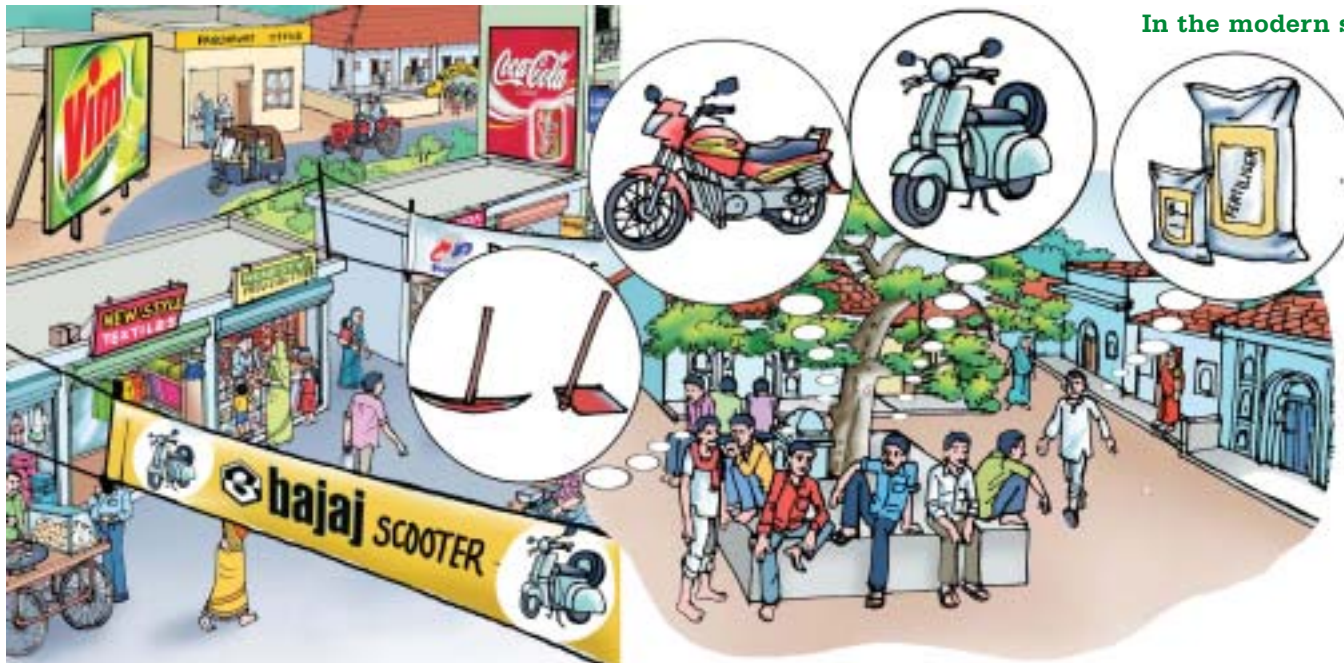
Consider a cluster of five or six villages with a total population of 10000. We can divide this population into various groups according to the types of goods and services they will be interested in buying.

For example:

1. A group of people that wants to buy motorcycles.
2. A group of people that wants to buy pesticides, insecticides, fertilisers and seeds.
3. A group of people that wants to buy jewellery and cosmetic items.
4. A group of people interested in learning a vocational skill to get self-employed.
5. A group of people that wants to buy mobile phones.

Similarly, we can divide the population of 10,000 into many other groups according to the goods or services they will be interested in buying.

The traditional concept of the market was a physical place where merchants would sell their goods to buyers. Specialised markets could exist, such as a vegetables market, a cloth market, etc.



In the modern sense, a market can mean any group of people who are interested in buying a specific kind of product. You can thus have a market for tools, a market for motorcycles, a market for fertiliser, etc.



Can we further divide the groups mentioned above into sub-groups?

Yes, we can.

Let us understand this with the help of group 1 mentioned above – the group of people interested in buying a motorcycle.

All of us know that not all people will be interested in buying the same

type of motorcycle. This is because different people have different preferences and choices, which are governed by their personalities, likes or dislikes, attitudes, lifestyles and capacity to pay.

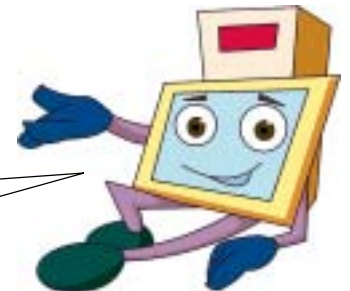
Some people will be interested in buying a Hero Honda motorcycle whereas some will be interested in buying a Bajaj. Similarly, some people will be interested in buying a 100 cc bike, whereas others will be interested in buying a 150 cc bike. And some people will be interested in buying a black colour bike while others will be interested in buying a red colour bike.

Therefore, we can divide people in group 1 – who are interested in buying a motorcycle – into three sub-groups:

- People interested in buying **a bike of a specific company** — Hero Honda/Yamaha/Bajaj/TVS/Suzuki.
- People interested in buying **a bike of a specific engine capacity** — 100cc/125cc/150cc/250cc/350cc.
- People interested in buying **a bike of a specific colour** — black/red/green/blue/silver.

You can see that we have now divided a group of people interested in buying a motorcycle into homogeneous sub-groups. This process of dividing a group into homogeneous sub-groups is called segmentation. Therefore, we can say that a market can be segmented further based on age, income, gender, education, etc. We will study more about segmenting markets in Chapter 3.

The market is the focus of all marketing decisions in an organisation



Marketing

Any person, group or organisation interested in reaching a group of customers with a product or service can be said to be involved in the marketing of that product or service. For example, a cooperative selling seeds and fertilisers can be said to be involved in the marketing of agri-inputs. Similarly, a company that sells tractors can be said to be involved in the marketing of tractors.

Marketing is not just one activity. It is a process consisting of series of activities designed to plan, price, promote and distribute products and services to the target market. For a company to market its product or service successfully to a group of customers, it has to follow a process that involves a series of activities as outlined below:

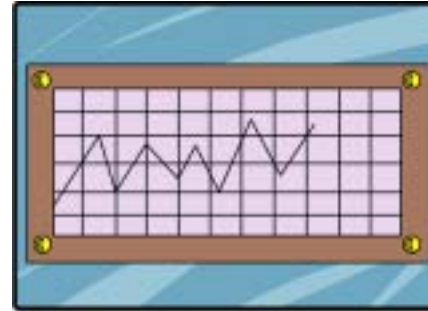
1. Need identification: Identify the need of a group of customers for which the product or service is intended.



2. Product design and development: Design and develop a product or a service as per the need identified.



3. Pricing: Decide an appropriate price of the product or the service so developed.



4. Promotion: Educate the target market through awareness campaigns.



5. Place: Deliver the product or service at a place nearest to the customer.



6. Post-sales service and support: Provide after-sales support and service to the customers if it is required under the product warranty.



For ease of understanding and memory, we can say that marketing of a product basically involves four Ps – Product, Price, Place and Promotion. A combination of these four primary elements determines an organisation's marketing mix or marketing programme. Let us understand what the four Ps really mean:

1. Product: The end-product or service that is to be sold to the customer. It involves understanding the requirements of potential customers (target market) through a market research and developing the right goods and services to be marketed.

2. Price: It involves determining the right base price for the product or service and also deciding on a strategy for discounts to be offered on the base price.

3. Place: It involves making the product or service available to potential customers through a distribution channel of wholesalers and retailers.

4. Promotion: It involves informing, educating and persuading the potential customers (target market) about the product or service. It involves advertising, personal selling and sales promotion.

In addition to the four Ps of product marketing, the marketing of a service involves three additional Ps. These are:

5. Process: A process is a series of steps required to complete a certain task. For example, the process involved in buying a railway ticket or the process involved in withdrawing money from the bank.

6. People: It includes people engaged in providing the service to the customers. For example, the waiter at a restaurant, doctor at a hospital, etc.

7. Physical Evidence: Physical evidence is the material part of a service. Because there are no physical attributes to a service, a customer generally relies on material cues like signages, packaging, process paperwork or documentation, the building itself, the furnishings, etc. Take, as an example, postal services in India. You can easily recall the red-coloured post boxes and the post office dispatch and delivery stamp on the inland letters and postcards.

Therefore, it can be said that marketing is a way to identify the needs of a group of customers, develop products and services according to the needs identified, educate potential customers about these needs and, subsequently, offer them products and services that can satisfy these needs.

Alternatively, we can also define marketing as a process to offer the right product to the right person, at the right time and in the right place.

To get a better understanding of marketing, we need to know the meaning of some important terms used in marketing and the subtle differences in their meanings.

EXERCISE: THE FOUR 'P's

Recall one popular product about which you might have heard of or read of in the recent past. Using the four Ps, can you recall and write down the marketing strategy used for that product?

Name of the product	Name of the company	Strategy/mix			
		1. Product	2. Price	3. Place	4. Promotion

Set 1: Difference between need, want and demand

Example 1

Need: A need can be defined as a state of deprivation. Every child needs to study. This is his need.

Want: The fondness for a particular product or service over its substitute is want. If a child prefers studying computers over mathematics, this becomes his want.

Demand: The ability to pay for your want is demand. The ability to pay for a computer course makes the demand.



Example 2

Need: A farmer ploughs his field to grow crops. This is his need.

Want: He likes a tractor to plough the field. This is his want. He may or may not be able to pay for the tractor.

Demand: The ability to pay for the tractor becomes the demand.



Set 2: Difference between product and service

Product: Anything that is tangible, can be offered by one party (seller) to another (buyer) and whose ownership can also be transferred in the process is a product. For example, a mobile phone, a tractor, motorcycle, TV, soap, etc. All these things can be felt when touched and their ownership gets transferred from the seller to the buyer at the time of purchase.

Service: Anything that is intangible, and whose ownership does not get transferred at the time of sale from the seller to the buyer is called a service. For example, banking services, health care services, educational services, transportation services, communication services etc. Services cannot be touched or felt by hand. They are highly perishable.

Set 3: Difference between marketing and sales

Marketing: Marketing starts with the identification of customers' needs and wants and then develops a product or service that will satisfy that need or want. It has a long-term perspective towards developing new products and services.

Sales: In sales, the approach is short-term and emphasis is more on selling the product to the end-customer. Sales is the culmination of all marketing efforts. It is important to note that sale is the final step in the marketing process during which the end-customer buys the product or the service and makes payment. An organisation gets revenue only when sales take place. At no other point in the entire marketing process does the organisation selling a product or a service earn revenue.

Concept of grassroots marketing

Grassroots marketing involves marketing of products and services in rural markets. It mainly revolves around the rural customer. The customers in rural areas are spread randomly in villages and small towns. Accordingly, the markets in rural India are also spread far and wide and are not linked to each other. The origin of grassroots marketing has emerged due to the presence of small and diverse markets. The grassroots marketing concept holds every market as an individual entity.

The following features characterise rural markets in India:

- Agriculture based economy
- Sparsely populated and geographically scattered villages
- Low per capita income
- Poor infrastructure – roads, electricity, communication and banking,
- No or very limited access to means of information and communication
- Low awareness levels
- Seasonality of demand for products and services

Any organisation that wants to market its products and services to rural customers has to consider these features while designing, developing and marketing its products and services in rural markets.

Let us understand how marketing companies have changed their products or price with the help of a few examples.

EXAMPLE 3: PRODUCT

In India in most urban areas, electricity is available for at least 16 to 18 hours per day on an average, whereas in most parts of rural India, it is available only for six to eight hours per day. Due to this, the sale of TV sets in rural areas was considerably low.

In order to sell their TV sets in rural markets, companies marketing TV sets had to cope with this problem. Therefore, these companies developed specially designed TV sets that can run even on tractor and truck batteries, which are readily available in rural areas. The design of the TV set is such that the power cables from batteries can be directly connected to the TV sets.



EXAMPLE 4: PRICE

In the past companies used to market shampoo in large bottles. Each bottle of shampoo of 200 ml used to cost between Rs. 75 and Rs. 100. As a result, shampoo was beyond the reach of most people both in rural and urban areas as people were unwilling to spend that much money on buying a shampoo. However, they were very much interested in using a shampoo if it were available to them according to their need and willingness to pay. Marketing companies came up with the idea of sachet packs (very small packs of 10-15 ml). The price of these sachet packs was between Rs. 1 and Rs. 5. This has made shampoo affordable to even the poorest of the poor and resulted in a huge surge in the volume of shampoo sold.

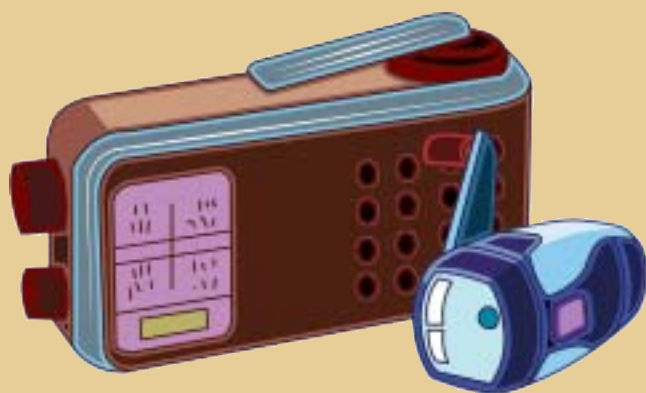


Differences between urban and rural markets

The rural markets behave differently from urban ones. The table below highlights some of the important differences between the characteristics of urban and rural markets:

URBAN MARKETS	RURAL MARKETS
Densely populated	Sparsely populated
Geographically concentrated	Geographically scattered
High disposable incomes	Low disposable incomes
Extensive reach of mass media	Limited reach of mass media
High awareness levels	Low awareness levels
Logistically, easy to serve	Logistically, difficult to serve
Low seasonality of demand	High seasonality of demand

The differences in the characteristics of urban and rural markets influence the marketing mix (a combination of the four Ps) of a company in a big way. The two examples quoted earlier in the chapter clearly illustrate how companies modify their products or prices to fulfill the needs of its customers in rural markets. Let us understand it further with the help of one more example.



EXAMPLE 5: PRODUCT

Torches are mostly powered from electricity or dry batteries (cells). The torches powered by electricity are not of much use in villages in India because of long hours of power cuts. On the other hand, the life of a dry battery (cell) is limited and an ordinary villager cannot afford to buy a pair of dry batteries every two or three weeks. Some electronics goods marketing companies in the last couple of years have recognised this problem and made suitable modifications in their products. For example, Philips has come up with a manually powered wind-up radio and wind-up torch. Both these items do not require either a battery or electricity. Any person who wants to use it can charge it immediately by rotating the manual lever for a couple of minutes.

The table below highlights the differences in the marketing mix of companies in urban and rural markets.

MIX	URBAN MARKETS	RURAL MARKETS
Product	Base product + additional features	Base product that can be used under rural settings
Price	Price is important but quality is even more important	Affordability is the key; high price sensitivity
Place	Malls, showrooms, retail outlets	Retail outlets; network marketers – NGOs and commission agents
Promotion	Use of mass media – TV, radio, publicity events	Wall paintings and road shows through demo vans; <i>haat</i> and <i>mela</i> activities; community radio, comic strips and wall posters

Benefits of grassroots marketing

Most governments across the world have realised that the road to a developed economy goes through the rural areas. In India, more than 65 percent of the population still lives in villages. Successive governments in India over the last couple of decades have taken steps to give a major thrust to rural development. These measures, coupled with normal monsoon rainfall for the last 12 consecutive years, have given a boost to the village economy and have helped rural people improve their per capita income. This has left villagers with more disposable income to spend. As a result, the demand for products and services in the rural sector is growing on an every-day basis.

The growth in demand for products and services in the rural sector has outpaced that for urban markets, where the demand has started slowing down. The growing rural markets, with over 650 million people, have started attracting the attention of rural marketers in a big way. For example, in the last couple of years, mobile phone companies like Bharti (Airtel), Reliance and BSNL have added more customers from small towns and villages than from big cities. Similarly, in 2001-02, the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) sold 55 percent of its policies in rural India.

However, if an organisation has to succeed in rural markets in the long term, it has to ensure the following:

- Recognise the diversity of rural markets.
- Recognise infrastructural bottlenecks – poor road infrastructure, long power cuts and poor communication infrastructure.
- Identify the needs and requirements of customers in rural markets.
- Develop new products and services or customise existing ones according to local demand and make them available at affordable prices or in sachet packs (such as for shampoo and hair oil).
- Use appropriate grassroots marketing methods to educate customers and create awareness about the products and services.



Social marketing

Social marketing is the planning and implementation of programmes designed to bring about social change using concepts from commercial marketing. Social marketing differs from other areas of marketing only with respect to the objectives of the marketer and his/her organisation.

Social marketing seeks to influence social behaviour that benefits society generally. Social marketing is used extensively by various governments all across the globe to fight health-related concerns such as Tuberculosis (TB), Polio, AIDS, smoking, etc. It is also used to create awareness among the general public about issues such as hygiene, public safety, etc.

Example 6

Let us understand the concept of social marketing with the help of an example. The Pulse Polio immunisation campaign, undertaken across the globe to get rid of polio, is the largest international disease control effort ever. Remarkable progress has been made since the initiative began in 1988. The number of global polio cases declined from an estimated 3,50,000 cases to just over 7,000 in 1999.



In India, the number of reported cases of polio declined from 28,757 during 1987 to 3,265 in 1995. In 2000, in spite of improved surveillance, only 186 cases have been detected throughout the country. From a marketing perspective, the Pulse Polio campaign can be summarised as follows:

Organisation: Department of Family Welfare, Government of India.

Target segment: All children below the age of five years.

Product: Polio immunisation doses.

Price: Free of cost but one has to put some efforts and carry his/her child to the nearest health care centre.

Place: Primary health care centres and hospitals. The distribution includes vehicles that carry the medicines from one place to the other and personnel who travel from house to house in order to provide doses to the children.

Promotion:

Electronic media: Amitabh Bachchan can be seen on TV spreading the message of eradicating polio from the country.

Print media: Magazines and newspapers are used for promoting the Pulse Polio Abhiyan. Billboards with social messages can be seen in hospitals and primary health care centres, spreading the message of eradicating polio.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

Customer Relationship Management is a process by which information about the customer's need and behaviour is gathered in order to develop stronger relationships with them. There are many technological components to CRM. A better way to define CRM is that it is a process that will help bring together huge amount of information about customers, sales, effectiveness in marketing and market trends.

Customer Relationship is probably the most important concept that has evolved in recent times. Customers, who are the most valuable asset of any company, can remain loyal if a relationship with them is developed. Developing a relationship, however, is easier said than done.

A good strategy will be to integrate every area of touch point with customers like marketing, sales, customer service, and field support. This is achieved with the integration of the people, process and technology in the business. In short, the CRM process should have some sort of control over the customer life cycle.

BENEFITS OF CRM

- Collects customer-related data.
- Creates detailed profiles of individual customers.
- Develops better communication channels.
- Increases customer satisfaction.
- Provides access to customer account history and order information.
- Identifies new selling opportunities and Increase revenues.
- Enables more effective reach and marketing.
- Improves customer service and support.
- Improves response time to customer requests for information.
- Leads to enhanced customer loyalty.
- Enhances ability to meet customer requirements.

SUMMARY

- The meaning of the term market as defined in day-to-day use is quite different from its meaning used in business.
- In business, market refers to a group of customers that is interested in buying a product or a service and also has the resources (money) to buy that product or service.
- Marketing is not just one activity. It is a process consisting of series of activities designed to plan, price, promote and distribute products and services to the target market. It starts with the identification of customers' needs and wants and then leads to the development of a product or service that will satisfy that need or want.
- Marketing of a product involves four Ps – Product, Price, Place and Promotion. A combination of these four primary elements determines an organisation's marketing mix or marketing programme.
- Grassroots marketing involves marketing of products and services in rural markets. It mainly revolves around the rural customer.
- Grassroots (rural) markets are scarcely populated and are scattered. The infrastructure is not well developed and customer awareness levels are low. Therefore, organisations have to customise their marketing programmes keeping in view the limitations of rural markets.
- Social marketing is used to spread awareness about social issues and bring long-term social changes. Social marketing uses concepts from commercial marketing in planning and implementing social awareness campaigns like AIDS, polio, safe drinking water, etc.
- To develop stronger long-term relationships with customers, it is important to use elements of Customer Relationship Management (**CRM**). **CRM** is a process by which information about the customer's needs and behaviour is gathered. It helps in bringing together information about customers, sales, effectiveness in marketing and market trends.

EXERCISES

- Q1.** What is the business definition of market?
- Q2.** What are the steps of marketing as a process?
- Q3.** What is the difference between marketing and sales? Explain by giving one example.
- Q4.** What is the difference between a product and a service? Give one example each of a product and a service.
- Q5.** What are the four Ps of product marketing?
- Q6.** In addition to the four Ps of product marketing, what are the three Ps of services marketing?
- Q7.** What is grassroots marketing?
- Q8.** What are the important features of grassroots markets?
- Q9.** With the help of a relevant example, explain how organisations vary their marketing efforts (four Ps) in rural settings.
- Q10.** What is the difference between social marketing and commercial marketing? Explain with the help of an example.
- Q11.** Explain the concept of social marketing by taking the example of AIDS.

Multiple Choice Questionnaire

1. In business, market is defined as

- a. A place where buyers and sellers meet
- b. A place where goods and services are bought and sold
- c. A homogeneous group of customers interested in buying a product or a service
- d. Only a
- e. Only a and b

2. Marketing is

- a. An activity
- b. A series of activities
- c. A process
- d. Only b
- e. Only b and c

3. Marketing as a process involves which of the following

- a. Need identification
- b. Product design and development
- c. Product pricing
- d. Product promotion
- e. All of the above

4. Which of the following can be considered as a need?

- a. A child wants to play
- b. A farmer wants to plough his field
- c. A child wanting to play cricket instead of tennis
- d. Only a and b
- e. a,b and c.

5. Which of the following can be considered a want?

- a. A farmer wanting to buy a Mahindra tractor instead of a Ford
- b. A child wanting to study
- c. A child wanting to study computers over history
- d. Both a and b
- e. Both a and c

6. Which of the following is the characteristic of a product?

- a. It is intangible – one cannot feel it by touch or smell
- b. Its ownership gets transferred at the time of sale or purchase
- c. It's non-perishable – can be stored
- d. All of the above
- e. Only b and c

7. Which of the following is the characteristic of a service?

- a. Its ownership cannot be transferred at the time of sale or purchase
- b. It is highly perishable – cannot be stored
- c. It is intangible – cannot be felt by touching
- d. All of the above – a, b and c
- e. Both a and b

8. Which of the following is not a service?

- a. Opening a bank account
- b. Studying in a school
- c. Hiring a taxi
- d. A television
- e. Surfing the Internet at a telecentre

9. Which of the following is/are a characteristic of a rural market?

- a. Low disposable incomes
- b. Geographically scattered markets
- c. Limited reach of mass-media
- d. High seasonality of demand
- e. All of the above

10. Which of the following is/are not a characteristic of rural markets?

- a. Densely populated
- b. Extensive reach of mass media
- c. Low awareness levels
- d. Poor infrastructure facilities – power, roads etc.
- e. Both a and b



Concept of a Telecentre

At the grassroots, people do not have access to information and ICT-enabled products and services. A telecentre is a retail delivery point, which offers ICT-enabled products and services to grassroots communities. In this chapter, we will learn about telecentres, the type of products and service that can be offered from a telecentre. We will also learn about the different stages in the life cycle of a telecentre and the benefits of a telecentre to a community.

By the end of this chapter, you should be able to understand:

- **The need of a telecentre in grassroots communities**
- **What a telecentre is**
- **The products and services that can be offered by a telecentre**
- **The life cycle of a telecentre**
- **The benefits of a telecentre to the community**

The need for telecentres

For centuries, people in rural areas have suffered from lack of development. This is partly because rural communities have never had access to latest information, most modern products and services, expert advisories etc., which are normally available to people living in big cities and metros. Let us understand this with the help of a few cases that ordinary villagers face in their day-to-day life.

Case 1

Even today, simple information on government policies and schemes that should be available and accessible to rural poor is never readily accessible to them. A villager has to set-aside a complete day to travel several miles to the nearest *tehsil* (*taluk*) or district headquarters to access such information and the chances are that he/she has to return empty-handed due to the high-handedness of the bureaucrats.

Case 2

For ages, farmers have been selling their agricultural produce to middlemen at throw-away prices in the absence of any information on the market rates of their produce in nearby markets (*mandis*) at the time of harvest.

Case 3

A villager whose immediate relative is suffering from a critical illness does not have any information about the hospitals that he/she can go to or about the expert doctors he/she can consult to get the patient treated successfully and affordably. In the absence of such vital information, people generally fall prey to quacks.

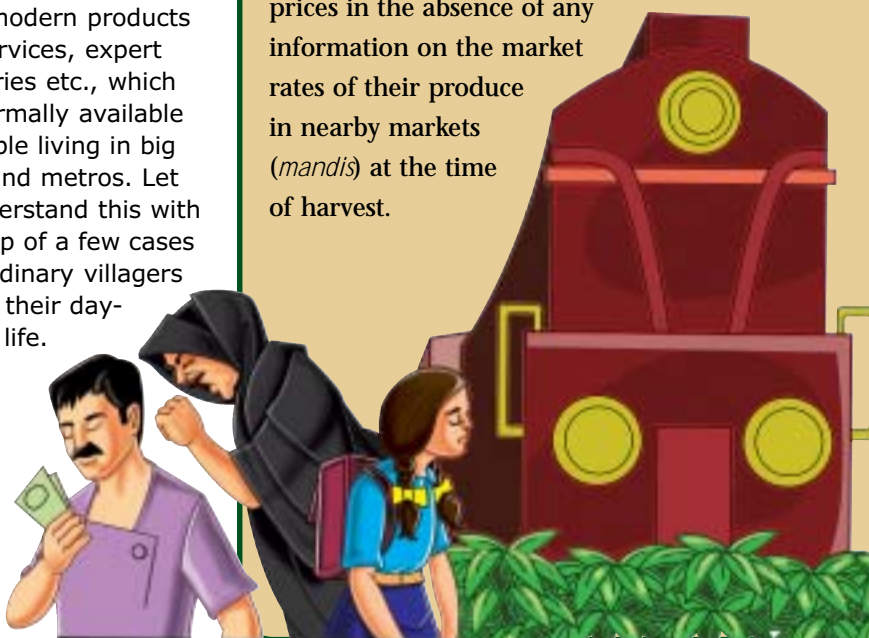
Case 4

In today's scenario, a village girl studying in Std XII does not have any access beyond her school teacher to find solutions to her problems in Math or Physics. Or a college graduate looking for employment does not have any information on potential employers or vocational training opportunities.

Case 5

Parents in a remote village in one of the states of India, say Bihar or Jharkhand, who plan to visit their son situated more than 1,000 km away in Bangalore, will have no information about the available trains and the availability of seats without travelling to their nearest railway station some 40-50 km away.

In all the above cases, it is quite evident that availability of timely information is of essence. In the absence of such critical, easily accessible, real-time information, it is not possible for rural people to make informed decisions. Because of this, they are unable to realise their potential and are forced to migrate to big cities where such facilities are much more readily available.



ICTs — A tool for rural development

In the last one decade, the world has witnessed a revolution in the field of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). ICTs have made a big and positive impact on society, especially on businesses and urban communities. However, the same cannot be said of the rural areas, particularly in the context of the developing countries. This is leading to a 'digital divide'.

Providing ICT services to the rural poor can address problems associated with high levels of illiteracy and poverty, low levels of production, and rural-urban migration. With rural poverty accounting for more than 70 per cent of poverty in India, the importance of making ICT services available beyond city limits is

evidently clear. Rural populations need solutions for their livelihoods, and need to fill information gaps that do not let them mix with global markets. The inherent capacity of ICTs in making relevant information accessible to the remotest of places has strengthened and increased their utility for rural development in India and abroad.

A telecentre offers one of the best means to reach out to the rural masses for the delivery of ICT-enabled services. A telecentre acts as an important link, connecting people to information and basic services. Many successful experiments, which have been reported in the Indian context, have proven that telecentres have been instrumental in expanding the livelihood options of villagers and empowering them with relevant information, tools, goods and services.

What is a telecentre?

A telecentre is a retail delivery point, located in villages and small towns. It makes available information, products and services to people residing in the nearby villages using Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).

A telecentre is equipped with at least one or more computers, has a printer and preferably a scanner. At places where the Internet is available, a telecentre should have an Internet facility. In extremely remote locations where there is no Internet connectivity, a telecentre can operate even without Internet connectivity. Internet connectivity is generally made available through various modes: landline phones, mobile phones, cable, broadband and VSATs¹.

Alternatively, we can also state that a telecentre is the PLACE — one of the four Ps of the marketing mix — from where ICT-enabled services are offered to the customers in rural areas.



Products and services that can be offered from a telecentre

A telecentre can offer a wide array of products and services. A telecentre uses ICTs to deliver most of the services but it might not be true in every case. In some cases, a telecentre might deliver the product or service even without the help of the Internet and computers. The following is the list of services that can be offered through a telecentre. This list is only indicative and not exhaustive.



➤ Agriculture and animal husbandry

- Crop production (seed varieties, irrigation, etc)
- Crop insurance
- Weather reports and disaster warnings
- Animal health and veterinary services
- Production (best practices)

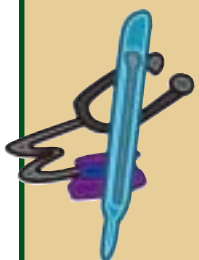


➤ Citizen services

- Grievance redressal
- Schemes and benefits
- Birth and death certificates

➤ Health

- Vaccination schedules
- Ambulance services and transportation
- Information about hospitals and Primary Health Centres
- Blood banks and life-saving drugs
- Doctors' database
- Appointments with doctors



➤ Education and vocational training

- Schools, colleges and universities
- Examination results
- Education abroad
- Schemes and scholarships
- Counselling and FAQs



➤ Land and property

- Land records
- Property transfer and registration



➤ Employment

- Job opportunities
- Self-employment schemes



➤ Panchayat matters

- Utility connection (water, etc)
- Property transfer and registration
- Tax rules and tax payments



➤ Tourism and transport

- Room availability and booking
- Booking of long-distance bus and train tickets
- Information on transport routes, sightseeing destinations

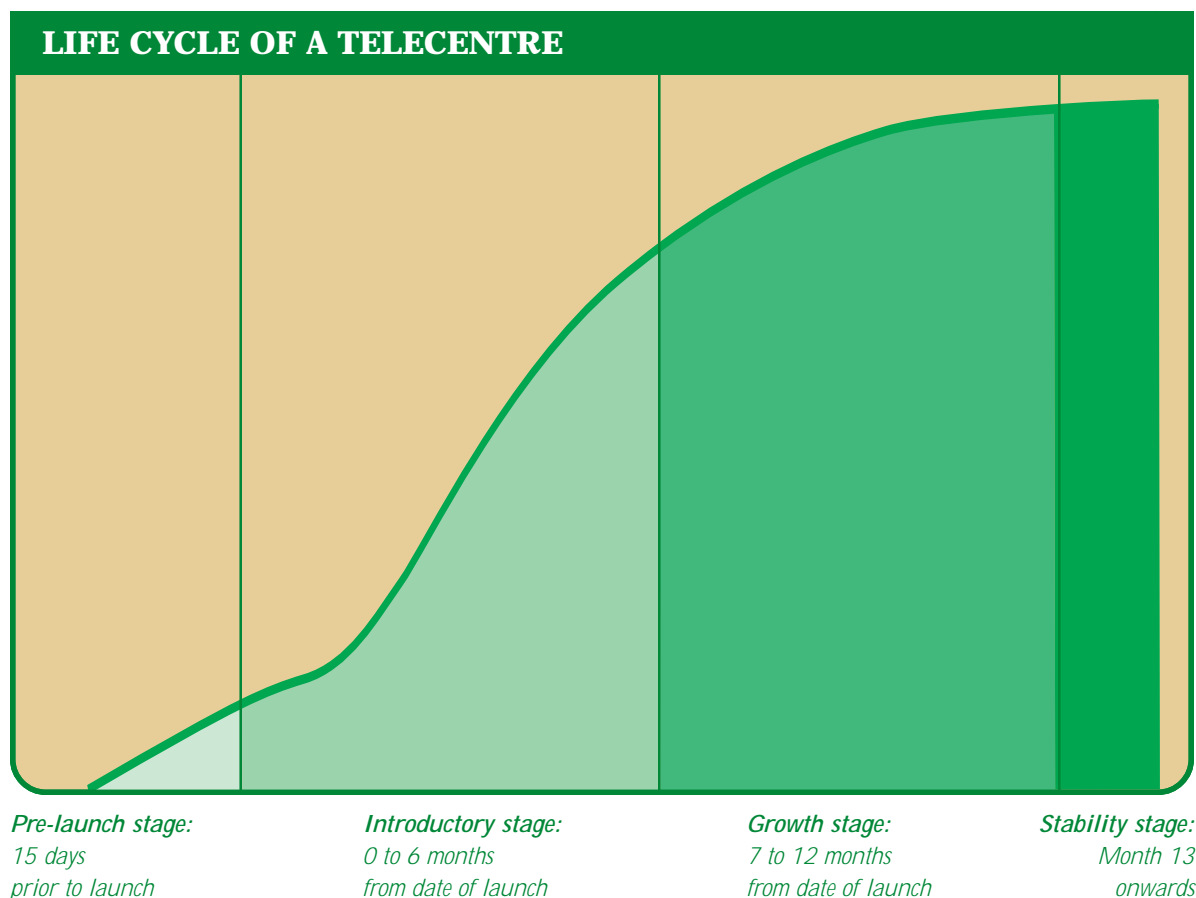


It is important to note that though a telecentre can offer all the products and services mentioned in the table above, it can do so only when it fulfills the following:

1. It should have entered into a formal agreement with the organisation offering that service. For example, to offer e-governance services, a telecentre should have been authorised either by the government or by the telecentre network to which the telecentre belongs.
2. It should have the required infrastructure to offer the service. For example, if a telecentre intends to offer information based services, it is important for it to have an Internet connection. Similarly, if a telecentre plans to offer Desk Top Publishing (DTP) services, it is important for it have a printer and a scanner.
3. It should have trained personnel to offer the service or set of services, which it intends to offer.

Life cycle of a telecentre

The life span of a telecentre can be broadly divided into four stages: pre-launch stage, introductory stage, growth stage and stability stage. The idea of dividing the life span into stages is to simplify the understanding of the growth of a telecentre. The life cycle of a telecentre can be depicted as in the figure below.



Note: The stages defined above and the corresponding time-frames are based on Development Alternatives' experience over the years in setting up and managing telecentres. It is quite possible that these might vary across telecentre networks, depending upon the telecentre model and the products and services being offered.

Pre-launch stage

This stage starts when one decides to set up a telecentre. In this stage the telecentre operator sets up the infrastructure, recruits, selects staff, and trains them. During this stage, the telecentre is not ready to deliver the services yet. Generally, it takes 30-45 days for a person to set up a well-furnished telecentre. At least two weeks prior to launch, the telecentre operator can start creating awareness about the telecentre and the initial set of services it is going to offer. Therefore, this stage requires some upfront investments in promotions. One has to publicise his/her telecentre heavily by conducting various promotional activities.

Introduction stage

This stage begins from the day of the launch of the telecentre. The launch date is the date when the telecentre is opened to the community and is ready to offer services and products. The awareness campaign initiated a few weeks before the launch has to be further intensified. The primary objective of all promotional campaigns during this stage should be to create awareness about the telecentre. A secondary but important objective should also be to attract as many walk-ins to the centre as possible. In this stage investment on promotions persists and revenue starts coming in.

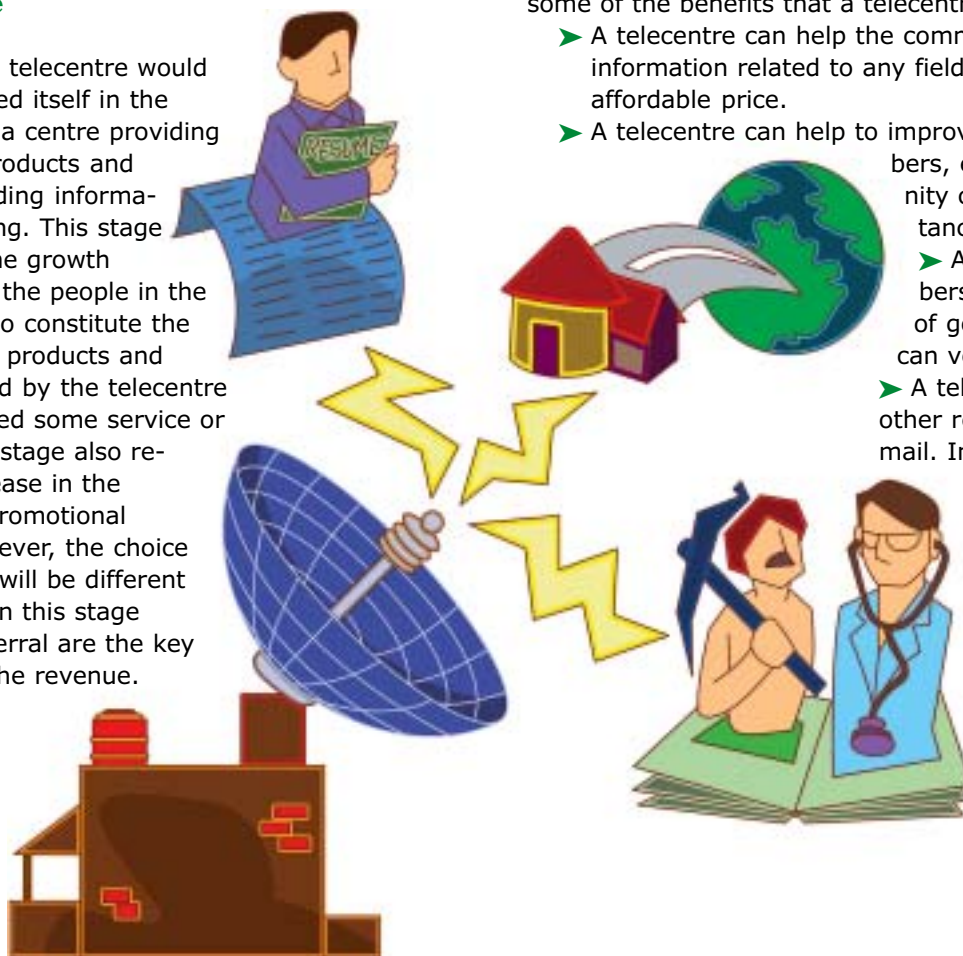
Growth stage

The start of this stage indicates that considerable awareness has been generated within the community about the telecentres and its services. This can be measured simply by the increase in foot-falls (that is, number of people who come) and growth in the number of people who have started using the telecentre services. The focus should be on providing best possible services to the customers. This will help create positive word-of-mouth publicity, which in turn

will bring more customers to the centre. This is the stage when the centre is ready to launch new products and services. The frequency of marketing activities can be brought down.

Stability stage

By this time, a telecentre would have established itself in the community as a centre providing ICT-enabled products and services, including information and training. This stage arrives after the growth stage. Most of the people in the community who constitute the market for the products and services offered by the telecentre would have used some service or the other. This stage also requires an increase in the frequency of promotional activities. However, the choice of promotions will be different in this stage. In this stage selling and referral are the key to increasing the revenue.



Benefits of a telecentre to the community

By now, you would have figured out the importance of telecentre for a rural community. A telecentre has the potential to play a very important role in the lives of community members. It essentially bridges the digital divide that exists between rural and urban India. The following are some of the benefits that a telecentre can offer to the community members.

- A telecentre can help the community members to access time-critical and decision critical information related to any field – health, education, agriculture, government etc. – at an affordable price.
- A telecentre can help to improve the IT skills and vocational skills of the community members, especially the youth. In addition, any member of the community can avail the services of various universities who offer distance-learning programmes.
- A telecentre can do away with the need of community members to visit their *tehsil* or district headquarters to get any kind of government information, certificates or licenses. A telecentre can very well fulfill this need in the village itself.
- A telecentre will help village community members to connect with other remotely located villagers and friends through Internet and e-mail. Individuals can join various online community groups according to the subject-matter of their preference to enhance or update their knowledge.
- A telecentre can provide information to men and women on employment opportunities that exist in the neighbouring villages, towns and cities.
- Last, but not the least, a telecentre can fully integrate the villages with the rest of the world. It will not take days and months for any information to reach the villages.

SUMMARY

- Timely availability of relevant information is important in making decisions.
- Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have revolutionised the way data and information is transmitted, accessed and used. However, its benefits have accrued only to businesses and urban communities. Rural communities are yet to reap its benefits.
- A telecentre is a retail delivery point, located in villages and small towns. It makes available information, products and services to people residing in the nearby villages using ICTs.
- The typical life span of a telecentre can be divided into four stages: the pre-launch stage, the introductory stage, the maturity stage and the stability stage. The idea of dividing the life span into stages is to simplify the understanding of the growth of a telecentre and the type of marketing programmes a telecentre operator should plan and implement.
- A telecentre can help the community members to access critical information related to health, education and government. It also help to improve the IT skills and vocational skills of the community members.
- With the help of telecentres village community members can connect with other remotely located villagers and friends through Internet and e-mail.

EXERCISE

- Q1.** What is a telecentre?
- Q2.** How is a telecentre different from other shops and retail outlets?
- Q3.** List five services that a telecentre can offer.
- Q4.** List at least three benefits that a telecentre will offer to a community.
- Q5.** What are the different stages of a telecentre life cycle?

Multiple Choice Questionnaire

1. A telecentre is a place where you can get

- a. Grocery items
- b. Vocational training and e-governance services
- c. Telephones
- d. Information and information based products and services
- e. Both b and d

2. A telecentre is generally equipped with

- a. Computers
- b. Internet
- c. Printer and a scanner
- d. All of the above
- e. None of the above

3. A telecentre is set up to primarily fulfill which of the following needs of the community

- a. Information needs
- b. Informal education and training needs
- c. Communication needs
- d. Only a and b
- e. All – a, b and c

4. Which of the following will not be available at a telecentre?

- a. Information on health services
- b. Information on agriculture
- c. Information on government schemes
- d. Garments
- e. Information on land records

5. Which of the following are the stages in the life-span of a telecentre?

- a. Pre-launch
- b. Introductory
- c. Growth
- d. Stability (Maturity)
- e. All of the above

6. A telecentre will

- a. Help people access all kinds of information in their own or neighbouring villages
- b. Will greatly reduce the need for villagers to travel to their nearest town in search of information
- c. Help villagers connect to the outside world – other remotely located villages and communities
- d. Allow people access to time and decision-critical information
- e. All of the above

Footnotes

¹ A Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT) is a two-way satellite ground station with a dish antenna. Technology has now evolved to the point that something that previously could only be done with large satellite dishes can now be done with a much smaller and vastly lower-powered antenna at the customer's premises.



Who are Your Customers?

In this chapter, we will build upon the concepts of marketing that we learnt in Chapter 1. In the first part of this chapter we will learn about segmentation and the bases of segmentation. Segmentation is all about dividing a market into homogeneous groups of people. It helps marketers decide which segments of the market to focus their marketing efforts on. Consumer behaviour is a complex phenomenon. It deals with what people buy, why they buy, when they buy and from where they buy. In the second part of this chapter, we will learn about consumer behaviour and the process a consumer follows to buy a product or a service. In the last section, the chapter discusses the influencers – people who play a significant role in influencing the buying behaviour of a person.

By the end of this chapter, you should be able to understand:

- **How to identify a target market**
- **How to segment a target market**
- **Basis of segmentation**
- **The consumer buying process**
- **The basics of rural consumer behaviour**

In chapter one, we studied the concepts of marketing and grassroots marketing. We also studied the concept of market, which we had defined as a group of potential customers that is interested in buying a product or a service. We had also illustrated the concept of market with the help of an example and demonstrated how a market can be segmented into various groups and sub-groups based on likes, dislikes, habits, attitudes, lifestyles and capacity to pay of the potential customers forming those groups.

In chapter 2, we studied in detail about telecentres and the type of products and services a telecentre can offer. As a telecentre operator or manager, you will also be involved in the marketing of products and services that are to be offered by your telecentre.

If your telecentre is associated with a telecentre network then it is quite likely that some relevant products and services would be made available to you from the day of launch of your telecentre. In that case you will not have to develop them on your own. However, in some cases, you might be required to develop your own product(s) or service(s).

In both the scenarios, it will always be important for you to select and carefully define a target market because it is extremely important for a seller, whether a small proprietor or a big company, to carefully select and accurately define its target market. It will help you in developing an effective marketing mix (the four Ps).

How to select a target market

Careful selection of a market is one of the most important activities in marketing because target market is the focus of all marketing activities. If the selection of the market is not correct then it is quite possible that your entire time, effort and resources might go down the drain.

Therefore, one of the important criteria for the selection of a market is that an organisation should consciously seek markets that will generate sufficient sales volumes at a low enough cost to result in a profit. Also, an organisation ordinarily should seek a market wherein the number of competitors and their size are minimal.

Let us understand this with the help of an example.

EXERCISE

Can you recall the name of the five groups that we had mentioned in Chapter 1? Can you list five more such groups?

As a grassroots marketer, you will have to aim all your marketing efforts at the target market that you select, defining it for each of the products and services you offer from your telecentre.

IDENTIFY YOUR CUSTOMERS

Assume that your telecentre, which caters to people living in a cluster of five or six villages, has an Internet connection, and that one of the services that you plan to offer from your telecentre is Internet surfing and e-mail. How will you select your target market?

To answer this question, you will have to first identify who the potential customers for your service will be. Can you list at least three such groups of potential customers?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

How to Market your Telecentre

Let us expand this list.



1. College going youth in the age group of 16-24 years



2. Employees of the government, banks and private companies, schools, colleges



3. School children of Classes 6 to 12



4. Family members whose relatives live in distant cities in India or abroad



5. Professionals – doctors, lawyers, engineers, accountants, insurance agents



6. Businessmen – retailers, wholesalers, traders



7. Farmers and artisans



8. Research scholars – students pursuing higher studies, especially Ph.D.

Can we expand the list further? It's possible, but we have to think harder for other groups.



9. Unemployed youth seeking job opportunities



10. Aged people – above 50 years of age – who want to learn Internet just out of curiosity and to keep pace with the times

PRIORITISE TARGET GROUPS

Which three of the 10 groups listed here, do you think, will be the most easiest to attract? And why? Can you write them in decreasing order of priority, with your reasoning?

1.

2.

3.

Potential customers in all the 10 groups put together will constitute the **total market**. But the biggest chunk of the market for Internet and e-mail will be the youth, employees and professionals. This will also constitute our target market in this case. All your marketing efforts to sell your service – Internet surfing and e-mail – must be targetted at these groups.

Market segmentation

You can recall the example from Chapter 1, where we had divided the population of 10,000 into many groups. Based on the preferences, attitudes, and capacity to pay, we had further sub-divided the group of people that was interested in buying motorcycles into three sub-groups:

1. People wanting to buy a Hero Honda or a Bajaj or a TVS motorcycle;
2. People wanting to buy a 100cc or a 150cc motorcycle; and
3. People wanting to buy a black, red or silver colour motorcycle.

In this example, all we have done is to divide a market – of motorcycle buyers — into different homogeneous segments. Drawing a grid will help us better understand this division better.

People interested in buying a motorcycle

Capacity	100 cc	125 cc	150 cc	250 cc
Make	Hero Honda	Bajaj	TVS	Yamaha
Colour	Black	Red	Silver	Blue

This process of dividing a total heterogeneous market for a product or a service into several segments, each of which tends to be homogeneous in all significant aspects, is called **market segmentation**.

DEFINE MARKET SEGMENTS

Segmented market for Internet surfing and e-mail service

Segmentation according to				
Age	8-16	17-21	22-35	36-60
Occupation	School children	College-going youth, graduates, college dropouts	Employees, traders, farmers, professionals, housewives	Employees, traders, farmers, professionals, parents
Use of Internet and e-mail by each segment				
Internet	Information on curriculum and related to school assignments; stories and entertainment	Information on college project assignments; employment opportunities, self-employment schemes; avenues for higher education and learning; school and college results on Internet	Information related to their own field of work	Information related to their own field of work; advisories; online matrimonial services
E-mail	Connect with friends	Connect with friends; correspond with potential employers, avenues of higher learning	E-mail related to work or business; online expert advisories	E-mail to sons and daughters staying in other cities / towns

Basis for segmentation

The segmentation of the market is done on the basis of certain factors. These factors can be classified as the following:

- Geographic
- Demographic
- Psychographic (psychological and social factors)
- Behaviourist

Geographic factors

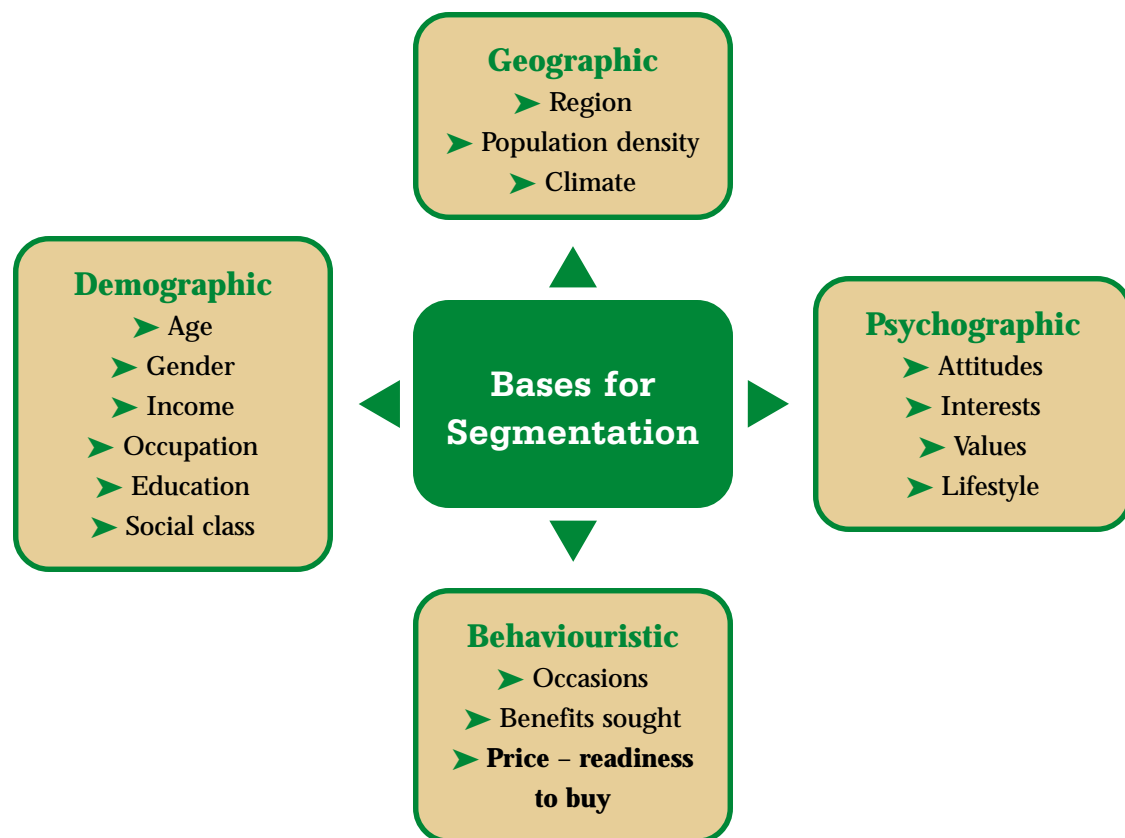
➤ **Region:** A big organisation with national level operations can segment a market into regions – North, South, East and West. It can also segment the market into States – Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, etc. Similarly, a village-level entrepreneur can segment the market into different villages or group of villages – Village 1, Village 2, Village 3, etc.

➤ **Language:** Language becomes important for an organisation that aims to set up its operations across India. In such a case, it will have to provide its services in multiple languages. For example, people in Tamil Nadu would strongly prefer an e-mail service in Tamil in comparison to English or Hindi. The same holds true for Punjab as well, because people in Punjab would strongly prefer the service to be in Punjabi.

Even at the village level, there might be people who would prefer the service to be delivered in the language of their choice. For example, even in a remote village in Punjab or Kerala, a customer might prefer to receive the service in English rather than in Punjabi or Malayalam. Therefore, depending on the nature of the product or service, you can segment your customers into – vernacular language users, English users and Hindi users.

➤ **Climate:** Climate is also an important factor for segmentation. For example, a soft drink company would focus its marketing efforts on areas in hot and humid climatic zones (for instance, Mumbai, Chennai, etc.) than on areas in extremely cold climate zones like Shimla or Srinagar. On the contrary, an organisation selling woollen garments will focus its marketing efforts on cities in cold climatic zones.

From a telecentre's perspective, people in a telecentre located in the coastal region would be interested in



knowing about sea weather and fishing zones whereas people in flood-prone areas like Eastern Uttar Pradesh and North Bihar would be interested in knowing about flood warnings.

➤ **Population density and growth:** Generally places with high population density are easier to reach and serve than places with low density. For example, as a telecentre operator, it will be easier for you to create awareness about your product in a village with a population of 6,000. But it will be extremely difficult to do it in five small villages spread across 4-5 km and with the same total population.

Growth in the number of customers in a territory is also an important parameter for segmentation. An organisation (telecentre) should target geographical areas (villages) which demonstrate consistent growth over the years.

Demographic factors

➤ **Age:** Different products suit people of different age groups. For example, toffees and chocolates are consumed by kids and teenagers, while motorcycles and cars are used by adults above 18 years of age. Similarly, youths between the age 18 and 28 might like to undergo skill-based training to get employed. Generally, the eyesight weakens once people reach the age of 40 years and above; more people in this age group would be interested in buying spectacles.

➤ **Gender:** Some products are gender-specific, for example, women generally use jewellery such as bangles and earrings. Men tend to use shaving kits (shaving razor, shaving cream and shaving brush).

In the service category, most women would prefer different kinds of courses, for instance, they may prefer word processing packages; men, on the other hand, might prefer hardware maintenance.

➤ **Education:** The level of education in the community is an important factor that affects buying behaviour. A needy but meritorious student in a village would be interested in information on scholarships. Similarly, a youth who has graduated from a college would be interested in knowing about employment opportunities and government sponsored self-employment schemes. Further, an educated person who can read English newspapers or magazines might want to buy a newspaper or magazine in English.

➤ **Occupation:** Occupation is also an important factor of segmentation. For example, a farmer will buy a tractor and other farm inputs like seeds and fertilisers whereas a carpenter will buy tools that are used in carpentry. A student in the final year of graduation would be interested in knowing more about future career options in his or her field of specialisation.

A housewife with kids below five years of age would be interested in knowing about the vaccination schedule for kids at the nearest Primary Health Centre (PHC). Similarly, a daily-wage worker in a village would be interested in knowing about the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) and the wage employment opportunities available in neighbouring villages.

➤ **Income:** People can be broadly categorised according to their level of income into three categories: low income group (LIG), medium income group (MIG) and high income group (HIG). A person belonging to the LIG category may buy a bicycle, a person in the MIG category may buy a scooter or a motorcycle whereas a person belonging to HIG category may buy a car. A farmer with a small landholding will normally use a bullock cart to plough his fields whereas a farmer with large landholding will normally use a tractor.

➤ **Size of the family:** The size of the family is a key factor affecting the buying decision. A small family

Things to consider when a segment has to be chosen

There are certain things that have to be kept in mind before choosing a segment to cater. These are as the following.

- Is the segment large enough to justify the efforts one has to make to earn revenue?
- Is the segment accessible?
- Is the segment growing?
- Does the telecentre have the resources to service the segment?

DEVELOP BASES FOR SEGMENTATION

Basis for segmentation	Typical market segments
➤ Geographic factors	
➤ Region	Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, etc.
➤ Population density (size)	Under 5000, 5000-20000, 20,000-50,000, 50,000-100,000
➤ Climate	Hot, cold, rainy, hot but humid
➤ Demographic factors	
➤ Age	Under 5, 5-10, 11-16, 17-21, 21-35, 36-50 51-65
➤ Gender	Male, female
➤ Income	Low income, medium income, high income
➤ Education	Illiterate, Primary, Middle, Secondary, Senior Secondary, graduation, post-graduation, professional degree
➤ Occupation	Farmer, teacher, doctor, student, housewife, service, carpenter, businessman
➤ Religion	Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian, Jain, Buddhist, Parsi
➤ Psychological and social factors	
➤ Values	Girls in some parts are not allowed to pursue courses which involve fieldwork and travel or late hours at night
➤ Interest	Young people are more interested in computers compared to older people
➤ Lifestyle	Conservative, liberal, outgoing, adventurist
➤ Behaviour toward product	
➤ Benefits desired	Sewing machine: cost, quality, durability, repairs, etc
➤ Price	Cheap, economic, premium

would like to buy smaller packets of a product unlike large families who demand a bigger packet.

➤ **Religion:** A telecentre owner should consider religious sentiments, and offer products which are acceptable to the community.

➤ **Ethnicity:** Ethnicity is a very important facet that needs to be considered while offering products and services. For example, in India, the staple diet of people in North India is wheat; for people in South and East India it is rice.

Psychological and social factors

➤ **Values:** Whether the family values education over money or vice versa.

➤ **Attitude:** How an individual feels about a product.

➤ **Lifestyle:** The lifestyle of an individual also plays a significant role in the buying decision. A modern and outgoing individual would like to use technology such as the Internet in his daily life.

Behavioural factors

➤ **Occasions:** Festivals, *haat* days, birthdays, weddings, etc.

➤ **Price:** The price of the product offered should be affordable for the community. Therefore, it is important for a telecentre owner to offer only those products and services which can be bought by the common man.

➤ **Benefits desired**

Why, when and where do consumers buy? The basics of rural consumer behaviour

Different people buy a product or a service for different reasons. Let us take the example of a mobile phone. A person can buy a mobile phone to stay in touch with his family members and relatives; on the other hand a person can buy a mobile phone to stay in touch with business customers; a doctor buys a phone to stay in touch with patients; and a young school- or college-going youth buys a mobile phone to impress his/her friends.

It has always been a difficult job for a marketing organisation to predict the behaviour of a consumer — what, when, where and how much a consumer will buy. Marketing success largely depends on the ability to anticipate what buyers will do.

Consumer behaviour can be defined as the action that a person (consumer) takes in buying and using a product or a service. It also involves the mental and social processes that follow these actions. To make a purchase, a consumer engages in a complex decision-making process. We can divide this process into five stages:

1. Need Recognition
2. Information Search
3. Evaluation of Alternatives
4. Decision
5. Post-purchase behaviour

➤ **Need recognition:** This is the first step towards purchasing. During this stage a consumer realises that something is missing in his/her life and there is some discontent. He/she is now convinced that he/she is not satisfied and wants to overcome this dissatisfaction. Sometimes it is an internal trigger such as hunger, thirst, lack of education, etc, which makes one feel dissatisfied. At other times, an external factor such as an advertisement, a demonstration or a display in the store can make one feel a sense of dissatisfaction.

➤ **Information search:** Assuming that consumers are motivated to satisfy their needs, they will next undertake a search for information on possible outcomes. The sources used to acquire this information may be as simple as remembering information from their memory or the consumer may look for information from outside sources like friends, relatives, Internet search, etc. The amount of effort the consumer directs toward searching for information depends on factors such as: the importance of satisfying the need; familiarity with available solutions; and the amount of time available to search. To appeal to consumers who are at the search stage, marketers should make efforts to ensure that consumers can easily locate information related to their product. For example, for marketers whose customers rely on opinion leaders in the village, attaining high brand value in the minds of opinion leaders will be a critical goal.

➤ **Evaluation of alternatives:** In this stage, the consumer will shortlist a couple of options from which one can select the best perceived option. There are two levels in this stage:

- i. Product
- ii. Brand

For instance, a consumer who needs to buy a motorcycle has multiple options to choose from such as 100 cc, 150 cc or 200 cc motorcycles. Within each segment, he will have multiple brands to choose from such as



Need recognition: The consumer realises that something is missing in his life.



Information search: He then undertakes a search for information on possible outcomes.



Evaluation of alternatives: This results in a short-list from which he can select the best perceived option.

Yamaha, Bajaj, Hero Honda, etc. Marketers must determine which criteria consumers are using in their selection of possible options and how each criterion is evaluated. Continuing with the example of a motorcycle, marketing tactics will be most effective when the marketer can tailor their efforts by knowing what benefits are most important to consumers when selecting options (for example, quality, brand name, fuel efficiency, looks, colour, etc) and then determine the order of importance of each benefit.



***Decision:** The consumer makes the final purchase, taking into account conditions existing at the time of purchase.*

***Post-purchase behaviour:** Based on the performance of the chosen product, the consumer re-evaluates his decision.*



➤ **Decision:** Generally the solution chosen by the consumer is the same as the product whose evaluation rating is the highest. However, this may change at the time of actual purchase. The 'designated' purchase may be altered or modified at the time of purchase for various reasons, such as: the product is out of stock, a competitor offers an incentive at the point-of-purchase (for example, a store salesperson mentions a competitor's offer), the customer lacks the necessary funds (for example, credit card not working), or members of the consumer's reference group take a negative view of the purchase (for example, a friend is critical of the purchase). Marketers whose product is most desirable to the consumer must make sure that the transaction goes smoothly. For example, Internet retailers have worked hard to prevent consumers from abandoning online purchase (that is, online shopping carts) by streamlining the checkout process. For marketers whose product is not the consumer's selected product, last-chance marketing efforts may be worth exploring, such as offering incentives to store personnel to 'talk up' their product at the checkout line.

➤ **Post-purchase behaviour:** Once the consumer has made the purchase, he /she is faced with an evaluation of the decision. If the product performs below the consumer's expectation then he/she will re-evaluate satisfaction with the decision, which at its extreme may result in the consumer returning the product while in less extreme situations the consumer

will retain the purchased item but may take a negative view of the product. Such evaluations are more likely to occur in cases of expensive or highly important purchases. To help ease the concerns that consumers have with their purchase evaluation, marketers need to be receptive and even encourage consumer contact. Customer service centres and follow-up market research are useful tools in helping to address purchasers' concerns.

Rural consumer behaviour

There are a number of factors that play a significant role in the behaviour of rural consumers. Influences such as traditions, social customs and religion affect the everyday life of a rural customer, including his purchasing decision.

In addition to it, there are certain influencing circles to which a customer is attached. These can be categorised as friends, family, relatives, etc. Apart from that a customer is also influenced by certain other people whom he / she interacts with directly or indirectly in day-to-day life. These people hold a high status in the village and are known to everyone in the village. They can be termed as the opinion leaders of a village. Sarpanchs (Pradhans), doctors, religious leaders, government officials and other educated members of a village belong to this category.

The four main groups that influence a rural consumer's decision are detailed below:

➤ **Friends:** Friends and peer group play a vital role in the life of a rural customer. Under the influence of friends and peer groups, a customer takes certain buying decisions which he /she believes satisfies his/her craving towards attaining status in the group. This behaviour is more prominent among adolescents and youth. During adolescence and youth one is influenced more by friends than any one else.

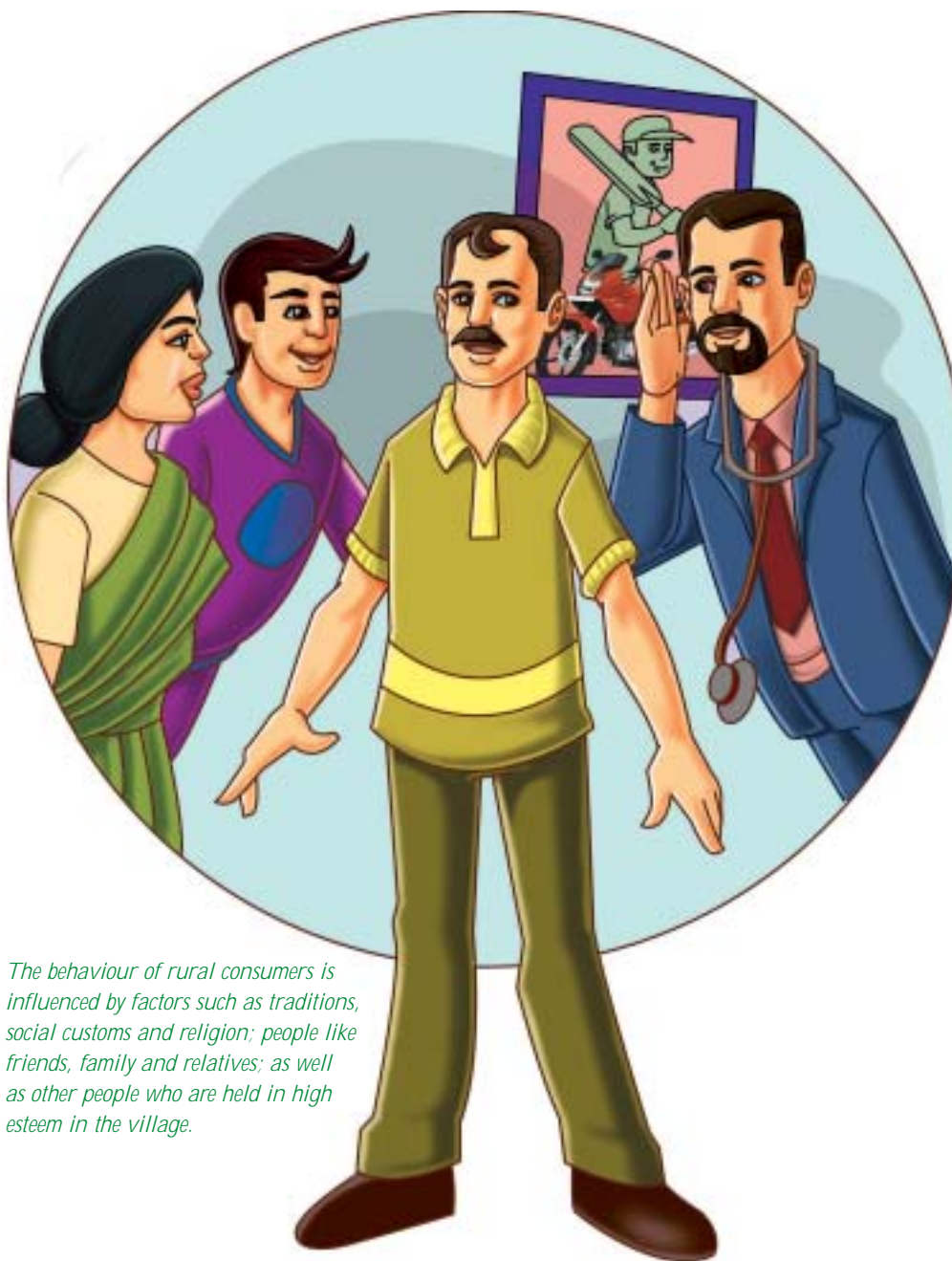
➤ **Family:** Family also influences the decision of a customer. In the life of a customer living in rural areas his / her family is the most influential factor in any decision. In India even important decisions like choosing the stream of education or deciding on a wedding are influenced by family members. This is more true of rural families in India.

➤ **Opinion Leaders:** These are people who hold a high stature in the society. An opinion leader can be a sarpanch, an educated or respected person of the community or a doctor residing in the village. He or she can also be a postmaster or someone from the administration. People living in villages are highly influenced by such personalities. The stature of these people in the village can be compared to movie celebrities in urban India. People follow them because of the status they have in the society.

➤ **Idols:** Among the village youth the role models are generally someone from their village who goes to the city and earns a livelihood there. For example, in the Punjab, youths look up to those who have migrated to the US and the UK to make a living. Similarly, you will find hundreds of examples where someone from some village comes to a metro for employment and gradually brings in other people from his village as well.

Therefore, telecentre operators must take into account the role of influencing groups or individuals at the time of preparing plans for the marketing activities of their telecentres.

Thus, it is important for a telecentre operator or manager to understand how the consumer perceives a product, and who the key influencers in the purchase decisions are. This understanding would be the basis for designing a marketing strategy to target potential customers.



The behaviour of rural consumers is influenced by factors such as traditions, social customs and religion; people like friends, family and relatives; as well as other people who are held in high esteem in the village.

SUMMARY

- The market is the focus of all marketing activities.
- Careful selection of a market is one of the most important activities in marketing.
- The most important criterion used for the selection of a market are that it should generate sufficient sales volumes at a low enough cost to result in a profit.
- A market is divided into several segments each of which tends to be homogeneous in all significant aspects. This process is called market segmentation. The most lucrative of these segments is called the target market.
- The segmentation of the market is done based on four broad factors — geographic, demographic, psychographic (psychological and social) and behaviourist.
- One has to keep in mind the growth potential of the segment at the time of its selection. The ability to serve that segment is also important while selecting.
- Consumer behaviour is a part of marketing that explains why people buy, what they buy where they buy and when they buy. It involves the mental and social processes that follow the actions a consumer takes while buying a product or a service.
- There are a number of factors that play a significant role in the behaviour of rural consumers. Influences such as traditions, social customs and religion affect the everyday life of a rural customer including his purchasing decision.
- A telecentre operator (as a marketer) should keep in mind, while designing marketing programmes, consumers' buying motives and influencing factors.

EXERCISE

- Q1.** Define 'target market'.
- Q2.** What is the difference between a total market and a target market?
- Q3.** What is segmentation?
- Q4.** What are the bases for segmentation?
- Q5.** Assuming that your telecentre offers a range of e-governance services, segment the target market and identify the segments that would avail these services first.
- Q6.** What is consumer behaviour?
- Q7.** What are the steps of the consumer buying process?
- Q8.** Name the groups that influence a rural consumer's decision.
- Q9.** Assuming that your telecentre offers vocational skills programmes, list the steps that a consumer would follow to arrive at a decision to join the programme?.

Multiple Choice Questionnaire

1. Which of the following things must an entrepreneur keep in mind while choosing a segment?

- a. Whether the segment is large enough
- b. Whether the segment is growing or not
- c. Whether the enterprise has sufficient resources to service the segment
- d. a, b and c
- e. Only a and b

2. Which of the following are the bases of segmentation?

- a. Demographic factors
- b. Geographic factors
- c. Behaviouristic factors
- d. Only a and b
- e. a, b and c

3. Customers for jewellery and cosmetic items can be segmented on the basis of

- a. Gender
- b. Age
- c. Income
- d. Lifestyle
- e. All of the above

4. Customers for using e-mail and the Internet can be segmented on the basis of

- a. Age
- b. Occupation
- c. Education
- d. Only a and b
- e. a, b and c

5. Which of the following are the steps of a decision process to purchase any product or service?

- a. Information search
- b. Evaluation of alternatives
- c. Need recognition
- d. All of the above
- e. Only a and b

6. Seema wants to join a vocational training programme at a telecentre nearest to her village. Seema's decision is likely to be influenced by:

- a. Her friends
- b. Her parents
- c. Successful people whom she admires
- d. Only a and b
- e. a, b and c

7. Raman wants to buy a mobile phone. What will be the sequence of steps he will follow?

I. Compare price and features of various models of mobile phones

II. Recognise his need to buy a mobile phone and its desired features

III. Collect information on price and features of various models of mobile phones

IV. Purchase a mobile phone

- a. I, II, III, IV
- b. II, I, III, IV
- c. II, III, IV, I
- d. III, II, I, IV
- e. II, III, I, IV



How to Reach Your Customers

METHODS OF PROMOTION

It is important for any organisation – whether profit or non-profit – to create awareness about its products and services. Promotion serves to inform, persuade and remind the market about the organisation and the products and services it offers. In this chapter, we will learn about the importance of promotion and its methods. We will also learn about some of the activities that can be conducted in the grassroots markets as a part of sales promotion.

By the end of this chapter, you should be able to understand:

- **The importance of awareness generation**
- **Different approaches to awareness generation**
- **The promotion approach**
- **Various methods of promotion**
- **The community-based approach to promotion**

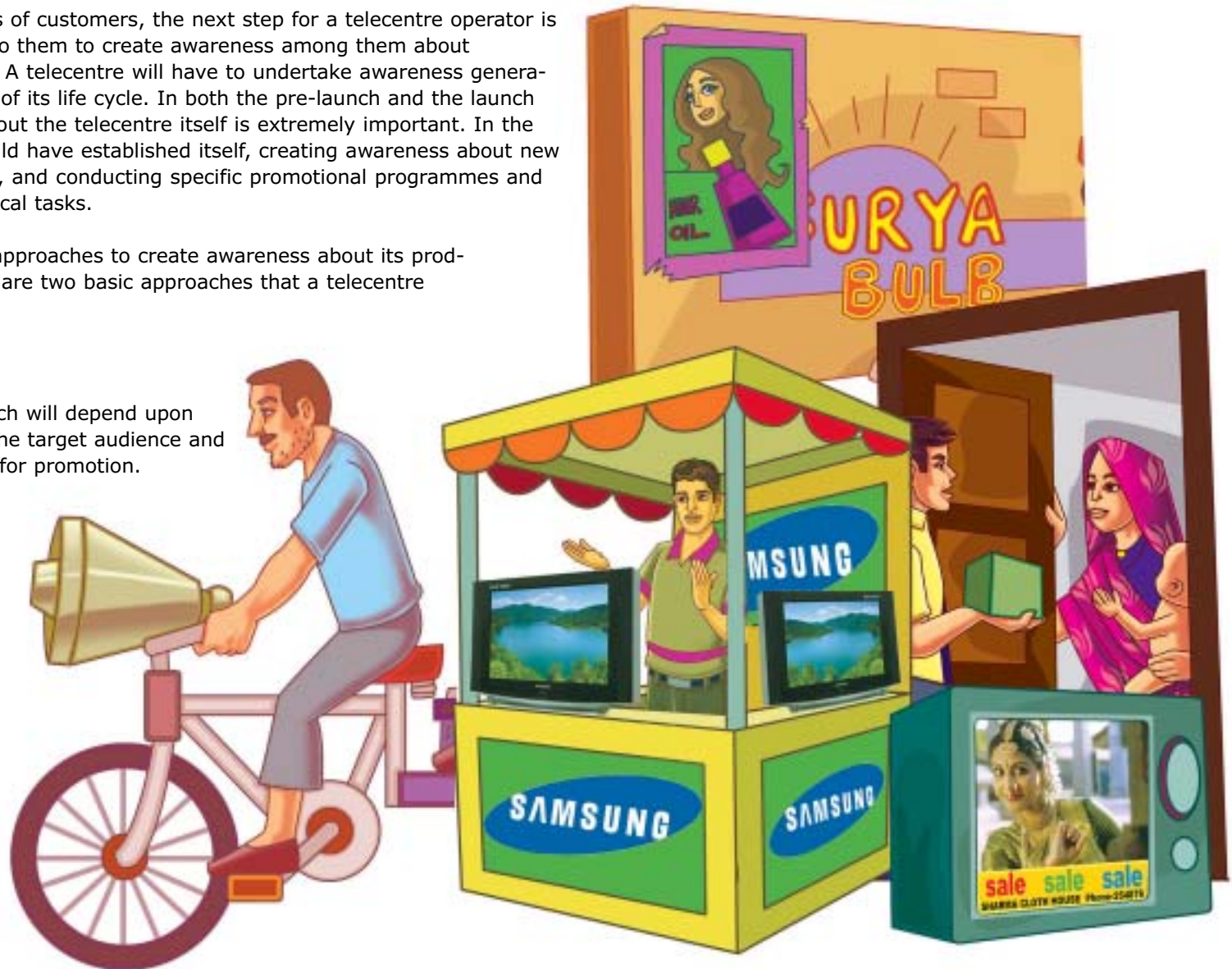
In the previous chapters we learnt the concepts of market, market segmentation and consumer behaviour. Through these concepts, we understood how to identify potential customers to whom a telecentre can offer its products and services, and the factors that influence customers at the time of making their purchase decisions.

Having identified potential groups of customers, the next step for a telecentre operator is to identify ways of reaching out to them to create awareness among them about telecentre products and services. A telecentre will have to undertake awareness generation activities during every stage of its life cycle. In both the pre-launch and the launch stages, generating awareness about the telecentre itself is extremely important. In the later stages when the centre would have established itself, creating awareness about new products and services introduced, and conducting specific promotional programmes and events will become the more critical tasks.

A telecentre can adopt different approaches to create awareness about its products and services. Broadly, there are two basic approaches that a telecentre can choose from:

- **Promotion approach**
- **Community approach**

The choice of a particular approach will depend upon what is being promoted, who is the target audience and what are the resources available for promotion.



Promotion approach

We can also call it the business approach to promotion because more or less all business organisations adopt this approach to promote their products and services. Promotion is an important element of marketing strategy. It serves to inform, persuade and remind the market about the business (in our case, a telecentre) and the products and services it offers. The basic objective of promotion is to influence the customer.

There are five different methods of promotion used by business organisations. These are:

- **Personal selling:** It involves calling on prospective customers personally for a one-to-one interaction and making a presentation to them about a product or a service.
- **Advertising:** It is paid-for impersonal mass communication. The most common forms are electronic (TV, radio, cable TV and the Internet) and print (newspapers and magazines).
- **Sales promotion:** It is designed to supplement personal selling and advertising. It includes contests, events, road-shows, discount coupons or gift coupons etc.
- **Publicity:** It is non-paid-for communication, which happens due to press releases, newspaper articles and photographs.
- **Public relations:** It is a planned effort to influence the attitudes and opinions of a specific group of customers. It is in the form of newsletters, annual reports, sponsorships and charity events.

Of these five methods of promotion, personal selling, sales promotion and public relations hold special significance as far as promotional activities of a telecentre are concerned. We will discuss these three in detail in this chapter.

Personal selling: One-on-one house calls

One-on-one house calls are important to make people aware of the fact that a telecentre has opened in their locality. Meeting potential customers in person helps build credibility and trust. It helps in gaining acceptance of parents, elders and opinion leaders in the community. At the grassroots level it is the most effective method of promotion during the initial stages of the setting up of a telecentre and also when a new



product or service is launched. A telecentre operator should selectively pick the people who would be the target group for new services or programmes instead of spending money on mass media options.

We will discuss personal selling in detail in the next chapter on personal selling and counselling.

Advertising

We see advertisements (or ads) daily in both electronic and print media. Can you recall some of the advertisements that have appeared recently on TV and in newspapers?

From a telecentre's perspective, placing an advertisement in newspapers or in TV is prohibitively costly. Only large organisations with state or national level presence can afford to place their advertisements on TV and in magazines.

Cable ads

However, placing an ad on cable TV is affordable and if cable TV is present in any of the communities where a telecentre is operational, then a telecentre operator should consider placing an ad on it. A cable ad is one of the best ways to communicate with the masses. These days most households in rural India have access to a television and many of them have cable TV connections or Direct-to-Home (DTH) connections. A small scrolling ticker can be placed on the local channel, advertising the product and its benefits. Through cable TV, awareness about of the product spreads rapidly.

When?

Whenever a new product is introduced, cable ads can be aired. Apart from that, cable ads can be shown during the festive season as more and more people are likely to spend time in front of the TV.



What?

The cable ad should contain information about the product. It should also contain information about the benefits of the product, and the address of the telecentre along with the phone number and email.

How?

Prepare a plan as to when the cable ad would be aired. Prepare the layout of the cable ad with all the information arranged in a sequential manner. Software called Flash can be used to design the advertisement. Load it on a compact disc (CD) and give it to your cable operator to play it.

Wall paintings

Apart from cable ads, wall paintings also play an important role in spreading mass awareness. While traveling from your village to your nearest district town you might have seen wall paintings painted on road-side shops, houses and tube-well sheds. Can you recall a couple of them?

How many and where?

Depending on the resources available, a telecentre can get at least five or six wall paintings of a size of about 8x6 sq. ft created at strategic locations where it feels that its potential groups of customers can easily view them on a regular basis.

What?

The wall painting should prominently highlight the bouquet of services available in the telecentre. It should also contain information about the benefits of the product and the address of the telecentre along with the phone number and e-mail.

How?

Identify the locations where you want to place the ads. Take prior permission of the people on whose building's walls you want to paint your advertisement. In case the wall belongs to public agencies, such as the Municipal Council or Village Panchayat, then you should obtain prior permission from the authorised official.

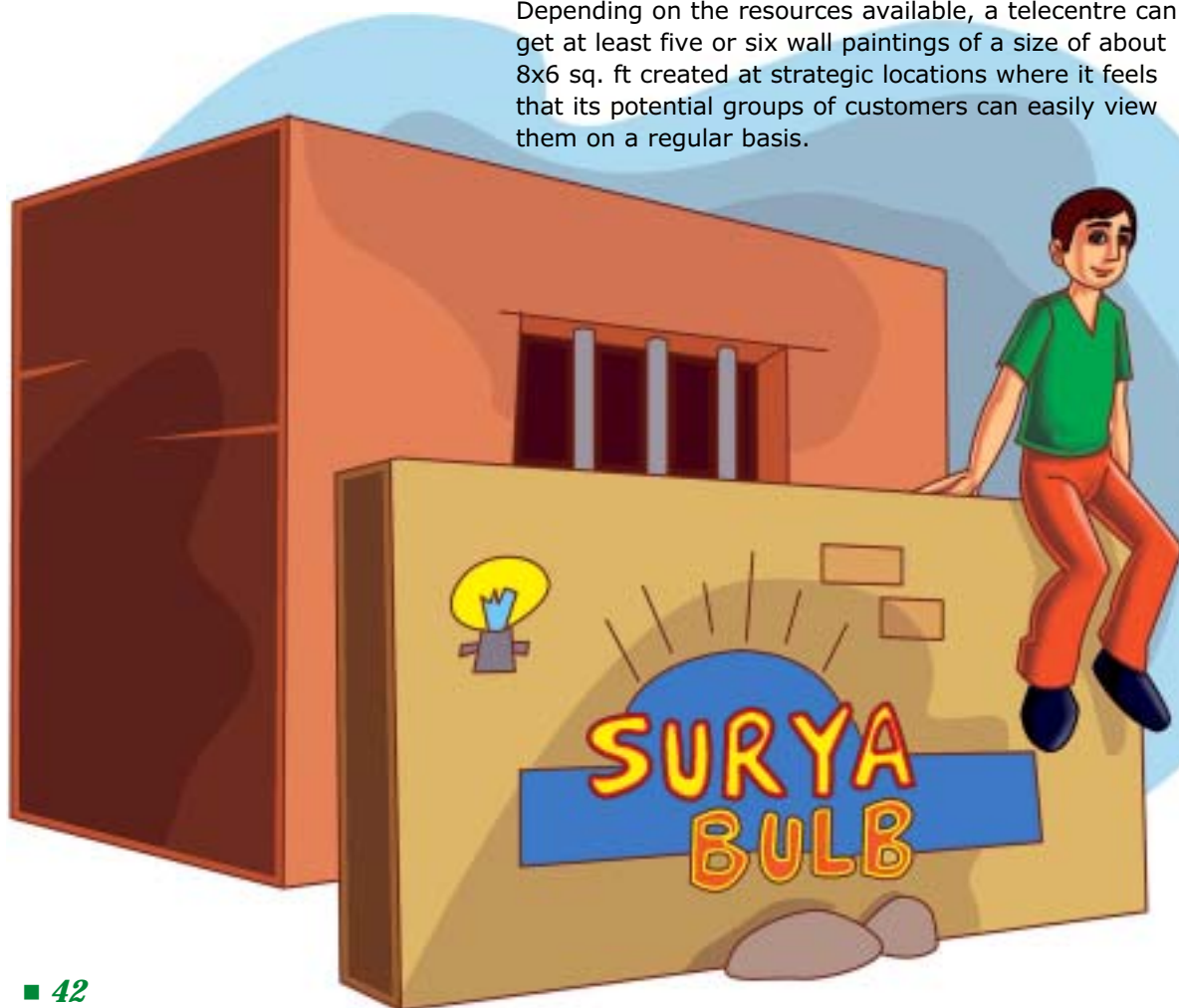
Prepare the layout of the wall painting advertisement with all the information arranged in a proper manner. If possible, prepare a soft copy (that is, a design on a computer) of the wall painting, either by yourself or through a local DTP shop, and show it to the painter who is going to do the wall painting. This will avoid all misunderstandings that often arise later in the case of informal and verbal communications.

Sales promotions

At the grassroots level, dealers and retailers conduct many activities to promote their products and services. A telecentre, being a retail point for ICT-enabled services, can also conduct similar activities to attract as many customers as possible to the telecentre.

Some of the common and most effective activities that can be conducted by a telecentre are:

- Activity stalls
- Public announcements using a tri-cycle or an auto
- Posters
- Activities, events and contests at the telecentre
- Promotional gifts or discounts



Activity stalls or canopy

Why?

Prefabricated stalls or canopies are a wonderful option that can be used for promotion. These activity stalls are effective for large-scale outreach to:

- Create visibility for your telecentre.
- Create awareness and get a large number of spot registrations outside the telecentre premises.
- Run demonstration sessions or some games and activities to attract potential customers before registering them for a programme or service.

When?

One of the most important factors that determine the success of this activity is the timing of these stalls. The following are some key indicators:

Month: Avoid exam time and months when the weather is extreme (hot and cold). Any other time of the year is appropriate to hold these activities particularly the festival months and post harvest period.

Week: If most of your customers or their parents are salaried and get their salaries at a particular time in the month, schedule the stalls around pay days. . If they are farmers than schedule the stall just after the harvest season is over and crop is sold.

Day: Weekdays are appropriate to attract school and college students after their study hours. Weekends are also good days to attract the parents and the older age group for specialised telecentre services like e-governance and information on government schemes.

TIP: Time the stall in such a way that you get your target customer in a relaxed frame of mind and not when he/she is in a hurry to get back home or to work or to study.



Who?

This depends on the programme or service you wish to promote through this medium.

Where?

- Outside schools and colleges
- Outside recreational places like parks
- Outside the telecentre.
- In the main market area
- At the weekly market (village *haat*)

TIP: The golden rule for the location of a stall is that it should be in a place where a large number of your target audience will be available on the day of the activity.

What?

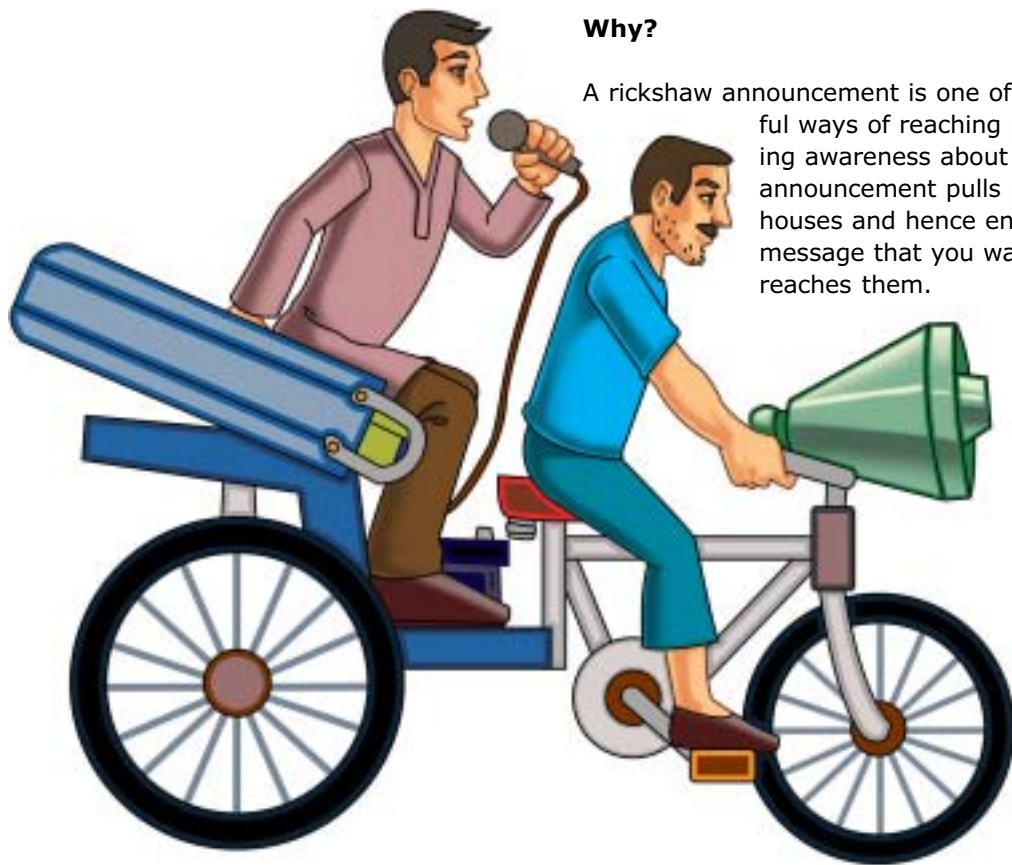
Stalls can draw huge crowds if they are set up properly and the activity (game or demonstration) is well planned out. Spend at least one week prior to the scheduled day with your local telecentre representative to make sure that you have:

- The stall in a clean and working condition.
- There should be no marks or torn sheets as this creates a negative impression.

Public announcements using a rickshaw, tri-cycle or auto

Why?

A rickshaw announcement is one of the most successful ways of reaching people and spreading awareness about your product. The announcement pulls people from their houses and hence ensures that the message that you want to spread reaches them.



When?

This activity can be replicated every two to three months to promote the services and products of the telecentre. Apart from that, every time a new product or service has to be introduced this activity should be repeated.

Where?

Announcements can be made in the villages around the telecentre.

How?

Plan your visit in advance and identify the key addresses you will visit. Choose the appropriate time (during the day) for conducting this activity. It is best to avoid early morning hours (before 11 am) and afternoon. Record a cassette which can play a message about the information of products and services that are available in the telecentre. This can be done at any audio-video shop. Develop a script and visit the nearest audio shop to record the message. Arrange a rickshaw and sound player along with speakers. Hire a rickshaw and inform the rickshaw puller about the timings and route plan. Arrange some leaflets and a canopy as well. Depending on the lifestyle of people, choose the hours of the day, for example, when children would have returned from school and college, and at least one parent would be home. Once you reach the location, play the cassette player as you take the rickshaw through the bylanes of the village. Put up the canopy in a location where you can handle queries. While making the announcements, keep distributing the leaflets as well.

TIP: The effectiveness of public announcements can be increased by circulating leaflets and putting up a canopy as well.

Posters

Why?

Posters are also a very effective tool to attract the attention of people in rural areas, especially in small villages and towns.

When?

Posters can be used to remind people about the products and services offered by the telecentre, as well as to create awareness of a new product. Therefore, it is one of the tools that a telecentre can use at any point of the year, irrespective of the phase in the telecentre and product life cycle.

Where?

Posters can be glued anywhere where the locals spend their time relaxing or waiting. These can be streets in front of schools and colleges, bus stops, bookstores, etc. However, never put posters on the walls of important institutions such as hospitals or police stations.

What?

The poster should not be very verbose (that is, it should not have too much text). The size of the font should be big enough so that the information can be easily read. It should always contain the address of the telecentre along with the phone and email address. The first line of the poster should catch the attention of the public. Never use substandard quality for printing posters.

How?

Planning how to use posters should start at least 15 days prior to the first day of every month. This would help you to put the posters in place in the first 10 days



of the month. This is useful, as you can then benefit from the results of this exercise in the following 20 days of the month. During the planning phase, the following things have to be taken care of:

- Budget for printing the posters.
- Selection of places where these posters can be glued.
- Decision on quantity of posters to be used.
- Permission from the local authorities to glue the posters.
- Layout of the posters.
- Selection of vendor who would print the posters.
- Arrangement of resources (vehicle and individuals) to be used to glue the posters.

Community-based approach

Why?

A community mobilisation approach ensures that a large population is able to see and feel the product. This is one of the most successful ways to reach the people and spread awareness of your product. The community mobilisation approach is only possible with the permission of village elders and other influential people. This makes it easy to generate an aura of trust within the community. Therefore, there is a good chance of booking orders and selling products.

When?

Community mobilisation events should be organised keeping the season in mind, with extreme climates, harvesting season and festival times being avoided. All



these seasons are labour-intensive, during which members of the community will be busy with the related activities. To ensure that an activity like community mobilisation is successful, it is also crucial to choose the right time of day. Early mornings, afternoons and late evenings should be avoided. The idea is to select those hours of the day when most villagers, particularly the target segment, are free.

Where?

The selection of the place for such an activity requires careful thought. The location should be a central place close to the village and easily approachable.

How?

To conduct a community mobilisation programme, planning has to be done at least two weeks before the event. First get the permission from the village elders and *sarpanch* to conduct such an activity. Once the permission is granted, spread the message about the programme by conducting house-to-house calls. You could use the age-old method of spreading messages by using a drum. A local person can be approached, who can take a round of the village beating the drum and gathering people, whom he can then inform about the product, the time, venue and date of the event. Distribution of leaflets containing all this information will be an added benefit.

Arrange for the amenities that are required to conduct the programme on the appointed day. On that day, reach the place in advance and set up things as required. Send someone to the villages to gather people and show them the path to the event. Then conduct the programme in an interactive manner, involving the members of the community. Also arrange for some snacks as it will act as an incentive for people to stay.

COMPARISON OF PROMOTIONAL APPROACHES

Type	Size and place	Price	Highs	Lows
Wall paintings	Size = 4x6 Feet. Place = Where the target customers can see them	Rs. 5 to 6 per sq ft.	Permanent. High visibility.	Expensive. Stagnant. Ads cannot be specific.
Posters	A3 size Place = Public places Distance from the ground 8 feet.	Differs from place to place.	Easier to paste in place than wall paintings.	Life is short.
Road shows	Small trucks, cars, vans Villages	Rs. 1,000 per day	Awareness in target markets.	Expensive.
Cable ads	Local cable operator Target localities	Differs from place to place.	High level of awareness.	
Newspaper ads		Differs from place to place.	Reach is good.	Expensive. May not be read in villages as literacy level is very low.
Community mobilisation	Place = Villages		High level of awareness.	Takes a little effort.

SUMMARY

- Promotion is an important element of marketing strategy. It serves to inform, persuade and remind the market about the organisation and the products and services it offers.
- Promotion keeps the product in the mind of the customer and helps stimulate demand for the product. It is an ongoing activity.
- The five different methods of promotion used by business organisations are personal selling, advertisements, sales promotion, publicity and public relations.
- Personal selling and sales promotion can be effective tools to promote telecentre products and services. Fostering long-term relations with the community and institutions – a public relations exercise – can also prove to be very effective.
- Some of the common and most effective sales promotion activities that can be conducted by a telecentre are: free demonstrations, activity stalls, public announcements using a tricycle, rickshaw or auto, posters, events and contests.
- A community mobilisation approach involves conducting village meets and focus group discussions to create awareness among the community about a product or a service. It involves giving product demonstrations to a large groups where people are able to see and feel the product. This is one of the most successful ways to reach people and spread awareness about your product in villages.
- Community meetings and group discussions should be organised keeping the season in mind. Extreme climates, harvesting season and festival times should be avoided.

EXERCISE

- Q1.** Why is promotion needed?
- Q2.** What is the business approach to promotion?
- Q3.** What are the different methods of promotion?
- Q4.** What is the difference between advertising and publicity?
- Q5.** What is sales promotion? What are the different methods of sales promotion?
- Q6.** As a telecentre operator wanting to undertake a promotional campaign, list the factors that you will consider while selecting a promotional method.
- Q7.** Define the community approach to promotion.

Multiple Choice Questionnaire

1. The basic purpose of promotion is to

- a. Inform customers
- b. Educate customers
- c. Persuade customers
- d. All of the above
- e. Only a and b

2. Which of the following is not a method of promotion adopted by businesses?

- a. Advertising
- b. Sales promotion
- c. Personal selling
- d. Street Plays
- e. Public relations

3. Which of the following methods of promotion will be effective for a telecentre

- I. Advertisement on TV
- II. Advertisement in national and regional newspapers
- III. Personal selling
- IV. Sales promotion
- V. Establishing good public relations with opinion leaders and with heads of local institutions

- a. I, II, III, IV and V
- b. Only I, II and III
- c. Only III, IV and V
- d. Only I and II
- e. Only IV and V

4. The most common types of sales promotion that a telecentre can undertake are:

- a. Organising activities or events at the centre
- b. Putting up an activity stall at prominent public places like schools, colleges and offices
- c. Sponsoring events organised by a school or college or panchayat
- d. Distributing leaflets (handbills) to community members directly or through newspapers
- e. All of the above

5. Which of the following are important considerations when putting up an activity stall?

- a. Location of the stall
- b. Timing of setting up the stall
- c. Necessary material for conducting an activity
- d. All of the above
- e. Only a and b

6. The factors that a telecentre operator should keep in mind while selecting a promotional method will be

- a. Target segment audience
- b. Resources available – financial and human
- c. Message to be communicated
- d. Timings – month, day, date of promotion
- e. All of the above

7. Which of the following is not a part of the community-based method of promotion?

- a. Community mobilisation executives
- b. Community presentation or demonstration
- c. Advertising
- d. Community members
- e. Sarpanch and other village elders



Personal Selling

Personal selling is an important part of promotion. From a telecentre's perspective, personal selling assumes great importance. In this chapter, we will learn at great length about personal selling, and the various steps involved in the sale process. The chapter explains in detail how to plan a sale, the things that one should know about one's customers and the business environment. The chapter also touches upon the basic concepts of body language and its interpretation, which are important for any sales person to know.

By the end of this chapter, you should be able to understand:

- **The knowledge a telecentre operator should possess for selling telecentre products and services**
- **The steps and process of a sale**
- **Importance of non-verbal communication in sales**
- **Golden rules of selling and counselling**

In Chapter 1, we had discussed the difference between marketing and sales. We had also mentioned that selling is an important part of marketing. The goal of all marketing efforts is to maximise sales.

Personal selling uses personal communication to inform and persuade a prospective customer to buy goods, services or ideas. Personal selling has several advantages over impersonal methods of promotion discussed in Chapter 4 – advertising, sales promotion, publicity and public relations. In personal selling, a seller can customise a sales presentation to fit the needs and behaviour of individual customers. Also, a seller can respond to a prospective customer's reactions and make adjustments on the spot.

One of the biggest advantages of personal selling is that mostly it is focussed on prospective customers, and therefore results in actual sales. The main objective of other forms of promotion is to move the prospective customer closer to a sale.

As a telecentre operator or manager, at some point in time or the other, you will also have to engage in the sale of products and services offered by your telecentre. Whenever you start selling the products and services to prospective customers in your community, as a salesperson you will have to go beyond simply making a transaction. Your efforts to complete a sale will include a multi-step process as follows:

1. Identify the needs of your prospective customer.
2. Explain the benefits of your product or service.
3. In case you are selling a product, demonstrate its the proper use.
4. Answer questions raised by the prospective customers and respond to objections.
5. Seek commitments from prospective customers.
6. Arrange the terms of the sale and close the sale transaction.
7. Follow-up to ensure that the buyer is satisfied.

A telecentre operator might have to sell products and services both within and outside a telecentre. In cases where a prospective customer walks into a telecentre seeking a product or a service, the process of sale is called counselling. The steps involved in the process of selling, however, remain the same as in counselling.

Planning for a sale

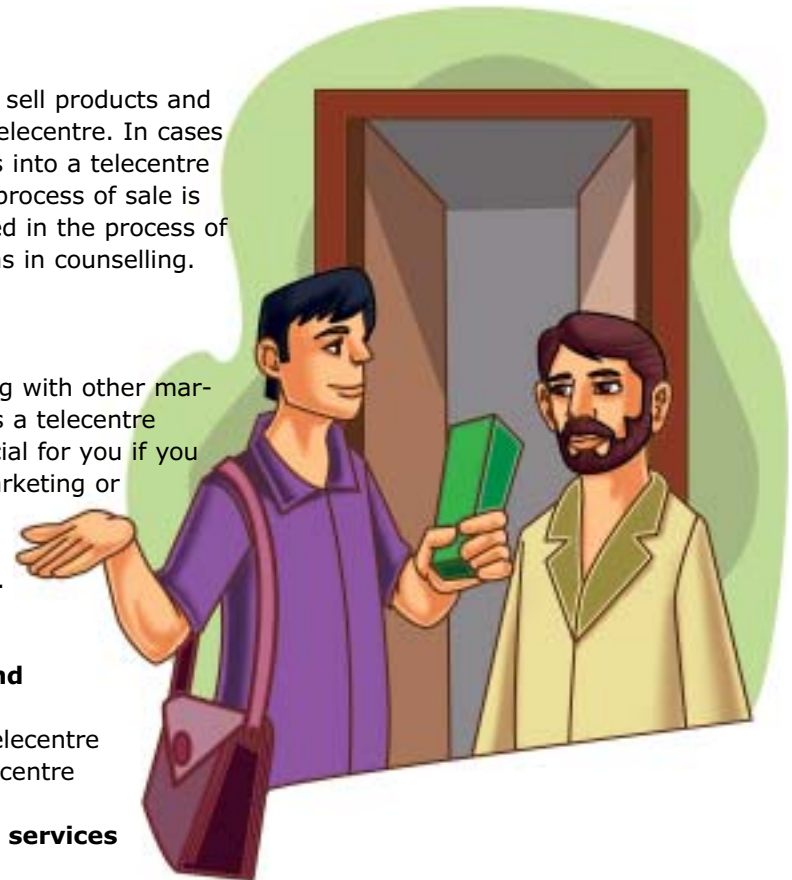
Mostly, personal selling is done along with other marketing and promotion efforts. But as a telecentre operator, it will be especially beneficial for you if you undertake it immediately after a marketing or promotional programme. A smart telecentre operator must know the following before stepping out to sell.

Internal knowledge

- **All about your telecentre and telecentre network**
 - Services available at your telecentre
 - Unique features of your telecentre
 - Expertise
- **Knowledge of products and services offered by your telecentre**
 - Ingredients of the product
 - Unique Selling Proposition (USP) of all the products
 - Benefits of the various products and services
- **Knowledge of policies (if in case your telecentre is associated with a telecentre network)**
 - Promotional schemes (if any)
 - Price structure
 - After-sales services

External knowledge

- **Competitors**
- **Economical environment**
- **Social environment**



A telecentre operator or manager must compile all the above-mentioned information in a logical sequence in a file or a folder to present it elegantly to a prospective customer.

The next step for a telecentre operator is to identify prospective customers through the process of segmentation. A smart telecentre operator would segment the market on the basis of geography, income, age, gender, education, etc, depending upon the product or service to be marketed.

The next step is to identify specific individuals or institutions that would be future customer. Thereafter, a telecentre operator must determine whether they are qualified to buy. Qualification will include two things:

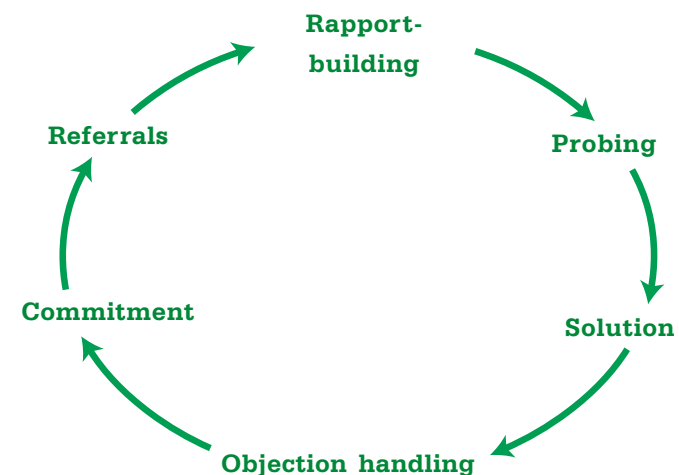
- Willingness to buy
- Capability to buy

Two different scenarios might have resulted in your meeting a prospective customer:

- a. The customer comes to your telecentre after getting to know about it from some source.
- b. A telecentre representative approaches prospective customers outside the telecentre.

In both these scenarios, the process of personal selling remains the same. Only the way you build a rapport with the customer and the degree of time you spend on each of the various steps in the process of personal selling might vary.

The process for effective personal selling



As shown in the figure above, the process involves six steps which are:

1. Rapport-building: Getting to know the prospective customer better by making him/her comfortable; building a relationship of trust. The process of rapport-building is very important as it thaws the ice between two individuals who meet for the first time. We assume that the personal selling is a process which ensures that the telecentre representative becomes the guide of the person who is considered as a prospect for any product or service. Any person would consider another person as his/her guide only when he/she trusts the person. The first step to create that credibility is to build a rapport with the customer. This can be done by introducing each other, addressing the consumer by his/her first name and using some ice breakers to create a comfortable situation. This would help the prospect to be free with the telecentre representative and share his/her thoughts.

2. Probing: Understanding the prospective customer's needs, wants and demands.

This stage comes just after the rapport building stage. As mentioned earlier, marketing is all about identifying the needs of the consumer, educating them about these needs and finally presenting them with a product or service that can satisfy these needs profitably. Probing involves an informal interview where the counsellor tries to know the background of the individual. This will involve asking questions about one's education level, financial soundness, sibling property, etc. It may also include knowing the prospect's future plans from different perspectives such as career, education etc. An appropriate and adequate probing will provide ample inputs to the telecentre representative to analyse the prospect's needs.

3. Suggesting a solution: The knowledge gained from the above step will help the telecentre representative to suggest the right product or service for the individual and justify their selection. A solution which fits into the gap between his present stage and his would-be stage is what the customer is looking for. The solution has to be **measurable, relevant** to the customer's need and **credible** to the customer. While suggesting a solution in terms of product or service, telecentre representative must ensure that solution statement has to have a well thought out structure encompassing the features, Unique selling prepositions (USPs) and the benefits of the product so that it persuades the customer about the product or service.

4. Objection handling and proposing a final solution: In this step the telecentre representative has to handle the queries of a consumer and satisfy all his doubts. This is the step where generally the consumer is convinced but not ready to commit anything. It is a must to remember that any doubt left in the customer's mind will reduce the probability of sale.

5. Taking a commitment: When the prospective customer has been provided with a solution and all his objections have been met, it is time for the telecentre representative to secure a commitment from the prospect. During the entire interaction, it is important to observe the customer's body language closely, and change whenever you find the prospect is not showing interest or is appearing defensive, etc. There are various non-verbal signals that are clear in any conversation. A smart seller is able to read these, and make suitable changes so that he can hold the prospect's attention. One can imagine what the outcome would be if the customer is feeling bored, and the seller goes on and on about the same thing.

Some body signals that should be observed are:

Body signals Indications

Arms folded	Uncomfortable, arrogant or defensive
Rubbing nose	Not getting you
Deep sigh	Feeling bored
Rapid blinking	Confused
Leaning back with hands behind head	Not listening to you
Drumming fingers	In a hurry
Change in rate of speech, voice tone or silence	Have some doubts

6. Taking referrals: Once the sales process is closed and the prospect has been converted, the next step is to ask for references. If the customer is convinced about the product than he/she will give the references of his/her friends.

A smart seller must be careful about his / her personal characteristics

Body Language	Appearance	Language usage and verbal communication
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Maintain eye contact➤ Show confidence➤ Use your hands➤ Gestures➤ Facial expression➤ Have patience➤ Relax➤ Smart enough to use product/service brochure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Wear formal dresses➤ Avoid bright combinations, for example, red and blue➤ Be well groomed (neat and clean)➤ Avoid heavy make-up➤ Avoid heavy jewellery	<p><i>Language should be</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Easily understandable for the prospect➤ Polite➤ Respectful <p><i>Verbal communication</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Your voice should be audible and clear➤ Use proper voice modulation (emphasise the benefits of the product/service)➤ Appropriate rate of speech

TEN GOLDEN RULES OF PERSONAL SELLING

Dos

1. Always emphasise the benefits of the product or service offered. Customers look for benefits, *not* features, advantages, etc.
2. Avoid doing anything else while listening to a prospect. Show respect to a prospect by listening attentively.
3. Offer a high value product or service only after assessing the prospect's paying capacity.
4. The entire transaction must be closed on the spot. Keep checking whether the customer finds the solution interesting or useful. Otherwise, change the way you are positioning the product or service.
5. Always remain patient and positive, and keep smiling.

Don'ts

6. Never tell lies and never over-promise.
7. Never criticise any individual or institution in front of a prospect.
8. Do not make exaggerated statements which may seem false to a prospect.
9. Never leave the option of choosing or closing the sale with the prospect.
10. Never fall into a price debate.

Personal selling script

Situation

A 22-year-old boy comes to a telecentre to know about vocational training courses. He is interested in computers and wants to pursue a course through which he can explore the world of opportunities in the world of information technology.

Key players

- Telecentre representative
- The prospect: Ajit, a 22-year-old boy

Telecentre Representative (TC Rep)

(Gets up from his seat and greets Ajit with a smile)

Welcome, sir.

Please have a seat.

(After Ajit sits comfortably on the chair, the TC Rep starts the conversation in a very polite manner.)

Would you like to have a glass of water?

Rapport-building: Greeting

Prospect: No. Thank you.

TC Rep: What is your name?

Prospect: Ajit. I have come here to know something about vocational training courses.

TC Rep: Fantastic, you have shown an interest in learning something more. You have taken up the initiative to learn more than what is taught in the colleges. I must congratulate you for your initiative.

Rapport-building: Complimenting

Ajit: Thank you.

TC Rep: First I would like to tell you about the place where you have come. We are XYZ. XYZ has helped hundreds of people to become IT proficient. Apart from quality IT education we provide many information based products and services like e-governance, government schemes, etc.

Rapport-building: Building company credibility

TC Rep: May I know something more about you so that I can understand you better?

Probing

Ajit: Yes.

TC Rep: Tell me something about yourself.

Ajit: I am studying at the Government College. I am doing my B.A. Final. My father is a farmer and my elder brother runs a clothing shop in Parsa (a town close by).

TC Rep: How many members are there in your family?

Probing

Ajit: As I said, my father is a farmer. My mother is a housewife. I have an elder brother who owns a shop and a younger sister who is in Class 12.

TC Rep: How do you spend your free time?

Ajit: I am interested in reading books and travelling. I like to know about the outside world.

TC Rep: While making decisions related to your career, such as which course to do or where to do it from, whom do you consult with?

Ajit: I consult with my elder brother but ultimately I myself decide upon the course that I want to study and where I will study. My family has full confidence in the selection I make.

Probing

TC Rep: Where do you see yourself two years from now?

Ajit: I see myself working in the city with a good company and earning a reasonably good income.

TC Rep: Why do you want to do a job while your father has his own farming and your brother is also self employed? Don't you want to have your own business?

Ajit: Actually, my father cannot invest a large amount in setting up a business. He has already invested a large sum on our studies, and soon he will have to spend money on my sister's marriage. Secondly, I want a white collar job where I can get an assured income, and I think a job is the best option for me.

Probing

TC Rep: What kind of education do you need to achieve your goal in life?

Ajit: At present I don't have any specialised degree or diploma. I think it would be difficult for an Arts graduate to get a good job without any professional or specialised training. After

consulting with some people, I have decided to do a computer course. This can help me in getting a good job. I don't know much about computers but I see it everywhere, and I am aware that there are huge opportunities in the world of computers.

TC Rep: I really appreciate your decision to choose IT as your career. Computers have applications in all the fields of life. You could use computers for entertainment, information and even make your daily life simpler. Nowadays computers are being used everywhere, from railway ticketing to sending e-mails.

What I have understood from this conversation is that our Advance Diploma in IT course suits your needs. The total duration of the course is 10 months. Apart from making you conversant with the basics of computers, through structured module, this course provides you with sufficient expertise in some of the latest computer languages like C, C++, SQL and Visual Basic. It also makes you proficient in MS Office. We provide equal number of theory and practical sessions to our students to make them strong on each front. We also provide courseware designed by experts to our students.

Solution

(The courseware is shown to Ajit.)

TC Rep: How do you feel about the course, Ajit?

Ajit: It is good.

Solution

TC Rep: The course will give you a good opportunity to expand your knowledge and learn computers well. With the help of the Internet, you can even search for job opportunities on your computer. There is a huge demand for qualified computer professionals in the industry and it is growing rapidly. Let me show you a list of some of our students who have already got placed successfully after completing the course from our centre.

Objection handling

Ajit: Oh! That's wonderful. But is this course recognised by any university?

TC Rep: XYZ telecentre is an autonomous body in the field of IT education, and as I told you earlier, we provide quality education in over 200 centres across India.

Ajit: What I will have to pay?

TC.Rep: Rs. 200 per month for 10 months. This includes the cost of books, exams and certificates.

Ajit: Do you also provide placements?

TC Rep: Dear Ajit, we provide placement assistance to our students but not jobs. We can and will guide you on where and how to apply. After you complete the course successfully, you will have better skills than fellow students, and finding a job will not be a problem.

Objection handling

Ajit: What kind of jobs can I get after this course?

TC Rep: This is a good question. After this course you can apply for the job of computer instructor in schools, colleges and other institutions, computer lab assistant, computer operator and Office Administrator. You can also apply for the job of a customer care executives in call centres, or as web designer and software programmer in software firms, etc. Apart from this you can start your own business, such as an Internet café or other DTP jobs. You can also start your own computer education centre.

The telecentre representative takes a registration form in his hand and asks:

TC Rep: Ajit, by now you would have realised that joining our course is a good decision. How would you like your name to be spelt on the course certificates?

Taking commitment

Ajit: Ajit Singh.

TC Rep: Let us fill this registration form and complete the formalities.

Ajit: OK. Do I need to pay now?

TC Rep: Yes, you can pay now to reserve your seat in the recently started batch. Ajit, at present we are running two new batches of this course. One is at 10am and the other is at 3pm. Which one would you like to join?

Ajit: I would like to join the 3pm one. When did it start?

TC Rep: It started two days ago. We will give you extra classes to learn the curriculum already covered in those sessions.

Ajit: Ok. Thanks.

The telecentre representative helps Ajit in filling up the form, then collects the fee.

TC Rep: Ajit, can you tell me the names of some of your friends who would be interested in similar courses? You have a surprise gift coming your way if three or more of your references enroll in our centre.

Taking referrals

Ajit: Yes.

The telecentre representative collects the details of Ajit's friends.

An effective selling job does not end when the sale has been made. The final stage of the selling process is a series of post-purchase services that can build customer goodwill and lay the groundwork for future business for your telecentre.

SUMMARY

- Personal selling is one of the most effective methods of promotion. It involves making a one-on-one presentation to a customer about a product or a service.
- One of the biggest advantages of personal selling is that it can be focussed on prospective customers and results in actual sales. The main objective of other forms of promotion is to move the prospective customer closer to a sale.
- The process of personal selling involves identifying the needs of a customer, explain product benefits, answer the questions raised by a customer, arrange the terms of sale and close the sale transaction and follow up the sale to ensure that the buyer is satisfied.
- A smart telecentre operator who engages in personal selling must have the knowledge of the following before stepping out to sell: knowledge of your telecentre and telecentre network; knowledge of policies and competitors; and the economic and social environment.

EXERCISE

- Q1.** What is personal selling?
- Q2.** What are the advantages of personal selling over other methods of promotion?
- Q3.** What are the important steps of a sale process?
- Q4.** As a telecentre operator undertaking a sale, what is the internal and external information that you must know before meeting any prospective customer?
- Q5.** What is probing?
- Q6.** What is objection handling?
- Q7.** What are the things (dos and don'ts) that a smart telecentre operator must keep in mind at the time of making a sale?
- Q8.** What is a sales script? Write a brief sales script that you would use as a telecentre operator to sell e-governance services to your prospective customers.

Multiple Choice Questionnaire

1. The method of promotion in which a marketer meets prospective customers directly to make a product presentation is called

- a. Advertising
- b. Public relations
- c. Sales promotion
- d. Personal selling
- e. None of the above

2. Personal selling offers which of the following advantages over other impersonal methods of promotion like advertising, sales promotion and public relations?

- a. The seller can customise the sales presentation according to customer's needs
- b. The seller can respond to the prospective customer's objections immediately
- c. It can be focussed on prospective customers and can lead to actual sales
- d. All of the above
- e. Only a and b

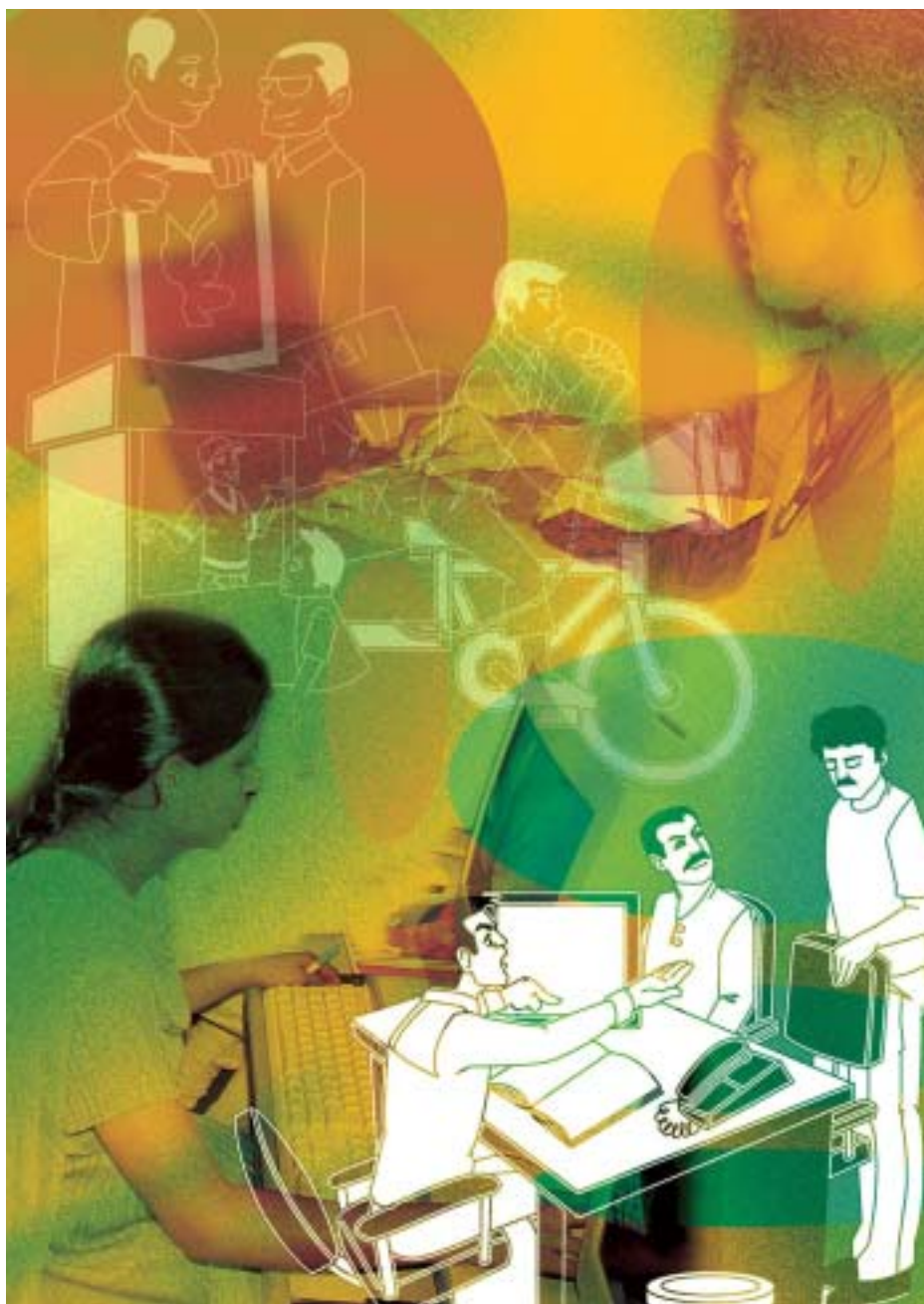
3. Before going for a sale, a salesperson must have good knowledge of

- a. Products and services offered by a telecentre
- b. Knowledge of the specific benefits of each of the product or service
- c. Knowledge of the unique features of his/her telecentre
- d. Only b and c
- e. a, b and c

4. Which of the following are steps of a sale process?

- I. Objection handling
- II. Closing or taking a commitment
- III. Rapport-building and need identification
- IV. Advising a solution

- a. Only I, II and IV
- b. Only I, II and III
- c. Only I and III
- d. Only I and IV
- e. All – I, II, III and IV



How to Plan for a Successful Promotional Programme

Having learnt and understood the basic concepts of marketing, a telecentre operator should also know how to implement them effectively and measure their effectiveness. This chapter will teach you how to plan effective promotional programmes to pull traffic to a telecentre. In this chapter, we will also learn about a budget and its importance in planning and executing a promotional programme. We will also discuss ways to measure the effectiveness of a promotional programme.

By the end of this chapter, you should be able to understand:

- **The importance of preparing a plan**
- **The importance a preparing a budget**
- **The way to estimate revenues and costs of various methods of promotion**
- **The method of measuring effectiveness of the plan implemented**

In the previous chapters, we learnt the concepts of grassroots marketing. In Chapters 4 and 5, we learnt the basic concepts of promotion and various methods of promotion. A telecentre can bring in customers by intelligently varying the marketing mix (4Ps), especially price and promotion. As discussed earlier, one can do different things to bring in customers at different times in the life of a telecentre. During its opening, one needs to create large scale awareness of the centre across sections of the community. This is best done by inviting people (particularly influential people from different sections of society), holding village meetings, organising a demonstration of products and services in the local *haat*, etc.

When a centre has been running for some time and, therefore, adequate awareness has been generated, the focus of activities has to shift to promoting greater use of the centre. This can be done through word-of-mouth publicity, and also by ensuring that people of different age groups, and across gender utilise the telecentre facilities. There are a large number of simple ways to do this, some of which are:

- Inviting influential people to hold small lectures about the benefits of the products and services.
- Adapting products and services that help people earn money, find a job, etc. For example, providing career counselling to youth who come to your centre to study, helping local artisans find a market for their craft through the use of the Internet.
- Highlighting success stories of the initial phase.

Some other things that can help bring in consumers:

- Outdoor advertising – wall painting.
- Contests in the centre – will bring in school or college children.
- Forming a club for people of different age groups.
- Distributing leaflets.
- Putting up posters.
- Publicity through Rickshaws, etc.

Preparing a plan

Planning is vital for conducting a successful marketing programme and so is execution. Therefore, at the beginning, we need to draw up a plan of activities that will bring more customers to the telecentre. Planning involves deciding about the following:

- What to do
- When to do
- Where to do
- How to do
- Whom to do

Careful planning will help in efficient resource utilisation and effective implementation, and will help us understand the improvements that need to be made.

Conducting a promotional plan requires resources – promotional material and people. All of this costs money. However, costs can be incurred provided that these activities bring in revenue that is at least a few times more than the cost.

Until the telecentre starts generating a healthy surplus, it has meagre resources. Therefore, any expenditure has to be carefully considered, and drawing up a budget becomes important.

What is a budget?

A budget is an amount allocated to be spent on a specific activity. Let us suppose you have decided to carry out a few promotional activities as you think they are best suited to bring in customers. Let us say you intend to spend Rs. 1,000 in the coming month against these activities. In this case your budget will be Rs. 1,000. Of this, you plan to spend Rs. 200 on, say, posters. Then the budget for posters is Rs. 200.

One can ask: How would a telecentre operator decide how much to spend on promotion, that is, on the

promotion budget. It would depend on the availability of funds (money), the kind of activities to be conducted and their revenue generation potential,. It is important to carefully estimate the revenue generation potential, and while one cannot get a 100 per cent accurate estimate, one must go through the steps in Table 1.

TABLE 1. ESTIMATING REVENUE

Land record applications

	1 st Quarter	2 nd Quarter	3 rd Quarter	4 th Quarter	Total
No. of applications	1,000	1,200	1,300	1,400	4,900
Projected price (Rs.)	10	10	10	10	10
Estimated revenue (Rs.)	10,000	12,000	13,000	14,000	49,000

Note: The number of applications have to be estimated based on an understanding of the need; while the price has to be fixed based on an understanding of people's paying power as well as market rates.

The table calculates the revenue estimate from land record applications in a year. A projection for the year is given in the first row. The figures are given on a quarterly basis, cumulated at the end. The revenue is calculated by multiplying the number of applications expected to be received and the amount paid for each application by customers. The figures are shown in the last column. By knowing the amount of revenue that one can earn at the end of a period, the expenditures can be planned so that at the end of the period, the telecentre owner is able to cover his costs and generate a surplus.

Budget for promotional expense

A budget ensures that proper thinking is done and a plan is made for the optimum utilisation of the funds available.

A simple format can be made to allocate funds for a promotional activity in a particular month. At the beginning of every month, a telecentre owner can allocate funds to be spent on a particular activity as shown in Table 2. At the end of the activity the owner can fill up the format as shown in Table 3. This will give him / her the variance between planned and actual spending. Using this information one can investigate as to where there was a slack and hence tie up the loose ends of the implementation part.

Table 2. Cost estimate for promotional Activities in January 2007 (Rs.)

Activity	Estimated cost	Estimated revenue
Rickshaw	1,000	5,000
Posters	1,200	2,500
Leaflets	600	1,000
Wall painting	1,000	0
Canopy	200	800
Lecture demonstration in the centre	400	1,000
Demonstration in local haats	2000	2,000
Village meeting	1,000	3,000

Table 3. Actual spending on promotional activities in January 2007 (Rs.)

Activity	Actual cost	Actual revenue
Rickshaw	800	4,500
Posters	1,500	2,000
Leaflets	600	0
Wall painting	1,000	0
Canopy	200	500
Lecture demonstration in the centre	400	1,000
Demonstration in local <i>haats</i>	2,500	3,000
Village meeting	400	2,000

Which activities have been effective, and can be repeated? Which activities have not worked, and how could those have been relatively more effective? These topics are covered in the next section.

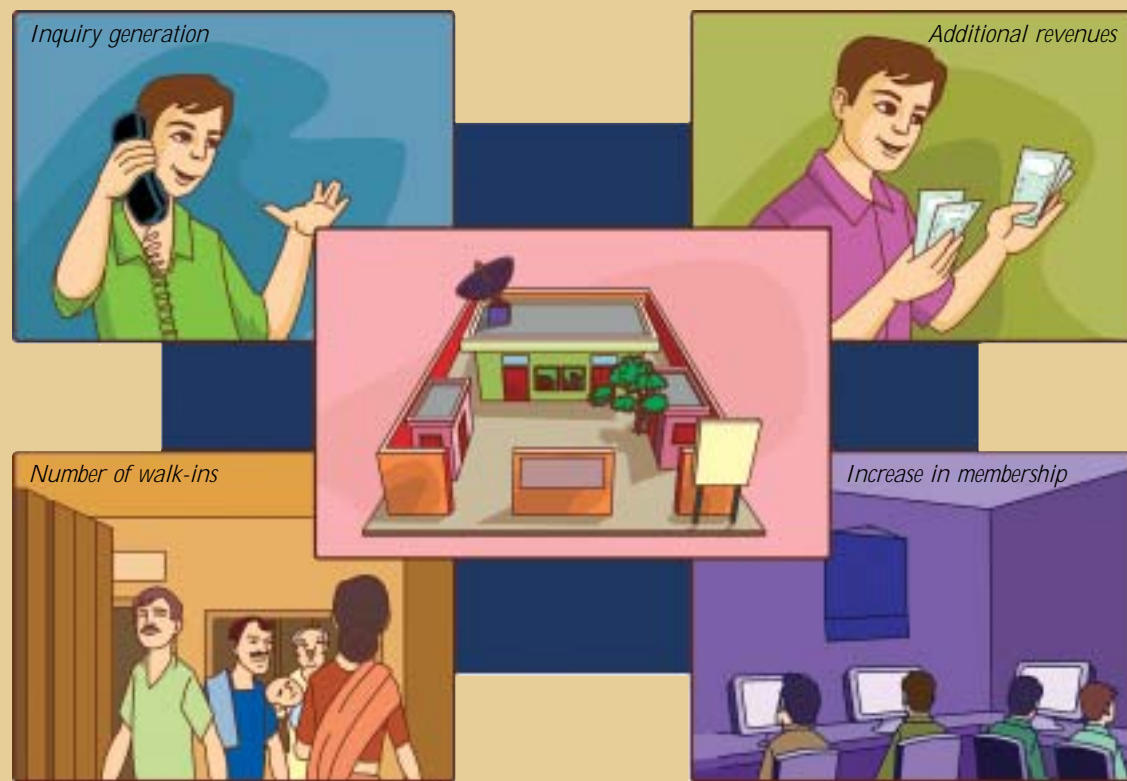
Measuring the effective implementation of a plan

Having spent money and conducted a set of activities, it is important to understand how effective these have been in meeting various objectives.

There are a few simple measures (listed below) that can be used to understand the same. The measure to use will depend on the objectives with which the activity was conducted.

- **Revenue** – Any good marketing activity should increase the revenue of the telecentre.
- **Inquiry generation** – The success of a marketing activity can also be measured by the number of inquiries that it generates.
- **Number of walk-ins** in the telecentre – also gives you the indication of successful activity.
- **Increase in membership** – also gives you the indication of successful activity.

A promotional activity can be considered to have been effective if it leads to:



Simple formats where the statistics can be recorded can help you capture the effectiveness of a promotional activity. The following formats are examples showing the effectiveness of promotional activities corresponding to the place and product. In the first format we can see that the effectiveness of a roadshow for getting e-governance applications in a telecentre can be represented as follows.

Activity	Product or service	Expected inquiries	Actual inquiries	Expected sales	Actual sales	Revenue generated	Cost incurred
Roadshow	e-governance applications	200	140	70	44	440	Rs. 200
Posters	e-governance applications	100	60	30	20	200	Rs. 400

Parameters determining effectiveness of promotional methods

(A) Effectiveness in generating inquiries = (Actual inquiries) / (Expected inquiries)

(B) Effectiveness in terms of revenue vs cost = (Revenues generated) / (Cost incurred)

Now we can use the figures collected to evaluate the respective effectiveness of each of the two approaches used for promotion.

Roadshow

- Effectiveness in generating inquiries: $140/200 = 70\%$
- Effectiveness in generating sales: $44/70 = 62.85\%$
- Effectiveness in terms of revenue vs cost: $440/200 = 2.2$
- Cost incurred per sale: $\text{Rs. } 200/44 = \text{Rs. } 4.54$

Posters

- Effectiveness in generating inquiries: $60/100 = 60\%$
- Effectiveness in generating sales: $20/30 = 66.67\%$
- Effectiveness in terms of revenue vs cost: $200/400 = 0.5$
- Cost incurred per sale: $\text{Rs. } 400/20 = \text{Rs. } 20$

In view of the above facts, it is quite clear that a roadshow is a better activity to conduct than putting up posters. The cost incurred per sale in case of a roadshow comes out to be Rs. 4.54 compared to Rs. 20 in the case of posters. The roadshow also generated more inquiries at 70% compared to 60% of posters.

Similarly, in the second format we can find out the effectiveness of two different activities in generating awareness in a particular place.

Place	Activity	Product	Expected walk-ins	Actual walk-ins	Expected enquiries over the phone	Actual enquiries over the phone	Expected new members	Actual new members
Shastri Park	Roadshow	Cook stove	50	20	50	10	25	5
Shastri Park	Posters	Cook stove	50	10	50	5	25	1

Effectiveness in generating inquiries

Roadshow

Walk-ins: $20/50 = 40\%$

Telephone: $10/50 = 20\%$

New membership: $5/25 = 20\%$

Posters

Walk-ins: $10/50 = 20\%$

Telephone: $5/50 = 10\%$

New membership: $1/25 = 4\%$

This clearly shows that a roadshow is the best way to promote the cook stove in Shastri Park. Similarly, simple records can help you decipher the effectiveness of promotional activities and this understanding will help one utilise his money in a better way.

SUMMARY

- In addition to having an understanding of the basic concepts of marketing and marketing promotion, it is also important to know how and when to implement them effectively.
- At the time of planning a promotional activity, it is important to draw up a budget.
- A budget is an amount allocated to be spent on a specific activity. A budget ensures that proper thinking is done and a plan is made for the best utilisation of the funds available.
- Once the budget is known, a telecentre operator can draw up a plan of specific promotional events keeping in mind the budgetary constraints.
- The operator must also take care of the details to ensure successful execution of the plan.
- Once the plan is executed, a telecentre operator must also measure the effectiveness of the plan against the objectives set.
- There are a few simple measures that can be used to measure the effective implementation of a plan. These are: revenue, inquiry generation, number of walk-ins in the telecentre and increase in membership.



Effective Delivery of Products and Services

Having well defined and smooth processes are essential for any organisation to succeed. This is also true for any telecentre. In this chapter, we will discuss about the importance of having smooth processes. The chapter also highlights the importance of qualified and skilled staff in ensuring the smooth delivery of products and services from a telecentre.

By the end of this chapter, you should be able to understand:

- **Importance of effectively delivering products and services**
- **Importance of good ambience**
- **Importance of skilled staff**
- **Importance of a smooth process**
- **Importance of effective grievance handling**

While the effective delivery of products and services is dependent on our understanding customer requirements and making them aware of the telecentre, the following characteristics enhance delivery:

- a) Accessibility
- b) Availability of requisite physical infrastructure
- c) Quality of staff in the centre

It is important that the telecentre generates acceptance within the local community. While a telecentre's primary role is to deliver products and services, it cannot effectively discharge this role unless it is able to build a strong relationship with the community. The three factors above have an important role to play in building this relationship.

Importance of good ambience in a telecentre

All of us like an environment which is neat and clean. A clean environment creates attention and attracts us, compared to an untidy environment. The same principle applies in a telecentre. A telecentre which is neat and clean will create a good impression in the minds of those who visit it. A properly managed telecentre also convinces the regular customers that they are in good hands. Certain things should be done to ensure that the ambience of the telecentre is eye-catching. These are as the following.

- Dust-free environment.
- Peaceful environment.
- All the files and other office documents arranged neatly.
- Neat and clean toilets.
- Arrangement of drinking water.
- Sufficient chairs for the visitors to sit.

A telecentre which is neat and clean creates a good impression in the minds of those who visit it.



Skill-sets required in the staff to run a telecentre

To create a good ambience in the telecentre it is imperative to employ the right people who possess certain skills. A telecentre is a community centre which will be visited by the local community members. This includes men, women, girls and boys. A telecentre should be able to create an atmosphere of safety among the community members so that females should not feel unsafe in the environment. To achieve this, the employees of the telecentre should behave well with the visitors. They should be able to redress the queries of customers and convince them to buy the

products and services. A very high degree of energy levels, confidence and extrovert personality are the skill-sets required to be successful in this business. An understanding of the local people and the market would further help the cause. As this business requires an individual to interact with different people regularly one should not feel hesitant to meet and greet people. A high energy level will be needed to implement activities and meet the targets. The skills possessed or required are:

Positive thinker

Always believe in the products and services that you sell. Apart from that, believe in yourself and that you can sell the product.

Smiling face

Keep a smile on your face. That makes a visitor comfortable.

Caring

Always care for the customer. Try to know his problems and care for them.

Facilitator

Be a facilitator. Find out what are the problems or concerns of the customer and then suggest a product or service that can solve that problem.

Courteous

Always behave well.

Patience

High patience levels will be needed to implement activities and meet targets.

Good communication

Confidence and an extrovert personality, as well as an understanding of the local people and the market, would further help the business.

Well-groomed

A well-groomed telecentre employee will create a good impression in the minds of visitors.

Importance of a smooth process

These days customers are willing to pay more if the services provided are of the highest order. Managing the customer immaculately is the need of the hour. For example, if the product is a curriculum than the whole process involving counselling, collecting the fee, providing the receipt, exam and the final delivery of the certificate should be so smooth that the customer lauds the service. This creates a good impression about the organisation and hence helps to create a good and long-lasting relationship with the customer. The process starts when a customer comes to the telecentre with a query. The telecentre employee should become a friend and guide, addressing all the queries that a customer may have and convincing him to go for the service offered in the telecentre.

How to have a smooth process in the delivery of products and services

By writing down procedures for business activities, your business can be run more efficiently and consistently. Procedures can be for activities such as dealing with complaints, preparing quotes, serving customers, answering phone calls, counselling and e-mails and equipment use.

EXAMPLES OF EFFECTIVE PROCESSES

Dealing with complaints

Any company these days lays emphasis on service. Dealing with complaints is also a way of servicing. A telecentre which is quick to redress customer grievances benefits over its competitors. A happy and satisfied customer spreads the appreciation by positive word-of-mouth in the community. This helps to build the credibility of the telecentre acting as a medium of advertisement. A set and written document about different problems and possible solutions, along with the timelines, will allow an employee to expedite the process of rectification.

Example

Take the example of an e-governance application which has not been responded to for more than two weeks. The customer complains over the phone, that he has not received the response to the application he had filed through your telecentre. In such a situation the telecentre owner should make a promise the customer regarding how much time it would take to address the complaint. Once promised, the timelines should be met under all circumstances. If there is an error on the part of the customer than that has to be communicated in a polite manner.

Answering phone calls

Phone calls are a common feature in the life of a telecentre owner. Thus telephone manners are something that is very necessary. There has to be a written script about how to answer the telephone.

Example

Operator: Good morning. ABC telecentre. May I help you?

Caller: I want to know about the price of different vocational courses that you offer.

Operator: May I know your name please?

Caller: This is Rajesh.

Operator: Namaskar Rajeshji. What do you do?

Caller: I am a student studying in Class 10 and would like to know about the vocational courses you are offering.

Operator: First of all I would like to congratulate you for your prudent decision. Rajesh we have a couple of courses for students of Class 10. However can you tell me what your subjects were in Class 10? It would be great if you can share your future plans.

After probing, just suggest a suitable course. Ask him to come to the telecentre for a better understanding about the course and a feel of the resource materials.

Repercussion of a faulty process in the system

Example

Consider an example of a telecentre which sells a mechanically powered torch in rural areas. Suppose a person books a torch with the telecentre executive who visits his village. In a normal case, the executive books the order with his telecentre after his visit. However, due to a flawed process, for instance, the absence of an order book, the person in charge may forget to write the order in a professional way. The hectic schedule of the executive does not allow him to follow up with the booking order clerk. This would create a situation where the order is forgotten by every one in the telecentre. On the other hand, the customer who had booked the order will keep on waiting, lose his patience and finally would cancel the order. The consequence would be suicidal for the telecentre as it would lose its credibility among community members. Remember: negative publicity in the rural areas spreads like wild fire, and can be detrimental to the image of a telecentre.

SUMMARY

- A telecentre operator can effectively deliver products and services when she develops a better understanding of customers' requirements.
- A telecentre which is neat and clean will create a good impression in the minds of those who visit it. A properly managed telecentre also convinces the regular customers that they are in good hands.
- A telecentre operator must be adequately skilled to deliver satisfactory services to customers. Behavioural skills which are required by a person to run a successful telecentre are positive thinking, caring, facilitation skills, courtesy, patience, good communication skills and good grooming.
- The employee of the telecentre should redress amicably all the queries that a customer may raise and persuade the customer to avail a service offered in his telecentre.
- A telecentre, which is quick to redress customer grievances, benefits over its competitors. A happy and satisfied customer spreads the appreciation by positive word-of-mouth in the community.

EXERCISE

- Q1.** What is the importance of maintaining good ambience in a telecentre?
- Q2.** Why is it important to have a well-qualified and trained telecentre operator?
- Q3.** Explain the importance of having a smooth process.
- Q4.** List the attributes of an effective telecentre operator.

Multiple Choice Questionnaire

1. A telecentre can deliver products and services effectively only when

- a. It is easily accessible to community members
- b. The necessary infrastructure – power, computers, Internet, furniture, etc – is available at the telecentre
- c. Telecentre operator is adequately trained and certified to deliver the service
- d. None of the above
- e. All – a, b and c

2. Maintaining good ambience in a telecentre means

- a. Neat and clean dust-free environment
- b. Peaceful environment with very little noise
- c. All furniture, hardware and documents arranged in a proper manner
- d. Availability of clean drinking water
- e. All of the above

3. If a telecentre does not maintain good ambience, then which of the following will hold true?

- a. Unsatisfied customers
- b. Decrease in number of walk-ins to the centre
- c. Positive word-of-mouth publicity in the community
- d. All of the above
- e. Only a and b

4. To run a telecentre effectively, it is important that a telecentre operator must

- a. Be polite and courteous towards all customers
- b. Patiently listen to customer grievances, if any, and try to resolve them amicably
- c. Always be positive and full of energy
- d. Frequently visit community members and build good relationships with them
- e. All of the above

5. Having a smooth process to service customers helps to

- a. Create a positive first impression about the telecentre and its staff
- b. Service the customers efficiently
- c. Quickly identify and resolve mistakes, if any, committed by telecentre staff in servicing customers
- d. All of the above
- e. Only a and b

Feedback Form for Grassroots Marketing for Telecentre Management

Your feedback on this module is very important to our efforts to continually improve its content and presentation style. Please take a few moments to complete this questionnaire.

Your name (optional):

How many hours did it take you to complete this module?

Please send us your feedback on the various aspects of the module by placing a (✓) mark in the column that best describes how you feel – choose from

- 1 which means strongly disagree;
- 2 which means somewhat disagree;
- 3 which means somewhat agree; or
- 4 which means strongly agree.

Statements about the module	1	2	3	4
1. The objectives of the module were clearly stated.				
2. The subject matter of the module was new to me.				
3. The subject matter of the module was relevant to me.				
4. The module was written in a manner that is clear and easy to understand.				
5. The treatment of the module topic was adequate.				
6. The module's level of difficulty was just right.				
7. The module provided me with new ideas, insights or perspectives.				
8. The module increased my understanding of major concepts and principles.				
9. The module provided me with new knowledge and skills that enhance my job performance.				
10. The examples and/or case studies in the module were relevant.				
11. There were too many learning activities and exercises.				

Please answer the following questions on the back of this page.

1. What did you find most useful in the training? (Please explain your answer.)
2. What did you find least useful in the training? (Please explain your answer.)
3. On what topics, if any, would you rather have spent more time – whether or not they were addressed in the training?
4. On what topics, if any, would you rather have spent less time?
5. What suggestions do you have for improving the module?
6. Any other suggestions or comments you may have.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please tear it out (or photocopy these two pages) and send to:

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This manual on Grassroots Marketing that forms part of the set of *Telecentre Management Training Manuals* prepared and peer-reviewed by telecentre.org's five valued partners in India helps learners to understand the concept of marketing. It dwells upon the differences between urban and rural markets, outlines methods to identify telecentre customers and their needs, and recommends strategies to promote a telecentre business.

Mission 2007 partners



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Telecentre Management Training Manual

Grassroots Communications

Version 1 (prepared by Mission 2007 partners)

telecentre.org is a collaborative social investment programme of



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Contents

■ 4

Concept of Communications

There are several forms of communication starting from inter-personal communication to use of various media tools and the Internet. With the information revolution, it is very important to be in control of communication processes and also the medium through which one wants to communicate.

■ 18

The Art of Good Writing

Central to the process of communication, especially the use of mass media, is the art of good writing. And integral to the writing process is the ability to tell good stories.

■ 28

The Power of Wallposter Comics

With the novel use of wallposter comics, even an illiterate person in the village can see and understand your intended message. Following the popular storytelling technique, wallposter comics are stories told in a four-panel visual format.

■ 34

How to Become a Photographer

'A photograph is worth a thousand words' is a popular saying. It is very important to master the science and art of photography to use it as a medium of communication at the grassroots level.

■ 44

The Power of Radio

This chapter introduces you to the importance of radio, especially community radio, and how it can be a powerful medium to communicate at the grassroots level. You are then taken, step-by-step, into the programme production process.

■ 52

The Power of Digital Stories

Using the knowledge gained about computers and computer programmes, and applying the art of storytelling to media skills such as photography and audio recording, you can create very special and unique digital stories about your home, your village, your community and the issues that emerge. Making digital stories can be fun and it can be an inexpensive alternative to videos and film-making.





Concept of Communications

Communication is part and parcel of human existence. Without communication, man cannot live and function as part of human society. Initially, man used to communicate through gestures and symbols, and later language and culture evolved. Nowadays, there are several forms of communication starting from inter-personal communication to use of various media tools and the Internet. With the information revolution, it is very important to be in control of communication processes and also the medium through which one wants to communicate. This chapter gives an overview of the importance of communications, the various types and forms of communication. It then outlines the importance of grassroots communications.

By the end of this chapter, you should be able to understand:

- **Importance of communications**
- **Types and forms of communications**
- **How to categorise communication channels**
- **Elements of effective interpersonal communication**
- **Grassroots communication and its relevance in the community**

Communication is an inseparable part of our lives. All of us communicate on a daily basis with ourselves, our family members, friends, relatives, teachers, government officials, business partners and even pets. Without communications, the world will come to a grinding halt.

In its simplest form, 'communication' can be defined as an exchange of thoughts, ideas and feelings. It is a process of sending a message through a medium of one's choice to a person who can receive it and then act upon it. It can also be defined as 'who said to whom with what effect'. All communication must have a purpose, otherwise it is meaningless.

EXERCISE

An exercise to understand what communication means:

Window is closed:

- Imagine a situation where there is no communication. No media are available in your isolated village. **Write** an imaginary experience of how you would communicate with the community. **Discuss** the experience and **explore** the role of communication in this.

Window opens:

- Know the modern world around you with the help of the modern tools of mass media available to you. Write about the changed situation. How is life comfortable in and around the place you stay? How are the various tools of mass media being used?

Central to the process of communications is the sender, the receiver, the message and the medium.

For example, imagine a person who wants to talk to his brother who is on a tour to a foreign country. He can use either letters, e-mail or fax to communicate. In this case, the person who is sending the letter becomes the sender, the one who receives it the receiver.

The sender must have clarity and must know what to communicate. He must be well aware of the five Ws and the one H – what, where, why, when, who and how.

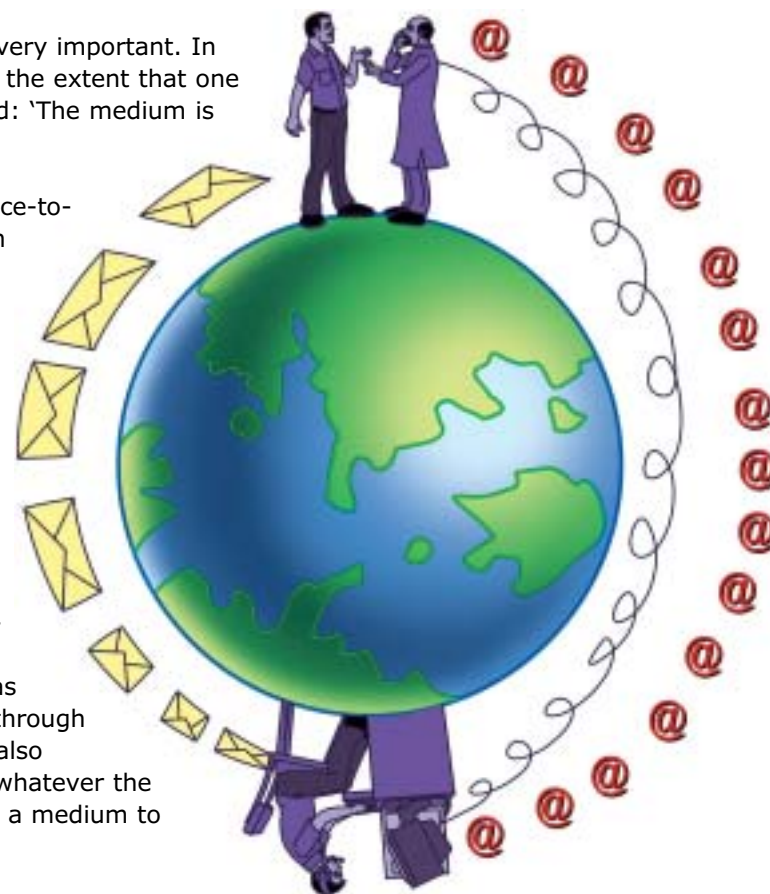
The choice of the medium is also very important. In fact, it qualifies every message to the extent that one communications specialist has said: 'The medium is the message'.

Usually when communication is face-to-face, it does not involve a medium because the sender and the receiver are in direct contact. A conversation between two people — if they are in the same office or in the same home — is an example of a communication that can happen directly.

But a conversation between two people who are separated by a geographical distance cannot happen face-to-face. If, for example, the sender is in India and the receiver is in America, they can (as mentioned earlier) communicate through letter, fax, telephone, e-mail and also through computers. In this case, whatever the sender wants to say goes through a medium to reach the receiver.

SENDER ➤ MEDIUM ➤ RECEIVER

MESSAGE



There are different media that one can choose depending on the target audience and on the geographical profile of the area where the communication is intended.

Some common media in use are:

- letters, telegrams and written communication
- telephone, fax and e-mail
- newspapers
- radio and television
- internet and multimedia
- podcasting
- blogging
- streaming video
- traditional forms of communication



The receiver's profile is also very important as it makes communication very specific. For example, the language that a person speaks, his culture and geographical location will all determine which media one would use to communicate and in which language. Without knowing the receiver's general profile, customs, tradition and culture, communication might not be successful.

Pre-historic man used to communicate through gestures and symbols. Remnants of cave paintings in almost all early civilisations are classic examples of this urge to communicate. Then came the invention of language. Imagine the diversity of the world today as humankind has evolved to encompass various cultures, customs and traditions. Consider the examples below.

CULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS



➤ A woman with a bindi on her forehead comes to your training programme. Does it communicate something about her?

➤ There are people comfortable eating with their hands; some can eat only with a knife and fork; and some eat on banana leaves instead of plates. Can you instantly say which regions they are from?



➤ Artful drawings called *kolams* can be found in front of homes in all parts of South India. Can you recall other forms of art and architecture that communicate their origin?

Types and forms of communication

The earliest form of communication known to man is cave drawings and symbols, in which communication happened through pictures. And then as human beings settled down, they started living in homes and organising social congregations. Communities which lived together shared a similar lifestyle. They had similar food habits, similar kinds of dresses, similar kinds of celebration of important milestones in life, etc. They interacted with each other and this interaction became a culture which we call communication.

In the modern world, we communicate through a variety of ways. There is interpersonal and group communication; in an office setting there are staff meetings, trainings, meetings, conferences, newsletters, e-mails, etc. There are also external forms of communication such as reports, newsletters and letters – the list is endless.

Communication can basically be classified into two types:

- Verbal communication
- Non-verbal communication

EXERCISE

To understand communication, look at your surroundings and list five things from a man or a woman's attributes that tell you something about him or her.

Everything that a man or woman does or wears has a pattern which can be attributed either to culture or to environment. Why do Indian women wear bindis on their foreheads whereas Americans don't? In fact, by looking at the way a person dresses or speaks, we can say which part of India he/she is from. How do we do

that? This is because of the large body of communication that we carry with us, which is known as non-verbal communication. In contrast, there is verbal communication which evolved with the evolution of language. Whatever was spoken became oral communication and gradually led to written communication.

The following are the various types of communication:

- **Oral** – People invented special forms of communication tied to the place of their gatherings. Gathering outside tea stalls or in *chaupals* in villages gave them an opportunity to exchange information and ideas. In modern times, gadgets such as telephones and cellphones enhance mutual communication.
- **Written** – Newspapers are perhaps the earliest forms of organised written communication. This goes back to the invention of the printing press by Gutenberg that made written communication possible through printing technology. Pamphlets, bill-boards, hoardings, etc, emerged as methods of propaganda using the written word.
- **Visual** – The addition of pictures to explain parts of the written word has been used since time immemorial. In fact, communicating through visuals has been quite effective right from pre-historic times. Photography is still considered an effective form of communication and a saying goes that 'a picture is worth a thousand words'. Comics, paintings, illustrations and drawings are other forms of visual communication.
- **Electronic** – The two primary forms of communication using electronic technology are radio and television, and both depend on air waves. In modern times, television has become a very effective means of reaching out to people in their homes while radio still remains the most effective form of communication for people

living in remote areas or for people on the move.

- **Web-based** – This form of communication has revolutionised our times as the entire world is now practically at the fingertips of people in the cozy confines of their homes. The Internet has made the world a global village in the true sense of the term.
- **Folk and indigenous communication** – With every culture evolved folk and indigenous forms of communication. Traditional folk instruments, like *dhol* in Rajasthan or *mridangam* in Tamil Nadu, have been used to take messages from one village to another. There are organised forms of folk media like 'villupattu' in Tamil Nadu and 'burra katha' in Andhra Pradesh, which are still very popular.



Categorising communication channels

Communication channels can broadly be referred to as delivery systems for messages to reach intended audiences. These can broadly be classified into 'interpersonal', 'community-oriented' and 'mass media'.

Interpersonal channels focus on either one-to-one or one-to-group communication. One-to-one channels include peer-to-peer, spouse-to-spouse and community change agents-to-clients. Interpersonal channels use both verbal and non-verbal communication.

Community-oriented channels focus on spreading information through existing social networks such as a family or a community group. This channel is effective when dealing with community norms and offers the opportunity for audience members to reinforce one another's behaviour.

Forms of community communication include:

- Community-based media, such as local newspapers, local radio stations, bulletin boards and posters.
- Community-based activities, such as health fairs, folk dramas, concerts, rallies and parades.
- Community mobilisation, a participatory process of communities identifying and taking action on shared concerns.

Mass media channels reach large audiences. They are particularly effective at agenda setting and contributing to the establishment of new social norms. Formats range from educational to entertainment to advertising. Mass media channels, which reach a large audience in a short period of time include:

- Television
- Radio
- Newspapers
- Magazines
- Outdoor/Transit advertising
- Direct Mail
- The Internet
- Cellphones – SMS (Messaging Services)

Traditional media are living expressions of the lifestyle and culture of a people, evolved through the years. They are vehicles of persuasive communication as they reach large audiences. Being part of the rural social environment, they constitute a credible source of information for the people and can reach large audiences. Folk media are an essential ingredient in producing culturally identifiable communication packages. Being a product of local culture, folk media are rich in cultural symbols and intimate with people at the grassroots. Also, they are highly participatory and can stimulate development. Examples of traditional and folk media are puppetry in Rajasthan, street theatre in various parts of the country, *villupattu* in Tamil Nadu, *kathakali* in Kerala, *burra katha* in Andhra Pradesh and *jatra* in West Bengal.

COMMUNITY MOBILISATION

Krishnendu Bose, a Delhi-based film-maker, makes documentaries on environmental and livelihood issues. He often returns to the region where a film has been shot, and screens it for the local community to view and then discuss the issues tackled in the documentary.





THE REVIVAL OF VILLUPATTU

In Tamil Nadu, there has been a revival of *villupattu* in recent times. 'Villu' means bow and 'pattu' means song. So, the term '*villupattu*' refers to a form of communication in which the communicator has the traditional bow in front of him and uses a style that combines song, drama and narration. In earlier times, kings and soldiers used to communicate in this form and hence the term. After the tsunami struck coastal areas in Nagapattinam and Cuddalore in Tamil Nadu, *villupattu* was introduced among the children as a form of communication by Plan India under the Amazing Kids project. Children now use the media to create awareness on a host of social issues ranging from education through water and sanitation to disaster preparedness. Needless to say, this form of communication draws huge crowds and is proving to be a hit with the masses.

Elements of effective interpersonal communication

There are three important aspects of communication, that is, *Agaaz*, *Aawaz* and *Andaaz*. [Translated, these terms mean beginning, voice and style.] An effective communicator should focus on body language, facial expression, hand movement, eye movement, level of confidence, voice modulation, pauses, stances of their speech, etc. *Aawaz* means voice, that is, whatever we say with our mouth and hear with our ears. Voice is a gift of Nature. When we speak or communicate, the message sent across is more than the words themselves, it includes not just the voice but the tone, the pauses, stance, pitch and clarity. Proper communication is difficult because at each step in the process there are potentials for error. It is therefore critical to understand the communication process, be aware of the potential sources of errors and constantly counteract these tendencies by making efforts to remove and reduce barriers to effective communication.

It is also important to understand that in case of non-verbal communication, we attribute meaning to not just what someone else is saying (that is, the verbal part of the message) but also the non-verbal communication (such as *Andaz* and *Agaaz*). *Andaaz* means style, facial expression and movement of the eyes. Facial expressions play an important role in communication.

Interpersonal communication is not merely just talking and listening. Verbal behaviour is only one component between people. In this section, you will read about some of the main elements that you may need to use to make your work easier.

We communicate with our eyes

Eyes are windows through which you see the person inside. Eyes express emotions and attitudes. Eye

Mst dance forms make extensive use of the eyes, of expressions, of hand gestures and of body movements to communicate emotions and even to narrate incidents.



contact is a common means of expressing love. Gaze aversion is interpreted as unwillingness to interact. A strong gaze may indicate dominance or aggression and a person with little eye contact is seen as submissive or shy. Eye movements indicate that we are attending to others; they are used to open and close communication channels between people while speaking in turns.

A period of eye contact often starts an interaction during which you look at the person who is talking to you. The person often looks away while she/he is talking, once in a while checking whether you are looking (listening). After she/he has finished, this gaze is returned to you to signify your turn to talk.

Learn to use this understanding. Skills are formed by repetitive use. To initiate control into non-verbal behaviour, role plays are useful. If you are a shy person, you can still learn to get out of your shell by making eye contact. Instead of looking into yourself, learn to look into somebody else. The fear of the 'unknown other' will melt as communication channels open up.

Communicating with facial expression

When we look at people, we are not only looking at their eyes. Facial expressions are the most important means of communicating non-verbally. By looking at a face, we can say whether the person likes or dislikes us, understands us or not. Faces can communicate interest and involvement. They can also express emotional status ranging from happiness to despair.

Feelings are often reflected on the face even if a person wishes to disguise them. The face responds instantaneously and gives the most effective feedback to another person. Facial expressions may be difficult to control or even predict in our own cases. But facial expressions, as our action, can be totally under our

control with a bit of practice.

Acting is not merely for actors. Doctors, nurses, waiters... all of us act out a role. Role playing in small informal groups with sufficient feedback can improve our communication skills.

A good gesture

Hand gestures are second in importance to facial expressions in non-verbal communication. People who are deaf and dumb manage very well in interpersonal communication using only gestures. So, the power of this element is not to be misjudged.

We do use gestures normally to repeat, emphasise or even contradict our verbal messages.

You wave and also say goodbye. This is an example of a repetition of both verbal and non-verbal signals in



Sometimes a person's expression can be a clear indication of their mood; at other times, it can be much less obvious.



The raised fist, show here being used by author-activist Arundhati Roy, has come to symbolise people power.

daily use. A clenched fist with wide-open eyes and loud voice. Here the verbal and non-verbal components emphasise one another.

She says she is all right but throws up her hands in despair. Here, there is an element of contradiction between the verbal and non-verbal components.

Like facial expressions, gestures can also be used to put the ball in the other's court when you are speaking by turns.

Appearances

Appearances serve to differentiate between people: the old from the young, the formal from the informal, doctor from trainee, the judge from the accused. Appearances convey messages about social status, personality attitudes and emotional states.

Personal appearance not only affects our own self-image but also our behaviour and the behaviour of the people around us. Our dress, hair style, cosmetics or jewellery provide the basis for first, and sometimes long lasting, impressions.

Appearances are often deceptive but we nevertheless depend on using the cue in our day-to-day interactions with people. Changes or modifications in your daily appearance change the behaviour of people toward you. This knowledge can be put to use easily.

Posture and gait

The way a person sits, stands or walks reflects her attitude towards herself and her relationship to others. Posture can reveal warmth, harmony with others and the status and power in relation to the other. People unconsciously adopt different postures to those they like and dislike.

People with higher status are relaxed in the presence of juniors who maintain formal postures. When we interact with people whom we like, we tend to lean forward. When somebody whom we don't like interacts with us, we tend to lean back and distance ourselves.

A person entering a class, walking slowly with hunched shoulders, may be thought of as timid, whereas a straight back and purposeful gait may convey confidence. Sometimes we may be deceived by such inferences, but more often we are proved right. Each individual has his own characteristic styles of posture and gait, which reflect their personalities and self-image.

Conscious adoption of postures and gaits, which signal to other people positive messages, can be the first step that we need to take to change the behaviour of people around us. This will slowly change your self-image and your personality as well in due course of time. For example, if you slouch while entering a room for an interview, you convey the impression that you are not confident and not sure of yourself. However, if you walk in with a straight back and look directly at



Posture is very much a part of the body language of sport, with commentary using phrases such as "have their shoulders down" or "holding their heads high".



The invasion of someone's 'personal space' can be an act of affection or one of aggression.



Interpersonal communication takes several forms in villages. In hilly regions, it is customary even today to climb to the top of a hillock and shout so that people in a whole village can hear. In Rajasthan when a male child is born, people clap from rooftops to signal the arrival of the newborn. No such thing is done when a girl child is born. In interior villages of India, one can still find drummers – the carriers of messages from one village to another.

the person who is interviewing you, it means that you are confident. Similarly, a teacher's putting his feet on the desk while talking to a student is very bad manners, while leaning across the table and looking at his student sympathetically communicates that he wants to listen to the student.

Proximity and touch

You may deal with someone across a table as part of a group during sessions. You may also meet someone on the road or in the neighbourhood. The distance that we keep while interacting with people depends to a certain extent on where we are. It also depends on who we are.

People have personal spaces around them, which may shrink and expand depending on the situations. People unconsciously adopt their positions in a social gathering. Proximity (or closeness), which encroaches upon this personal space, conveys intimacy.

Let's imagine you are in a group. You cannot be expected to be intimate with all the participants. If you are within one or one-and-a-half feet of another person, you are in an intimate space. From one and a-half to four feet is personal space. From four feet to about two feet is social space and more than that is public distance. If you learn to regulate your distance from people depending on situations, you can produce better results.

Touch

Touch conveys even more subtle messages than the visual and auditory elements of communication. Love and hate, happiness and anger are all communicated easily from person to person through body contact. We can communicate warmth, caring, love and affection, through touch. A touch can also convey fear, distress and exuberance. As children, all of us get a lot of body

contact that reduces as we grow up. But throughout our life, we use touch for expressing affiliation, sexual and aggressive feelings. Holding, stroking and caressing are nurturing even for adults.

Physical touch in assuring somebody who is in panic or in pain is not necessarily a sexual contact even if the person is of the opposite sex. You will find gratitude for a lifetime for a touch at the right moment if you are willing to try. When your mother touches you, then you feel reassured. However, when a stranger strokes your back in a crowded bus or cinema hall, then you feel repulsed or angry. Touch is a way of communicating many things to people.

Voice

Each person has a unique voice. Yet, it may change tone, quality and timber depending on situations. Besides what is actually being said, by the voice we learn more about the person speaking. We unconsciously make judgments about people's character from the way they speak. The tone of the voice can signal a message, which is actually the opposite of what is being said. In fact, even calling people names with a loving tone can be quite endearing instead of enraging.

Your social skills will get a big boost if you attend to using your voice to its fullest advantage. Role play mimicking different voices can add to your repertoire in facing actual life situations.

Grassroots communication and its relevance in the community

It is very important to create communication opportunities at the grassroots level by letting people discover the power of modern media not just as channels of communication that exist outside of them but as a skill and an art which they themselves can acquire and put to good use. While mainstream media, such as national newspapers and television channels, do not give adequate space to grassroots issues and concerns, it is possible to create one's own media like a community newspaper, community radio, wallposters, etc, to suit one's objectives.

Increasingly, community media — or media created by the community — is gaining prominence in many parts of the country. When it comes to local audiences, messages that can be distributed through community media have a more powerful impact than mainstream media. For example, it is possible to create an inexpensive poster using comics as a medium and paste it in various important points/locations in a village. Similarly, a community newspaper can serve the immediate needs of a people living in a restricted geographical area, something that the mainstream media would ignore because of its sheer size.

It is important for grassroots communicators to learn the art of good communication skills and then also pick up the skills that are used in mainstream media so as to be in a position to create one's own media. 'Be your own media' is the mantra that grassroots communicators can follow. In terms of grassroots communica-

tions, two skills are necessary:

- The ability to use mainstream media for achieving one's desired objectives.
- The ability to pick up the skills that go into the production and distribution of mainstream media to create one's own media.

While people at the grassroots level can use many media tools, the following skills and tools will stand them in good stead.

Community newspapers

Understanding newspapers and how they are brought out is important for grassroots communicators to create their own product for a niche audience – it could be a village community or people living in a cluster of images. Such a newspaper serves to enhance community interest, map local resources and opportunities and circulate information over a small populace so that they may derive benefit from the opportunity it brings.

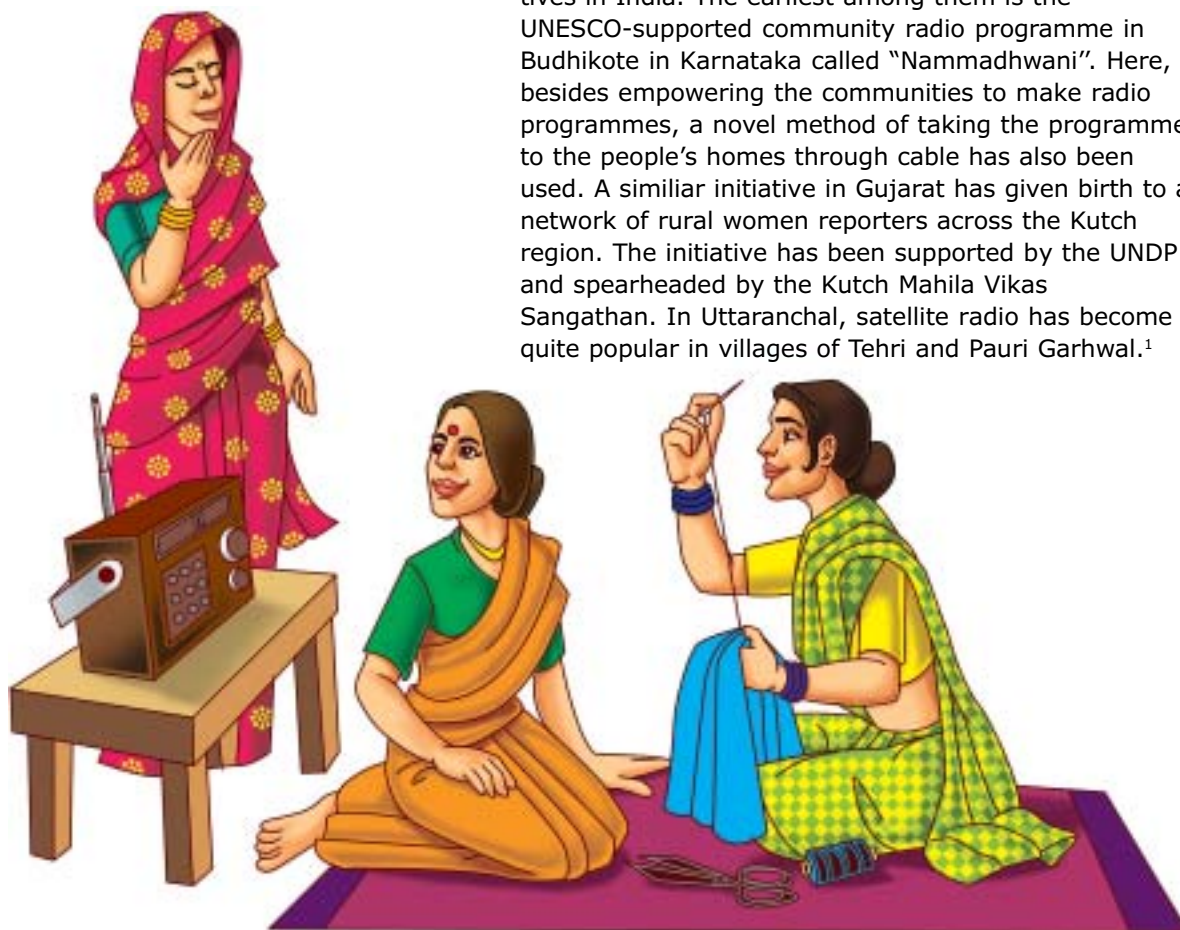
An example is *Namma Uru Seythi (Our Village News)* being published by the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF). There are many other examples of powerful community newspapers in the country, *Gram Gadar* in Rajasthan and *Qabar Lehariya* in Bundelkhand, being two such publications.



Community radio

Community radio can be defined as radio of the people, by the people and for the people. Again, it serves to enhance community interest besides vesting programming capacities and ownership and control in the community. Since people love to hear their own voice being broadcast, community radio can be a good tool to organise people and to advertise their talent.

There are several interesting community radio initiatives in India. The earliest among them is the UNESCO-supported community radio programme in Budhikote in Karnataka called "Nammadhvani". Here, besides empowering the communities to make radio programmes, a novel method of taking the programme to the people's homes through cable has also been used. A similar initiative in Gujarat has given birth to a network of rural women reporters across the Kutch region. The initiative has been supported by the UNDP and spearheaded by the Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan. In Uttaranchal, satellite radio has become quite popular in villages of Tehri and Pauri Garhwal.¹



Community video

Community video is different from the mass appeal television channels, whose mantra is to earn profit. When grassroots communicators know how to make films or videos, they can serve to enhance community interest and benefit.

A unique community video experiment has been spearheaded by Drishti Media Collective along with a US-based group called Video Volunteers. The initiative involves setting up community video units and production of video magazines through community volunteers. Video magazines are being regularly produced and telecast in about 10 regions of the country. The cost of establishing the community video unit is about Rs 12 lakh.

¹ UNESCO stands for United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. UNDP stands for United Nations Development Programme.

Wall-posters

Comics are usually considered a medium for lampooning political personalities. But when utilised innovatively, they too can serve as a medium for creating awareness on social issues besides giving grassroots communicators a powerful weapon in their hands!

Grassroots photography

Photography is a powerful tool of communication. 'A picture is worth a thousand words' is a common saying. Grassroots communicators can pick up the skills of photography and put it to good use to serve their and their community's benefits.

Digital stories

Digital stories are a very powerful medium of communication and grassroots communicators can use them as substitutes for films and video. In comparison to the cost incurred in making a film, the cost incurred in making a digital story is almost negligible.

A telecentre operator can use media tools in two distinct ways:

- Promotional approaches to popularise a telecentre or sell a product or service.
- Local content development, including the sharing of success stories – both collection and dissemination of such content.

There is a classic example of how knowledge and practice of media tools can empower people at the grassroots level. The Umang group in Uttarakhand evolved out of the media tool's training given to a group of children and youth in Gairsain by Sri

Bhuvaneshwari Mahila Ashram and Plan India. The youth media group — after receiving training in print, comics, photography and radio — is now using their skills to highlight issues of relevance to children in the hills. They now have their own newspaper, *Umang*, and are also making radio programmes and taking them to the people through narrowcasting. Comics have also been used by children to highlight issues of local relevance. The group has also managed to create a network of children proficient in media skills across the State, and are further honing their skills through training and orientation programmes.



SUMMARY

- Communication can be defined as the process of sending a message through a medium of one's choice to a recipient (person, group or organisation) who can receive and act upon it.
- In the modern world, we communicate through a variety of ways. There is interpersonal and group communication and, in an office setting there are staff meetings, trainings, meetings, conferences, newsletters, e-mails, etc. There are also external forms of communication such as reports, newsletters and letters.
- The various types of communication are oral, written, visual, electronic, web-based, the Internet and folk and indigenous communication.
- Communication channels can broadly be referred to as delivery systems for messages to reach intended audiences. These can broadly be classified into: interpersonal; community-oriented; and mass media.
- There are three important aspects of communication: *Agaaz*, *Aawaz* and *Andaaz*. [Translated, this means beginning, voice and style.] An effective communicator should focus on body language, facial expression, hand movement, eye movement, level of confidence, voice modulation, the pauses, stances of their speech, etc. *Aawaz* means voice, that is, whatever we say with our mouth and hear with our ears. Voice is a gift of Nature. When we speak or communicate, the message sent across is more than the words themselves, it includes not just the voice but the tone, the pauses, stance, pitch and clarity. Similarly, the way we begin a conversation, or *agaaz*, is also very important. So is the style, or *andaaz*.
- It is very important to create communication opportunities at the grassroots level by letting people discover the power of modern media not just as channels of communication that exist outside of them, but as a skill which they themselves can acquire and put to good use.
- The Internet has truly made the world a global village. E-mail, Internet and other computer-based technologies are revolutionising the way we communicate.

Glossary

- **Communications:** Communications is an exchange of ideas, thoughts and feelings through a medium of one's choice between a sender and a receiver.
- **Sender:** The person who wants to communicate.
- **Receiver:** The person who is supposed to receive the message.
- **Medium:** Communication often happens through a channel and this is referred to as the medium.
- **Message:** The central idea that a person wants to communicate.
- **Traditional media:** Media which has been in use since time immemorial and is part of the community's customs and ways of interaction and entertainment.
- **Mass media:** Media that can reach a large number of people, such as newspapers, radio and television.
- **Community media:** Media of the community, by the community and for the community such as community radio, community newspapers, etc.
- **Interpersonal communication:** Communication that takes place through our body, facial expressions and gestures.
- **Grassroots communications:** Communication processes that can help people to exchange their ideas, thoughts and feelings in the rural areas.
- **Community radio:** Radio of the community, by the community and for the community.
- **Photography:** Communicating through pictures.
- **Comics:** The use of representative visual art to communicate.
- **Digital stories:** The use of digital media to exchange ideas, thoughts and feelings.
- **Awaz:** Voice.
- **Andaaz:** Style of conversation.
- **Aagaz:** The way a conversation is begun.

EXERCISES

Concept of Communication

- Q1.** What is communication?
- Q2.** What are the four important elements of communication?
- Q3.** What are the different forms of communication?
- Q4.** What is the difference between verbal and non-verbal communication?
- Q5.** What are the various channels of communication and how can they be used? Explain by giving an example.
- Q6.** What are the various forms of inter-personal communication?
- Q7.** What is grassroots communications and how can telecentre operators benefit from it?

Multiple Choice Questionnaire

1. Communication is

- a. An exchange of thoughts
- b. An exchange of ideas
- c. An exchange of feelings
- d. All of the above

2. Who is central to the process of communications?

- a. Sender
- b. Receiver
- c. Message
- d. Medium
- e. All of the above

3. Which of the following is not an example of communications?

- a. Two people speaking over the telephone
- b. A politician addressing a rally
- c. News over radio
- d. Sending message through e-mail
- e. Speaking to oneself

4. Which of the following is not an example of traditional media?

- a. Puppetry
- b. Theatre
- c. Villupattu
- d. Magic
- e. Talk shows

5. The spoken word is important to which medium of communications?

- a. Newspapers
- b. Radio
- c. Television
- d. Internet
- e. b and c

6. Which of the following is an example of community media?

- a. Wall paintings
- b. Radio
- c. Newspapers
- d. Television
- e. All of the above

7. Which of the following is not an example of inter-personal communications?

- a. Eye
- b. Gestures
- c. Hand
- d. Touch
- e. Thought

8. Which of the following is used extensively as a means of grassroots communications in India?

- a. Newspapers
- b. Radio
- c. Theatre
- d. Can't say
- e. All media, to some extent



The Art of Good Writing

Central to the process of communication, especially the use of mass media, is the art of good writing. And integral to the writing process is the ability to tell good stories. This chapter introduces you to the art of writing good stories by taking you to your childhood and making you reflect on grandma's tales that probably had a mesmerising effect on you. After we understand the importance of good stories and the art of telling them, we introduce you to the concept of news and how writing in newspapers builds on this storytelling approach. You will also be introduced to the art of writing features and then given tips for becoming a good writer.

By the end of this chapter, you should be able to understand:

- **The art of writing stories**
- **Concept of news**
- **Building blocks of news**
- **The writing process**
- **Principles of good writing**

As we discussed in the last chapter, communication can happen using a variety of media tools. At the heart of the communication process is the ability to tell good stories with clarity and interest so that they leave a lasting impression on the reader. We all have listened to grandma's tales with great interest simply because they are like a lullaby – having a mesmerising effect on us. Grassroots communicators should also pick up this art of telling stories because it will help them communicate effectively and also help them use media tools effectively. In that sense, this chapter is the base of the skills that are to follow subsequently in the manual.

The art of telling stories

Stories are all around us and we all want to tell stories. You would like to tell a success story of running your telecentre, the remarkable ideas which have sustained business for you or the simple brainwave that made a turnaround for you. Your story might inspire many more to follow your path and therefore, you need to tell it with great interest. A good story should have three parts:

- A beginning
- A twist or a turnaround
- An ending

The beginning lays the stage for telling a story — it weaves the plot and brings together the characters who are bonded in action for the purpose of the story.

The twist or the turnaround is the reason why we are telling the story. It can be a story of rags-to-riches, that of failure turning to success, of striking gold after a long period of wait, etc.

The twist happens because of some opportunity coming one's way. It might be meeting new people, attending a new skills workshop or suddenly getting inspired after reading a book.

The ending is the logical sequence to what happens after the twist or turnaround.

To understand the process of telling a story, we must also look into the nuances of what makes a good story. Many times a story is as good as the way it is told. This means a good story is a combination of two things – what is being told and how it is being told. The two technical terms used for these are form and content. And before we discuss the storywriting process in detail, let us look at the world of newspapers where everything is a story — from an accident in a local town to the President of the United States getting elected. Understanding stories the way they are told in newspapers or on television can give us an insight into the storywriting process.

What makes the *Jataka Tales* or stories from the *Panchatantra* still popular not only with children but also with adults? It is the story-telling technique employed by the writers of these age-old tales. In recent times, there have been efforts to render the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* in an animation film format which has lured children and adults alike to cinema theatres. This shows that the story-telling technique still remains the most powerful form of communication that makes people listen to the message contained therein.



We all learn through stories. Think of folk tales and epic legends — like the child Krishna against King Kamsa or about Prahlad and his father. Stories like these have mass appeal because they're about sympathetic characters caught up in conflicts we can all identify with. As audiences, we root for the good guys and hope the bad guys learn their lesson. These lessons connect to morals that appeal to widely held values of right and wrong: it's wrong for powerful giants to bully little people; it's wrong to build empires by wiping out entire villages or destroy their way of life. Solutions follow from these morals: strategy and smarts can be mightier than size and brawn; forming alliances for the common good is better than authoritarian military rule.

By packaging your messages in a well-framed story, you can convey history, political context and institutional solutions through morals that move audiences to action.

While stories have often been used as mechanisms for social control, those who are working for social change can use stories to show that progressive change is necessary, possible and irresistible. Follow these steps to creating stories and symbols that communicate change.

- **Develop a 'big idea' frame.** If you haven't already, try coming up with a big idea frame that captures your values and the change you want to make. Your story frame should convey this big idea frame.
- **Create a story frame.** All good stories contain four main ingredients: characters, conflict, setting and solutions. Ask yourself: Who are the main characters? Who are the good guys? Who are the villains? Who are supporting characters? What scene are you trying to set? What's interesting about the scene? What's the conflict, new development

or unexpected plot? How does the story get resolved? What's the moral? What are the solutions and who's responsible? What images illustrate this story?

- **Develop images and symbols to illustrate the story.** What photos or symbols capture this story in one graphic? Don't think literally, think in metaphors.
- **Add a news hook.** What anniversaries, holidays or developments in local, national or international news can you hook your story to? For example, if your story is about the need for new legislation to protect against social discrimination, you could use a story about a child victimised because the parents have HIV/AIDS, or use recent local cases of racial profiling as may appear in a local newspaper. If your story is about the need for a movement against corporal punishment in schools, you could peg your story on Teachers' Day (September 5), on Mahatma Gandhi's birthday (October 2) or recent local cases of corporal punishment.
- **Identify your main characters.** Identify people in your community whose personal experiences reinforce your story frame and who are willing to share their story. Often the people most affected by your issue are your powerful spokespeople. Refine your story frame together, by asking them to tell you their personal stories and adjusting the frame to reflect the reality of their lives.
- **Test your story through role plays.** Practice telling the story to your cousin, sister or mother – anyone who's not involved with work on your issue. Ask them what they think the moral of the story is, whom they sympathise with and what action they feel moved to take, if any. Revise your story based on their responses.

DEVELOPING STORIES

The aim of these exercises is to help you reflect on stories in a precise way through various creative activities. Narrate or write stories and then analyse them using the two tools mentioned below:

I. Tree of Life exercise

- **Roots:** Represents the background of the story, why and in which situation it began.
- **Trunk:** Represents the main characters' efforts and other stakeholders involved.
- **Leaves:** Represents the incidents in the stories.
- **Fruits:** Represents the end of the story with a surprising situation.
- **Buds:** Represents how the surprising situation leads to future possibilities.

II. Life Road exercise

- **Beginning:** Background of the story, why and in which situation it began.
- **Milestones:** The main characters' efforts and various incidents of the story.
- **Crossroads:** Stakeholders involved in the story.
- **End:** End of the story with a surprising situation.
- **Dot line road and milestone:** How the surprising situation leads to future possibilities.

Concept of news

News should also be written in an interesting way so that people can relate to it. The way of writing news is often referred to as the 'inverted pyramid' style of writing, which simply means that the most important point of any piece of communication always comes in the first paragraph, which is known as the introduction. It contains the development first and then elaborates it through first-person quotes. The subsequent paragraphs in the news item have relevant information but in the order of diminishing importance. As we read in the first chapter, it basically tells us a story by answering six basic questions: what, where, when, why, who and how, also known as the five Ws and one H.

The inverted pyramid style requires the writer to summarise the story, to get to the point quickly without beating around the bush. It is a useful tool for thinking and organising. It forces the writer to sum up the main point of the story in a single paragraph. It also allows editors to cut stories from the bottom up.

There is an interesting anecdote which illustrates how the technique of news writing in its present format became popular. During the days of the American Civil War, wireless was the only means of communication between people in ground control and those at the war front. Every evening, messages used to be flashed between the two but the way the events at the war front was described by the army generals used to be very descriptive starting with the weather to the gathering of the army, etc. By the time, it came to communicating how many people actually died on that day, the wireless snapped leading people on the other side to exclaim with exasperation one day : "Cut out the crap, just tell us how many people died. We will fill in the rest of the details." This was beginning of the inverted pyramid style of communication.

How to write news

A news item has four main parts – the headline, lead, body and tail.

- **Headline:** It is that part of the news which creates interest in the reader and compels him to read the news. It must be short, catchy and based on facts. It is the nerve wire of any news.
- **Lead:** The lead is the main part of the news and is known as window to the news. It gives in a nutshell what the news item is all about and has the five Ws and one H. It should be catchy and compel the reader to read the news.
- **Body:** Contains other details about the news. In the inverted pyramid style of writing, it comes only after the lead. The main components of the news appear in the lead and the details come in the body.
- **Tail:** Contains the background and other less important details of the news.

Building blocks of news stories

There are four building blocks of news stories:

- **Facts:** News revolves around facts. A popular quote says: Facts are sacred, comment is free.
- **Colour:** Gives the reader the flavour of being there. For example, in the sentence, "Sparkling in a red blue saree, Aishwarya Rai was the centre of all attention", the reference to the dress worn by the actress adds colour to her description.
- **Quotes:** Introduces a human element.
- **Background:** Gives the context explaining the significance of the news piece.

Walk into any newspaper office and you will have reporters talking over telephones to people, gathering facts or getting quotes. Give a copy (that is, an article) which does not contain people's quotes to the editor and he will throw the copy back at you saying: "Who is saying this, you? Have you spoken to someone?"

ANALYSING NEWS

Take five news items from a newspaper. Identify the five Ws and one H in each news item and write down your observations.



Newspaper offices are real madhouses where people discuss the building blocks of news stories in great detail. "There is no colour in your story. Who will read it?" is an oft repeated statement by chief reporters and news editors. You have reporters referring to old files for background. Nothing is written from memory. "You can't trust memory" is a saying that comes alive in newspaper offices.

There is an interesting anecdote from the life of Mark Twain¹ that shows how difficult it is to communicate precisely. Mark Twain was once asked to give a talk to the public. He asked: "When do you want me to come?" The person who invited him said, "Sir, you are a famous writer. How does it matter to you whether it is tomorrow or after a year?" Mark Twain retorted, "It does matter. If you want me to ramble, I can come straight away. But if you want me to speak just for two minutes, I can come only after a year."

¹ Mark Twain (whose real name was Samuel Langhorne Clemens; born: November 30, 1835, died: April 21, 1910) was an American humorist, satirist, lecturer and writer. Twain is most noted for his novels *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*.

WRITING NEWS: SOME TIPS

- Use short, simple sentences.
- Use the active tense.
- Vary the length of paragraphs (you need to provide an interesting shape to the material you are writing).
- Introduce a human voice. Look for golden quotes – the quote that sums up the story.
- Use colour; it gives the reader the flavour of being there and brings the story credibility.
- You need enough background so that a reader fresh from any vacation understands what is happening, a reader who is not an expert understands. The significance is clear for everyone.

Journalism and storytelling

"Most newspapers," according to the Pulitzer Prize winner, Jack Hart, "are filled with the ends of stories — the beginnings having been sacrificed at the altar of the inverted pyramid." According to him, "A story is a sequence of action in which a sympathetic character encounters a complicating situation that he confronts and solves." Hart calls stories the antidote to static or declining newspaper circulation among time-starved readers. Here are some of the tools he describes in non-fiction story-telling:

Action line

You might think of these as devices for constructing a plot, the dramatic tension or the overall structure of a story. Action lines or plots arrange the events and details in ways that seize readers' attention and draw them into the story.

A classic way to think of a story, and the origin of another term, 'the dramatic arc', is to think of a story as an arrow. The lead is like drawing a bow, and then sending the arrow off on a path of rising action until it reaches its zenith — the climax of the story — and then letting it fall through the denouement that ties up loose ends.

Foreshadowing: This is, of course, hinting at what is to come, or sowing a question that readers will expect to have answered. Hart said that this is "directly opposite of all our journalistic instincts, to tell everything at the beginning".

In media res: This means 'beginning a story in the middle of the action'. Aristotle coined the term, which was then translated into Latin. 'In media res' usually refers to the point at which the outcome hangs in the balance.

Anecdotes and vignettes: Snippets of action written in dramatic narrative used primarily to advance the overall plot, but also can be used for exposition or characterisation. Anecdotes have their own action lines. Vignettes are anecdotes without a punchline or a climax.

Endings: Create a sense of satisfying closure. Ideally, said Hart, the ending will complete the story and “create a sense of satisfying closure. They may complete a circle. They may surprise, but seem right.”

Scene setting

Thematic details: Details that develop central story themes.

Collective details: Details that enhance a group of people or objects, rather than individuals. For example, “The children wore jeans and T-shirts.”

Continuity devices: Elements that help keep the look, sound or feel of a scene fresh in a reader’s mind. After mentioning the beating drums at Anwar Sadat’s state funeral², for example, *Newsday* reporter Pat Sloyan mentioned them twice more before his story’s conclusion. The repetition kept the drums beating in the background as the story progressed.

Characterisation

The challenge for writers is to bring characters to life on flat, two-dimensional pages.

Indirect characterisation: Hart writes that this uses external details to reveal a character by showing, rather than telling. Rather than saying that a character is high-strung, for example, a writer might describe the character as “fidgeting in his seat and, with trembling hands, shifting three stacks of coins around the top of his desk.”

Physical description: Details of appearance that might suggest character traits help create an image of the character. Some aspects of physical appearance — tattoos, for example — reflect character. He also suggested the use of status indicators — such as saying “so and so, the famous international actor” — championed by Tom Wolfe, an American author.

Height, weight, hair style, clothing, eyeglasses and many other physical characteristics help create a character that’s something more than a cardboard figure. Hart notes that journalists are uncomfortable with physical descriptions of people, but that these details are as critical to characterisation as they are to scene setting.

Guidelines for writing

Everyone finds writing difficult. But there are ways to make it easier. The more you practise writing, the easier it will become. Here are some suggestions to help you start writing, and to help you complete the task.

- Be clear on what you want to write. Clarity is the one single quality that distinguishes most great works.
- Do some research, read materials and improve your knowledge on the topic and be thorough with the subject as much as possible.

How do I start writing?

- Remember the rules called the ‘Writer’s ABC’: A – Accurate; B – Brief or concise; C – Clear and simple.
- Set a date for when you will finish the report/article/story, etc.
- Decide how many words or phrases you are going to write each day.
- For each section, write down the question and then quickly list the ideas you want to include in the answer. List the ideas as words or short

² Anwar Al Sadat (December 25, 1918 - October 6, 1981) was the third President of Egypt, serving from October 15, 1970 until his assassination. He is considered to be an important and influential Egyptian and Arab figure in modern history.

WRITING FEATURES

Features are elaborate stories on any theme, person or issue which has been in the news in the recent past or which requires a detailed treatment including research, gathering of information, interviews of various people and elaboration of the theme.

The writing process has five distinct stages:

- **Choose a story** – Decide on the theme on which you want to write a feature.
- **Gather information** – Use primary and secondary resources. You can either read books or search the Internet for related information. Also, talk to experts on more information and data.
- **Plan the structure** – Choose the angle to the story that you would like to present. While choosing a story depends on the theme of the publication or segment, choosing the angle is more a matter of presentation.
- **Write the story** – Write clearly with supporting facts, interviews and enough background detail. You can take two approaches – one is the ‘nut graf’ approach, in which the kernel of the argument is presented first and then evidences built up to support the argument. The other approach is the questioning approach in which the kernel of the argument is presented as a question and then the details follow.
- **Edit the story** – After writing the story, read and re-read the story till it becomes crisp and easy to read. Use short, simple sentences and active instead of passive tone as suggested earlier.

‘Three Weddings and a Funeral’ is the title of a feature article published in *The Hindu* by the noted development columnist and writer, P. Sainath. The article revolves around the growing incidents of suicide among farmers in the Vidharba region. The writer has tried to present in graphic form how farmers are committing suicide after getting caught in a debt trap. But the way the story has been presented makes all the difference. It talks of two weddings and a funeral in the same family (and another wedding in the village) on consecutive days, and how those taking the funeral procession out had to hide to avoid those in the marriage procession – a poignant and grim tale that touches people’s hearts.

notes. Then decide which ideas are most important, and decide in which order they should be placed. Then begin to write sentences for each idea.

- Write down the information as you think of it. In the beginning don’t worry about the sentence structure or spelling. Later you can revise what you have written.
- Start anywhere in the report. Start on the part you like best, or the part that is easiest to write.
- If you get stuck in the section you are writing, change to another section. You can return later to the section you found difficult.
- Set aside a period of time each day to write the report. Make sure it is a time when writing the manual is the only task you have, and make sure that nobody will disturb you.
- After doing a certain amount of writing take a break for a cup of coffee or tea, or go for a short walk.
- After you finished your writing, leave it aside for a few days and then re-read it. Change if necessary.
- Check whether the title, contents, introduction, the main and sub-sections, illustrations, summary, conclusion, recommendations and appendix (if necessary) are in place.
- Give yourself a reward when you achieve one of your targets.

How do I make the text easy to understand?

Reports, stories or articles must be easy to read and understand. It is especially important to make your report easy to read if you are writing in English for users whose English is not good.

- Keep the average sentence length to around 15-20 words.
- Use simple, short common words.
- Explain technical terms. For example: “Dehydration means that a body has lost a large amount of its normal fluid.”
- Use precise words. Words which have only one meaning are easier to understand. For example: Instead of: ‘last’, you can write ‘previous’ or ‘the one before’.
- If the user is learning how to do something, you must tell him exactly how to do it. Explain the steps one by one if, for example, you are writing about any game for children.

- Use positive statements. For example: write ‘Drink clean water’ instead of ‘Do not drink contaminated water’.
- Put only one idea in a sentence. Long sentences containing several ideas are confusing. Use short, simple sentences.
- Rewrite long sentences as two or more shorter sentences.
- Use active verbs. For example: Instead of ‘The patient should be examined’, write ‘Examine the patient’.
- Use nouns instead of pronouns. If there is confusion, rather than using pronouns such as ‘it’ or ‘they’ or ‘he’, use the noun or name. It may be difficult for the user to understand who or what ‘it’, ‘they’ or ‘he’ is. For example: Instead of ‘The doctor told him that his mother is suffering from tuberculosis’, write ‘The doctor told Ram that Ram’s mother is suffering from tuberculosis’.
- Write for the user personally. Make sure that what you write is relevant for the user of your

report. For example: If your article is for doctors, you may write ‘Dirt in wounds prevents healing’. But if your article is for villagers it is more appropriate to write ‘If you get dirt into a cut, the cut will not heal’.

- Put information in a proper time sequence.
- Give instructions in the order in which the user must follow them. For example: Instead of: ‘Apply the dressing, but remember to clean the wound and wash your hands first’, write ‘Wash your hands. Then clean the wound and apply the dressing’.
- Give examples as much as you can and wherever necessary. Examples show users how to apply information. Make sure the examples relate to what the user has to do. If the information is important, give more than one example.
- Give the reader some practice; ‘practice makes perfect’, as the saying goes. Include problem-solving exercises. This will teach the user how to use the information contained in your report.

SUMMARY

- **At the heart of the communication process is the ability to tell good stories with clarity and interest so that they can leave a lasting impression on the reader.**
- A good story is a combination of two things – what is being told is ‘content’ and how it is being told is ‘form’.
- A story has three parts: a beginning; a twist or a turnaround; and an ending. The beginning lays the stage for telling a story. The twist or the turnaround is the reason why we are telling the story. The ending is the logical sequence to what happens after the twist or turnaround.
- News is something that is novel, written in an interesting way and to which people can relate. It basically tells us a story by answering the six basic questions: what, where, when, why, who and how, also known as the five Ws and one H.
- The way of writing news is often referred to as the ‘inverted pyramid’ style of writing, which simply means that the most important point of any piece of communication always comes in the first paragraph, which is known as the introduction.
- A news item has four main parts: a headline, lead, body and tail.
- There are four building blocks of news stories: facts, colour, quote and background.
- Features are elaborate stories on any event or issue which has been in the news in the recent past or which requires a detailed treatment including research, gathering of information, interviews of various people and elaboration of the theme.
- The writing process has five distinct stages; choosing a story; gathering information; planning the structure; writing the story; and editing the story.

Glossary

- **Story:** Technical term for anything that is published in the newspaper.
- **News:** A record of events that are happening all around us.
- **Inverted pyramid:** A style of writing that captures the most important point of any story in the first paragraph.
- **Features:** Features are elaborate stories on any theme, person or issue which has been in the news in the recent past which requires a detailed treatment including research, gathering of information, interviews of various people and elaboration of the theme.
- **Five Ws and one H:** The most important components of any news – what, where, when, why, who and how.

EVALUATION/ASSIGNMENT

- Keep a dairy to record your experiences/observations on issues concerning your neighbourhood. Write a page every day. At the end of 15 days, cull out the most important observations and develop a feature from them.
- Every day, analyse any three news items that appear in a newspaper to identify the five Ws and one H for those stories.
- Do the order of priority analysis to ascertain the significance of a news item.
- Write a press release on your work and give it to the local media. See how it has been carried in the newspapers and write down what you think about it.



The Power of Wallposter Comics

In the previous chapter, you learnt about the technique of storytelling and how newspapers have adapted the art to create a distinct genre of writing that creates and sustains human interest on issues surrounding the world. This chapter introduces you to the novel technique of wallposter comics making – the advantage is that even an illiterate man or woman in the village can see and understand your intended message. Following the popular storytelling technique, wallposter comics are stories told in a four-panel visual format. This chapter introduces you to the concept of wallposter comics and tells you of the skills needed to practise it to enhance your communication abilities.

By the end of this chapter, you should be able to understand:

- **What wallposter comics are**
- **How to create visual stories in a four-panel format**
- **How to use wallposter comics in your work**

The idea of using comics in development is a novel one and differs from the traditional approach to cartooning, which is used as a weapon to lampoon political characters in newspapers. Grassroots comics are comics with a social message and can be used to educate, entertain and inform the people. The power of a visual medium like comics cannot be underestimated. All the development problems in a village, howsoever big or small, can be represented through attractive visuals and taken to the people. And when there is a story underlying these visuals, it becomes all the more attractive. It is an excellent medium for creating awareness on social issues without having to take recourse to the written word.

Laxman Singh Negi, a young boy in Uttaranchal, was taught how to make comics in a workshop organised by Plan India along with World Comics India. When he went back to his village, Mehlachouri, he drew a comic on an issue that disturbed him — when his friend was beaten by his alcoholic father. He told the story in four simple panels with average drawing skills: A man drinking was shown in the first panel, he beats his son in the second panel, the son dies in the third panel and the man repents in the fourth. The comic created an uproar in his village; it was pasted all along important locations. The result: the man gave up drinking altogether. Laxman got an opportunity to go to Geneva to display his comics-making power in September 2006.

Another Plan India partner, Samskar (based in Nizamabad, Andhra Pradesh), runs a quarterly magazine (*Our View Point*) which is practically run by the kids themselves. Ganga Lakshmi from Rudrur, who faced severe discrimination at home, drew a cartoon on her plight. When it was published in the magazine, the kids went to chastise the parents. “We totally converted Ganga’s younger brother. He now treats her with respect and affection,” Kashirani of the same village claims.

How to make wallposter comics

The technique of making wallposter comics described in this chapter is drawn from the workshops organised by World Comics India across the length and breadth of the country. A learner’s handbook is also available with World Comics India — this chapter just summarises the broad techniques followed by them. It is an adaptation from the trainer’s manual brought out by World Comics India. For detailed guidance on the wallposter technique, refer to this manual available for free download from the World Comics website, www.worldcomics.fi.



Laxman, a 11 year old member of Umang Group, Gairsain presenting his Comics on the Day of General Discussion, September 15, 2006 to the members of Child Rights Committee, NGO Group, children and representatives from national governments of various countries. Laxman has been trained in making films and in using comics for bringing social change has used the power of the comic strip to bring about a change in his village by actually showing how alcoholism ruins people's lives through a comic strip. This led to some adults in the village actually quitting the drinking habit.

Introducing the idea

- Familiarise yourself with the idea of wallposter comics. See samples from other people and countries; go through the stories and messages in the stories. This will make you understand that grassroots comics are different from ordinary comics in newspapers.
- Identify the themes you want to make comics about and how they are linked to the activity you are engaged in.
- Write a story (four to five sentences) from the themes you have chosen and spell out what messages you want to give with the story.
- If you have more than one story, select one good story from amongst them.
- Break your story into four parts – in each panel there should be one action at a time. If the story is very long, it has to be made shorter.
- Set the stories aside and do a drawing exercise to raise your own confidence in your drawing. Make facial expressions, draw body gestures as well as stick figures, and add flesh and clothes on them.

The next steps:

- Decide the reading order (from left to right and from up to down).
- Place dialogue texts.
- Place explanatory texts.

Remember: Do not write in text what is shown in the picture.

Making a visual script

- The next step is to make the visual script. A visual script is necessary because all the details to be discussed and considered before doing the art final work. The main things to be drawn should be sketched into the panel (that is, do a sketching, not a proper drawing yet). Write all the text in the explanatory boxes and the speech balloons. At this stage also a title should be

decided upon.

- The visual script is finalised with respect to the headlines and the four panels. Two A-4 size papers are used to create the comics. The gap between the headline and the top two panels should be 4 cm and the border on either side must have a gap of 2 cm. A gap of approximately 1 cm is left both in the middle and at the bottom. The second paper has also to be made exactly in the same fashion and, in this case, the 4 cm gap is at the bottom of the two panels. Here, your name (because you created the comic) and the village you come from is written.
- Check the script, especially the following:
 - Is the title inviting?
 - Is the reading order correct?
 - Are there writing errors in the text?
 - Is the message in the story understood properly?

When a grassroots comics artist wanted to tell a story of how alcoholism destroys people, he decided to tell it only through visuals. No words at all. In just four panels, he told a compelling story that has become very popular. In the first panel, a toddler sees his father drinking. In the second panel, the toddler has now become a tiny tot and goes about the house on a small cycle. Time has flown but his father continues drinking. In the third panel, the boy has grown in size, so has the cycle. But the situation in his home does not change. And in the last panel, the boy has grown, he now has a scooter. He is looking at his father in a photograph — his father is no more and there is a garland adorning his photograph!

Preparing the final artwork

- Now the final artwork starts. Measure the wallposter comics, take good quality paper. First make the final drawing in pencil, then ink with black ink. Do not colour or shade with pencils or watercolours.

A girl displays a comic made by her at the Annual Balika Mela at Lunkaransar in Rajasthan.



- Check the final pencil drawing before inking: Has all text been written correctly? Is the lettering big enough (minimum 1 cm high)?

Inking

- Before final inking, it is good to do an inking exercise. It can be done on the visual script. First draw thin outlines, then remove the pencil lines with an eraser. After this, fill in solid blacks, then textures (like crosshatching, grass, ground, etc) and decorations.
- Ink the grassroots comics with a black gel pen.
- Finish the inking and check the artwork for any further corrections (surprisingly, you will find that often you make new mistakes when you copy text from a manuscript).
- Then take the artwork for photocopying.

Organising a critique session

- Have a critique session. Glue the wallposter halves together and pin the wallposter on the wall. Gather all your friends or advisors; go through each wallposter and discuss the following:
 - Is the message understood correctly?
 - Do the text and pictures balance each other?
 - Is the readability okay?
 - Do the wallposters look good from a distance?

After this, you can distribute the wallposter comics as you had planned.

You can still do one more exercise — turn the wallposter into a comic strip. Here's how:

- Photocopy the artwork again, but now reduce the size to 50 per cent.
- Then assemble the panels in a strip and align the headings and credit, if necessary.



Two wallpaper comics developed using the methods described here. As they dwell upon issues of local, personal relevance, these comics can be used to communicate effectively with the target population.

SUMMARY

- The power of a visual medium such as comics cannot be underestimated. All the development problems in a village, howsoever big or small, can be represented through attractive visuals and taken to the people. And when there is a story underlying these visuals, it becomes all the more attractive. It is an excellent medium for creating awareness on social issues without having to take recourse to the written word.
- The first step in making comics is to identify the issues affecting a particular society. This can be a participatory exercise too. Make a list of the issues on which you would like to make comics.
- The second step in making comics is to discuss real life events which relate to the list of issues. Write a story on the issue of your choice. Stories can also be imaginary, but the message should be loud and clear.
- The third step is to break the story into four parts, the first part representing the beginning or the background, the second represents the sequence of events or the middle, the third the impact or the outcome, and the fourth part is the message.
- Working on the visual script is the most important step in making grassroots comics. After the story is broken up into four parts, the drawings are done. By using line drawings, you learn:
 - Facial expressions,
 - Body language, and
 - Simple movements.
- The next step is finalising the manuscript by creating the visual script and then doing the rough drawings.
- The visual manuscript now tells the story through narrative dialogues. Use simple and short dialogues; tell your story in the minimum words possible.
- The visual script is finalised with respect to the headlines and the four panels. Two A-4 size papers are used to create the comics. The gap between the headline and the top two panels should be 4 cm and the border on either side must have a gap of 2 cm. A gap of approximately 1 cm is left both in the middle and at the bottom.

The second paper has also to be made exactly in the same fashion and, in this case, the 4 cm gap is at the bottom of the two panels. Here, your name (because you created the comic) and the village you come from is written.
- Text editing and reducing unnecessary text ensures that the text is easy to read, the narrative is not too long or overly complicated. In fact, a story with minimum or no text can be considered an ideal story
- The next step is to ink the grassroots comics with a black gel pen.
- After this, visual titles are incorporated. The title can also be illustrated visually with appropriate symbols.
- The comic is now ready for public display, on boards, doors and common places, etc.
- In the critique session, discuss your comic with friends or advisors. It is like an immediate feedback session from your audience.

Glossary

- **Grassroot comics:** Grassroots comics are comics with a social message and can be used to educate, entertain and inform people.
- **Visual script:** Rough sketch of the story in four panels.
- **Inking:** Giving final touches to the comics with black gel pen.
- **Speech balloons:** Dialogues that capture conversation between two people.
- **Thought balloons:** Narrative that capture thought.
- **Explanatory text:** That portion of the comics where the story is told in words.
- **Critique session:** Getting people to discuss the comics.

EVALUATION/ASSIGNMENTS

- Follow the steps described in this manual and make a comic on any one of the following issues:
 - Female foeticide
 - Dowry deaths
 - HIV/AIDS
 - How you can draw people to your telecentre
- Practise drawing the facial expressions, body movements and simple actions of people.
- Practise outdoor sketching to include foreground, background and depth to your comics.
- Take some of the comics drawn by you and paste it in important localities in your village. Note down the reactions of people. Then explain whether wallposters are attractive and why?
- “Everybody can draw” – test the efficacy of this statement by getting together a few people in your telecentre and make them draw wallposters. Describe in detail why and how they are able to follow this technique with ease.



How to Become a Photographer

In the previous chapter, you were introduced to the technique of wallposter comics as an effective medium of grassroots communication. This chapter gives an overview of photography, the basic techniques of composition and framing, as well as tips on how to take good photographs. 'A photograph is worth a thousand words' is a popular saying. It is very important to master the science and art of photography to make it a medium of communication at the grassroots level.

By the end of this chapter, you should be able to understand:

- **What photography is**
- **What the different techniques of lighting are**
- **Composition and framing**
- **Layout**
- **How to take effective photographs**

First of all, anyone can take a photograph! Through taking and studying photographs, it is possible to explore and learn more about our environment, our community and about ourselves. Secondly, developing our visual literacy enables us to communicate our ideas more fully.

Photography has affected our lives greatly. It recorded scenes in history that have touched us all. Priceless memories were saved thanks to photography, this art of light.

Photography is the art of recording an image — which we find attractive, amusing, or thought provoking — in history. And, unlike many other media, it provides us with a ‘true-to-life’ image that is not much different than what our own eyes would see. Photography can only record that our eyes saw.

Photography has an extremely important role today. It is used in advertising, magazines, science and research, newspapers. Without photography, our lives would certainly not be as exciting. We would have never been able to show Earth from outer space, or the first man walking on the moon. We would have never been able to find a cure for many diseases if photography was not around. So, science and art depend heavily on photography.

What is photography?

The word 'photography' means 'writing with light' (Greek photo = light; graphis = paintbrush, or drawing), and was first used by Sir John Herschel. Photography is both an art and a science. The 'art' concerns itself with images that are aesthetically pleasing to the eye, a photograph's composition. The 'science' concerns itself with the technical aspects of light, camera bodies, shutters, lenses and films. Understanding the art and science is essential to good photography.

In the beginning...

The technique that photography originated from dates back to the early- to mid-1600s. It started from the camera's predecessor, the *camera obscura*, which actually means 'dark room' in Latin. It was a box with a pinhole at the front, and a glass screen at the opposite end. When light went through the pinhole, it formed an image on the glass. Artists at the time used to trace the scene that was being projected, so it took some of the legwork out of drawing a scene. Later on, a lens was added to the *obscura* because it added more sharpness to the image. Many famous artists, such as Leonardo da Vinci and Michaelangelo, used the *obscura* to help them paint some of their most famous artwork.

A huge variety of cameras and camera equipment has been used by photographers, from the earliest camera obscura to the latest digital cameras.



The first photograph

Though the camera's design has been around since the 1300s, film did not come until the early 1800s. In the 1820s a French scientist named Joseph Niépce was looking for a way to improve lithography, a printing technique. Because of this discovery, Niépce captured the first picture in 1826, which was called 'View from the Window at Le Gras'.

Photography's popularity rises

It wasn't until the early 1900s that photography became available to everybody. Photography's fame started with George Eastman, who was the founder of the Eastman Kodak Company. The first camera available to the public was the Kodak No 1, Kodak's very first camera. It was about \$100-150, which was rather expensive at the time. The camera was basically a box with a shutter, lens, and a roll of about 100 exposures loaded in it. When one finished the roll, he/she sent the camera back to Kodak for developing, and the developed pictures and the camera were sent back to them. Since the Kodak, the camera has become a household possession.



The Kodak No 1, Kodak's very first camera, was the first camera available to the public.

Today photographers are taking advantage of digital capabilities by experimenting with enormous formats and new manipulative techniques. As technological advances improve photographic equipment, materials, and techniques, the scope of photography continues to expand enormously. Mobile phones are now increasingly being used to capture images that could help in rural development. For example, the photograph of a disease in a particular crop can be taken and instantaneously transmitted via satellite to an expert who can then give his opinion through video-conferencing. Similarly, applications of photography in tele-medicine are also tremendous.

Photography is a very powerful livelihood option for the youth, especially in areas where total dependence on agriculture limits the options for the people. In Udaipur, Rajasthan, photography training was offered to the youth in and around the tribal villages adjoining the town. This has made available a livelihood option to them and nearly 40 young people, including some tribal women, have made it a career. Basanti, a tribal woman, used her skills to fight country-made liquor production in her village. Another youth, Dinesh, is now offering training programmes to other youth.

Light

Without light, photography would not exist. In fact, the word 'photography' comes from the word 'photo', a Greek word meaning 'light'. Before you can understand photography, you must first understand the nature of light. Despite the most sophisticated cameras and the most expensive and sharpest of lenses, a photograph would be impossible without light, rendering cameras and lenses useless.

Light can do more than make an image on film; it can emphasise, subdue or alter moods. It can help you say many things about the subject. The ability to see slight changes in the light on a subject is a key to profes-

sional quality work and is part of what makes a photograph, not a snap shot. Film must get the correct amount of light for it to record an image. Too little light and the image is weak and lacks contrast, while too much light will make the image dark and highly contrasting. The challenge is to control the light.

Light quality is the most important characteristic of light for the photographer because it sets the mood of a shot. The quality of light breaks down into two types — hard or soft light. The source of light also breaks down into two types — natural or artificial light. Hard light throws distinct shadows. It comes from a point light source such as the mid-day sun or an electronic flash (artificial). It is a harsh light and often can cause the subject, if it is a person, to squint or need to put on sunglasses.

Soft light is the opposite and comes from a reflected source or a broad source. It is often indirect light and is frequently found in the shade as light that reflects into the shade from the surroundings.

Put the sun behind you

A standard lighting technique is to position yourself so the sun is behind you and to one side. This arrangement will shine light on the subject's face, while the slight angle will produce shadows to illuminate form. A better approach is to put the subject in a shady area with a shadowed background. Unlike the human eye, photographic film cannot handle bright areas and dark shadows easily, as in direct sunlight, so use the shade for a narrow tonal range. Overcast days are usually best for portraits.

PLAN OF THE DAY

Assuming a sunrise at 6am and sunset at 7pm, a good day of photography might include:

Time of the day	Plan
5am – Pre-dawn	A pink, ethereal light and dreamy mist for lakes, rivers and landscapes
6-7am – Dawn	Crisp, golden light for east-facing subjects
7-10am	Early morning: The city comes to life
10-2pm – Mid-day	The sun is too harsh for landscapes and people, but perfect for monuments, buildings and streets with tall buildings
2-4pm	Afternoon: Deep blue skies
4-6:45pm	Late afternoon: Terrific warm, golden light on west-facing subjects. Best time for landscapes and people, particularly one hour before sunset
6:45-7:30pm	Sunset: Great skies 10 minutes before and after sunset
7:30-8pm	Dusk is great for skylines, while there's still a purple colour to the sky
9pm	Night shots

Composition and framing

The artistic skills of a photographer cannot be taught. Those are skills that you have to hone. You can get 20 different people to take a picture of the same thing and you will get 20 different photographs. What are important to learn are the basics.

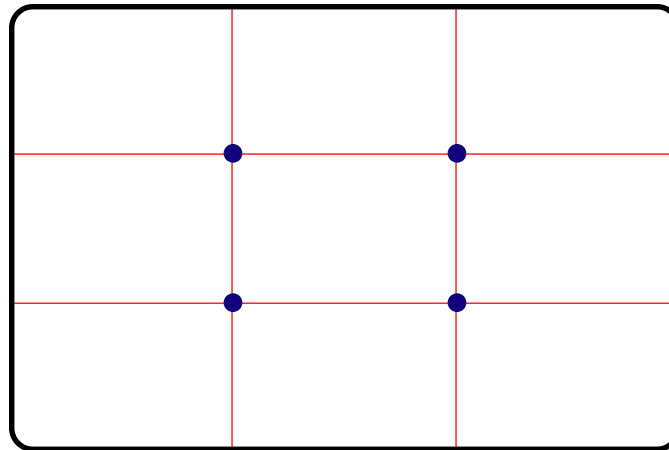
The art is called composition. It is the balance of all things in a photograph. The elements, the way the light interacts with those elements, the way those elements are arranged, are all part of a photograph.

Basic layout

There are three different ways to layout the elements in a photograph. One is to fill the frame. This will provide a clear description of what the photograph is about. The second is the 'Rule of Thirds'. The third is the 'Golden Mean'. The second and third ways provide a means to capture the background in the photo as well as creating a compelling photograph that guides the eye of the viewer. We will learn only about the 'Rule of Thirds' here. Even though the 'Golden Mean' is a basic thing, it is much more difficult to understand than the 'Rule of Thirds'.

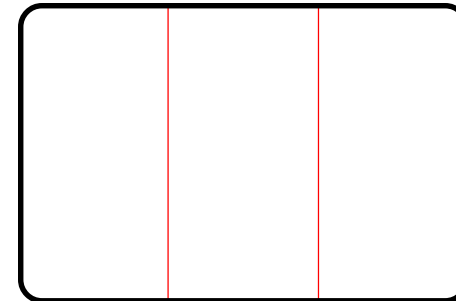
Rule of Thirds

Divide the frame into thirds, and then place the subject (blue spots) on the two dividers (red lines). See the diagram below.

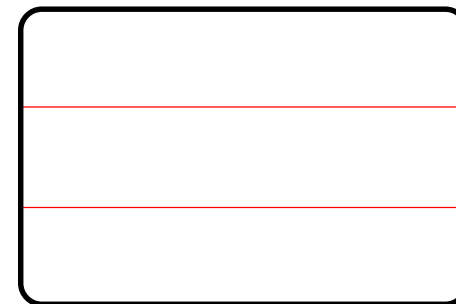


These basic rules are the basic building blocks of composition. The aim here is to create a visually compelling photograph, something that captures the attention of the viewer. The 'Rule of Thirds' aims to create a photograph that leads the eye of the viewer around and to provide a bit of background in the photo, to allow the photo to tell a story. It is found that the eye doesn't rest on the centre of a photograph.

The 'Rule of Thirds' states that the object of attention should be placed at the intersection of the dividing lines (that is, the green dots). But you can also place the object along one of the dividing lines.



Can also be expressed horizontally...



The aim of the 'Rule of Thirds' is to create a photograph which captures attention. The 'Rule of Thirds' does that by using human instinct. Most people's attention doesn't travel to the centre of a photograph, it scans the edges. So if your attention doesn't go to the middle, then why should your subject be there?

Subject(s)

Placement of one or more elements of the subject at (or very near) the intersecting points adds power to them and makes them much more noticeable. Where the subject(s) are placed is important.

Horizon

A horizon should normally be placed along (or near) the upper or lower of the two horizontal lines. If severe enough it can seem like two separate images, an upper and lower. Which line to use depends on the scene, what is to be depicted, and whether the sky or the foreground is of greater interest in portraying the subject. In the case of sunrises or sunsets, the horizon is usually placed along the lower horizontal line. In other photographs, the location of the subject and distant hills or mountains may dictate the location of where the sky meets them. An uneven horizon can also affect placement — it will require thought about balancing and how it appears in the image. Exact placement is not essential, only approximate, and how well it fits with the intended subject and how it is to be portrayed is an equally important consideration.



An object in the foreground helps emphasise the depth of a panorama.

Perspective

An object, or portion of an object, will appear smaller as the distance from its viewer increases. Photographs capture this same effect called 'perspective'. This effect reveals the object or scene's visible depth. Since a photograph is a flat image, we unconsciously use intuition and life experience seeing objects of similar shape to perceive perspective. The bridge photograph demonstrates this. The arches, railing and light standards all get smaller as the eye travels from the right side of the image to the left. Our intuition tells us bridges are level, light standards are the same size, rivers are level (going across them) and the arches are likely all the same size. The horizontal lines among them are parallel and equally spaced in reality. However, from our POV (point of view), they are not. Therefore the part of the bridge in the image's right side is closer than the part of the bridge on the left side. We need not see much, if any, of the far shoreline to come to this conclusion subconsciously and auto-

matically. This is reinforced by the size of everything that is part of the bridge, including the footings just above the water, getting smaller at the same rate. A look at the first and second photographs in this section also shows perspective clearly — the first with the railing and the second with the dam structure itself.

Angles

The angle at which you take the shot is the key to crafting a photo's composition. Basic photographic composition usually holds that a subject shot diagonally makes a more dynamic photo. Look for imaginary

A photo taken from a low angle can sometimes provide a strong sense of depth.



diagonal lines when trying to take a more dramatic, intense photo.

Playing with the angle of a shot can make all the difference in basic photographic composition. As you get more familiar with composition, experiment with low and high angle shots, as well as shots taken from below or above your subject.

Breaking the rules

Finally, remember that the rules of basic photography composition aren't hard and fast. Instead, use them as guidelines for your own creative ideas. Follow the guidelines of basic composition until you're comfortable with them and then start experimenting. Sometimes ignoring the guidelines produces a unique, striking photograph. Yet, be sure to understand the basics before you experiment with the rules of basic photographic composition.

There are several ways by which photography can be used in a telecentre-related environment. The application of photography in ICT projects is becoming popular across the country but there are several other areas where photography is required:

1. Photographs of cows, goats and other livestock required by the villagers for taking loans or insurance policies.
2. A photograph is the main document required in the Indira Aawaz Yojana scheme.
3. Passport size photographs are required by rural youth for many employment-related application forms.

In many of these cases, people have to travel to the nearest town for getting photographs. If the option is provided by the telecentre operator, he/she can minimise inconvenience for the villagers and also earn revenue.

HOW TO TAKE EFFECTIVE PHOTOGRAPHS

Points to remember at all times

1. Hold the camera steady

A problem with many photographs is that they're blurred. Avoid 'camera shake' by holding the camera steady. Use both hands, resting your elbows on your chest, or use a wall for support. Relax: don't tense up. You're a like a soldier holding a gun and it must be steady to shoot.

2. Put the sun behind you

A photograph is all about light so always think of how the light is striking your subject. The best bet is to move around so that the sun is behind you and to one side. This front lighting brings out colour and shades, and the slight angle (side lighting) produces some shadow to indicate texture and form.

3. Get closer

The best shots are simple so move closer and remove any clutter from the picture and make the subject look bigger in the frame.

4. Choose a format

How you hold the camera affects what your shot emphasises. For tall things, a vertical format emphasises height. Use a horizontal format to show the dramatic sweep of the mountains.



5. Include people

Photographs solely of landscape and rocks are enjoyable to take but often dull to look at. Include some of people, to add human interest.

6. Consider variety

You may take the greatest shots but if they're all the same type or style, they may be dull to look at. Include landscapes and people shots, close up and wide angles, good weather and bad weather.

7. Include foreground and background

When you are taking images of scenes it can be effective if you include a foreground and background object in your picture. This way you give the viewer a better feel about the distance of the object from the camera.

8. Add depth

Depth is an important quality of good photographs. We want the viewer to think that they're looking not at a flat picture, but through a window into a three-dimensional world. Add pointers to assist the eye. If your subject is a distant mountain, add a person or tree in the foreground.

9. Use proportion

The beauty of an image is often in its proportions. A popular technique with artists is called the Rule of Thirds. Imagine the frame divided into thirds, both horizontally and vertically. Now place your subject on one of the lines or intersections. Always centring your subject can get dull. Use the Rule of Thirds to add interest.

10. Position the horizon

Where you place the horizon in your shot affects what is emphasised. To show the land, use a high horizon. To show the sky, use a low horizon. Be creative.

11. Catch your subjects being natural

When taking your shots most of the time it is best if you don't pose your subjects. Let them act naturally while you take the shot. It may take you a little longer to get the shot but the end result will be a better photo with more natural faces.

SUMMARY

- The word 'photography' means 'writing with light' (Greek photo = light; graphis = paintbrush, or drawing), and was first used by Sir John Herschel. Photography is both an art and a science. The 'art' concerns itself with images that are aesthetically pleasing to the eye, a photograph's composition. The 'science' concerns itself with the technical aspects of light, camera bodies, shutters, lenses and films. Understanding the art and science is essential to good photography.
- The ability to see slight changes in the light on a subject is a key to professional quality work and is part of what makes a photograph, not a snap shot. The film must get the correct amount of light for it to record an image. Too little light and the image is weak and lacks contrast, while too much light will make the image dark and highly contrasting. The challenge is to control the light.
- A standard lighting technique is to position yourself so the sun is behind you and to one side. This arrangement will shine light on the subject's face, while the slight angle will produce shadows to illuminate form. A better approach is to put the subject in a shady area with a shadowed background. Unlike the human eye, photographic film can't easily handle bright areas and dark shadows, as in direct sunlight, so use the shade for a narrow tonal range.
- The artistic skills of a photographer cannot be taught. Those are skills that you have to hone. You can get 20 different people to take a picture of the same thing, and you will get 20 different photographs. What are more important to learn are the basics. The art is called composition. It is the balance of all things in a photograph. The elements, the way the light interacts with those elements, the way those elements are arranged — are all part of a photograph.
- There are three different ways to layout the elements in a photograph. One is to fill the frame. This will provide a clear description of what the photograph is about. The second is the 'Rule of Thirds'. The third is the 'Golden Mean'. The second and the third provide a means to capture the background in the photo as well as creating a compelling photograph that guides the eye of the viewer.
- The beauty of an image is often in its proportions. A popular technique with artists is called the 'Rule of Thirds'. Imagine the frame divided into thirds, both horizontally and vertically. Now place your subject on one of the lines or intersections. Always centring your subject can get dull. Use the 'Rule of Thirds' to add variety and interest.
- Depth is an important quality of good photographs. We want the viewer to think that they're not looking at a flat picture, but through a window, into a three-dimensional world. Add pointers to assist the eye. If your subject is a distant mountain, add a person or a tree in the foreground.
- When you are taking images of scenes it can be effective if you include a foreground and background object in your picture. This way you give the viewer a better feel about the distance of the object.
- When taking your shots, most of the time it is best if you don't pose your subjects. Let them act naturally while you take the shot. It may take you a little longer to get the shot but the end result will be a better photo with more natural faces.

Glossary

- **Photography:** The word photography means 'writing with light' (Greek photo = light; graphis = paintbrush, or drawing).
- **Composition:** Balance of all things in a photograph.
- **Frame:** The operative portion of a photograph.
- **Foreground:** The front portion of a photograph.
- **Background:** The back portion of a photograph.
- **Layout:** The basic arrangement of all elements in a photograph.
- **Depth:** The three-dimensional aspect of a photograph.
- **Proportion:** Balance of foreground, background and depth.
- **Subject:** The central object of attention in a photograph.

EVALUATION/ASSIGNMENTS

1. Develop your visual literacy skills.

Take the morning newspaper and select any two photographs. Write what is happening in the picture. Is there enough background and foreground in the picture? Have people been included? Are basic techniques of photography being followed? This way you will develop your visual literacy skills.

2. Analyse your photographs.

The best way to learn photography is to go out and take photographs. After you get them developed, apply the 'Rule of the Thirds' on the photo and see for yourself whether the photograph has proportions. This way you can develop the art of photography.

3. Do the pinhole camera experiment to understand the principle of camera operation.

You need the following: Black film canister, semi-opaque magic scotch tape or tracing paper, black chart or paper, and a pin. Poke a hole in the centre of the bottom of the film canister with a pin. Place two pieces of scotch tape over the opening of the film canister. This will be your viewing screen. Put the black paper around the opening of the film canister, so that no light can come in. Point the viewer to a well-lighted area and look through the paper tube. You will see the upside down image projected on the screen.

What happened was this: A pinhole camera is a simplified camera, using only a film canister with a hole poked into it — the aperture; and semi-opaque tape which is the viewing screen. Light will travel through the aperture and create a reverse image on the screen. The image will be upside down, because light travelling in a straight line through a small aperture flips the image.

4. Take random photographs at any time of the day and see what light does to a photograph. Mark the photographs and the time when it was taken and judge for yourself which time is the best to take photographs.

5. Keep a photo album and rank your photographs as good or bad. After a week, select the good and the bad photographs in a series and explain why you think so.



The Power of Radio

In the previous chapters, you studied about the wallposter technique and the use of photography in grassroots communications. This chapter introduces you to the importance of radio and how it can be a powerful medium to communicate at the grassroots level. The first section of this chapter introduces you to the concept of community radio. Then you are taken, step-by-step, into the programme production process. The steps in making a community radio programme are outlined at the end. The importance of a script and general scripting tips are also given at the end of this chapter.

By the end of this chapter, you should be able to understand:

- **Importance of community radio**
- **Components of a community radio programme**
- **Steps to be followed in making a community radio programme**
- **General scripting tips**

Community radio is radio of the community, in the community, for the community, about the community and by the community. It is a medium that gives voice to the voiceless, that serves as a mouth-piece of the marginalised. Over the past decade or so, community-based programming has taken root in different parts of India —it is empowering communities through access to information and communication skills. Precisely because of this, community radio has been accorded priority in media tools training workshops. Even children have been introduced to the basics of radio programming and then given hands-on experience in making a radio programme. After two years of grounding in radio programming and production, a children's community radio network has been formed, Radio Kids, as described later in this chapter.

Components of a community radio programme

In making radio programmes, it is important to remember that India has an oral storytelling tradition. People are good at telling stories, singing and drama.

These should form the bulk of the programme, interspersed with more serious components such as studio discussions and talks by experts. The target audience is usually youth and the uneducated who are drawn to radio or TV because of their infotainment (information combined with entertainment) potential.

There are three important components of any radio programme. These are voice, sound and music.

- **Voice** – This is the most important component of any news programme. Since radio is a voice-based medium, the ability to modulate one's voice is the crux of any good radio programme. The radio-jockey or anchor-person is the life of any programme.
- **Sound** – In radio programmes, all actions are presented through sounds. Creating pictures through sound is an important component of any radio programme.
- **Music** – Music plays an important part in a person's life. In a radio programme, music can be used to create interest, to set the mood or to entertain listeners.



SOUND EFFECTS

You can create some sound effects using the following techniques:

- **Walking over glass** – squish a plastic bag
- **Walking on wood** – use a shoe on a piece of wood
- **Walking in the forest** – scatter some sticks on the ground and walk on them
- **A gunshot** – fold a leather belt and pull the ends quickly
- **A cellphone** – use a regular cellphone
- **Thunder** – shake a piece of metal or tin
- **A telephone conversation** – talk into a roll of paper
- **Washing clothes** – thump a few clothes in a bucket
- **Washing plates** – put down a few cups and plates while keeping the water running
- **Expressing impatience** – tap fingers on a board
- **At the farm** – dig in earth in a box
- **At school, chairs and desks and moving** – drag a heavy object, chairs and tables

RADIO KIDS

Parina Parikh, Gangor Meghwal, Alka Meghwal and Aditya Chaturvedi – all 14-17 years old – are script writers, radio programme producers and editors. “We script weekly radio programmes that are heard by people in at least 30 villages in Bikaner,” says Aditya. The children live in Kolayat and are in high school.

It has been almost a year since these four youngsters joined Urmul Seemant’s radio team that produces the very popular ‘Kishore Vaani’ – Voices of the Youth — that is aired on Bikaner AIR. Most programmes are related to health, education and social issues. “Our scripts emerge from a workshop that we have every month. We decide the most relevant topic and then start conceptualising the programme,” says Parina.

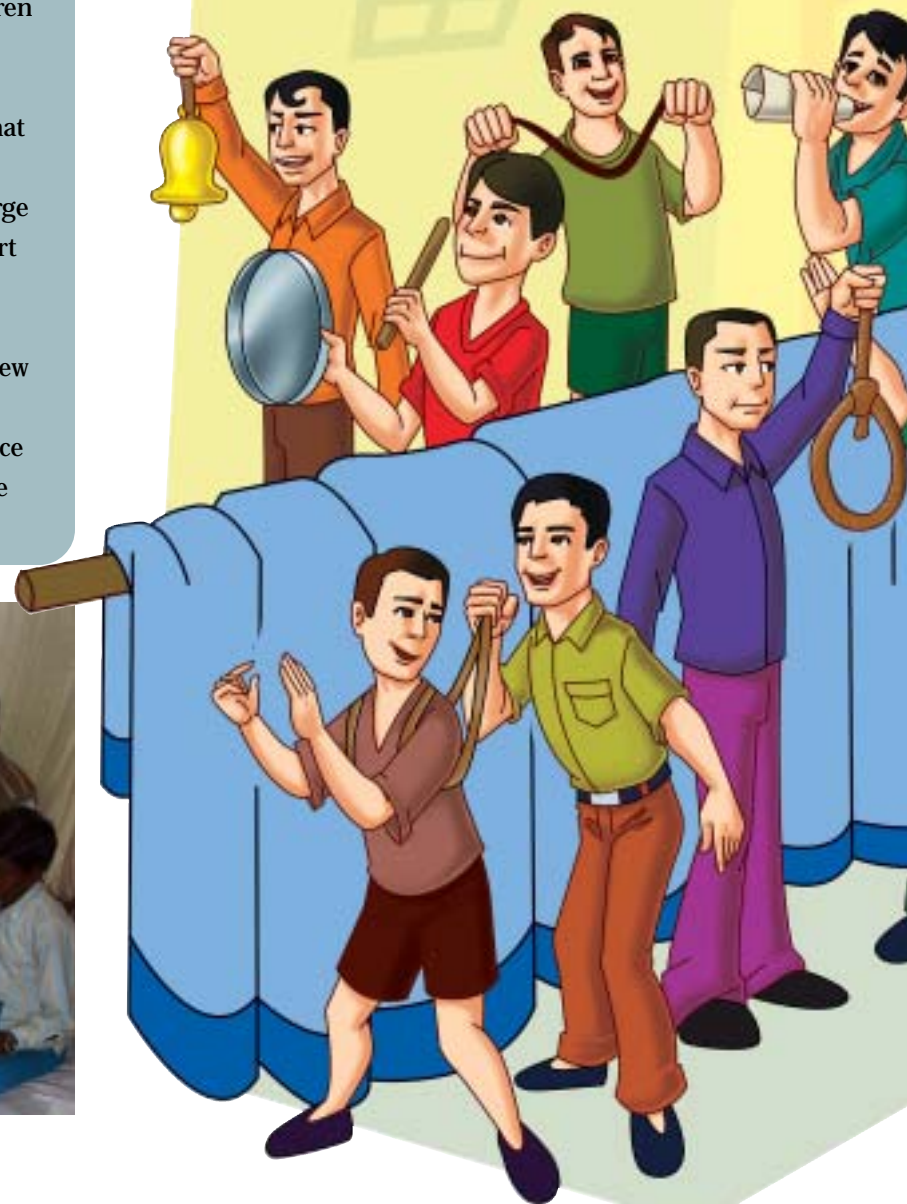
This half-hour programme covers reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, livelihood options and new farming techniques. But for Parina, the most exciting part of this experience has been the interaction she has had with different people – the collector, doctors, educationists and police officials. Funded by Panos (an international media group), the radio project has inspired the children to connect with the community better.

Children from other parts of the country are equally enthusiastic about making radio programmes. In Maharajganj district in Uttar Pradesh, a small group of children are making waves by recording radio programmes on issues relevant to their communities and narrow-casting it. So are children from Andhra Pradesh who have had their own radio programme for the past two years. In January 2007, Plan took the initiative to bring all these kids together to form the children’s community radio network.



Creating sound pictures

This activity aims to get you thinking about a theme and how to tell the story. Radio relies on being to create a picture using only sounds and voices. Begin by exploring your surroundings.



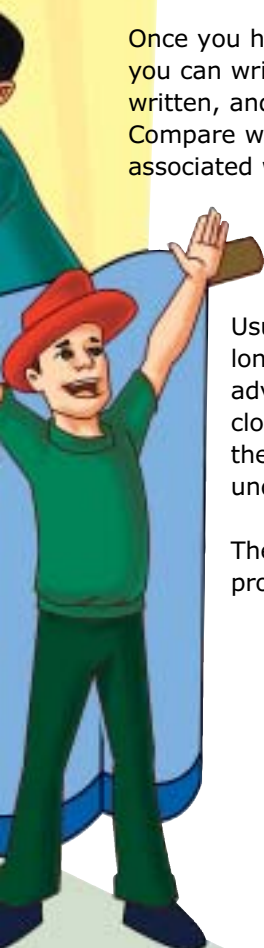
Each activity in the script can have associated sound effects. Draw all the parts of the script. For example, a village setting – huts, bullocks, goats, dogs, carts, tractors and, maybe, running water. The next step is to create the associated sounds using voices and simple props.

Once you have an idea in pictures, make a short skit – you can write it down. Read aloud what you have written, and think of the sound pictures related to it. Compare what you wrote to the sound pictures you associated with it. The sounds should help you tell the story better. This process helps you understand how to use sounds and voices to tell a story.

Usually, radio programmes are 30 minutes long. This includes about seven minutes for advertisements, as well as the opening and closing jingles. The actual programme time, therefore, is 23 minutes. Do not exceed this under any circumstances.

The components of a typical community radio programme are:

- Dramas
- Special information
- Pages from the history
- Employment and income generation
- Songs
- Feedback letters
- Agricultural information
- Question of the day
- Key local information
- Achievements of a programme or an individual



FUN TALK

'Allari Muchchatlu' (Fun Talk) in the Nizamabad district of Andhra Pradesh is a radio programme written and produced by village children. The community radio project is sponsored by Samskar-Plan International and the programmes are broadcast over AIR Nizamabad, All India Radio's local FM station, from 8.30 to 9.30 am on Sundays. Get a group of children together and in about half-an-hour you have a format which is their own. The format has a local flavour with proverbs and a talk on a historical figure being part of it. There are even some radio classes offered from time to time.

VOICES OF THE VOICELESS

In November, 2006, a group of Dalit women made history when they began broadcasting an hour-long programme. Their Community Radio Station, in the village of Machnoor in Andhra Pradesh, was the first fully-fledged CR station to go on air once the government had given this new medium the go-ahead. The station, set up by a non-governmental organisation, Deccan Development Society (DDS), consisted of a building made with locally available low-cost material, two 16-and four-channel mixers and stereo recorders. Two 100-watt FM transmitters with a coverage area of 30 km radius reaching out to 100 villages, were already set up. "It's our radio and we will broadcast programmes made by us for our benefit. We will talk about seeds, crop diversity, organic farming, health, hygiene, women's problems and sending children to school, virtually everything that touches the community," said General Narsamma, one of the four CR jockeys.



Source: The Hindu, November 20, 2006

How to Communicate Effectively

Steps in making a community radio programme

1. Decide on the issue

The first step in making any radio programme is to decide on the issue. It must be kept in mind that, like any other media, people listen to radio predominantly for education, information and entertainment.

2. Research the issue

It is also important to do research before making any programme. Two distinct types of research go into the making of any radio programme: audience research gives us the profile of the people, those who are the potential listeners; community-based research gives an idea of the issues on which people would like to receive information.

3. Decide the format

A radio programme comprises many sections or components such as drama, skit, talks, interviews, music, jokes, etc. Deciding on the format means deciding which components would go in to a programme. It could also be predominantly drama-based or interview-based.

4. Gather information

All details regarding the information which we would like to share with our listeners should be collected.

5. Decide on roles and responsibilities

It is important to decide who will do the anchoring, who will do the drama and so on.

6. Write the script

The entire radio programme is then neatly written down in the form of a script, starting with the anchorperson inviting the persons to listen to the programme, to soliciting feedback from them by giving the address for correspondence.

7. Rehearse

Rehearsal is the key to any successful radio programme. Rehearsals must be done till everyone gets their narration and voice modulation perfect.

8. Record

This is usually done in a studio, but it could also be done in village settings in a noise-free place on an ordinary tape recorder.

9. Edit

Editing the programme can be done on a computer, using simple software like Sound Forge.

10. Broadcast/narrow-cast

The programme can be taken to the community in two ways – via broadcasting or narrowcasting. Broadcasting can be done through All India Radio by purchasing time slots. Narrowcasting involves playing back the programme to the community through organised listeners' groups and serves as a powerful mechanism of immediate feedback.



VOICES FROM THE VILLAGES

'Chala Ho Gaon Mein' was started by AID-Bihar in Palamau (Jharkhand) as a community participatory radio programme involving the villagers. A weekly 30-minute air-time slot was bought from AIR Daltonganj and the first programme went on air on



August 5, 2001. Volunteers were trained using the simplest of portable tape recorders and the local folk tradition of creating instant poetry and skit became the basic style of presentation.

'Chalo Ho Gaon Mein' is now a bi-weekly programme that reaches a population of over 7 million covering Palamau, Garwah and Latehar districts in Jharkhand; stock characters like 'Phulwa Behen' and 'Raju Bhaiya' are household names in the districts. The programme is entirely in the local dialect (a mixture of Hindi and Bhojpuri) which is understood by all the villagers, unlike the chaste Hindi used by AIR Daltonganj.

In Kutch, Gujarat, the Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan (KMVS), supported by the UNDP, began its community radio broadcasts in 1999 over AIR Bhuj. Today, 'Kunjla Paanje Kutchji' (Saras Crane of our Kutch) is hugely popular in the vast reaches of the Kutch, where literacy levels are low and poverty makes it difficult for villagers to take advantage of newspapers and television.

General scripting tips

The script is the thread that binds the programme. It is what the anchor, or narrator, reads out. Radio scripts have to be written so listeners can understand the story the first time it is read.

- The script should use informal grammar and simple words to be suitable for community broadcasting. It should use colloquial terms liberally but avoid slang or other words that demean others.
- Avoid highly specialised terms, unless they are explained.
- The language should be precise and clear. Sentences should follow each other and be easy to follow by ear. The scriptwriter should test the script by reading it to another group member. The easiest way to write simple clear sentences is to use the active voice, because that is closest to spoken language.
- Write for one listener. Write and deliver your words as though you are speaking to one person, not a crowd. The best communicators connect personally with their audience.
- Think for the listener rather than yourself. The purpose of the programme is to inform, not confuse. Children are especially good at saying things simply and in a straightforward manner. Their vivid imagination is good at painting a picture with words – the scriptwriter should be allowed as much leeway in storytelling as possible.
- The writer should simplify – use round numbers, avoid abbreviations and repeating long names and avoid unnecessary adjectives.
- Pay close attention to the beginning and end of each component of the script, such as a play or song. You may have to change the script to connect better with each component. Everything should appear to be an integrated whole, rather than separate pieces.
- A simple method is to introduce the next component. For example, you can say, "Listeners, Aarti has written a beautiful song for you on (the topic). I don't want get between you and Aarti, so here she is."

SUMMARY

- Community radio is radio of the community, in the community, for the community, about the community and by the community. It is a medium that gives voice to the voiceless, and serves as a mouth-piece of the marginalised.
- There are three important components of any radio programme. These are voice, sound and music. Since radio is a voice-based medium, the ability to modulate one's voice is an important component of any good radio programme. In radio programmes, all actions are presented through sounds. Music plays an important part in a person's life and, in a radio programme, music is used to create interest and also to entertain the listeners.
- A radio programme comprises many sections or components such as drama, skit, talks, interviews, music, jokes, etc. Deciding on the format means deciding which components would go into a programme.
- The entire radio programme should be neatly written down in the form of a script, starting with the anchorperson inviting the persons to listen to the programme, to soliciting feedback from them by giving the address for correspondence. The script is the thread that binds the programme. It is what the anchor, or narrator, reads out.
- Radio scripts have to be written so listeners can understand the story the first time it is read. The script should use informal grammar and simple words to be suitable for community broadcasting. It should use colloquial terms liberally but avoid slang or other words that demean others.
- Rehearsal is the key to any successful radio programme. Rehearsals must be done till everyone gets their narration and voice modulation perfect.
- The programme can be taken to the community in two ways – broadcasting or narrowcasting. Broadcasting can be done through All India Radio by purchasing time slots. Narrowcasting involves playing back the programme to the community through organised listeners' groups.

Glossary

- **Community radio:** Radio of the community, by the community and for the community.
- **Format:** The way a radio programme is presented.
- **Script:** The thread that binds the programme. It is what the anchor, or narrator, reads out.
- **Anchor:** A person who presents or narrates the entire programme.
- **Voice modulation:** The ability to lower or heighten one's voice as the per the need of the narration.
- **Broadcasting:** Using an allotted radio frequency to air one's programme.
- **Narrow-casting:** Playing back the programme to the community through organised listeners' groups.
- **Editing:** Fine-tuning the programme by removing the mistakes, barriers and voice aberrations in any recording.

EVALUATION/ASSIGNMENT

- List the components of a community radio programme.
- Practice voice modulation by narrating some of the news items found in the daily newspapers. Pay adequate attention to accent, voice modulation, pronunciation and narration.
- Try out some of the sound effects described in this chapter.
- Write a radio drama on an important issue affecting your community like female foeticide, education of girl children or HIV/AIDS. Once you have written the script evaluate it for clarity, conciseness, entertainment value and message delivery.
- Make a 10-minute community radio programme on the successes you have had in running your telecentre. Read the section on components of a community radio programme again and then prepare the programme.
- Rehearse in front of the mirror for 10 minutes daily and learn to pronounce some difficult words with clarity, emphasising the appropriate syllables.



The Power of Digital Stories

This chapter introduces you to a very new and simple idea — that of creating digital stories. In earlier chapters of this manual, we have covered skills that can make you a good grassroots journalist and communicator and help you interact with your community.

What if you could add the knowledge you have gained about computers and computer programmes and the art of storytelling to those media skills such as photography and audio recording? You could create very special and unique stories about your home, your village, your community and the issues that emerge.

This is the power of the digital story — and with a little bit of training — you could well be creating such digital stories, using them to voice community concerns, to capture events, festivals and other occasions. Making digital stories can be fun and it can be an inexpensive alternative to videos and film-making. And finally, it could well be an additional source of income for your telecentre.

By the end of this chapter, you should be able to:

- **Understand what digital stories are**
- **Follow the process of making a digital story in a few simple steps**
- **Make your own small digital story**

In an earlier chapter, we told you about wallposter comics. You may also remember the comic strips that you have seen and read over your life, whether the tales from Panchatantra or from the famous Chandamama series of comic books. Those comic strips were printed and they told a story in pictures and words. If you could combine that print medium with today's technology, you would be working in a new area of creativity called 'digital storytelling'.

Digital storytelling is a craft that uses the tools of digital technology to tell stories about our lives. In other words, it is the practice of combining a narrative story with digital content, including images, sound and video, to create a short movie, typically with a strong emotional content. Done properly, storytelling can be a powerful, evocative and emotional way of communicating themes and stories, often touching us in deeper ways than one-dimensional videos that rarely probe beneath the surface of people's lives.

Digital stories can be interactive and complex movies, but they can also be a simple set of photographs and slides with a corresponding narration of simple narration and music. The resources available for such types of stories are virtually limitless, often within your immediate surroundings — so long as you are observant and keep a careful record, especially of photographs and newspaper cuttings and magazines.

A person with little or no technical background can create digital stories. A number of simple applications can get someone started on making digital stories, though more sophisticated applications may be needed for complex story efforts. Anyone can create digital stories using software and applications that either are part of your operating system, such as the commonly known Windows Movie Maker or iMovie which comes bundled with the system's operating software. There are other simple software available on the Internet — and many are available for free. You can download

what you want from the Internet and at least use the trial versions available until you can procure your own copy.

There are also more expensive software such as Photoshop® and Flash®, available in the market. The original versions are still expensive for a non-professional like you. Trial versions are available on the Internet. So use the trial versions as much as you can. While pirated or unauthorised copies are available in the grey market, it is strongly recommended that you do not purchase these since there is always a risk of viruses entering and corrupting your system. You also run the legal risk of violation of copyrights and intellectual property laws. So use free software wherever possible.

Having gone through the earlier five chapters and understood the subject, you must by now be quite familiar with the basic skills needed to create a digital story. What is attempted in the next section is to take you through the steps toward creating a digital story by yourself with little help from outside experts.

Digital stories can be interactive and complex movies, but they can also be a simple set of photographs and slides with a corresponding narration of simple narration and music.



Essential steps in creating a digital story

Step 1: Decide on the story you want to tell

There are dozens of stories, all within your neighbourhood and all waiting to be told. Everything from the birth of a new baby in a family, to pests in crops, to sanitation and hygiene issues; to stories about how to treat diarrhoea among children — all or any of these could be a story. A visit to a city during which you have taken many photographs could form the basis of a digital story.

Whatever the story, it is important to decide what story you want to tell. You could choose stories on issues affecting your life. Anything can become a digital story, including one's personal journey or a meaningful interaction between two friends, or a Gram Sabha meeting; a school function, etc.

Step 2: Gather your materials

The materials for your stories can come from pre-existing collections of photographs, from books, magazines or it could be a series of photographs that one can go out into the field and click. Gather all the materials you need to support the ideas and emotions in the script, including music, sound effects, photographs and small movie clips. Having collected all the materials, you can now move on to the next stage.

Step 3: Begin writing your script

A digital story typically begins with a script. This is the first step and is usually done by writing the story on paper and in a story form. In chapter 2.1, we have explained the process of writing stories at length. Use what you have learned from

that chapter to help you to write it. Experiment, for it is through trial and error that we will learn.

Build up your story in a conversational language, remembering how your mother or grandmother used to whenever they told you stories. Remember how they made the story come alive with colourful descriptions. Use the same kind of descriptions in your narration of the story but remember, you have to choose carefully from all the story elements on the one hand and the resources at your command on the other — so that your story has meaning and can have the desired effect when shown.

Step 4: Prepare your equipment

You do need the support of computers, peripherals and some software to work on a digital story. In addition to the computer at your telecentre, you need a digital camera, scanner, CD writer, and a printer. This equipment should be part of your telecentre anyway. If not, there are a variety of such peripherals available in the market, some at a very low cost and some which have many features such as a scanner, copier, printer and fax bundled into one. These come in very handy when you have to prepare your equipment. Ideally, you need more than the Windows Movie Maker software — Adobe Film Maker and Adobe Photoshop, or Flash — to work on the digital story. But you can begin and learn your work on Windows Movie Maker until such time when you can get the other software.

Step 5: Create a storyboard

The next step is to create a storyboard (a visual script). You must decide how many photographs would go into the digital story, whether you need to record live interviews with people, etc.

The storyboard is the basic building block of a digital story. A comic strip is the simplest form of a storyboard. The storyboard is a sequence of simply drawn pictures that visually depict the digital story. Often the terms — script and storyboard — are used interchangeably, though they have their differences. The difference is that a script can also be written without any visuals at all, whereas a storyboard is always a visually illustrated script. The storyboard in practice becomes the blueprint for action.

A graphic artist working on developing artwork based on a storyboard (the basic sketches placed on the black sheet at the bottom of the picture).



Before we start developing a storyboard, let us look at the various media components of a digital story. You must have gathered these already. You will have text, audio and visuals (drawings, photographs). You may also have some video clippings with you. The digital story will be a combination of all and so the storyboard should have all the components in a two-dimensional page or card. The digital story in a sequence of pictures and narrative, as shown in the storyboard below, becomes the complete blueprint for the digital story.

Step 6: Digitise your media

All the materials that have been collected, sorted and sequenced now need to be digitised. This will include text, if any, and also any photographs, images, charts, etc. This means that while you may enter text directly onto the computer using the program, you will have to create digital files of all photographs, sound (whether narration, also called voice-over) and music and other sounds (also called sound effects), and other visual elements. This means ordinary photographs and newspaper and magazine clippings will have to be scanned and stored, music and sound effects converted to audio files, etc.

Create folders for each section of your story and save all the different elements (text, audio, photographs, etc) relating to that section inside that folder. That way, all the needed elements will be in one place and you will not waste time searching for them.

While dealing with text, it is very important to remember that, in a digital story, it is a support and not the main means of communication. In a digital story, text is most often used for titles, subtitles, headlines, credits and content.

At this stage, it is a good idea to play around with the Media Maker and get familiar with all its features. You could use the Help menu in the program to guide you through the process.

If you can, learn the basics of Photoshop to digitise the media at this stage.

Step 7: Record a voice-over and add music

The story is then converted into audio form – the recording has to be neat and crisp. You have learned to record audio in the chapter on radio. The same techniques are useful here. Just remember, the original quality of the audio must be as good as you can make it, because it is very difficult to correct bad audio once it is recorded. Choose and add music that suits the storyline.

Step 8: Edit the story

This is the final step in producing the digital story. Add or delete images, audio and text, and make it crisp and interesting. There are some simple rules that can guide you in the editing process. For instance, it is easier to delete and to cut than it is to decide where and what to add. So, the first cut (round) of editing may be longer than you want it. You can start the process of sharpening your story to add visual and audio impact.

Always save your newly edited version as a new file on your system. This is a precaution because you might want to restore some image and you will have lost it if the changes were saved in the old file itself. Even the best of professional editors have been known to make the mistake of not saving their work and then losing it.

Always take a back-up of your work on a CD.

Keep the raw files, that is, unedited content, in different folders also. You may need them later in this or another project. In case your computer system fails or crashes, you will have the back-up copy to work with — you will not have to start from the beginning again.

Step 9: Share your story

Digital stories can be shared in multiple ways, including through a stand-alone CD-ROM (Compact Disc-Read Only Memory) on a computer or it can be converted into a VCD/DVD format and played on television screens. As far as possible, do not store all your digital stories on the main computer itself. Not only will you overload your computer memory, but there is always a risk of viruses entering the system and corrupting the files. You can also find other ways of sharing your stories. With the fast development of the Internet, it is also possible today to place your digital story on the World Wide Web as a part of a free web service. By doing this, your story will reach not just your village but the world.

Step 10: Gather feedback

Always gather feedback about your digital story from people. This will help you with ideas for new ideas and ways of creating digital stories. Take all feedback, good and bad, without anger or disappointment. We cannot be experts right from the beginning. Each feedback and experience will enrich our effort and improve our skills.

So go ahead and experiment with this way of telling stories and of capturing the life and variety in your community. Only by experiment and practice can you master the art of digital stories. When you do, you will find a lucrative business, along with a feeling of satisfaction.

SUMMARY

- Digital storytelling is a craft that uses the tools of digital technology to tell stories about our lives.
- You need a computer with a digital camera, scanner and printer to start. Initially, you can work on Windows Movie Maker but later you might need more sophisticated software.
- It is important to decide what story you want to tell. The script is the first step in producing a digital story. It is written on paper and in a story form.
- The next step is to create a storyboard, at which point you must decide how many photographs would go into a digital story.
- The story is then converted into audio form. Add music that suits the storyline.
- Add or delete images and make it crisp and interesting.

Glossary

- **Digital stories:** Digital stories are short, crisp stories affecting our lives that are told by using the tools of digital technology.
- **Windows Movie Maker:** A movie-making software that comes free with Windows. You can follow the steps listed there to create a digital movie.
- **Adobe Photoshop:** A software that allows you to process photographs
- **Adobe Movie Maker:** An advanced movie making software available as a licensed product from Adobe. `
- **Storyboard:** The visual script and a blue-print of a story.
- **Digitisation:** The process of using digital technology to translate media into the digital form, be they photographs, audio recording or simple animation.

EVALUATION/ASSIGNMENTS

- List the steps that go into the making of a digital story.
- Write a story on an issue affecting your operations. Remember all the techniques of story-telling described in Chapter II.
- Record your story by using sound recorder.
- List the photographs that are needed for you to make a digital story.
- Collect the photographs.
- Go to Windows Movie Maker and follow the simple steps to create a digital story.
- Screen your digital story to a target audience and gather feedback.

Feedback Form for Grassroot Communications for Telecentre Management

Your feedback on this module is very important to our efforts to continually improve its content and presentation style. Please take a few moments to complete this questionnaire.

Your name (optional):

How many hours did it take you to complete this module?

Please send us your feedback on the various aspects of the module by placing a (✓) mark in the column that best describes how you feel – choose from

- 1 which means strongly disagree;
- 2 which means somewhat disagree;
- 3 which means somewhat agree; or
- 4 which means strongly agree.

Statements about the module	1	2	3	4
1. The objectives of the module were clearly stated.				
2. The subject matter of the module was new to me.				
3. The subject matter of the module was relevant to me.				
4. The module was written in a manner that is clear and easy to understand.				
5. The treatment of the module topic was adequate.				
6. The module's level of difficulty was just right.				
7. The module provided me with new ideas, insights or perspectives.				
8. The module increased my understanding of major concepts and principles.				
9. The module provided me with new knowledge and skills that enhance my job performance.				
10. The examples and/or case studies in the module were relevant.				
11. There were too many learning activities and exercises.				

Please answer the following questions on the back of this page.

1. What did you find most useful in the training? (Please explain your answer.)
2. What did you find least useful in the training? (Please explain your answer.)
3. On what topics, if any, would you rather have spent more time – whether or not they were addressed in the training?
4. On what topics, if any, would you rather have spent less time?
5. What suggestions do you have for improving the module?
6. Any other suggestions or comments you may have.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please tear it out (or photocopy these two pages) and send to:

B. Shadrach,
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 No. 208, Jor Bagh
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 India

This manual on Grassroots Communication that forms part of the set of *Telecentre Management Training Manuals* prepared and peer-reviewed by telecentre.org's five valued partners in India discusses how a telecentre can be used as a tool to communicate effectively both within and outside the community. The module helps telecentre operators to write better, take and use photographs, create comic-strips, make promotional aids using multimedia tools and use information and communication technologies to create digital stories.

Mission 2007 partners



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Telecentre Management Training Manual
Entrepreneurship

Version 1 (*prepared by Mission 2007 partners*)

telecentre.org is a collaborative social investment programme of



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Contents

■ 4

Introduction to Entrepreneurship

Honesty, commitment, the will power and courage to undertake calculated risks, desire to grow big, using opportunities and resources, interest, knowledge, experience, self-confidence, capability – these are some qualities that define an entrepreneur.

■ 12

Assessment of Entrepreneurial Competencies

An insight into the competencies required for an ICT entrepreneur, in the form of a self-evaluation tool. Using it and analysing the feedback from the results will help you understand your strengths as well as areas for improvement in yourself.

■ 26

Establishing a Telecentre Enterprise

For a successful entrepreneur defining and articulating business objectives, formulating successful business plans and strategies are crucial steps. ICT entrepreneurs, especially, will realise that by catering to the information and communication needs of their communities they are rendering a valuable service.

■ 44

Managing a Telecentre Enterprise

To be successful, an entrepreneur needs to know basic business operations and management procedures. Marketing, human resources and managing people, financial transactions, time management, leadership, vision for the future – these are only some of the skills required.





Introduction to Entrepreneurship

What is entrepreneurship? Not all businessmen or self-employed persons are entrepreneurs. Honesty, commitment, the will power and courage to undertake calculated risks, desire to grow big, using opportunities and resources, interest, knowledge, experience, self-confidence, capability – these are some qualities that define an entrepreneur. You may already have some and lack a few. The good news is you can acquire what you lack.

By the end of this chapter, you should be able to understand:

- **The nature of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs**
- **What it means to run an ICT enterprise**
- **The pitfalls and precautions associated with running an ICT enterprise**

What is self-employment and entrepreneurship?

An immediate reaction to the word employment is any job that gives salary. Lack of correct information on self-employment in the light of such a misconception has led many youngsters away from the field of self-employment. Because of improper and incomplete information on self-employment, many youngsters are subjected to peculiar situations. On one hand, you have a few who think that self-employment is very easy and that no prior preparations are necessary; if they have money they can launch their own self-employment ventures. On the other hand, many others feel that self-employment is a very complicated process involving many complexities and thus they feel they are not fit enough to launch their self-employment ventures.

Thus our youngsters misunderstand self-employment, resulting in many of them starting one or the other self-employment ventures, but very few continue the ventures successfully on a permanent basis. In the light of this background, let us understand what self-employment is.

Self-employment is any venture a person undertakes based on the strength of his knowledge and experience, on his own with creative means, where he utilises natural resources available within himself and around him, that is, in his surroundings. He conducts his business with self-confidence, a sense of belief in his own capability, and honesty; he works hard without depending on others; and derives maximum satisfaction along with the primary goal of earning money.

If we analyse each and every word here, a clear picture of self-employment, as also that of entrepreneurship, emerges. Interest, knowledge, experience, self-confidence, capability, will power, hard working nature, creativity, risk-bearing abilities, good character,

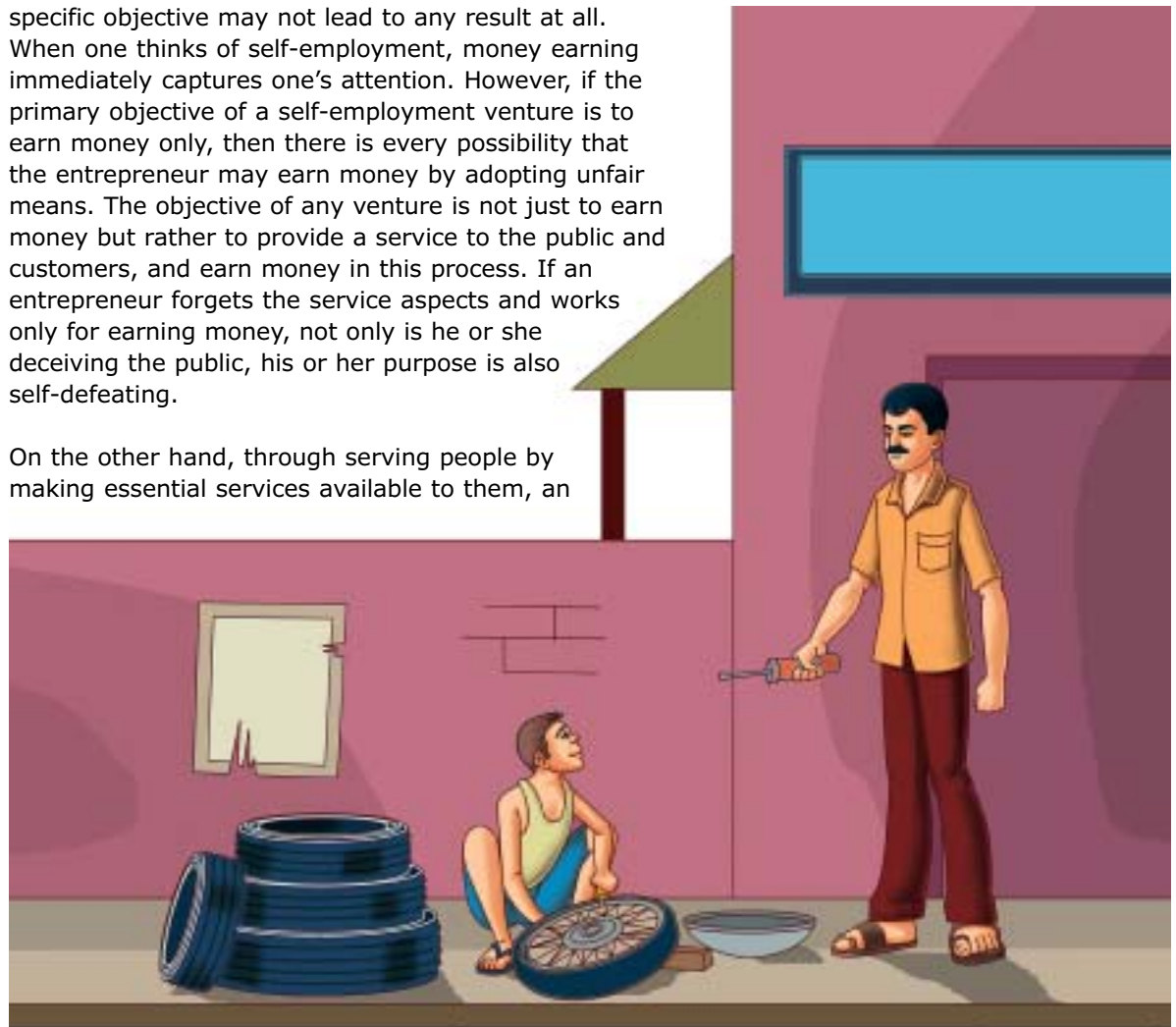
a desire to grow big, making use of opportunities and resources are some of the qualities which transform a person, leading him or her to be an entrepreneur.

Objectives of entrepreneurship

To undertake any task and to get the desired results, one should have definite objectives. A task without any specific objective may not lead to any result at all. When one thinks of self-employment, money earning immediately captures one's attention. However, if the primary objective of a self-employment venture is to earn money only, then there is every possibility that the entrepreneur may earn money by adopting unfair means. The objective of any venture is not just to earn money but rather to provide a service to the public and customers, and earn money in this process. If an entrepreneur forgets the service aspects and works only for earning money, not only is he or she deceiving the public, his or her purpose is also self-defeating.

On the other hand, through serving people by making essential services available to them, an

A person sitting by the side of the road repairing tyre punctures is self-employed. An entrepreneur, however, would build on this to one day possibly own a chain of auto service centres.



entrepreneur can have satisfaction and joy, which otherwise is not possible to get while earning only profit. In the light of this background, youth should understand the correct objectives of self-employment and entrepreneurship, which can be listed as in the box below:

Thus an entrepreneur should be useful not only to himself but also to society and the nation as a whole. The life of an entrepreneur becomes more meaningful if money is earned by providing good service to the customers.

- To find a permanent way to lead one's life in self-employment.
- To earn money/profit by providing essential services to the public.
- To raise standards of living along with the development of the venture.
- To earn a place of respect in society.
- To contribute to the production sector.
- To contribute to national income of the country.
- To join hands in the development of the country.

And, for an ICT entrepreneur, a great challenge is:

- To bridge the digital divide.

Today's education and self-employment

The main objective of any type of education is to acquire knowledge. Unfortunately today education has become a means to secure a salaried job. The youth are failing to re-deploy the knowledge they acquire during the course of their education into framing their lives meaningfully.

It will not be out of place to note that today education is producing clerks instead of producing youngsters full of creativity and innovativeness. Any type of education should develop self-confidence in an individual to face life. Is this happening today? If no, why don't we think of a complete change in our education system?

Why not evolve an education system that adapts itself to our surroundings, environment and our people? Education – instead of turning into a factory and churning out doctors, lawyers, engineers, etc – can play crucial role in bringing about a complete change in the fields of agriculture, small-scale industries, small business, rural artisans, etc. In that case these subjects have to be included right from the primary school level. Let the concept of self-employment and entrepreneurship be introduced to our boys and girls at a very tender age.

This may help in preparing our youngsters for self-employment right from their childhood and instill a sense of confidence in the younger generation to face and lead life without necessarily going in for wage employment.

Even though education has been undergoing a change in the right direction, in the form of the introduction of job-oriented and vocational courses, a lot needs to be done to bring about a complete transformation.

ADVANTAGES OF SELF-EMPLOYMENT

Self-employment has an edge over wage employment and helps an individual to lead a happy, contented life. It plays an important role in the life of an individual, helping him to enjoy the fruits of his hard work and derive satisfaction. Some of the advantages can be listed as:

Self-sufficient life: Self-sufficient life is a gift of self-employment to an individual. He/she does not depend upon others and leads his/her life according to his/her wishes.

Happiness and satisfaction: A person should derive happiness and satisfaction out of any work he does. In self-employment an individual can earn happiness as well as satisfaction because he undertakes hard work to please himself and his customers or clientele whereas in wage employment a person works to please others, preferably his/her higher-ups. Thus deriving happiness and satisfaction out of his/her work takes a back seat in the latter case.

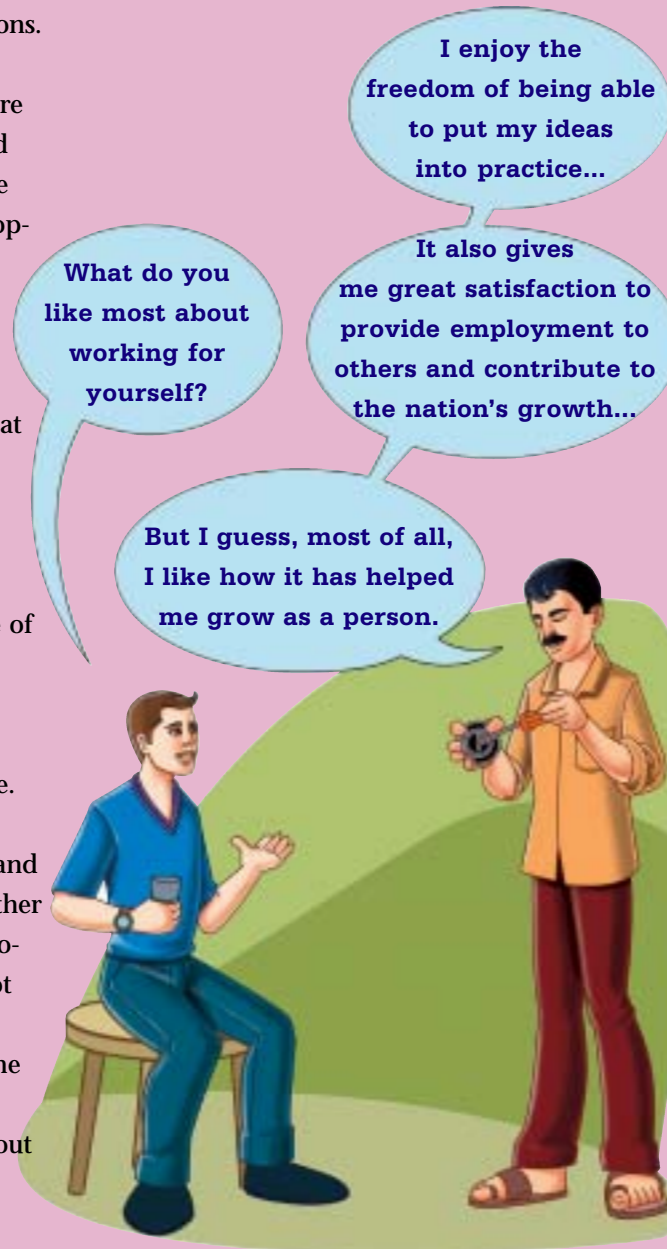
Employment to others: In wage employment, a person cannot even dream of providing employment to others. But in self-employment, a person can definitely employ others, care for them and their families and thus derive satisfac-

tion of having come to the rescue of needy persons.

Enough opportunity for development: There are lots of opportunities available to a self-employed person to develop his/her venture. The sky is the limit! The person enjoys total freedom in developing and diversifying the venture. There is no compulsion and time frame. On the contrary, in wage employment, such opportunities for self-development are very limited. Either it is slow process or enough opportunities may not come at all.

Implementation of one's own thoughts: A self-employed person can implement his/her own thoughts freely without any hesitation and waste of time. In wage employment, generally a person cannot do so. The creativity is curbed.

Free life: A self-employed person enjoys free life. There is a lot of freedom in working, in setting time limits, etc. Sometimes a person works day and night to complete the task on hand and some other times he/she can take out leisure time and temporary relief out of the workload. The person is not bound by restrictions. In wage employment, restrictions on time, place or type of job make the life of a person a routine. Life becomes passive. The thrill in life is taken out. The person turns out to be a machine.



Utilisation of resources: The perfect combination – that of human resources with plenty of natural resources available freely in our country – is possible only through self-employment and entrepreneurship.

Development of society: Self-employment plays an important role in developing a creative and active society through the development of the personality of an individual, and according value both to hard work and the worker. A creative society is the backbone of a strong nation.

Economic freedom: In self-employment by the utilisation of resources, production as well as the income level of people increases. Thus self-employment paves the way for economic freedom.

Personality development: Personality development of an individual is possible in self-employment. Not only the venture but the person also develops and grows along. A self-employed person can have the satisfaction of having a direct involvement in building and developing the nation.

There is no 'fear of unemployment' to the 'future generation' of a self-employed individual. They can continue their self-employment ventures.

SELF VS WAGE EMPLOYMENT – A COMPARISON

Vital points	Self-employment	Wage employment
Investment	Has to be done	Need not be done
Income	No limit	Restricted
Risk	Present	Not present
Responsibility	More	Less/absent in some cases
Accountability	Very much there	Less/nil in few cases
Employment to others	Can be given	Not possible to give
Creativity	Unlimited and is rewarded	Limited and sometimes without reward
Freedom	Unlimited	Limited
Opportunity for future generation to continue	Present	Absent
Time factor	Unlimited	Limited
Own thoughts implementation	Full freedom to do so	Limited freedom
Scope for development	Abundant	Very less
Satisfaction / happiness	Available in plenty	Scarcely available
Utilisation of resources	Possible	Not possible directly
Contribution to society, nation	Directly and in greater proportion	Indirectly and in less proportion
Worries	Worries concerned on others and business. Hence better health and long life likely	Worries always self-centred. Hence more health problems and likely lower life expectancy
Desire to grow	Present in plenty	Curbed by many limitations

Entrepreneurship in self-employment

All persons engaged in self-employment ventures are not entrepreneurs. In other words, all businesspersons are not entrepreneurs. Involving oneself in any activity that brings in income, in itself, is not the end. It is only a beginning. The main objective of any self-employment venture is economic activity.

This economic activity can be divided into three broad groups:

- Income generation activity
- Self-employment
- Entrepreneurship

All self-employed people are not entrepreneurs but all entrepreneurs are self-employed persons. That means each activity mentioned below is different in nature.

1. Income generation activity

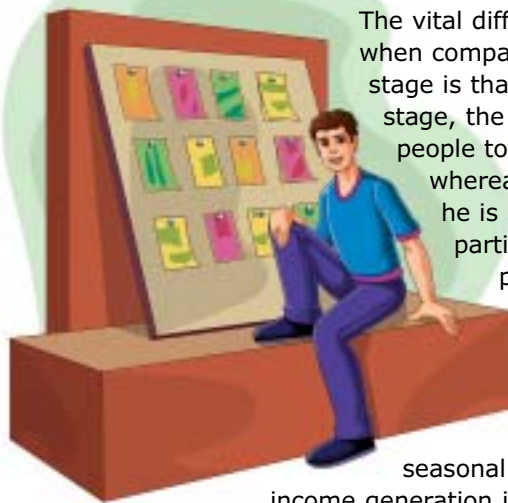
An activity that helps in generating income is only a beginning. Here the activity may be seasonal and the person engaged in it might not be utilising his full time and energy in carrying it out. In other words, the activity may not have been carried out on a full-time basis.

To illustrate: a boy engaged in selling lottery tickets in a bus stand, a cinema house or in some public place can be said to be engaged in income-generating activity. He might be attending to this only during his spare time. The main objective of a person engaging in such an activity is not to earn more and more income but to gain experience and confidence, thus getting a firm footing in the activity.



II. Self-employment

This is the second stage. The main difference between the first and second stage is 'time'. In his, a person fully utilises his or her entire time and energy in carrying out the activity. The income generated is on a continuous basis and the activity has a definite shape. To illustrate: the boy, in the first example, after gaining sufficient experience, confidence and learning the tricks of lottery selling now purchases a small box and starts selling the lottery tickets on a roadside.



The vital difference here when compared with the first stage is that, in the first stage, the boy approaches people to sell the tickets, whereas in this stage, he is stationed at a particular point and people approach him to purchase the tickets. Here the business is no longer seasonal and a uniform income generation is present.

III. Entrepreneurship

This is a very vital stage. Income-generating and self-employment activities undertaken with the objective of only earning money cannot take a person to this stage. Along with generation of income, the person has to acquire or develop entrepreneurial qualities.

The person has to bring in effective coordination between his or her own personality and the business undertaken. One has to attain perfection through hard work, creativity and one's innovative nature. The will



power and courage to undertake calculated risks will take a self-employed person towards entrepreneurship. If actual economic development has taken place in true sense, then entrepreneurship should develop.

Again, in the example given above, the boy who is self-employed now gains experience, enough confidence and also income, and launches his own lottery agency, thereby employing others. Thus he enters the third stage.

Today's requirement

Starting a self-employment venture is only a beginning and is not the end. Do not feel satisfied with the success and income/money alone. Think of developing yourself into an entrepreneur, with an enlarged vision of not only self-development but development of the nation. Always think of what you can contribute for the growth of your country as an individual. Will power, sustained efforts, hard working nature together with creativity and innovativeness will definitely take a self-employed person towards entrepreneurship.

PITFALLS & PRECAUTIONS

Some of the **pitfalls** in operating any business:

- Not knowing yourself
- Lack of experience
- Failing to plan
- Lack of capital/money
- Inappropriate location
- Too much capital going into fixed assets
- Improper inventory management
- Having the wrong attitude
- Choosing wrong partners
- Drawing too much personal income
- Having unrealistic expectations

Precautions every entrepreneur needs to take:

- Plan properly
- Investigate
- Learn
- Recognise limitations
- Keep records
- Watch the balance sheet, not only profits
- Cooperate with suppliers and banks
- Utilise professional assistance

Telecentre and entrepreneurship

Telecentres aim to stimulate and respond to the demand for information and communication services, yet each telecentre is likely to have its own unique qualities that match the needs of the community.

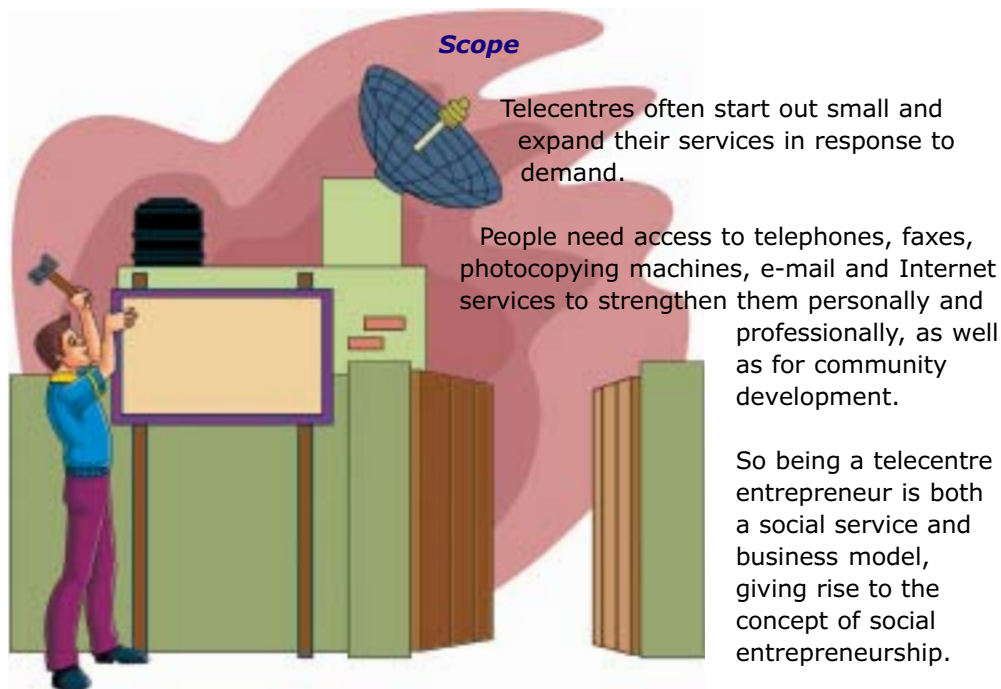
There are many kinds of telecentres – they may be independent individual agencies or enterprises, part of a franchise, or perhaps a project of a national agency.

All telecentres believe that they are relevant to the community they serve. An important indicator of the success of any telecentre is the degree to which it becomes an integral part of the community it serves.

Being a telecentre entrepreneur

In typical commercial models, the kiosk manager is:

- An independent entrepreneur, who
- Invests his capital in the kiosk, and
- Creates community organisations to guide his kiosk's activities



Scope

Telecentres often start out small and expand their services in response to demand.

People need access to telephones, faxes, photocopying machines, e-mail and Internet services to strengthen them personally and professionally, as well as for community development.

So being a telecentre entrepreneur is both a social service and business model, giving rise to the concept of social entrepreneurship.

OUTCAST TO WEB-CAST!

At an age when most young men in his village were falling in love, Prasad* was possessed by revolutionary zeal. Pessimism, more than poverty, had turned Prasad a Naxal in his state.

Prasad's quest for martyrdom made him an extreme individualist. Everyone – his family, friends and community – started avoiding him. He had become an outcast. It didn't take long for him to realise that if you have only one tool in your kit – a hammer – every problem would have to be dealt with like it's a nail. He understood the limitation of violence in sorting out the problems he was fighting for. He did not want to be a failure in life.

Somewhere he read that if an experiment fails, what does the scientist do? He conducts another experiment. He does not try to justify his failure, or say that his failed experiment has not failed at all. Prasad was inspired by this and wanted to revert to the mainstream and do something positive and useful for his community that that shunned him. There is nothing to be ashamed of in his past, he told himself.

He soon had an opportunity. There was an advertisement in his Mandal for educated youth with leadership skills and enthusiasm to run an ICT kiosk in his village. He applied for it in partnership with his childhood friend. He impressed the panel of interviewers with his energy.

He learnt all the skills necessary to run the kiosk, from the basics of computers, business, managing machinery, etc. Soon the same people who had avoided him became his clients and started flocking to his centre day and night.

With positive thinking, patience and perseverance, Prasad has come a long way from being an outcast to being a role model today for the youth of his village. Perhaps for millions of youngsters who want to demonstrate their talents and skill and who want to use the latest technologies for the benefit of their respective communities, Prasad is really a role model to emulate in setting up ICT kiosks.

** Name changed to maintain anonymity*

SUMMARY

- From income generation activity to self-employment and entrepreneurship, the goals are different and so are the skills and resources required.
- There are both pros and cons when you compare wage and self-employment – analyse all the conditions.
- Soft skills and technical skills are both required for an aspiring entrepreneur.
- Avoid the pitfalls and prepare yourself to take adequate precautions before starting your own venture.
- Telecentre entrepreneurs bridge the digital divide.
- Telecentres often start out small and expand their services in response to demand.

Evaluation Exercise 1: ICT Enterprise Success Factors List

Prepare yourself: Having gone through the first part you must still be interested in starting a business. The next step is to prepare you and enhance the likelihood for a successful ICT business venture. Also do some homework, both online and offline, and understand how ICT kiosks function.

The exercise: What do profitable ongoing businesses have in common? List as many success factors as you can in the space provided:

ICT Enterprise Success Factors

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____



Assessment of Entrepreneurial Competencies

From Evaluation Exercise 1, it would have been clear to you that there are many internal attributes essential for the success of an ICT) entrepreneur. This chapter is designed to give you an insight into the competencies required for an ICT entrepreneur. It consists of a self-evaluation tool. Using it and analysing the feedback from the results will help you understand your strengths as well as areas for improvement in yourself. Therefore answer the questions sincerely and honestly, to gain maximum benefit from this exercise.

Once you are clear after this exercise where you need to improve, you can do one of two things:

- **Try and acquire the competencies required, or**
- **Partner with or hire people with those competencies**

Instructions for filling your responses

1. This questionnaire consists of 70 brief statements. Read each statement and decide how well it describes you. Be honest about yourself.
2. Select one of the numbers below to indicate how well the statement describes you
 - 5 – **Very well**
 - 4 – **Well**
 - 3 – **Somewhat**
 - 2 – **Very little**
 - 1 – **Not at all**
3. Write the number you select under each statement.

Here is an example:

I remain calm in stressful situations
2

*The person who responded to the item above wrote a "2" indicating that the statement described him or her **very little**.*

Some statements may be similar, but no two are exactly alike.

Please answer all questions.

SELF-RATING QUESTIONNAIRE

Read the instructions on the left before commencing the questionnaire.

1. I look for things that need to be done
2. I like challenges and new opportunities
3. When faced with a difficult problem, I spend a lot of time trying to find a solution
4. When starting a new task or project, I gather a great deal of information
5. It bothers me when things are not done very well
6. I give much effort to my work
7. I find ways to do things faster
8. I plan a large project by breaking it down into smaller tasks
9. I think of unusual solutions to problems
10. I feel confident that I will succeed at whatever I try to do
11. I tell others when they have not performed as expected
12. I get others to support my recommendations
13. I develop strategies to influence others
14. No matter whom I am talking to, I am a good listener
15. I do things that need to be done before being asked to by others
16. I prefer activities that I know well and with which I am comfortable
17. I try several times to get people to do what I would like them to do
18. I seek the advice of people who know a lot about the problems or tasks I am working on
19. It is important to me to do a high quality job
20. I work long hours and make personal sacrifices to complete jobs on time
21. I am not good at using my time well

- 22.** I think about the advantages and disadvantages of different ways of accomplishing things
- 23.** I think of many new ideas
- 24.** I change my mind if others disagree strongly with me
- 25.** If I am angry or upset with someone, I tell that person
- 26.** I convince others of my ideas
- 27.** I do not spend much time thinking about how to influence others
- 28.** I feel resentful when I do not get my way
- 29.** I do things before it is clear that they must be done
- 30.** I notice opportunities to do new things
- 31.** When something gets in the way of what I am trying to do, I keep on trying to accomplish what I want
- 32.** I take action without seeking information
- 33.** My own work is better than that of people I work with
- 34.** I do whatever it takes to complete a job
- 35.** It bothers me when my time is wasted
- 36.** I try to think of all the problems I may encounter and plan what to do if each problem occurs
- 37.** Once I have selected an approach to solving a problem, I do not change that approach
- 38.** When trying something difficult or challenging, I feel confident that I will succeed
- 39.** It is difficult for me to order people to do things
- 40.** I get others to see how I will be able to accomplish what I set out to do
- 41.** I get important people to help me accomplish my goals
- 42.** In the past, I have failures
- 43.** I take action before it is clear that I must
- 44.** I try things that are very new and different from what I have done before
- 45.** When faced with a major difficulty, I quickly go on to other things
- 46.** When working on a project for someone, I ask many questions to be sure I understand what that person wants
- 47.** When something I have been working on is satisfactory I do not spend extra time trying to make it better
- 48.** When I am doing a job for someone, I make a special effort to make sure that person is satisfied with my work
- 49.** I find ways to do things for less cost
- 50.** I deal with problems as they arise, rather than spend time trying to anticipate them
- 51.** I think of many ways to solve problems
- 52.** I do things that are risky
- 53.** When I disagree with others, I let them know
- 54.** I am very persuasive with others

55. In order to reach my goals, I think of solutions that benefit everyone involved in a problem

56. There have been occasions when I have taken advantage of someone

57. I wait for direction from others before taking action

58. I take advantage of opportunities that arise

59. I try several ways to overcome things that get in the way of reaching my goals

60. I go to several different sources to get information to help with tasks or projects

61. I want my company to be the best of its type

62. I do not let my work interfere with my family or personal life

63. I get the most I can out of the money I have to accomplish a project or task

64. I take a logical and systematic approach to activities

65. If one approach to a problem does not work,

I think of another approach

66. I stick with my decisions even if other disagree strongly with me

67. I tell people what they have to do, even if they do not want to do it

68. I can not get people who have strong opinions or ideas to change their minds

69. I get to know people who may be able to help me reach my goals

70. When I do not know something, I don't mind admitting it

Now use the scoring and evaluation sheets on the following pages to rate yourselves with respect to various attributes of importance to entrepreneurs.

Scoring sheet for Self-rating Questionnaire

Instructions for scoring your responses:

1. Enter the ratings from the completed questionnaire on the lines above the item number in parentheses Notice that the item numbers in each column are consecutive: Item number 2 is below item number 1, and so forth
2. Do the addition and subtraction indicated in each row to complete each competency score.
3. Add all competence scores to compute the total score.

Rating of Statements	Score	Competency
$\frac{\quad}{(1)} + \frac{\quad}{(15)} + \frac{\quad}{(29)} + \frac{\quad}{(43)} - \frac{\quad}{(57)} + 6 = \underline{\quad}$		Initiative
$\frac{\quad}{(2)} - \frac{\quad}{(16)} + \frac{\quad}{(30)} + \frac{\quad}{(44)} + \frac{\quad}{(58)} + 6 = \underline{\quad}$		Sees and acts on opportunities
$\frac{\quad}{(3)} + \frac{\quad}{(17)} + \frac{\quad}{(31)} - \frac{\quad}{(45)} + \frac{\quad}{(59)} + 6 = \underline{\quad}$		Persistence
$\frac{\quad}{(4)} + \frac{\quad}{(18)} - \frac{\quad}{(32)} + \frac{\quad}{(46)} + \frac{\quad}{(60)} + 6 = \underline{\quad}$		Information-seeking
$\frac{\quad}{(5)} + \frac{\quad}{(19)} + \frac{\quad}{(33)} - \frac{\quad}{(47)} + \frac{\quad}{(61)} + 6 = \underline{\quad}$		Concern for high quality of work
$\frac{\quad}{(6)} + \frac{\quad}{(20)} + \frac{\quad}{(34)} + \frac{\quad}{(48)} - \frac{\quad}{(62)} + 6 = \underline{\quad}$		Commitment to work contract
$\frac{\quad}{(7)} - \frac{\quad}{(21)} + \frac{\quad}{(35)} + \frac{\quad}{(49)} + \frac{\quad}{(63)} + 6 = \underline{\quad}$		Efficiency orientation
$\frac{\quad}{(8)} + \frac{\quad}{(22)} + \frac{\quad}{(36)} - \frac{\quad}{(50)} + \frac{\quad}{(64)} + 6 = \underline{\quad}$		Systematic planning
$\frac{\quad}{(9)} + \frac{\quad}{(23)} - \frac{\quad}{(37)} + \frac{\quad}{(51)} + \frac{\quad}{(65)} + 6 = \underline{\quad}$		Problem-solving
$\frac{\quad}{(10)} - \frac{\quad}{(24)} + \frac{\quad}{(38)} + \frac{\quad}{(52)} + \frac{\quad}{(66)} + 6 = \underline{\quad}$		Self-confidence
$\frac{\quad}{(11)} + \frac{\quad}{(25)} - \frac{\quad}{(39)} + \frac{\quad}{(53)} + \frac{\quad}{(67)} + 6 = \underline{\quad}$		Assertiveness
$\frac{\quad}{(12)} + \frac{\quad}{(26)} + \frac{\quad}{(40)} + \frac{\quad}{(54)} - \frac{\quad}{(68)} + 6 = \underline{\quad}$		Persuasion
$\frac{\quad}{(13)} - \frac{\quad}{(27)} + \frac{\quad}{(41)} + \frac{\quad}{(55)} + \frac{\quad}{(69)} + 6 = \underline{\quad}$		Use of influence strategies
TOTAL SCORE	=	
$\frac{\quad}{(14)} - \frac{\quad}{(28)} - \frac{\quad}{(42)} - \frac{\quad}{(56)} + \frac{\quad}{(70)} + 18 = \underline{\quad}$		Correction factor

Corrected scoring sheet

Instructions for correction:

1. The Correction Factor (the total of items 14, 28, 42, 56 and 70) is used to determine whether or not a person tries to present a very favourable image of him. If the total score on this factor is 20 or greater, then the total scores on the 13 competencies must be corrected to provide a more accurate assessment of the strength of the competencies for that individual.
2. Use the following numbers when figuring the corrected score

If the Correction Factor is	Subtract the following correction number from the total score for each competency
24 or 25	7
22 or 23	5
20 or 21	3
19 or less	0

3. Use the next sheet to correct each competency before using the profile sheet.

CORRECTED SCORE SHEET

Competency	Original score	-	Correction number*	=	Corrected total
Initiative	_____	-	_____	=	_____
Sees and acts on opportunities	_____	-	_____	=	_____
Persistence	_____	-	_____	=	_____
Information seeking	_____	-	_____	=	_____
Concern for high quality of work	_____	-	_____	=	_____
Commitment to work contract	_____	-	_____	=	_____
Efficiency orientation	_____	-	_____	=	_____
Systematic planning	_____	-	_____	=	_____
Problem solving	_____	-	_____	=	_____
Self-confidence	_____	-	_____	=	_____
Assertiveness	_____	-	_____	=	_____
Persuasion	_____	-	_____	=	_____
Use of influence strategies	_____	-	_____	=	_____
CORRECTED TOTAL SCORE				=	_____

* This number depends on a person's Correction Factor Score and will be 7, 5, 3 or 0, the same for each competency. Use the instructions on the previous page to determine the correction number.

COMPETENCY PROFILE SHEET FOR SELF-RATING QUESTIONNAIRE

Instructions for preparing profile sheet:

1. Transfer the correct competency score to the profile sheet by making an "X" at the appropriate point on the dotted horizontal line for each competency.
2. Draw a heavy line over the dotted horizontal line for each competency, from the left vertical line to the point you have marked with an "X". The heavy lines you have drawn graphically represent the strength of each competency.

Competency	Score					
	0	5	10	15	20	25
Initiative						
Sees and acts on opportunities						
Persistence						
Information-seeking						
Concern for high quality of work						
Commitment to work contract						
Efficiency orientation						
Systematic planning						
Problem-solving						
Self-confidence						
Assertiveness						
Persuasion						
Use of influence strategies						

EVALUATION EXERCISE 2A

Write down your thoughts about the following aspects of your competency profile:

1. What was your first reaction on examining your score for each of the 13 competencies?
2. What do you seem to be least competent at?
3. Thinking back, what incidents in your life seem to have demonstrated your weakness in these competence areas?
4. What seem to be your strongest competencies?
5. Thinking back, what incidents in your life seem to illustrate your strengths in these areas?
6. Which competencies would you want to make some improvement in?

Competencies: A conceptual framework

The Competent Manager *by Richard E. Boyatzis*

What is competence?

A competence is an underlying characteristic of a person which results in effective and/or superior performance in a job. A job competence is an underlying characteristic of a person, in that it may be motive, traits, skills, and aspect of one's self-image or a body of knowledge which one uses. The existence of these characteristics may or may not be known to the person. In this sense the characteristics may be an unconscious aspect of the person.

In simple terms, a competence is a combination of body of knowledge, set of skills and cluster of appropriate motives/traits that an individual possesses to perform a given task effectively. In order to understand more about competencies, let us understand the meaning of knowledge, skills, traits and motives, which form various components of entrepreneurial competencies.

What is a body of knowledge?

Knowledge means collection of information and retention of facts that an individual stores in some parts of his/her brain. Let us take, for example, swimming.

One could be in a position to describe how to swim, which would mean that one possesses knowledge of swimming. But this alone will not enable him/her to actually swim unless one has something more than the knowledge itself to perform the activity. It means that knowledge is necessary but not sufficient for performing a task.

In real life situations, one may find various examples where people possessing mere knowledge have miser-

ably failed while performing the task. Besides knowledge, an individual should have skills to translate the knowledge into action.

What is a skill?

Skill is the ability to demonstrate a system and sequence of behaviour that are functionally related to attaining a performance goal. Using a skill is not a single action.

The relationship among the specific actions is such that each contributes in some direct manner to the capability of people to function effectively or ineffectively in a given situation

Since a skill is the ability to demonstrate a system and sequence of behaviour, it must result in something observable, something that someone in the person's environment can 'see'.

For example, planning ability is a skill. People who have this skill can identify a sequence of actions to be taken to accomplish specific objectives. They can identify potential obstacles to those actions. People with this skill can identify sources of help in avoiding obstacles or overcoming them when they interfere with the action sequence. None of these separate actions constitutes a skill, but the system of behaviour does. People who have this skill can apply it in a variety of situations or contexts.

Going by the example of knowledge of swimming, if one has to be in a position to swim, one needs to have the skill too.

Knowledge could be acquired by reading, listening, looking at visuals, etc, while skill can be acquired only through practice which enables the individual to demonstrate the system and sequence of behaviour that are functionally related to performing a task. In other



**One can gain
KNOWLEDGE
about
swimming
from any of
several
sources**



Once can build on knowledge by practising to acquire a SKILL

words, knowledge of swimming could be acquired by reading, talking to experts and so on whereas the skill to keep oneself afloat in water can be acquired by practising on a number of occasions. Thus knowledge as well as skills is required to perform a given task effectively.

Motives and traits

A motive is recurrent concern for a goal state or condition appearing in fantasy which drives, directs and selects the behaviour of the individual.

Motive includes thoughts related to a particular goal state. For example, people who think about improving their own performance and competing against a standard of excellence are said to have 'achievement motivation' – when they encounter a situation in which their performance can be measured and a goal can be stated, their achievement motivation is aroused. (Once aroused, the motivated thoughts direct and select their behaviour, that is, they will choose to do things that help them get feedback about their performance and engage in activities that may result in improved performance.)

In simple terms, motive is an urge for which one has continuous concern in one's mind, which directs one to get into certain actions to satisfy the concerns.

Coming back to the example of swimming, the knowledge of swimming followed by practice leads an individual to acquire the capability to swim. But then this does not lead him to become the best swimmer within a given reference group. The individual urge to do better and better, leading to a desire to become the best swimmer, could be termed as a concern for excellence – in other words, achievement. It is this concern, which would help the individual to constantly practice swimming, and look out for ways and means of increasing the speed, thereby ultimately increasing the possibility of becoming the best swimmer.

A trait is a dispositional or characteristic way in which the person responds to an equivalent set of stimuli. A trait includes thoughts and psychomotor activities related to a general category of events. For example, people who believe themselves to be in control of their future are said to have the trait of efficacy. When people with this trait encounter problem or issues in any aspect of life they take initiative to resolve the problem or understand the issue.

They do not wait for someone else to do it nor expect that luck will take care of it.

The thought pattern and resultant behaviour occur in response to any general set of events which allow the trait to be expressed.

Thus, to perform any given task, including that of launching a ICT venture and managing it successfully, a person needs a set of knowledge, skills, motives and traits, which could be together labelled as competencies.

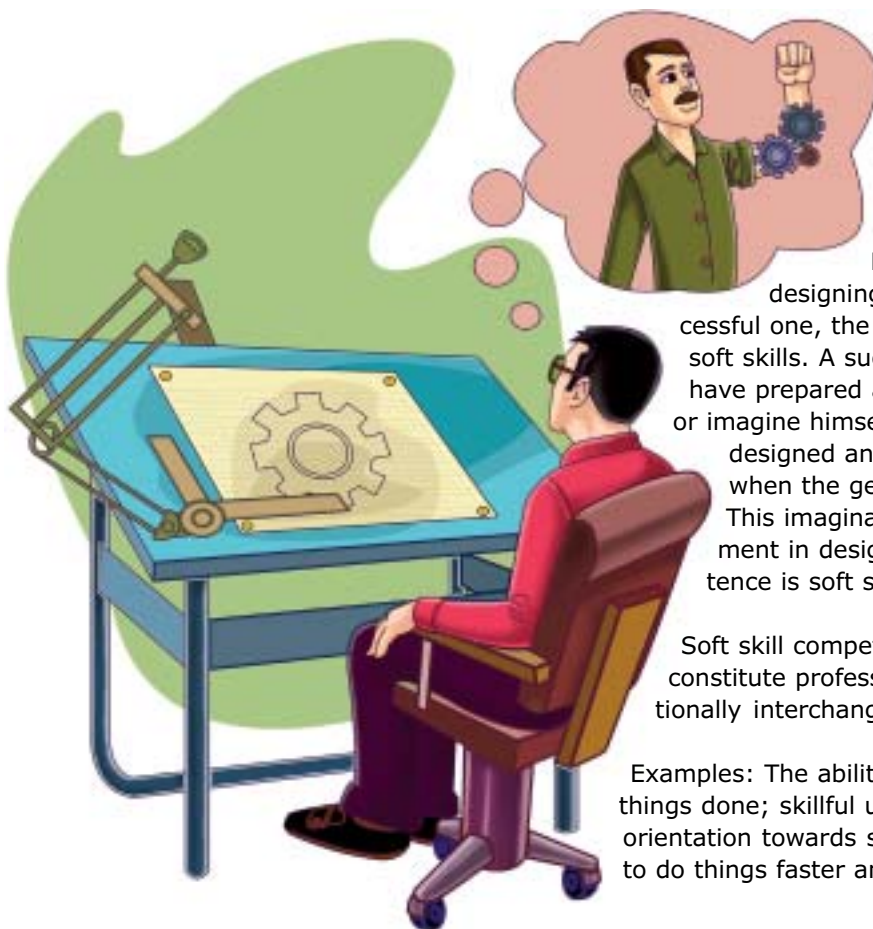
It takes a TRAIT such as a desire for excellence to build on one's skill and become the best in one's field



Identifying competencies – Alternative approaches

Soft skill and hard skill competencies

What does it take to perform a task effectively? The task could be related to a manager, a supervisor or an entrepreneur's work. One aspect that leads to effective performance is the 'hard skill' of the performer. By hard skills, we mean those related to a given profession and acquired generally through academic education and also through hands-on experience in performing tasks.



Taking the example of a 'design engineer' engaged in designing gears as a part of a machine, the technical knowledge/skills of designing is the hard skill that would contribute to his performance.

However, between a successful designing engineer and a not so successful one, the difference could be in terms of soft skills. A successful design engineer could have prepared a preliminary design of a gear, or imagine himself to be a gear that he has designed and think of where it could hurt when the gear is fitted in the machine. This imagination could lead to improvement in design. Such a cognitive competence is soft skill competence.

Soft skill competencies are those which do not constitute professional knowhow and are functionally interchangeable.

Examples: The ability to persuade others to get things done; skillful use of influence strategy; orientation towards seeking information; orientation to do things faster and cheaper.

Identification of competencies

Lyle M.Spencer; Scottish Council for Research in Education

Now that we have understood that both hard skills and soft skills are necessary to perform a task, how can we identify them effectively? In other words, how can we decide what it takes to perform a task effectively?

The answer could come from a theory reflecting someone's thoughts on what characteristics an individual must possess to do the task effectively. It may emerge from the personal experience of the individual who needs to decide what it takes to do a job well. For example, one may conclude, based on one's experience, that to perform task 'x' effectively, one needs characteristics such as dedication, hard work, thoroughness, etc.

Identifying what it takes to perform a task effectively will lead to listing out the qualities which are vague and seldom tested systematically against performance.

Job competency assessment

The best way to understand what it takes good performers to do what they do and how they approach a given situation, is to compare the same with what average performers would do. The process — that is, job competency assessment — is based on the following premises:

- In every job, some people perform more effectively than others. These people approach their jobs differently from the average performers.
- These differences in approach clearly show the specific characteristics that are often absent in average performers.

The approach towards job competency assessment involves

- Determining performance standards and factors indicating top performance, and using this information to identify superior performers.
- Analysing performer characteristics and behaviour; gathering experts' perceptions on what it takes to perform a job successfully — then studying what the top performers themselves actually do on the job.

A similar approach has been adopted for identifying entrepreneurial competencies, as described below.

Identifying entrepreneurial competencies

Subsequent to Prof David C. McClelland's (a well known behavioural scientist and Harvard University Professor) experiment in Kakinada and Rajamandri (in Andhra Pradesh, India) during late 1960s, achievement motivation was considered the central theme in the personality of a successful entrepreneur.

In simple terms, 'achievement motivation' is an 'urge' in an individual to excel, to do better and better, to complete, with self-set standards, to perform unique tasks and to be involved in long-term career goals.

Experience gathered during two decades in adopting achievement motivation theory for identifying and developing entrepreneurial potential has led to the need to understand, with more clarity, what contributes to success as an entrepreneur.

Accordingly, Prof. McClelland and his associates, with the involvement of the Educational Development Institute (EDI), Ahmedabad, initiated a research project where the emphasis was on identifying entrepreneurial competencies using the competency assessment approach. The research project was spread over three countries – India, Malawi and Ecuador. It involved the following steps:

- Identifying top performers, that is, entrepreneurs

in the small-scale sector who have performed well, and a matching sample of average performers operating in the same product line and in the same environment. Such samples were identified in various parts of India and other countries using certain established sampling techniques.

- Entrepreneurs so identified were interviewed in depth covering their early life, point of entry into the entrepreneurial career and their experience thereafter related to their business.
- Entrepreneurs were specifically asked to recall and narrate high points and low points in their business. The narration was probed to understand the thoughts, feelings and actions of the entrepreneur in a given critical experience. Based on this, a list of characteristics/competencies that a top performer has, was compiled and compared with that of an average performer.
- The list of such competencies, a competency model, was tested on a second set of samples of top and average performers for statistical validation.

Competency model for entrepreneurs:

This exercise has led to a competency model that distinguishes top and average performers, that is, entrepreneurs and others. Interestingly, background factors such as education, work experience, family background and technical expertise have emerged as being neutral to success as an entrepreneur.

Earlier, there used to be a firm belief that those persons with a business family background could become successful entrepreneurs. Subsequently, there was a belief that individuals need technical knowhow for being successful in an industrial venture. The experience as also the finding of the research project have clearly indicated that what it takes to be a successful entrepreneur is a set of competencies as listed on the following pages.

Competencies of a successful entrepreneur

1. Takes initiative

- Takes action that go beyond job requirements or the demands of the situation.
- Does a thing before being asked for or forced to by events.
- Acts to extend the business into areas, products or services.

2. Sees and acts on opportunities

- Recognises opportunities and takes action on them for business, education or personal growth.
- Seizes unusual opportunities to obtain financing equipment, land/work space or assistance.

3. Displays persistence

- Takes repeated or different actions to overcome obstacle.
- Takes action in the face of a significant obstacle.

4. Is information-seeking

- Takes action on own to get information to help reach objectives or clarify problems.
- Does personal research on how to provide a product or service.
- Consults experts for business or technical advice.
- Seeks information or asks questions to clarify what is wanted or needed.
- Personally undertakes research, analysis or investigation.

- Uses contacts or information networks to obtain useful information.

5. Has concern for a high quality of work

- Acts to do things that meet or beat existing standards of excellence.
- States a desire to produce work of high quality.
- Compares own or own company's work favourably to that of others.

6. Is committed to work contracted

- Places the highest priority on getting a job completed.
- Makes a personal sacrifice or expends extraordinary effort to complete a job.
- Accepts full responsibility for problem in completing a job for others.
- Pitches in with worker or works in their place to get the job done.
- Express a concern for satisfying the customer.

7. Is oriented towards efficiency

- Finds ways to do things faster or with fewer resources or at a lower cost.
- Looks for or finds ways to do things faster or at least cost.
- Uses information or business tools to improve efficiency.
- Expresses concern about costs versus benefits of improvements and changes in course of action.

8. Does systematic planning

- Develops and uses logical, step-by-step plans to reach goals.
- Plans by breaking a large task down into sub-tasks.
- Develops plans anticipating obstacles.
- Evaluates alternatives.
- Takes a logical and systematic approach to activities.

9. Has a problem-solving attitude

- Identifies new and potentially unique ideas to reach goals.
- Switches to an alternative strategy to reach a goal.
- Generates new ideas or innovative solutions.

10. Exudes self-confidence

- Has a strong belief in self and own abilities.
- Expresses confidence in own ability to complete a task or meet a challenge.
- Sticks with own judgment in the face of opposition or early lack of success.
- Does something that he says is risky.

11. Is assertive

- Confronts issues with others directly.
- Confronts problems with others directly.
- Tells others what they have to do.
- Reprimands or disciplines those failing to perform as expected.

12. Has a sense of persuasion

- Successfully persuades others.
- Convinces someone to buy a product or service.
- Convinces someone to provide financing.
- Convinces someone to do something else that he would like that person to do.
- Asserts own competence, reliability or other personal or company qualities.
- Asserts strong confidence in own company's or organization's products or services.

13. Uses influence strategies

- Acts to develop business contacts.
- Uses influential people as agents to accomplish own objectives.
- Selectively limits the information given to others.
- Uses a strategy to influence or persuade others.

14. Monitors work

- Develops or uses procedures to ensure that work is completed or that work meets standards of quality.
- Personally supervises all aspects of a project.

15. Shows concern for welfare of relevant others

- Takes action to improve the welfare of employees.
- Takes positive action in response to employees' personal concerns.
- Expresses concern about the welfare of employees.

CASE STUDY

Mr. Parker and his pens

This is a true American story



Mr. Parker was an ordinary clerk working in a shop selling fountain pens in an American city. After

completing his own work, he used to help the mechanics working in the department which repaired fountain pens. Mr Parker thus picked up how to repair fountain pens — he now could start repairing work confidently in addition to his clerical work.

Mr Parker used to take great pains to conduct the repair jobs very skillfully and with exactness. All



customers recommended his repair work. A stage came when all those who wanted to get their fountain pens repaired insisted on getting the job done only through Mr Parker. The time he spent on this work now started increasing. At times, because of overload, Mr Parker had to work even at home.

Having learnt pen repair technology himself, he knew exactly what was wrong with the various pens. Since he took the interest to see that similar types of defects did not recur, there

never were any repetitive problems of fountain pens repair work done by him.



One morning, Mr Parker wondered why there couldn't be a fountain pen that did not have any problem. He picked up different parts and components from the market and designed and produced a fountain pen that could not have any problems. He produced some 10 fountain pens as prototypes and presented them to people from different walks of life. While presenting the pens, Mr Parker made sure that he gave them to only those people who would surely give him full details of the defects as well as strong points of his design within a month or so. After one month, Mr Parker received feedback on his design. He got very useful data and information. He got the general impression that all these 10 people were very happy with the product and that they intended buying more of them for themselves and others.

Now Mr Parker thought of starting a small unit for manufacturing these pens regularly. But he did not have enough finance for this. He discussed this



problem with his friends and with those who wanted to buy more of his type of fountain pens. These friends

and users of pens gave Mr Parker small loans and he started manufacturing these pens on a small scale.

In this factory the quality control of the product was given the highest importance. Even if the cost of the pens was high, it was 'high quality' that was always maintained, all the time. The sale of the pen was linked with this guarantee and the company always replaced any defective unit.



In due course of time, this fountain pen became a world leader amongst fountain pen manufacturers and was named 'PARKER' after the name of its producer.



SUMMARY

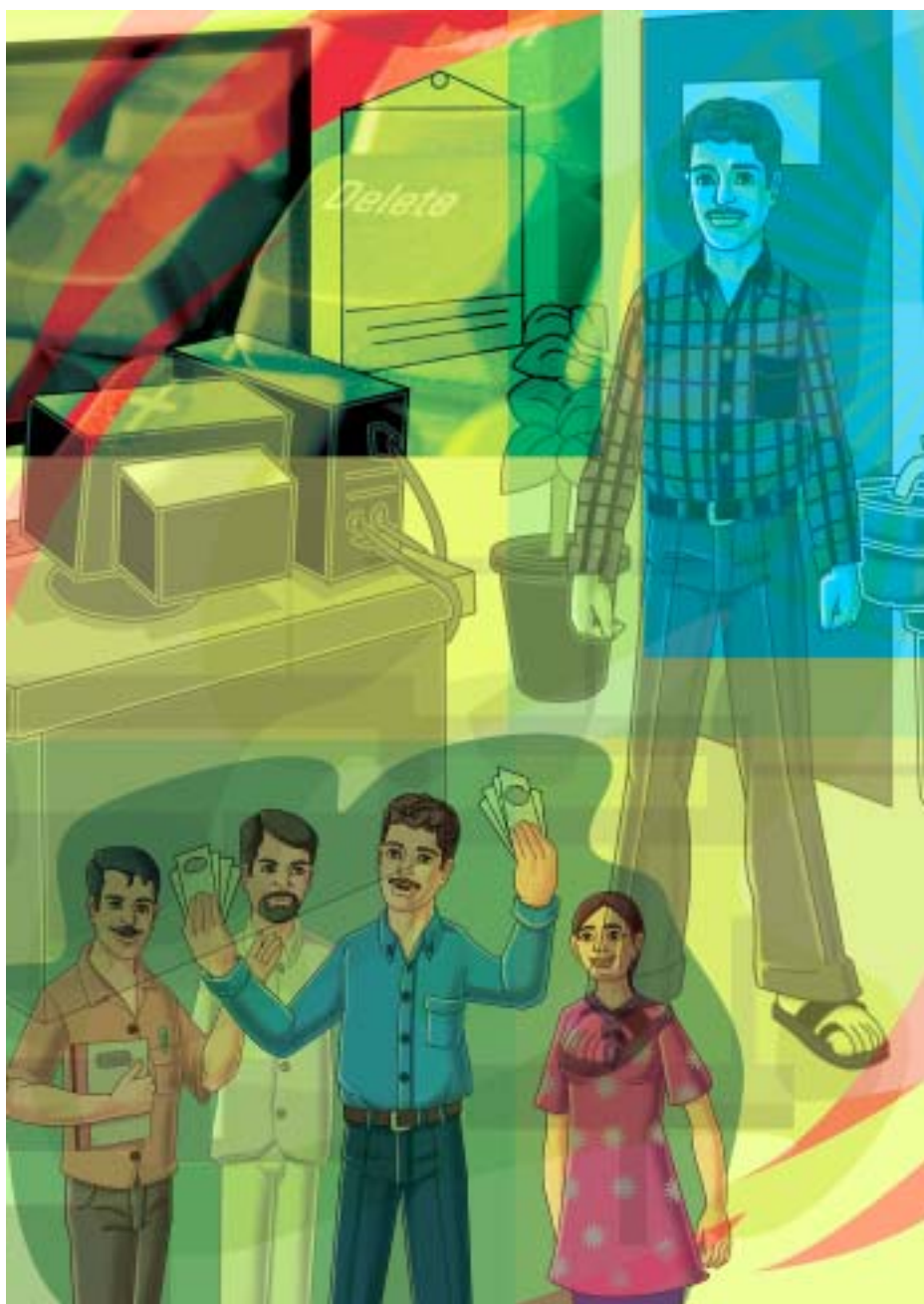
- Knowledge, skills, motives and traits can together be labelled as competencies.
- There are both soft skill and hard skill competencies.
- Identifying competencies, especially entrepreneurial competencies, is important for anyone planning to start an ICT enterprise.
- One may be strong in some competencies and weak in some others.
- One has to further strengthen the strong competencies.
- Where one lacks a competency, efforts should be focussed on acquiring it, or on employing people competent in that area.

Evaluation Exercise 2b. Entrepreneurial Competencies

Identify entrepreneurial competencies in the Parker case study

List as many entrepreneurial competencies as you can observe in Mr. Parker!

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____



Establishing a Telecentre Enterprise

For a successful entrepreneur defining and articulating business objectives, formulating successful business plans and strategies are crucial steps. This chapter guides both ICT and general entrepreneurs to do this. ICT entrepreneurs, especially, will realise that by catering to the information and communication needs of their communities they are rendering a valuable service. Access to such services is advantageous and valuable to the community, and the entrepreneur benefits from the venture as well.

By the end of this chapter, you should be able to:

- **Develop a business idea for a telecentre**
- **Do a quick market survey**
- **Create a business plan specifically for your telecentre**
- **Find financial support for your telecentre business**

Telecentre activity assessment

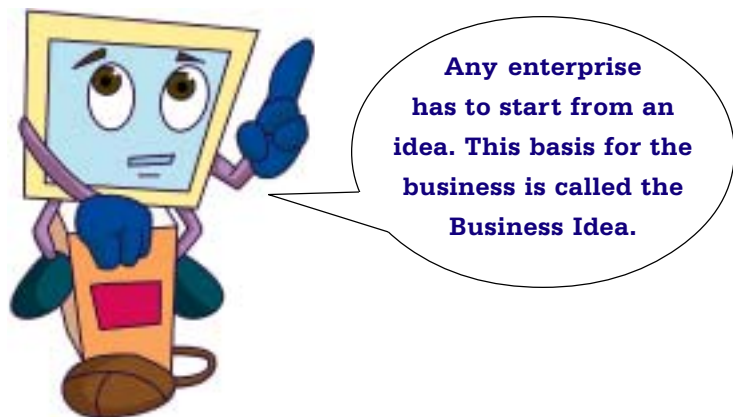
First generation ICT entrepreneurs, while taking up an entrepreneurial venture face the following big questions:

- **Is the telecentre model chosen feasible?**
- **How do I go about it?**
- **What equipment is used?**
- **How much would be the investment?**
- **Will I be successful?**

Any enterprise has to start from an idea. This basis for the business is called the **Business Idea (BI)**. Starting an enterprise based on a business idea is often an irreversible process. The entrepreneur becomes wedded to the enterprise, committing most of his resources and quality time.

A telecentre entrepreneur may be at a crossroads at this phase of the business idea selection. The selection of the business idea can make or mar an entrepreneurial career.

Proper selection leads the entrepreneur to the path of success and enhances his esteem and respect in the eyes of people who will be watching the entrepreneur. In addition, it saves valuable money, time and effort.



Activity assessment process to be undertaken by the ICT entrepreneur

Step 1

Ask yourself how you have chosen the proposed entrepreneurial activity — a telecentre — and why that particular activity. List the responses in a notebook.

Step 2

Ask yourself if you are confident of pursuing this chosen activity profitably and have a firm conviction in the activity. Note down your responses. There is a scientific method to choose the activity and a need for generating business ideas, the tools and techniques for the same.

Step 3

Sit with your notebook and, without judging your ideas prematurely, allow your thoughts to flow freely for about 10 minutes to generate the maximum number of business ideas. Immediately list the ideas generated.

Step 4

Verify the feasibility of your business ideas pertaining to a telecentre in your locality.

Step 5

What is your final opinion on starting a telecentre after evaluating your business idea?

If your answer is '**Yes**', then let us proceed with the rest of the handbook!

We will subject your shortlisted ideas to macro-screening and micro-screening techniques for the selection of the business opportunity.



SUBBU'S STORY...

Subbu is a young man in a village in Andhra Pradesh. He has three younger brothers and two younger sisters. His father is a farmer with limited agricultural income.

The business idea

A good business idea is essential for starting a successful venture and for staying competitive afterwards. Good business ideas, however, do not usually just appear. They result from hard work, effort and often creativity on the part of the entrepreneur.

Business ideas essentially arise from some kind of opportunity in the market, that is, the need or want for any product or service that the entrepreneur can identify.

A business idea is the response of a person(s) or an organisation to solving an identified problem or to meeting perceived needs in the environment (markets, community, etc).

The business idea – ICT enterprise

- Will enable the entrepreneur to utilise his skills.
- Will enable the use of any special techniques the entrepreneur knows, or some specific technology he has come across.
- Will enable the entrepreneur to solve a current problem existing in the market.
- Will help the entrepreneur to provide a service for which there is a demand, but which is not available in his community.

EVALUATION EXERCISE 3A

List the business ideas specific to setting up and servicing your community through a telecentre.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

EVALUATION EXERCISE 3B

Arrive at all the requirements for setting up a telecentre in your community based on your ideas.

The minimum requirements are:

- Clients – Government, students, SHGs, farmers, traders, etc
- Start-up finance
- A business plan
- Suitable premises
- Electricity and back-up power (UPS/generator)
- Telephone connection
- Systems (hardware and software)
- Furniture
- Staff

Business opportunity guidance

The recognition of a business opportunity coupled with the ability to respond effectively is the basis for starting and maintaining a successful venture. This involves not only generating an idea or identifying opportunities but also screening and evaluating them to determine the most viable, attractive propositions to be selected.

A business opportunity may be defined simply as an attractive investment idea or proposition that provides the possibility of a return for the person taking the risk. Such opportunities are presented by customer requirements and lead to the provision of a product or service which creates or adds value for its buyer or end-user.

A good idea is not necessarily a good business opportunity. Consider, for example, that over 80 per cent of all new products fail. It is important, therefore, that all ideas and opportunities are well screened and assessed.

Identifying and assessing business opportunities are not an easy task. Yet it is necessary to minimise the risk of failure. It involves, in essence, determining risks and rewards/returns.

Characteristics of a good business opportunity

Real demand: Respond to unsatisfied needs or requirements of customers who have the ability to purchase and who are willing to exercise that choice.

Return on investment: Provide durable, timely and acceptable returns or rewards for the risk and effort required.

Competitive: Be equal to or better – from the viewpoint of the customer – than other available products or services.

Meet objectives: Meet the goals and aspirations of the person or organisation taking the risk.

Available resources and skills: Be within the reach of the entrepreneur in terms of resource, competency, legal requirements, etc.

Ideas and opportunities need to be screened and assessed for viability once they have been identified or generated. This is not an easy task and yet, at the same time, it is very important. It can make the difference between success and failure, between making a fortune and losing everything you have.

Whilst the exercise does not guarantee success -- but then nothing in this world does -- it certainly helps in minimising the risk and thus reducing the odds for failure. Identifying and assessing a business opportunity involves, in essence, determining risks and rewards/returns reflecting the following factors:

Industry and market: Is there a market for the idea? Are there any customers – people with money who are able and willing to buy the product or service? Can you provide what they need or want? How many are they?

Length of the 'window of opportunity': Can you



SUBBU'S STORY..

Subbu decided to augment his family income and joined a training workshop on entrepreneurship development. The course led him to consider starting a telecentre in his village.

create or seize the opportunity whilst it lasts?

Personal goals and competencies of the entrepreneur: Do you really want to venture into the business? Do you have what it takes? Are you motivated enough?

Management team: Who else will be involved with you in the business? Do they have the experience, knowhow, contacts or other desirable attributes required?

Competition: Who are the competitors? Do you have something desirable for customers which they do not have? Can you produce or market at lower costs, for example?

Capital, technology and other resource requirements: How much capital, technology or other resources are required? Do you have them or could you get them?

Environment: Are the political, economic, geographical, legal and regulatory contexts conducive? Will the business do any damage to the physical environment?

Business Opportunity Guidance process

Step 1: Classification and sorting

There are many ways of classifying a list of business ideas. The simplest way is to classify ideas in terms of personal familiarity (for example, very, moderate, or absolutely not familiar) with the business. Another way is to classify ideas by sectors, namely:

- Telecentre service industry
- Allied activities

The **trade sector** emphasises the importance of buying products for resale and hence requires buying and selling ability on the part of entrepreneur. They must also be able to calculate gross margins.

The **service sector** is often dominated in small business. Builders, contractors, repair operations service station owners, and the like all provide important services to the community. Service industries are generally labour-intensive. Therefore the critical factor to consider is the ability to use time efficiently and effectively. However, a telecentre, which is a service industry, is not labour intensive like other small businesses. Rather, it is capital intensive. This is an important point to consider when classifying and sorting business ideas.

The **industry** may also be labour-intensive but it is more likely to be capital-intensive. Some manufacturing activities can rely heavily on skilled labourers, whereas other factories rely heavily on efficient machineries. The critical factors are likely to be the capital that you can invest in the plant and equipment, plus your own and your staff's technical knowhow.

Step 2: Macro screening

Examine the classified listing to come up with a shortlist of about 20 most workable ideas. This is where the things you have learnt about yourself will be useful. Essentially, the criteria you use for judging each idea re-answers to the question: what would you like to do and which business ideas will you be competent to undertake?

Personal preference: One can start with personal preferences for shortlisting their ideas. Based on their vision, qualities and resources, some ideas will have natural attraction for them. Some enjoy mechanical activities, others are for artistic ones. Some enjoy travelling, others just want to sit in one place. Note which of the ideas appeal the most, which ones moderately, and which ones least of all. Consider the most appealing business ideas, which you will be able to live with day after day. Drop those opportunities which fall under 'least preferred' from the list.

Capacity to invest: Next to preference, apply your investment capacity for further shortlisting the remaining opportunities. Investment capacity includes both your own capital or equity and the amount of money you can borrow from lenders. Drop opportunities whose capital requirement is absolutely beyond your investment capacity (own and/or borrowed capital).

Familiarity or exposure to needed technology: You may have had some exposure, experience or training with the technology needed for some of the ideas. If so, use this as a factor for choosing the business idea.

Step 3: Micro screening

Having matched ideas with their preference, capacity and capability, entrepreneurs need to weigh each opportunity with respect to the availability of certain inputs to make it viable. These inputs include:

- Availability of resources
- Availability of buyers or customers (the market)
- Availability of needed technology
- Availability of skills
- Availability of government support

Step 4: Examine government guidelines

It is also helpful to examine business ideas in view of policy guidelines issued by governments. Since governments want small ventures to succeed rather

than fail, the guidelines they issue often have great bearing on the feasibility of business ideas.

Step 5: Micro screen rating scale

Now rate each idea in the micro screen shortlist using this five-point scale:

- 5 – Excellent
- 4 – Satisfactory
- 3 – Average
- 2 – Unsatisfactory
- 1 – Very poor

In the end, you should have obtained total scores ranging from 5 to 25 for each of the business ideas. Note any factor that might be critical for success in that business.

Chart 1 shows what a rating sheet might look like.

Chart 1: Micro screen ratings

Shortlist of ideas	Availability of raw materials (1-5)	Availability of market (1-5)	Availability of technology (1-5)	Availability of skills (1-5)	Govt. policy (1-5)	Critical success factor
1						
2						
3						
4						

Rating scale: 5 – Excellent; 4 – Satisfactory; 3 – Average; 2 – Unsatisfactory; 1 – Very poor

Step 6: Verifying the choice

Go out into the market and try to get a few more facts about the business ideas. Try and identify the critical factors that might affect success or failure of a business in that line. Classify these factors into those that you can control, and those which are beyond your ability to control (such as government regulations, weather, and so on).

Step 7: SWOT

You should be able to identify the following:

- What are the strengths (S) and weaknesses (W) of this business idea?
These will point out factors that are within your means of controlling, such as your own competencies, capitalisation or location.
- What are the opportunities (O) and threats (T) for this business idea?

These will point out factors that are not within your power to control.

Importance of survey

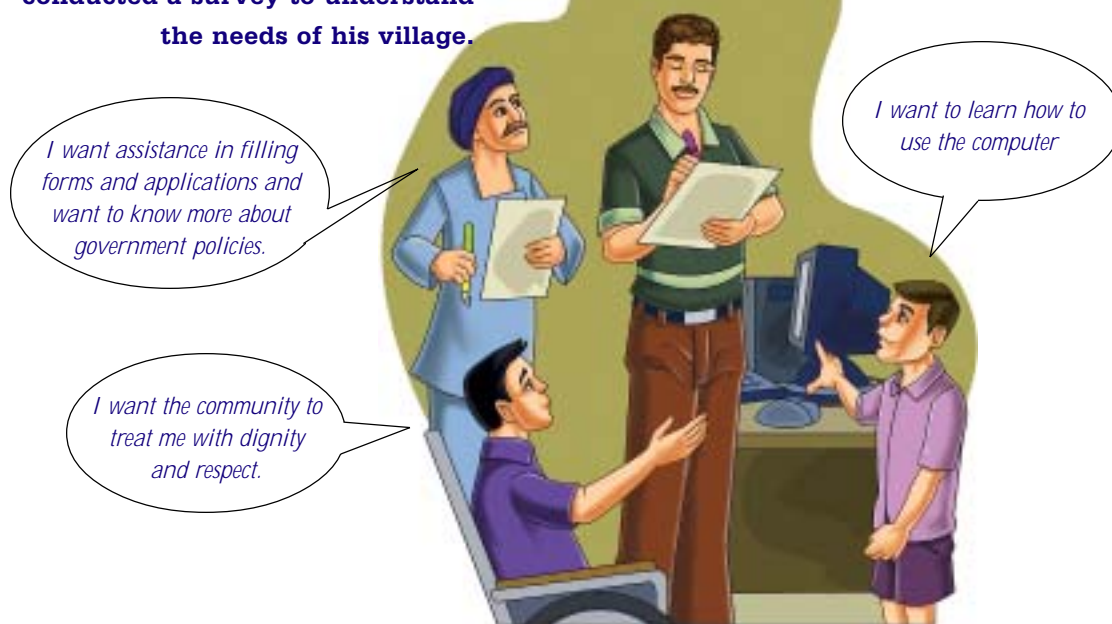
Now, as a prospective entrepreneur, you have identified a business opportunity and chosen an activity. The next step is to assess the viability of the particular activity. You have to decide not only what activity but also the location and scale of activity to undertake which generates good business and ultimately profit.

Markets are increasingly dynamic and competitive. Experience in promoting first generation entrepreneurs suggests that most of them are facing problems in setting up and running the enterprise mainly because of a lack of knowledge about the market and consumer needs, low quality product or service and competition in the market.

SUBBU'S STORY...

After the training Subbu conducted a survey to understand the needs of his village.

As an entrepreneur, conduct a the market survey to confirm the demand for the product or service. It is thus possible to minimise the risk and increase the probability of success.



Market survey

Identify the target clients for a market survey:

- Individuals (local community members)
- Government establishments
- Small businesses
- Schools and colleges
- Students and youths
- People with special needs
- Farmers
- Women's self-help groups
- Healthcare workers
- NGOs
- Civic organisations
- Political parties

Market survey or research may be defined as 'an objective and systematic collection, recording, analysis and interpretation of existing or potential markets, marketing strategies, tactics and interaction between markets, marketing methods and currently available products or services'. A market survey is a scientific tool to assess the viability of a project by collecting information from the following sources:

- The users, that is, the customers
- The service requirements
- The competitors

By collecting information in a structured format and analysing the data, you – that is, the entrepreneur – will be able to assess the viability of the activity. Hence a market survey is important.

The following basic questions can give information about buyers or potential buyers for your telecentre:

- What do they want? (Which service)
- Why do they want it? (The reason)
- Who does the approaching? (Young or old, men or women, etc)
- How do they avail the service? (In bulk or units, cash or credit)

- How much? (Quantity, frequency, etc)

The objective of the survey should be to enable you to answer questions such as:

- What is the size of market?
- What is the anticipated size of market for your telecentre services?
- What is the pattern of demand?
- What is the market structure?
- What are the buying habits and motives of customers?
- What will be your strong points in marketing your services?
- What are the future trends?

While conducting a market survey, it may not always be necessary to contact people directly. Information may exist in the form of reports, published materials or documents.

Therefore, data may be collected from two sources:

- Primary data sources
- Secondary data sources

Primary data will be collected directly from the community, suppliers or customers and secondary data will be collected from reports and other published books which already exists.

Designing a suitable questionnaire for market survey is essential to collect the required data and questions may be designed based on:

- Existence of competitors, their products and market strategies
- Information on all types of customers
- Information on competing products and producers
- Attitude of existing and potential customers

CONDUCTING A MARKET SURVEY

There is a five-point systematic process involved in carrying out market survey.

1. Defining the objectives and the specific information to be obtained:

- Identifying sources for obtaining information.
- Assessing the time and cost involved in the study.
- Working out the methodology and action plan.

2. Selecting a sample size by determining whom to contact and when.

3. Preparing questionnaires for the survey interviews.

4. Collecting data and analysing the information obtained.

5. Preparing a report based on data analysed.

Precautions for effectiveness of market survey

- Do not be prejudiced.
- Do not be impatient or argumentative.
- Do not reveal privileged information collected to others.
- Try not to write notes while discussing.
- Make notes immediately after the interview.
- Make adequate preparations before the interview in sequencing the questions to be asked.
- Approach competitors as potential customers and not as competitors.
- Thank the people whom you have approached for the interview.

SUBBU'S STORY...

Subbu thought about all the services he would need to offer to meet the demands of his community. He also planned for what he would require to have, in order to offer these services.

Telecentre business plan assessments

After evaluating and finalising the entrepreneurial activity, you have to prepare a systematic plan for implementation of the telecentre project.

A business plan is often demanded by the supporting organisations while extending financial assistance. Generally, first-generation entrepreneurs may be carried away by the appearance of a business activity and think that investment of money is sufficient to earn a profit.

However, systematic planning with concrete information and knowledge about your proposed enterprise is essential. A well-prepared business plan and thorough knowledge about the project impresses bankers and enhances their confidence in the entrepreneur.

A business plan

- Is a guide to setting up and running the telecentre
- Explains to a funding agency why the telecentre needs their help
- Is used to raise funds for the telecentre
- Allocates the telecentre's operational budget

A business plan describes everything about the telecentre. It is a detailed statement of the objectives of the telecentre and the strategies for achieving stated objectives, and explains how progress will be assessed on an ongoing basis.

A business plan should also cover:

- All the services that the telecentre will offer
- How the services will be provided
- Who the telecentre's customers are
- What the marketing strategy is
- The telecentre's budgets and sustainability plan

Business objectives will be determined by the answers

to questions such as:

- What are the needs of the community?
- Approximately how many people are going to use the telecentre?
- Which is the key target group?
- What services will be offered?
- How much money is available for running the telecentre?
- How many paid staff will there be?
- How will staff be recruited?
- How many volunteers can be relied upon?
- How many hours of the day will the telecentre be open?

Why a business plan?

A business plan enables you to know about the kind of resources required, amount of investment needed for the enterprise, the technology and process involved. This is also required to assess the available resources and mobilise them, if needed, from other sources as well as plan the activities. It also helps to know whether the project is profitable enough to venture into.

1. It is a comprehensive report providing all information related to the business activity.
2. Acts as a guideline for operation of the business.
3. Helps to plan the strategy.
4. Instills confidence and develops ability in the entrepreneur.
5. Establishes a link of confidence between you and financial institutions.
6. Is a medium to bridge communication gaps.
7. Helps as a guide for periodic monitoring.

Contents of a business plan

A business plan, also called a project report, should contain the following details:

1. General background information

- Name, address, age/date of birth of the entrepreneur
- Details of education
- Technical knowledge and experience
- Training capability

2. Details of proposed telecentre

- Location of centre
- Nature of the product/service
- Infrastructure and utilities required – building, power, phones, etc

3. Market

- Place of demand and market
- Expected sales turnover
- Promotion strategy

4. Cost of project and means of finance

- **Fixed capital:** Investment required for setting up the enterprise. 'Fixed assets' are the basic facilities required, such as building, equipment, furniture, etc
- **Working capital:** Administrative and marketing costs, such as for publicity, salaries, transportation, rent, interest, etc
- **Sources of funds:** Own, family, friends, relatives, financial institutions, percentage share of own funds, requirement and funds from financial institutions (specific bank)

5. Profitability

- Estimation of the profitability based on the planned projections of sales/services
- Repayment schedule for loan

Highlights

- The cost estimate must be as realistic as possible for all the expenses incurred. The estimated returns also need to be based on realistic projections.
- The overall profitability of the project should be calculated on the basis of the expected cost and revenues.
- Projected profits have to be calculated taking into account
 - Interest on loans
 - Depreciation on assets.

TELECENTRE SERVICES

- **Phone** – PCO, STD, ISD; fax
- **E-mail and Internet access** – browse, chat, search for info, etc
- **Word processing** – type letters
- **Desktop publishing** – graphic design and **printing**
- **Spreadsheets and databases** – Book-keeping and data management
- **Education** – CBT, SSA, Adult / Community Literacy programs
- **Computer training** – basic computer literacy, applications
- **Web page design**
- **Scanning of text and photos**
- **CD/DVD burning**
- **Games/movie watching**
- **Photocopying** (xerox)
- **Binding and lamination**
- Hire for video/photo coverage
- Weather forecasts
- Farming information
- **Market information** – rates at different mandis
- **Government services**, where possible, like E-Seva in Andhra Pradesh, etc.

Multi-purpose telecentres can offer more specialised services, based on demand and local community needs.

Business Plan Assessment

A business plan is a concrete plan of action developed to implement the basic business idea of an entrepreneur. It contains specification of the product proposed to be manufactured / service to be rendered / trade to be carried out, method adopted, the marketing plan as well as strategy for selling along with details of physical facilities, management, organization and the finance required for converting a business idea into a technically and commercially viable project.

Resource mobilisation and support system

Central and state governments prioritise enterprise creation because it leads to economic development and employment generation. Through policy initiatives, governments have established various promotional agencies to help potential entrepreneurs establish their enterprise by providing information, knowledge and confidence. These agencies provide information on various aspects such as incentives, infrastructure, support for finance and marketing, technology transfer, training, etc.

A number of non-government organisations are also involved in facilitating enterprise promotion. Financial institutions and banks have their own schemes for lending to enterprises — micro, small and big. These agencies provide both financial and non-financial services.

The list below is illustrative and not exhaustive.

A. Non-financial support system

I. National level

Small Industries Development Organization (SIDO): It acts as a policy formulating, coordinating and monitoring agency. Provides a comprehensive range of industrial extension services including technical, managerial, economic and marketing assistance through Small Industries Service Institutes (SISIs) and their branches/ Regional Testing Centres, Product and Process Development Centres, etc.

National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC):

It provides the following support:

- Supplies indigenous and imported machinery on a hire-purchase basis.
- Distributes and supplies indigenous and imported raw materials.
- Gives marketing assistance for both domestic and export purposes.
- Develops prototypes of machinery, equipment and other facilities.
- Registers units for participation in the purchase programme of the central and state governments.
- Provides incentives for women entrepreneurs and SSI units in Northeastern states.
- Enlists competent SSI units and facilitates their participation in government stores.
- Provides common facilities for testing, training for skill development, etc.

National Research Development Corporation (NRDC):

Provides new project ideas/ technologies.

Khadi & Village Industries Commission (KVIC)

- Provides training and finance at concessional rates to village artisans belonging to socially and economically backward sections of the rural population. It also helps in:
- Transfer of technology.
- Providing infrastructure and marketing support to KVIs. KVIC has a network of KVI Boards and training centres at the state and district levels.

Rural Development and Self Employment

Training Institute (RUDSETI): Established in 1982, the Institute has 20 branches throughout India and conducts more than 50 types of training

programmes, which are of short duration, ranging from one to eight weeks. The programmes are classified under the following categories:

- For first-generation entrepreneurs
 - Agricultural EDPs
 - Process EDPs
 - Product EDPs
 - General EDPs
- For established entrepreneurs
 - Skills upgradation programmes
 - Growth programmes for expansion, diversification and growth in business
- Rural development training programmes
- Technology transfer programmes
- Human resources development programmes

Other Institutions: Like RUDSETI, the Prime Minister Rozgar Yojana (PMRY) beneficiaries may find the following institutions helpful for providing training, knowhow and other information:

- National Institute of Small Industry and Extension Training (NISIET) Hyderabad.
- Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII), Ahmedabad.
- Integrated Training Centre at Nilokheri in Haryana.
- Self-employment training institutions promoted by banks.
- National Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development (NIESBUD).

II. State level

Directorate of Industries (DI): With a network of District Industries Centres (DICs) at the district level, it helps in:

- Registration of small scale units.
- Raw materials quota.
- Financial assistance under state aid to

industries.

- Infrastructure for establishing industries.
- Marketing support and technological guidance.

Industrial and Technical Consultancy Organisations (TCO)

- Technical consultancy services to small and medium scale enterprises.
- Provides assistance for formulation of project report.
- Training and technology transfer.

Centres for Entrepreneurship Development (CEDs): Many states have set up centres/institutes to provide training in entrepreneurship/self-employment to set up small industry, small business and micro-enterprises. Beneficiaries can avail of training, information, guidance and other facilities from these organisations, such as Centre for Entrepreneurial Development of Andhra Pradesh (CEDAP), Centre for Entrepreneurial Development of Karnataka (CEDOK), Centre for Entrepreneurial Development of Madhya Pradesh (CEDMAP), and Maharashtra Centre for Entrepreneurial Development (MCED), among others:

- State Small Industries Development Corporation (SSIDC)
- State Industrial Development Corporation (SIDC)
- State Agro Industries Corporation (AIC)
- Electronics Development Corporation (EDC)
- Khadi Village Industries Board (KVIB)

III. District level

District Industries Centre (DIC): At the district level, the District Industries Centre (DIC) is the nodal agency for beneficiaries. It generates

applications and selects beneficiaries through a Task Force; assists in the preparation of project reports and filling up of forms; provides loans and subsidy through local Banks; and gives general guidance for setting up micro enterprises.

District Rural Development Agencies (DRDA/ ZP), among others:

- Provide forward and backward linkages.
- Promote income generation activities among marginalised groups through the introduction of schemes.

B. Financial support system

Term-lending institutions

Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI): SIDBI is an apex bank that provides loans to SSIs through State Financial Corporations (SFCs) and commercial banks. The loans given by SFCs and commercial banks are refinanced by SIDBI. Through promotional schemes, SIDBI provide funding assistance for training, infrastructure and marketing support for small and medium enterprises through other agencies or NGOs.

Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI): IDBI coordinates the activities of institutions engaged in financing, promoting/developing industry. It has schemes such as Direct Assistance, Soft Loan Scheme, Refinance Industrial Loans, Automatic Refinance, Rediscounting of Bills and Seed Capital Assistance.

National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD): NABARD supports the non-farm sector, as well as village and tiny

sector industries located in rural areas, through refinancing.

Commercial banks: Commercial banks including RRBs and cooperative banks provide term finance and working capital advances. These are classified under cash credit, overdrafts, demand loans, bills purchased/discounted/advance against trade debts.

State Financial Corporations (SFCs): SFCs provide loans for acquisition of fixed assets by small and medium industries.

Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC): KVIC offers finance at concessional rates to village artisans who belong to socially, economically backward sections, both for plant and machinery and working capital. It also provides credit for khadi and village industries.

National Small Industries Corporation Limited (NSIC): NSIC provides financial support through:

- Procurement and supply of indigenous and imported raw materials in case units face difficulty in acquiring raw materials in bulk;
- Supply of indigenous and imported machinery on hire purchase and lease basis; and
- Discounting of bills.

Credit Guarantee Trust of India (CGTI): Established under the aegis of the SIDBI, it has introduced schemes to guarantee credit assistance given to small and medium enterprises by commercial banks, RRBs and all other financial institutions.

Banking

Banks are financial institutions that primarily accept deposits from the public and lend to customers. Banks also provide a lot of other financial related services; they play a crucial role in the economic development of a country. Providing credit support to entrepreneurs is one of the major priority activity of banks. They also give information on some major activities that are important for beneficiaries.

I. Important deposit schemes of banks

Deposit schemes are broadly classified into short-term and term deposits.

A. Short-term or demand deposits

i) Savings Deposit Account: One can deposit one's savings into this account. The account can be opened with very low initial deposit, with or without a cheque book facility. A minimum balance has to be maintained in the account. Deposits in this account earn interest at a certain rate fixed by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). Introduction from a known account holder is necessary to open this kind of account — proof of residence, latest photograph and permanent account number (PAN), if any, of the person are also required for opening a Savings account. This account is not meant for business operations. This account can be opened in single or joint names with various operational facilities. Nomination facility is available.

ii) Current Account: This kind of account can be opened as the Savings Bank Account is, with an initial deposit. It is meant mainly for business transactions. There are no restrictions on number of operations, unlike Savings Bank Account. Cheque book facility is available. No interest is paid on the deposits in this account.

B. Term deposits

Deposits can be made from 15 days onwards up to 120 months or 10 years, and different rates of interest are offered depending upon the duration of the deposit. Interest can be obtained in a lump sum upon maturity along with the principle, or can be availed of on a monthly, quarterly or half-yearly basis.

The deposits can be made in single or joint names. Nomination facility is available. In case of need, depositors can take loans of up to 75 percent of the amount deposited. More interest is given to the amount deposited in these accounts than that of the Savings Bank Account. Term Deposits are given different attractive names in different banks.

C. Cumulative or recurring deposit

A fixed sum can be deposited every month up to a specified period. The money to be deposited and the period, once specified initially, cannot be changed later on. Penalty is levied on default of payment or credit of installment. The account can be opened in single or joint names. Nomination facilities are available, as also loan facilities of up to 75 percent of amount deposited, in case of need. This deposit account is more convenient for persons with a fixed income or for the salaried class.

D. Pigmy or daily deposit

Even a small amount can be deposited on a daily or weekly basis for a fixed term of some years. An agent appointed by the bank will come to the depositor's doorstep to collect the sum. Fixed interest is paid. Nomination and 75 percent loan facilities are also available. This account is meant for businessmen and daily earners.

SUBBU'S STORY...

Subbu took the advice of the bank manager who told him about various loan options and other government facilities that he could avail of. He also helped Subbu prepare a business plan.



II. Loans and advances

Banks extend various types of loan facilities to different activities and purposes.

A. Priority sector advances

As per stipulated guidelines, banks extend a certain percent of their total advances to the 'priority sector' comprising activities which are considered for promotion by the state:

- Agriculture and allied activities
- Small scale industries
- Retail trade and small business
- Small road and water transport operators
- Professionals and self-employed people
- Education
- Housing
- Self-help groups
- Village and cottage industries, rural artisans

Government sponsored schemes (such as Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana (PMRY), the Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY), the Swarnajayanti Shahari Rozgar Yojana (SJSRY) and other poverty alleviation or income generation schemes of the central and state governments also come under priority sector advances.

B. Non-priority advances

- Advances against deposits
- Gold or silver loans
- Import/export finance
- Consumer durable advances
- Vehicles
- Wholesale trades
- Big industrial advances
- Consumption/personal loans

Nature of advances

Depending upon the duration of facilities, the above loans can be classified as:

- Short-term loans – repayable within 36 months
- Medium-term loans – repayable from 3 to 7 years
- Long-term loans – above 7 years

Short-term finance could be in the form of either a loan or cash credit. These loans could be:

- Clean loans – where there is no security
- Secured loans – where tangible or intangible security is provided. Security can be pledged, hypothecated or mortgaged

Purpose for which loan can be used

The finance obtained from the bank can be utilised for the acquisition of fixed assets including land and building and working capital requirement — in case of loans to enterprises. In case loans are made to individuals for consumption or other purposes, the loan amount can only be utilised for the particular purpose for which it has been given. Loans could be taken for:

- Purchase of machinery
- Purchase of equipment
- Purchase/lease of land
- Construction/purchase of factory building/shed
- Purchase/construction/lease of shop premises
- Purchase of raw materials
- Stock of semi-finished goods and stock in process
- Stock of finished goods
- Meeting trade debts
- Acquiring tools, dies, stores, patterns, types etc.
- Purchase of furniture and fixtures
- Legitimate expenses on day-to-day business activities like production, marketing, trading, distribution, transportation, salaries and wages, rent, etc, can also be financed provided tangible assets such as raw materials, goods in process or finished goods are available as security

Assessment of requirement and decision to grant loans by Banks

The following are the important factors considered by a bank in making a decision to grant a loan or advance:

- **Background of the applicant** – should not be a defaulter to any bank.
- **Previous transactions** must be satisfactory.
- **Knowledge about the project** – complete information and details about the proposed activity on the part of the entrepreneur.
- **Technical and managerial skills** to run the proposed activity.
- **Viability of the project** – the activity should generate sufficient income to the borrower to enable him to repay the loan and make his own profit.
- **Documents** – documents relating to the security offered and about the proposed activity like project report, invoices, clearance certificate, etc.
- **Security towards loan** – as per the norm of the bank.

Quantum of loan

Banks will lend to meet the shortfall of a project cost after the promoter's contribution. Normally, banks expect 10 per cent to 50 per cent as promoter's contribution (margin) depending upon the purpose and scheme.

Interest

Banks charge interest on the loans given. The rate of interest varies depending upon the scheme, purpose and category of advance.

Security

To safeguard the financial stake and ensure financial discipline on the part of the borrower, banks insist on tangible and intangible security for the loan advanced:

- Tangible security will be in the form of deposits, fixed assets, land, building, property etc.
- Intangible security will be in the form of a guarantor to the loan.

The bank finally decides on whom the loan is to be sanctioned to, and what amount is to be sanctioned, depending upon the technical feasibility and economic viability of the project. While sanctioning the proposal the banks take into account the following aspects.

1. The borrower: The bank considers the Character, Creditworthiness and Capacity of the borrower, to ensure that the money goes into safe hands. The borrower should utilise the loan for the specified purpose and establish the unit. He should not be a defaulter of any financial institution. Previous transactions must be satisfactory. He should have knowledge about the project including complete information and details about the proposed activity. He must possess the technical and managerial skill necessary to run the proposed activity.

2. Technical feasibility of the project: The proposal should be technically feasible, that is, the proposed project should be technically fit to be executed. The availability of raw material, machinery and technique, etc. is to be ensured. In the given conditions — the project should work. The demand of the product is sufficient.

3. Economic viability: The proposal should be economically viable, that is, it should be able to generate ample funds so that the borrower can run his unit smoothly. Profits made should be adequate to meet the routine expenses of the borrower, and to pay interest and loan installments of the bank. The balance amount of profit should be sufficient to meet his family's obligations.

4. Loan amount: Depending on the project cost and its feasibility, the loan amount is decided, keeping the margin money at 20 per cent which includes the subsidy amount. Loans will be considered for up to 80 percent of the project cost. Loans are given for meeting both term loans and working capital needs.

5. Disbursement: The loan amount sanctioned is disbursed by the banks in two or three installments depending upon the nature of the activity. The borrower submits the quotations or rate list from the suppliers/dealers from whom he wants to purchase things (for example, furniture, machinery, raw material, stock, etc). The bank disburses the amount through cheques or demand draft directly to the suppliers. The borrowers shall deposit the bills/original vouchers with the bank after purchasing the things.

Before the disbursement, the borrower is required to submit the following documents with the bank:

- Copy of rent/lease deed of shop/premises
- Pass book of Savings Bank A/c or Current A/c
- Quotation for purchase of items like furniture, machinery and raw material.

- No dues certificates from different banks or an affidavit stating that the borrower is not a defaulter of any financial institutions.
- A training certificate from authorised agency for EDP training
- Security papers as per norms

6. Interest: Interest is charged at Prime Lending Rate of Bank on loans. The interest is calculated every month on daily balances, on a reducing balance basis. It will not remain the same every month. As the balance amount reduces, so does the amount of interest. The interest amount is to be repaid by the borrower as and when it is charged to the account.

7. Repayment: Loan amount is to be repaid in monthly installments in three or five, years depending upon the nature of activities. The first installment shall start after a 'Repayment Holiday' of six months to one year. If the installments are not paid on time, it will attract penal interest and will cause other losses to the borrower.

8. Adjustment of subsidy: The subsidy amount is to be kept in a separate account by the banks. Balance outstanding in the loan amount is not to be reduced by subsidy amount. This amount remains in a separate account till the repayment of loan installments is regularly made by the borrower and the balance reduces to the extent of subsidy amount. The subsidy amount can be adjusted in the loan account at that point of time after a minimum lock-in-period of three years. However, interest is neither charged nor paid on the subsidy amount.

Other important facilities available from banks to entrepreneurs

- Banks also provide bills of exchange facility which enables the entrepreneurs to send and receive bonds against bills of exchange or goods.
- Letter of credit for advance payment to the suppliers.
- Bank guarantee or deferred payment guarantee to the suppliers and creditors on behalf of the customers.
- Facilities for discount of cheques and bills and collection of bills and cheques.



SUBBU'S STORY...

Subbu was thrilled when his loan was sanctioned. He was now on his way to becoming an earning member in his family and a respected figure in the community as well.

SUBBU'S STORY...

With the loan, Subbu set up a telecentre in his village. But he knew this was only the starting point. He now had to make a success of his business venture.



GOOD BANKING PRACTICES

Trust is the key factor on which entire banking transactions operate. Banks are the custodians of public money. Hence, there is a need to properly utilise the resource borrowed from the bank.

Tips on maintaining a good relationship with your bank

- Do not approach a bank only when you need a loan. Keep in regular contact with a nearby bank branch and open your Savings Bank Account.
- Deposit your money with the Bank. Advise your friends and relatives to deposit their excess money with the bank.
- While seeking financial assistance, call on the bank directly. Do not go through middle-men.
- Never begin your talk directly about the loan. Identify yourself, explain your background, your venture, as well as the demand and scope for it in the area. Give detailed information. Try to get the banker to visit your place before asking for a loan.
- Prepare a project feasibility report and hand over a copy of it while discussing your project. You should have the complete information at your fingertips.
- Always substantiate your estimates with quotations and other proof.
- Be confident and display confidence in your conduct and meetings.
- Give correct information during discussions and interviews.
- Obtain a list of essential papers and documents required and submit them all in one set.
- Do not confront a banker while discussions are on. Give him/her a chance to explain their point of view and then drive your point home.
- Note down the following details when you take a loan:
 - Loan amount sanctioned
 - Disbursement schedule
 - Rate of interest charged
 - Insurance premium, due date and name of the company
 - Repayment period and schedule
 - Installment amount
- Inform the bank as soon as you launch your project.
- When faced with difficulties and not being able to keep to your repayment schedule, call on the bank in

person. Explain and write a letter seeking extension of time or rescheduling of the repayment schedule.

- When you start earning, make it a point to repay the loan amount as per the installments granted.
- When income starts trickling in, try to save money with the bank. Do not think of saving in lump sums only. Small savings over a period of time give attractive returns in times of your need.
- Do not view your relationship with the bank in a short term perspective. As your venture develops, you may need more assistance from the bank. Let the bank be your friend, philosopher and guide.
- Produce your assets at regular intervals for inspection.
- Submit information, accounts, and audit report to the bank at periodic intervals.
- Never believe mispropaganda against the bank. Check with the bank officials.
- Remember — it is your bank, and you have rights as well as responsibilities.

SUMMARY

- A business idea is a prerequisite for a successful business venture. Good business ideas, however, do not usually just appear. They result from effort and also creativity on the part of the entrepreneur, that is, you.
- An idea, however good, is only a tool at the end of the day. It needs to be developed and transformed into a viable business opportunity.
- A business opportunity is simply an attractive investment idea or proposition that provides the possibility of a return for the person taking the risk of running a telecentre.
- Doing a market survey and understanding the pulse of your target customers is of the utmost importance.
- Things that need to be carefully planned are: business objectives of the ICT enterprise; the basic business plan; and draw up a list of services to be offered to clients.
- It is important to know what kind of national and local level support systems as well as banking procedures and schemes are available for successfully running your enterprise.

Evaluation Exercise 3c

Answer the following questions:

- What are the characteristics of a good business opportunity?
- What are the business objectives of a telecentre?
- What is the five-point process of an effective market survey?
- What are the contents of a business plan?
- What are the different resources and support systems available to an entrepreneur?
- What do you mean by good banking practices?
- What are the different bank loans and schemes available to you?



Managing a Telecentre Enterprise

To be successful, an entrepreneur needs to know basic business operations and management procedures. Marketing, human resources and managing people, financial transactions, time management, leadership, vision for the future – these are only some of the skills required. Each of us has inherent skills; it is important to shape and hone them and then put them to good use.

By the end of this chapter, you should be able to:

- **Understand the basics of running a telecentre, especially the soft skills needed**
- **Understand and maintain financial records, that is, simple book-keeping**
- **Understand and apply the basics of marketing**
- **Understand and apply the basic principles of managing human resources**
- **Understand and manage time, solve problems and develop effective communication skills**

Book-keeping

Book-keeping is the art of recording business transactions in a systematic manner, in a set of books. Book-keeping is a science as well as an art. Book-keeping is used to prepare financial statements for your company and helps you in taking decisions. Book-keeping is also called accounting.

OBJECTIVES OF BOOK-KEEPING

- To record the financial effects of business transactions.
- To provide the financial information required to the entrepreneurs.
- To calculate the profit and loss in a given period.
- To find out the financial position of the organisation on a fixed date.
- To ascertain who the debtors and creditors are.
- To study the progress of the organisation.

Financial transaction: The transfer of goods, money, services or credit between two parties is called a 'transaction'. A business involves a number of transactions such as purchase of goods, sale of goods, payment of money, etc. Each transaction has two aspects: giving; and receiving. Transactions are of two types: cash transactions; and credit transactions.

- Cash transaction
- Credit transaction.

Systems of book-keeping: There are two systems of book-keeping, namely,

- Single entry book-keeping
- Double entry bookkeeping

Single entry book-keeping is an incomplete system of book-keeping. Only personal aspects of the transactions are recorded. Both aspects of the transactions are not recorded. The disadvantages are:

- There is no scope for testing the financial accuracy of the books.
- Studying the financial position of the business becomes difficult.
- Detailed information is not available for studying the progress of the business.

In **double entry book-keeping**, both the receiving and giving aspects of each transaction are recorded at a time. This is the modern system. It is more scientific and has more advantages. It overcomes the deficiencies of single entry book-keeping.

Kinds of accounts – rules for debit and credit

An account is a summarised record of financial effects connected with a particular person or property or expense or income. Accounts play an important role in book-keeping. All business transactions are recorded in the form of accounts. There are three types of accounts:

- Personal Accounts
- Real Accounts
- Nominal Accounts

Personal Accounts: Accounts connected with persons or business institutions are called personal accounts. In personal accounts, the receiver's account is debited and the giver's account is credited.

Real Accounts: Properties accounts are called real accounts. The property coming in is debited; the property going out is credited.

Nominal Accounts: Expense and income accounts are called nominal accounts. The expenses are debited and the incomes are credited.

SUBBU'S STORY...

Subbu found that maintaining good relations with his bank benefitted him in running his business. The bank manager guided Subbu on keeping books of accounts and managing the finances of his telecentre.



Journal

There are two types of books in accountancy: (a) Journal; and (b) Ledger. The journal is the book of original entry. The ledger is the principal book or a book of final entry.

Each transaction has two accounts. One account has a receiving aspect and other has a giving aspect. For recording the transaction we have to ascertain the receiving account and giving account, class of account, debit account and credit account. The journal helps in this.

Subsidiary journals

In modern days, instead of one Journal, subsidiary journals are maintained conveniently.

- **Cashbook:** to record all cash receipts and payments.
- **Purchases book:** to record all credit purchases.
- **Sales book:** to record all credit sales.
- **Purchases return book:** to record all goods returned
- **Sales return book:** to record all goods returned by customers.
- **Bills receivable book:** to record all bills drawn by us.
- **Bills payable book:** to record all bills drawn by the creditors.
- **Journal proper:** to record all transactions that cannot be entered in the above books.

Cashbook

Cashbook is the main subsidiary record. Cash receipts and payments are recorded in this book. Receipts are recorded on the debit side and payments are recorded on the credit side. The cashbook acts as a journal and ledger, so there is no necessity for a separate cash account in a ledger.

Cashbooks are of three types:

- Single columnar cash book with cash column only.
- Two columnar cash book with cash and discount columns.
- Three columnar cash book with discount, cash and bank columns.

Nowadays, most organisations use a three columnar cashbook.

Rules for writing in these columnar cash books:

- Cash receipts are recorded on the debit side and cash payment on the credit side.
- Discount allowed is written on the debit side and discount received on the credit side.
- Payments through cheques are recorded in the bank column of the credit side.
- Cheques deposited in the bank are recorded in the bank column of the debit side.

Contra Entries: Cash or cheques belonging to the office deposited in the bank are to be recorded on both sides of the cashbook, that is, bank column on the debit side and cash column on the credit side. The cashbook is to be balanced every day.

Ledger

Ledger is the principal book or a book of final entry. It is a classified and consolidated summary of subsidiary records. Each account is allotted one or more pages in the ledger. All matters relating to it are recorded. The recording in a ledger is called posting. Ledger contains all matters connected with the business in a nutshell. The accounts are balanced at the end of every month. Trial balance is prepared with the help of the ledger.

Trial balance

Trial balance is the list of debit and credit balances of the various accounts in the ledger on a particular date. It includes cash and bank balances in the cashbook. Trial balance serves the purpose of testing the correctness of the accounts. It is the basis for the preparation of final accounts. It is useful to the management for comparing figures and arriving at conclusions.

Trial balance as on _____				
Dr			Cr	
Particulars	L.F.	Amount	Particulars	L.F. Amount
Cash on hand		xxx	Capital a/c	xxx
Cash at bank		xxx	Sales	xxx
Buildings		xxx	Purchases returns	xxx
Furniture		xxx	Bills payable	xxx
Salaries		xxx	Sundry Creditors	xxx
Rent		xxx		
Purchases		xxx		
Opening stock		xxx		
Sales returns		xxx		
Bills receivable		xxx		
Sundry Debtors		xxx		
Total		xxxx	Total	xxxx

Final accounts

Trading account is prepared to find out the profit or loss made by the purchase and sale of goods. On the debit side of Trading account, opening stock, net purchases and purchase costs are written and on the credit side net sales, closing stock are written. The difference between debit and credit side is known as gross profit or gross loss.

Trading account

Trading account is prepared to find out the profit or loss made by the purchase and sale of goods. On the debit side of Trading account opening stock, net purchases and purchase costs are written can the credit side net sales, closing stock are written. The difference between debit and credit side is known as gross profit or gross loss.

Trading account for the period _____	
Dr	Cr
To Opening Stock	
To Purchases Less returns	By sales By Less returns
To Carriage in words	By closing stock
To Duty and cleaning charges	
To Marine insurance	By Gross Loss
To Dock dues	
To Gross Profit	

Running a Profitable Telecentre Business

Profit and Loss account

Having prepared the Trading Account, the Profit and Loss account is prepared to calculate the net profit or loss during the period. The Profit and Loss account is debited with gross loss, and all expenses like salaries, expenses, rent, insurance etc. It is credited with gross profit, and other items of gains such as interest earned, rents received, etc.

If the credit total is heavier, the balance is net profit; if the debit side is heavier, the balance is net loss. The Profit and Loss account is closed by transfer to the capital account.

Profit and Loss account for the period _____		
Dr		Cr
	Rs	Rs
To Gross loss		By Gross profit
To Salaries		By Rent received
To rent		By discount receives
To Insurance		By Commission received
To Postage		By Interest received
To Stationary		By Net loss
To Sundry Expenses		(Transferred to capital a/c)
To Bad debts		
To Depreciation		
To Net Profit (Transferred to capital a/c)		

Balance Sheet

To know the financial position of the business on the closing date of the trading period, a statement of assets and liabilities — known as Balance Sheet — is prepared. The Balance Sheet is prepared with capital items — on the left-hand side the liabilities are shown, and on the right-hand side the assets are shown. The liabilities and assets are shown in a proper order.

Balance Sheet as on _____	
Liabilities	Assets
Rs	Rs
Over draft	Cash in hand
Bills payable	Cash in bank
Sundry creditors	Bills receivable
Income Received in advance	Investments
Outstanding expenses	Sundry Debtors
Capital:	Closing stock
Opening Balance	Furniture and Fittings
Add Interest	Plant and Machinery
Capital:	
Add Net Profit	Buildings
Less Drawings	
Less Net Loss	

Marketing management

The concept of marketing

Entrepreneurs set up a business primarily to make a profit. To do so, they provide a service or product to people, and charge them a price for it. People, however, will be prepared to pay a price for a product or service only if they feel it will satisfy them, though the actual satisfaction can come only after the service or product has been bought and used.

For entrepreneurs to be able to sell their product, it is therefore necessary for them to:

- Establish what needs of people the product or service satisfies.
- Persuade people to feel that the product or service will be satisfactory.

This process, of finding out what provides satisfaction to the customer, and providing the right product or service in the right product or service in the right manner so that they feel it will satisfy them, can be called 'marketing'.

Marketing is often taken to be the same as 'selling'. Although selling is a very important part of marketing, it is not all of it. In marketing the focus is on customers, that is, we look at the customers first, to see what needs or wants they have, or they realise that one need may be satisfied by one or more alternative products — therefore we can determine which product to provide that would be most effectively produced and would be profitable for the entrepreneur. The very choice of the product idea and technology is governed by what the market wants, as much as by the resources of the entrepreneur.

Marketing includes the entire range of activities aimed at not only providing people with the product they want to buy, but also selling it to them in the most

effective and profitable manner. Marketing involves a shift in thinking, in which you start by thinking of the customer and his/her needs, and then create an appropriate product and sell it, instead of selecting a product first and then looking for customers.

It is therefore of great importance for those venturing into the field of enterprise to know and understand the concept of marketing, and learn the why and how of it.



EXERCISE 4A

Draw up a marketing budget, strategy and plan to market your telecentre in an effective manner.

SUBBU'S STORY...

Subbu marketed his telcentre's services by distributing leaflets and putting up posters in various places. He also started interviewing prospective staff members. Subbu was excited that he could now give employment to others as well.

Human resource management

Staff selection and hiring

If the telecentre manager is looking to appoint staff that can look after and run the different operations of the centre, the way to go about it is by following a systematic process:

- List the job positions – DTP, marketing, etc
- Write a job description – What you expect, duties, responsibilities, Key Result Areas (KRAs)
- Advertise or search for people with the right qualifications
- Shortlist best applicants
- Interview and do a background check
- Negotiate salary and benefits
- Appoint staff

Human relations

We do not have business problems. We have people problems, and when we solve our people problems our business problems are substantially resolved. People knowledge is more important than product knowledge. Successful people build pleasing and magnetic personalities, which is what makes them charismatic. This helps in getting friendly cooperation from others. A relationship based on talent and personality alone, without character, is meaningless. The winning combination requires both character and charisma.

Life is an echo: We get back what we give. Benjamin Franklin said when you are good to others, you are best to yourself. Most of the time, other's behaviour towards us is the reflection of our own behaviour.

Life is a boomerang: Whether it is our thoughts, action or behaviour, sometime or the other they return with great accuracy.

"It is one of the most beautiful compensations of life that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself." (Ralph Waldo Emerson)

Generally we see the world not the way it is but the way we are.

Trust

All relationships – employer-employee, parent-child, husband-wife, student-teacher, buyer-seller – are trust relationships. Trust is a greater compliment than love.

Factors that build trust:

- Reliability
- Openness
- Character
- Competence
- Fairness
- Acceptance
- Consistency
- Integrity

Consequences of lack of trust:

- Stress
- Isolation
- Lack of communication
- Poor health
- Irritation
- Distrust
- Poor self-esteem
- Anger
- Suspicion
- Frustration
- Loss of productivity
- Unhappiness

Factors that prevent building and maintaining positive relationships:

- Ego: 'I know it all' attitude
- Selfishness and greed
- Jealousy
- Closed mind
- Lack of honesty and integrity
- Rude behaviour
- Negative attitude
- Uncaring attitude
- Lack of discipline
- Lack of respect for values

Positive behavior to develop better human relationships

- **Accept responsibility:** Responsibility is accepting the consequences of our actions and behaviour. Do not shift the blame to parents, teachers, god, fate, luck, stars, others etc. According to ancient wisdom our first responsibility is to the community, second responsibility is to our family and third responsibility to ourselves.
- **Think win-win:** When we serve our customers, our families, our employers and employees, we automatically win.
- **Choose your words carefully:** A fool speaks without thinking and a wise man thinks before speaking. Spoken words cannot be retrieved.
- **Do not criticise and complain:** Avoid negative criticism. Constructive criticism with a spirit of helpfulness is welcome. The right to criticise comes with the desire to help. Some suggestions for positive criticism.
 - Be a coach – criticise with a helpful attitude.
 - Attitude should be corrective rather than punitive.
 - Be specific.
 - Base your criticism on facts.
 - Criticise in private and not in public.
 - Give the other person a chance to explain his side.
 - Criticise the performance, not the performer.
 - Do not overdo criticism.

Receiving criticism: We may be criticised justly or unjustly. Justified criticism can be helpful and should be taken positively as feedback. Unjust criticism comes from two sources:

- *Ignorance* – can be corrected by bringing awareness.
- *Jealousy* – take it as a compliment in disguise.

Suggestions for accepting criticism:

- Learn from it.
- Take it with an open mind and evaluate it.

- **Smile:** A smile costs nothing, but it creates much. It enriches those who receive it without impoverishing those who give it. It cannot be begged, bought, borrowed or stolen. It improves face value. It is contagious and an inexpensive way to improve your looks.
- **Be a good listener:**
 - Encourage the speaker to talk.
 - Ask questions it shows interest.
 - Do not interrupt.
 - Do not change the topic.
 - Show understanding and respect.
 - Avoid distractions.
 - Show empathy.
 - Be open-minded.
- **Be positive:** Put a positive interpretation on the other person's behaviour.
- **Be enthusiastic**
- **Give sincere and honest appreciation**
 - It must be specific.
 - It must be immediate.
 - It must be sincere.
 - Do not qualify praise.
 - Do not expect compliments.
- **Accept your mistakes** immediately and willingly.
- **Accept others' mistakes:** When the other person realises and admits a mistake, congratulate him and give him a way to save face.
- **Discuss but do not argue:**

An argument <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Throws heat➤ Comes from ego and a closed mind➤ Is an exchange of ignorance➤ Expresses temper➤ Tries to put the other person down	A discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Throws light➤ Comes from an open mind➤ Is an exchange of knowledge➤ Expresses logic➤ Tries to establish what is right
--	--

The best way to win an argument is not to argue at all.

SUBBU'S STORY...

Subbu kept a suggestion book so that people could tell him about the quality of services of his telecentre. He also spoke to visitors to the telcentre to find out if they were satisfied with the services.



Time management and entrepreneurship

A few people presume that in self-employment one can maintain timings according to one's own whims and fancies. They are free to utilise time as they wish, as any authority does not bind them. A few others opine that in case one maintains good quality and efficient service, then neither the seller nor the purchaser has to give much importance to the timings.

You must realise that the management of time is of greater importance in your own business. Since there is no one else to enforce a code of conduct, the entrepreneur – that is, you — should set your own timings and a code of discipline, and abide by these strictly. An old saying, 'Time and tide wait for none', still holds good. If you plan your time systematically, then you can win the confidence of your customers.

A well known social scientist has analysed how an average life span of an individual — 70 years — is spent:

➤ Sleeping	28 years
➤ Studies	10 years
➤ Recreation, holidays	8 years
➤ Rest, illness	6 years
➤ Travelling	5 years
➤ Eating	4 years
➤ Dressing	3 years
➤ Working	6 years

That means almost more than 50 percent of the life span of an individual is spent in unproductive activities; the time available to work, to achieve something, is very limited. Hence the need to manage the time available, systematically, is very important. It is not important how much time an individual has spent but it is significant how productively one has utilised the time to achieve the targets in the short span of life.

Often time is wasted on account of the following factors:

- Lack of knowledge, self-discipline and skills.
- Lack of motivation and patience.
- Improper planning and non-prioritisation.
- Non-decentralisation of the work.
- Ill health and over-cautious nature in dealing with a situation.
- Improper communicating ability.
- Being over-social and entertaining unsolicited visitors.

Tips on managing time well

- Get rid of the illusion that "I want to do so many things but I have no time."
- Time lost cannot be retrieved. Hence think how best the available time can be utilised.
- Estimate the time requirement for each activity within a set frame of time.
- Prioritise activities according to importance. Remember, what is urgent is not always important.
- What is urgent but not important can be dropped or attended to at a later stage.
- Attend to the most important task that requires your personal attention, and leave rest to your colleagues and workers.
- Tactfully handle customers who are not time-conscious.
- Before you travel, plan your activities and visits well. That will help you to reduce wastage of time.
- Before calling on officials and others, confirm they have time to meet and talk to you. If possible, make prior appointments so that your precious time is not spent waiting.
- Use advanced communication equipment — such as telephone, fax, telex, etc — so that time is saved.

Problem solving

All of us experience problems of different orders and magnitudes at different times. In our daily life problems come so often that we do not even notice their occurrence. This is so because our experience and desire to solve them has equipped us with spontaneous reactions, which usually result into solutions. However, sometimes when we face an unusual or a difficult problem, we get stuck as our usual reactions fail to produce a solution. In such cases, various approaches and ways have to be tried.

You are likely to face a variety of problems in the course of the implementation and management of your enterprise. If you develop an appropriate system, approach and methodology for solving problems, it will help you manage your affairs smoothly — you would not remain under stress and tension when you encounter problems.

There are various qualitative and quantitative approaches developed in management services, which help us in solving problems. The basic objective of this section is to suggest a non-quantitative approach based on common sense and experiences in dealing with small-scale entrepreneurs and their problems.

In fact, the strategy would be to understand one's own environment, resources, capabilities, limitations, strengths and weaknesses in order to design an appropriate approach for solving problems. The approach suggested here will help you initially, in working on problems and, at a later stage, in formulating your own strategy for solving problems. The following steps are suggested for developing a problem-solving attitude and problem-solving mechanism.

Build a problem-solving attitude

We all have certain skills, traits and motives. Our psychological make-up tells what traits and motives we possess. These traits and motives can be identified and developed. Some people have traits and motives which enable them to work with and solve problems; some do not have these traits and motives and therefore they sometimes unconsciously try to avoid problems.

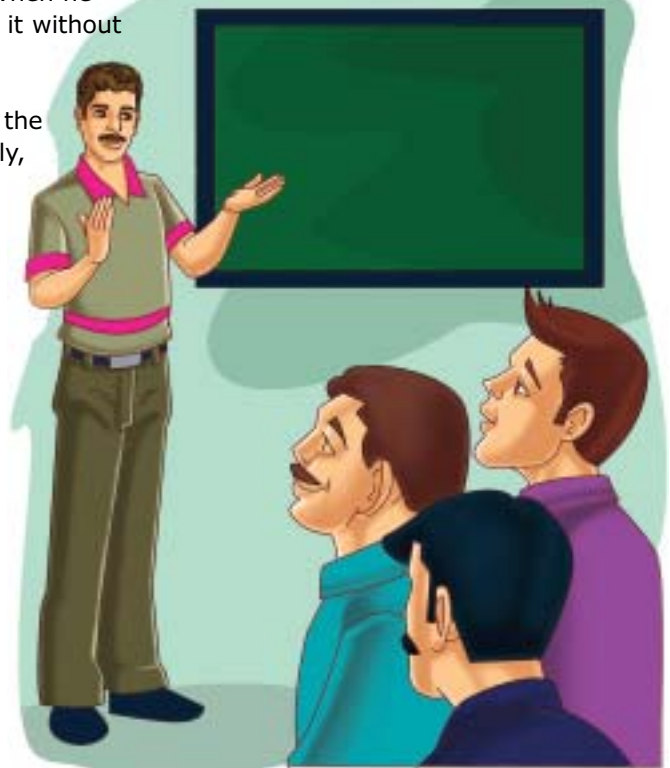
Let us take the example of an entrepreneur.

Mr Srikanth was the owner of a small restaurant. Once he got a notice from the Department of Food and Drugs Administration (DFDA). In his restaurant the necessary provision as per Food and Drugs Acts was not made — he received a notice for this. When he received the first notice he read it and filed it without taking any action. After a few days he got another notice. This time unconsciously he decided not to open the envelope and read the letter received from the DFDA. Subsequently, he started receiving notices frequently but kept doing the same thing.

After approximately one year, a team from the DFDA came to the restaurant and locked it. The department suspended Mr Srikanth's license for not responding to the notice and failing to take corrective action. Mr Srikanth's psychological composition directed his actions for problem-avoidance.

SUBBU'S STORY..

Subbu constantly plans his activities with his team and prioritises activities for the month. He also uses these sessions to help solve his team's problems.



Decision-making

A decision is the settlement of a question towards a definite outcome. A decision can be made in a variety of different ways, for example:

- The unspoken (Decision by omission)
- Self-authorised (Decision by one)
- The hand clasp (Decision by two)
- Voting
- Decision by an authority on behalf of others (Does anyone object? Do all agree?)
- Consensus or collective decision-making
 - Responsibility is shared
 - Transparency and clarity
 - Avoids conflicts
 - Increases participation
 - Improves relationships

Conflict resolution

Conflicts are natural and inevitable. They largely happen due to

- Differences in background, perception or attitude
- A lack of mutual trust
- Poor communication
- Lack of openness to each other's views

Eventualities during the process of conflict resolution

- Yesterday's solution is today's problem – stop-gap measure.
- Taking the short-term perspective (not appropriate in the long run).
- Personal biases, lack of seriousness and hidden agendas.

THE PROCESS OF DECISION-MAKING

Steps	Key points
Define objective	Specifying the aim or objective, having recognised the need for a decision
Collect information	Collecting and organising data; checking facts and opinions; identifying possible causes; establishing time constraints and other criteria
Develop options	Listing possible courses of action; generating ideas
Evaluate and decide	Listing the pros and cons; examining the consequences; measuring against criteria; testing against objectives; selecting the best
Implement	Acting to carry out the decision; monitoring the decision; reviewing

Leadership qualities

- Trust your subordinates.
- Develop a vision, planning is a must.
- Encourage risks and stand by them.
- Keep your cool always.
- Simplify functions and procedures.
- Do proper delegation and give a free hand to execute.
- Be decisive always.
- Take responsibility for others also.
- Build self-respect for your subordinates.
- Believe genuinely in their betterment.
- Catch them right and appreciate openly.
- Forgive mistakes gracefully.
- Listen to everyone down the line, praise them and share their glory.
- Make them understand that you value them, care for them.
- Believe in yourself.
- Set an example, be a good listener, organiser and communicator.
- Identify people and their strengths.
- Avoid ugly situations.
- Take no sides, decide on your own.
- Foresee problems and anticipate difficulties.
- Develop a sense of belonging in the organisation.
- Share success and pass the credit for it to subordinates.
- Put yourself in others' shoes.
- Invite dissent from people.

Essential skills required by a leader

- Have an idea about your ability to lead.
- Understand your environment.
- Ensure subordinates know what is expected of them.
- Motivate yourself through regular self-evaluation and effect mid-course corrections.
- Possess a positive attitude.
- Have the courage of conviction to act without fear or favour.
- Acquire new knowledge, develop new capabilities, and cultivate new relationships.
- Create a vision that motivates people to work. Vision makes an impact on people's sense of accomplishment and stretches individual and organisational capabilities.
- Set goals and priorities and ensure that they are understood.
- Evaluate achievements, the factors leading to positive and negative performances and realign priorities accordingly.
- Possess personal and professional creative ability.
- Be capable of developing creativity in others.
- Strive for all-round organisational performance.
- Motivate your colleagues to work to achieve a common goal.
- Establish an effective communication system for monitoring information and development of people.
- Rely on both formal and informal methods.
- Look for occasions to celebrate with people, which also enable you to keep in touch with ground realities.

Effective communication skills

Effective communication skills play a major role in successful business performance. Interpersonal communications break down because of a number of reasons. These reasons could be:

- Too much or irrelevant information
- An inherent tendency to make assumptions or draw inference from specific situations
- Poor and inactive listening skills

Conditions which hinder effective communication

- Preoccupation
- Mind-wandering
- Emotional block
- Defensiveness
- Hostility
- Relationships
- Charisma
- Status
- Inarticulateness
- Past experience
- Stereotyping
- Hidden agendas
- Physical environment

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

- Break down information into essentials.
- Keep the amount of information given at any one time small. Don't overload people.
- Keep the chain of information transmission short. More information will be lost or distorted at each extra step.
- Make sure the message is received and understood. Get feedback.
- Showing is more effective than telling. But a combination of both may even be better.
- Whenever possible use two-way communication. It takes longer but is more effective.
- Record important data. The strongest memory is weaker than the palest ink.
- Don't expect everyone to interpret data the same way. Different people have different perceptions and perspectives.
- Effective oral communication requires careful listening. We have two ears, but only one mouth. Then why is it that so many of us talk twice as much as we listen?
- Don't confuse assumptions with facts.

TEN GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE LISTENING

- Stop talking! “Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice.”
- Put the talker at ease. Help a person to feel free to talk.
- Show the talker that you want to listen. Look and act interested. Don't read your mail while listening. Listen to understand rather than oppose.
- Remove distractions. Don't doodle, tap or shuffle papers. Will it be quieter if you shut the door?
- Empathise with talkers. Try to see the other person's point of view.
- Be patient. Allow plenty of time. Do not interrupt the talker. Don't start for the door or walk away.
- Hold your temper. An angry person takes the wrong meaning of words.
- Go easy on arguments and criticism. This puts people on the defensive, and they may 'clamp up' or become angry. Do not argue because 'even if you win, you lose'.
- Ask questions. It helps to develop points further.
- Stop talking! This is both the first as well as the last guideline, because all other guidelines depend on it.

Creativity: Hallmark of an entrepreneur

An entrepreneur should be a creative person. The life of a person who lacks creativity is like stagnant water that breeds weeds and waste. On the other hand, a life full of creativity can be compared to flowing water moving towards a bright future. A few misunderstand creativity to be involved in a routine work on a continuous basis. Here are a few simple tips to the aspiring entrepreneurs to be creative.

- Develop positive thinking.
- Compete with yourself.
- Try to improve on your existing or past performance.
- Accept that you have to tackle problems.
- Analyse the problem and find data relating to it.
- Identify a solution to the problem.
- Try to solve the problem in different ways.
- Ask questions before you act.
- Break away from traditional approaches to a problem.
- Ponder new ideas and innovations.
- Look at achieving targets and accomplishing goals in a way other than the same old tested path.
- When confronted with problems, go beyond the boundaries and think of finding a solution.
- Break mental barriers in your approach to work.
- Keep yourself abreast with new knowledge, research and findings, by reading regularly.
- Alternatives, substitutes, re-arranging, should be uppermost in your mind while taking up a task.
- Convert your brain into a factory churning out better and new ideas.
- Note down these ideas and think of how best they can be adopted.

Each individual is gifted with inherent talents. What is required is to recognise and accept these talents within, to give proper shape to them and, most important of all, to put them to use.

SUMMARY

- Book-keeping and maintaining financial records, daily, weekly and monthly and yearly should be meticulously followed.
- Marketing activities facilitate the exchange of goods and services for money.
- Along with technical skills, there are many human resource management practices that one should learn.
- There are several soft skill competencies that an entrepreneur needs to develop.
- Time management, creativity, a problem-solving attitude, communication skills, leadership and decision-making skills are all essential.

Evaluation Exercise 4b

1. List the business records that need to be maintained.
2. What are the specific record-keeping needs of an ICT kiosk?
3. Highlight the target market needs for a telecentre in your community.
4. What marketing activities will you engage in to facilitate the exchange of service for profits with your prospective clients?
5. What are the job specifications in your telecentre and how will you screen the applicants?
6. What are the soft skills required for an ICT entrepreneur? List your strengths and areas for improvement.

Feedback Form for Entrepreneurship for Telecentre Management

Your feedback on this module is very important to our efforts to continually improve its content and presentation style. Please take a few moments to complete this questionnaire.

Your name (optional):

How many hours did it take you to complete this module?

Please send us your feedback on the various aspects of the module by placing a (✓) mark in the column that best describes how you feel – choose from

- 1 which means strongly disagree;
- 2 which means somewhat disagree;
- 3 which means somewhat agree; or
- 4 which means strongly agree.

Statements about the module	1	2	3	4
1. The objectives of the module were clearly stated.				
2. The subject matter of the module was new to me.				
3. The subject matter of the module was relevant to me.				
4. The module was written in a manner that is clear and easy to understand.				
5. The treatment of the module topic was adequate.				
6. The module's level of difficulty was just right.				
7. The module provided me with new ideas, insights or perspectives.				
8. The module increased my understanding of major concepts and principles.				
9. The module provided me with new knowledge and skills that enhance my job performance.				
10. The examples and/or case studies in the module were relevant.				
11. There were too many learning activities and exercises.				

Please answer the following questions on the back of this page.

1. What did you find most useful in the training? (Please explain your answer.)
2. What did you find least useful in the training? (Please explain your answer.)
3. On what topics, if any, would you rather have spent more time – whether or not they were addressed in the training?
4. On what topics, if any, would you rather have spent less time?
5. What suggestions do you have for improving the module?
6. Any other suggestions or comments you may have.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please tear it out (or photocopy these two pages) and send to:

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Telecentre Training Commons
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 India

This manual on Entrepreneurship that forms part of the set of *Telecentre Management Training Manuals* prepared and peer-reviewed by telecentre.org's five valued partners in India highlights the importance of managing and maintaining telecentres as social enterprises. The module tells learners how to develop a business idea, do a quick market survey, and create a business plan, honing the leadership skills that are critical to making a small telecentre business succeed.

Mission 2007 partners



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Telecentre Management Training Manual **Info-mediary Skills**

Version 1 (*prepared by Mission 2007 partners*)

telecentre.org is a collaborative social investment programme of



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Contents

■ 4

What is a Knowledge Centre?

Information and communication technologies are new age tools that can diminish distances and eradicate isolation, speed up developmental processes and enhance the overall quality of life. A knowledge centre (also known as telecentre or information centre) has many functions and one of the main ones is to provide 'information services' to the groups it serves. In order to provide such services, the knowledge centre coordinator has to become an 'info-mediary'.

■ 16

Information and Communities

This chapter will help you understand the importance of information and its role in communities; the difference between data, information and knowledge; the importance of understanding a community's information needs; and establishing a two-way process to collect and disseminate information in communities.

■ 30

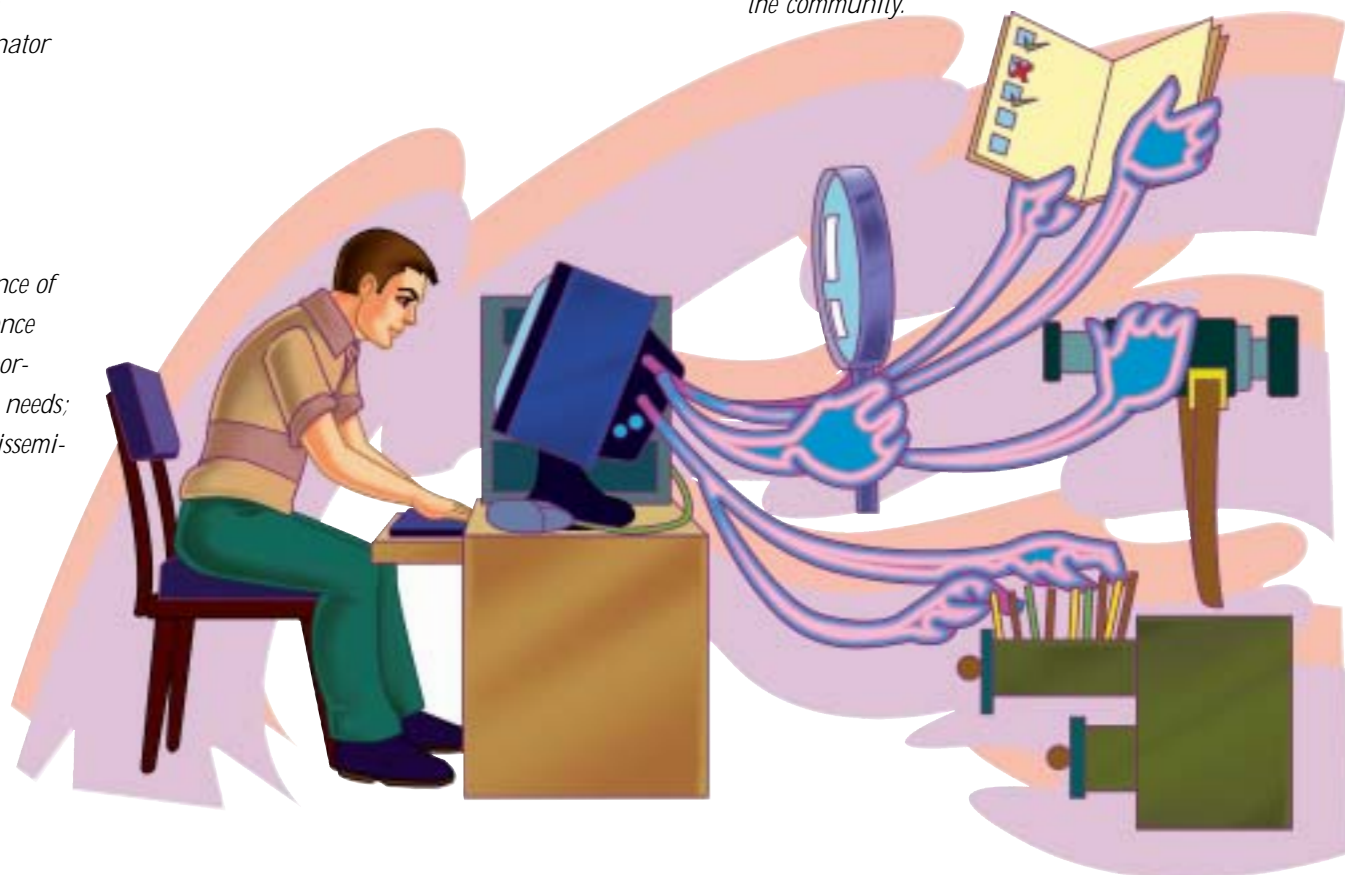
Locating and Collecting Information

This chapter will help you identify sources to collect information from both internal (within the community) and external (mass media, institutions, experts, etc) sources. It details the relative advantages and disadvantages of the various sources and provides handy tips to the knowledge centre coordinator.

■ 48

Providing Information Services to Communities

This chapter helps you understand the kinds of basic information that knowledge centres must possess, learn tools on how to engage the community in a meaningful 'information flow dialogue' and, in general, provide information-based services that will address the needs of the community.





What is a Knowledge Centre?

Information and communication technologies are new age tools that can diminish distances and eradicate isolation, speed up developmental processes and enhance the overall quality of life. A knowledge centre (also known as telecentre or information centre) is a model for providing such tools to under-served and marginalised communities, to help them access relevant information and opportunities to better their quality of life. A knowledge centre has many functions and one of the main ones is to provide 'information services' to the groups it serves. In order to provide such services, the knowledge centre coordinator has to become an 'info-mediary' or a medium to pass on relevant information to communities, as well as be a channel to pass information about communities and their practices to the world at large.

At the end of this chapter, you would:

- **Be able to name at least three or four different types of technologies and how they can help in social development issues**
- **Have a clear understanding of the roles of a knowledge centre in a community**
- **Have a clear understanding about information services and their importance in a community**
- **State the role of an 'info-mediary'**

What are Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)?

India is today one of the six fastest growing economies of the world. Fuelled by a highly talented, skilled and English-speaking human resource base, the business and regulatory environment is constantly evolving. The Indian economy has transformed into a vibrant, rapidly growing consumer market, comprising over a 300-million-strong middle class with increasing purchasing power. India provides a large market for consumer goods, on one hand, and imports capital goods and technology to modernise its manufacturing base, on the other.

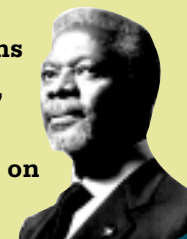
However, when it comes to food security, nutrition, bio-energy, environment and livelihood for rural India, the

situation is not as good. India still suffers from substantial poverty. Seventy-five percent of the poor are in rural areas; most of them are daily wagers, self-employed households and landless labourers.¹ The Planning Commission has estimated that 27.5 percent of the population was living below the poverty line in 2004–2005, down from 51.3 percent in 1977–1978, and 36 percent in 1993–1994. The source for this was the 61st round of the National Sample Survey (NSS) and the criteria used was monthly per capita consumption expenditure (below Rs 356.35 for rural areas and Rs 538.60 for urban areas).

In such a context, the standard of living could be improved to an extent by spreading basic knowledge in the fields of hygiene, nutrition, health care, appropriate technology, work organisation, etc.

“People lack many things: jobs, shelter, food, health care and drinkable water. Today, being cut off from basic telecommunications services is a hardship almost as acute as these other deprivations, and may indeed reduce the chances of finding remedies to them.”

– KOFI ANNAN,
then United Nations
Secretary-General,
announcing the
need for a Summit on
ICTs, March 1999



Despite recent positive economic developments, India still suffers from substantial poverty. Improvement in the standard of living could be attained to an extent by disseminating basic knowledge in the fields of hygiene, nutrition, health care, appropriate technology, work organisation and a few other fields.



The convergence of information technology, telecommunications and data networking technologies into a single technology is known as ICT.

Information and communication technology (ICT) is a new age tool that can decrease distances, end isolation, speed up developmental processes and enhance the overall quality of life. There are various technologies that come under the purview of ICT. They include telephones, cellphones, computers, the Internet, software systems, etc. ICT enables societies to produce, access, adapt and apply greater amounts of information, more rapidly and at reduced costs, and

offer enormous opportunities for increasing business productivity and economic activity. ICT can also contribute towards strengthening democracy, increasing social participation, competing in the global market place and removing barriers to modernisation, thus making poor populations fuller agents in the sustainable developmental process.

However, there is major concern regarding ICT. It has created a new divide, *the digital divide*. Like the rich-poor and urban-rural divides, the digital divide has created a new kind of poverty – '*information poverty*'. Information poverty refers to a lack of access to information and opportunities which keep one from improving one's life and quality of style. Experts consider that if we are able to bridge the digital divide, we would be able to get rid of the other divides as well. Our goal as 'Information and Communication Technologies for Development (ICT4D)' practitioners is to help bridge this digital divide and bring the benefits of ICT to those populations that have been isolated from it.



Types of ICTs

- **Voice-based communications** such as telephones, cellphones, etc, are the primary modes of ICT that can be used without learning any specific skills.
- **Computers** are ICT tools that can be used for many functions starting from documentation to more complex software systems. They are used to access the Internet and perform other basic data based functions. A certain amount of skill is required to operate computers, but since they are user-friendly it does not require much formal instruction.
- **The Internet** is a powerful tool that is basically a network of networks that are publicly accessible. The amount and scale of information on the Internet or World Wide Web is infinite. However, care must be taken to ensure the validity of the information one is accessing.

- **Community radio** is a type of radio service that caters to the interests of a certain area, broadcasting material that is popular to a local audience and often uses local community members as recording artists.
- **Wireless communication** is the transfer of information over a distance without wires.

What is ICT for Development?

"Information and Communication Technologies for Development (ICT4D) is the general term related to the application of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in development programmes in countries facing problems like poverty, illiteracy and a general lack of development."

This millennium is recognised as the information age as it becomes the most important tool for the people. However, in the current scenario against the backdrop of ICT-enabled social and economic opportunity, are these statistics: one-third of the world's population has yet to make a phone call; fewer than one-fifth has experienced the Internet; and most of the information exchanged over the Internet is in English, the language of only 10 percent of the world's population (UNDP et al, 2001). Given the right enabling environment, ICT can be leveraged by poor countries, communities and individuals to create a more empowered, equitable and prosperous future.

Why use ICT as a development tool?

- It offers great opportunities for people to use a wide array of services earlier unavailable to them, such as specialised medical consultancy through telemedicine, weather and best practices information through agro-extension services, and e-governance services such as birth and death certificates, drivers' license, land records, etc.
- It helps in faster communication between people through the use of telephone (fixed line and

RELEVANT EXAMPLES OF ICT FOR DEVELOPMENT

- **Government and governance**, by enabling more efficient management systems and service and enhancing transparency (e-procurement, online databases, registries, laws, rights, etc), decentralisation, citizen outreach and participation.
- **Poverty alleviation**, by enhancing aid management systems and facilitating social inclusion, information access and knowledge sharing in remote areas and with/among disadvantaged groups. Opportunities include: health (telemedicine and early warning systems for epidemics); education (distance learning); social empowerment (through networking); and economic empowerment (for example: better access to relevant knowledge on agricultural production, disease control, and market prices can increase farmers' incomes).
- **Environmental management**, including through the use of geographic information systems (GIS) and early warning systems, which can also contribute to enhanced food security.
- **Health**, by facilitating interactive information/knowledge-sharing, supporting coordination efforts, etc.

cellphones), e-mail, voice over Internet telephony, fax, etc.

- It diminishes geographical distances and provides access to data and other services that are far away from the user through online experts, online journals, databases etc.
- It can help in redefining education by individualising content of education. This is especially true for extension services and adult education. The localisation of content is also possible to a greater extent using ICT.
- It brings isolated populations closer to essential services such as medicine, through services like telemedicine.
- It helps farmers access important information (such as weather predictions, rainfall, etc) for more planned cultivation. They can also stay updated about market prices, helping them decide when and where to sell their produce for the best margins.

What is a knowledge centre?

Knowledge centres (or telecentres) are “a physical space that provide public access to ICTs for educational, personal, social and economic development.” The centres would provide a variety of services to communities in areas such as education, health, e-governance, etc, by facilitating access to information and essential services, providing opportunities through capacity-building and training tools using ICTs as outreach platforms.

SERVICES OFFERED BY KNOWLEDGE CENTRES

Knowledge centres inherently serve multi-purpose goals, as the community they serve has diverse needs. Some popular services:

- **Education:** IT courses, distance learning courses, vocational training, life skills.
- Information related to agriculture, government schemes, law, rights and benefits, weather, market prices, disaster preparedness, etc.
- Communication facilities such as text and voice mail, fax, telephone, voice and video chat, courier services, etc.
- Domain expert support in medicine, agriculture, law, etc, through periodic meetings and/or email correspondence
- **Miscellaneous:** photocopy, photo studio (digital camera/Web camera), lamination, desktop publishing (DTP).
- Payment of utilities/bills.
- Registration of births/deaths.
- Reservation of bus and train tickets.
- Assistance in identifying and tracking resources that a village has and in planning and monitoring projects.
- Local government can update communities on official programmes and schemes and in turn get regular updates from the village on progress on key parameters reflecting the ‘health’ of the village.
- Electronic accounting for the funds which are disseminated by the state/district administration for village activities.
- Act as a collection and distribution point for farm and other agricultural products.
- Assistance to communities in gathering information about their rights, such as rural employment muster rolls, minimum wages, Right to Information (RTI) acts, etc.

This list is by no means exhaustive and will be based entirely on the needs of the community.



Equipment

Telecentres typically possess a combination of the following equipment, with variations depending on the population served, services offered, etc.

- One to five computers (with floppy and CD drives, Internet and multimedia)
- Peripherals such as a scanner and printer
- Digital camera
- Power back-up – UPS/generator/solar power
- Software: Windows OS, Microsoft Office suite, other optional packages

What are information services?

From a knowledge sharing perspective, rural communities need to position themselves more strategically to benefit from whatever resources are available to them,

both nationally and internationally. They need to speed up the acquisition of new skills and knowledge that will lead to better farming, management of the environment, and health practices to improve the quality of life. Such a plan calls for clear strategies to optimise use of all branches of the extension services in agriculture, health, small business development, etc. All this can happen through the use of ICT.

Using ICTs, such as the Internet, community radio and video, is vital to communicate with both the local and global markets. Communities may use these channels to announce the products and services – from coffee, honey, handicrafts, and spices, to community-based tourism and many others – they can offer. Such access to communication may also enable rural communities to learn what new products they can grow that may find a market in both urban and international markets. In the global marketplace, knowledge is one of the most important tools and factors of production. It can help rural communities fight for their own survival and sustainable development.²

Information services thus become one of the most important services that a knowledge centre can offer to its community. This includes a broad array of activities ranging from the informal over-the-counter advice to customised and paid services. For example:

- 'Ask the expert' (paid) services on agricultural and allied occupations through linkages with local universities and institutions.
- Search for specific information, such as
 - market prices and markets;
 - institutions and centres of education, especially for higher education;
 - symptoms of diseases;
 - places of tourist and religious interest;
 - information for educational projects;
 - weather.
- Over-the-counter advice such as address/telephone numbers/contact details of government

offices, institutions of higher learning, medical institutions, etc.

While here we have mentioned only services which may be prompted by queries that come in from the community, the knowledge centre's role does not end there. It is important for the telecentre operator to take a proactive role in identifying 'information needs' of the community. These must then be prioritised and relevant information identified to meet such needs. All this will be explored in detail in the following chapters.

Who is an info-mediator?

Most telecentres are run by a staff of one or three people depending on the size of the centre and the community it caters to. Apart from a coordinator or manager there is an instructor who provides IT education and, in general, facilitates access to various services through the use of the technological tools available in the telecentre. Either person could be responsible for delivering information services in the community. Experience, however, says that it is generally the knowledge centre coordinator (or the person who is ultimately responsible for the centre's operations) who provides this service. For the purposes of this module we will call this person the '**info-mediator**'.

Info: Information + mediator: a human medium

The dictionary definition³ of 'medium' is 'a means of effecting or conveying something; a go-between or an intermediary'.
The term 'info-mediator' therefore refers to a person who is the medium or channel for passing information

MORE ABOUT TELECENTRES

For more information on the role of a knowledge centre, how to set up and manage a telecentre and other related queries, please read:

- Toolkit for setting up Rural Knowledge Centres: As Experienced through the Information Village Research Project and Jamsetji Tata National Virtual Academy M S Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF/MA/05/25)
- Make ICTs Work for People, National Institute of Smart Governance (NISG), 2004
- Ten Steps for Establishing a Sustainable Multi-purpose Community Telecentre: User's Guide; UNESCO Bangkok



ROLES OF AN INFO-MEDIARY

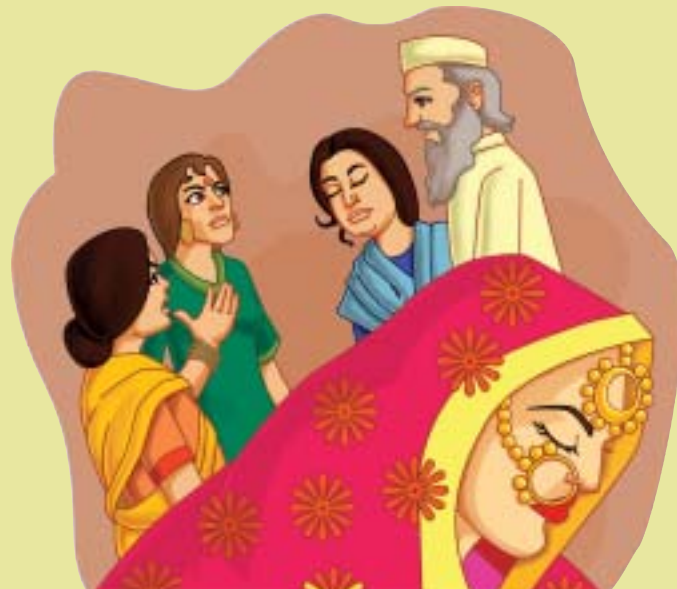
An info-mediary can play two possible roles in a telecentre. These are:

- **Information Agent:** This is the role where she/he provides information of immediate relevance and demand in the community.
- **Social Advocate:** In this role, the info-mediary has to pro-actively hunt for social issues in the region, try to identify possible solutions and then mobilise the community to act upon these solutions.

It must be noted that in the second role the info-mediary must play a balancing act between helping the community rid itself of social ills without offending cultural and traditional practices which might disrupt the running of the telecentre. This is a tough balance and grass-roots experiences provide no easy answers.

Example 1: Social advocacy – empowering women

Shobha Uttam and Anjum Khatoun, manager and coordinator of the Technology For The People (TFTP) centres in Old Hyderabad city, respectively, talk about their experiences. Shobha and Anjum are responsible for running telecentres which started off as vocational units for young women in the area. Given the conservative values of the community, it took a long time for the telecentre management to form a base of trust for itself within the community. Almost a year down the line they heard that a young woman (not yet 18 years of age) from their community was going to be married off to a wealthy widower, a Sheikh from Dubai, with several children. When this news reached them, Shobha and Anjum decided to act upon it. They tried to counsel the family but to no avail. Instead, abuses were hurled at



them and the elders of the community told them that they were infringing on traditional practices and threatened the very existence of the centre. The knowledge centre went through a tough period trying to regain its footing in the community, but this did not stop either of them. Sadly, the girl was secretly married off and they could do nothing to stop it. They have learnt their lesson, however, and do their best to empower the girls about their rights as individuals and women. The girls' future will determine whether Anjum and Shobha's teachings have gained root in the young minds.

Example 2: Social advocacy – revitalising infrastructure

Sagroli village is located on the border of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Since 1960, right from inception of the state of Maharashtra, there has been sustained apathy from the government authorities at every level, even for providing basic civic amenities such as roads, drinking water and health. It is strange that a village like Sagroli with a population of 10,000 has no all-season road. People have to walk at least 5 km for a tar road. In the rainy season the situation is unbelievable. Since the past two years the government has auctioned the sand of the river Manjira (worth Rs 2 crore for one year). This has made the road busy with traffic – about 400 heavy trucks transport sand in a day. It has very badly affected the health of the people, developing breathing problems, spondylitis, and many other diseases that we had never heard the names of.



The dust spreading in the air is accumulating on the roadside crops like cotton and jowar, etc. It has totally destroyed the crops and hopes of

the poor farmers. Even after continued follow up, agitations, rasta roko – nothing has materialised. At this stage the people approached the Sanskriti Samvardhan Mandal (SSM). After discussions, the people decided to adopt an innovative way of protest – ‘Gandhigiri’. People purchased postcards from the local post office. Nearly 2,500 people, including women and children representing all cross-sections of society, wrote letters to various government departments, including collector’s office, transport, B&C, tehsil, police, etc. The Sakal newspaper took note and gave this effort vast publicity. Schoolchildren mailed the then President of India, Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. For weeks, no other subject was discussed in the village. When the postcards poured into government offices, they awakened and started visiting the village. We received calls from the collector’s office promising repairs to the road. The postcard flow was continued and, at last, the repairs started. We hope the new road will be good enough for all seasons.

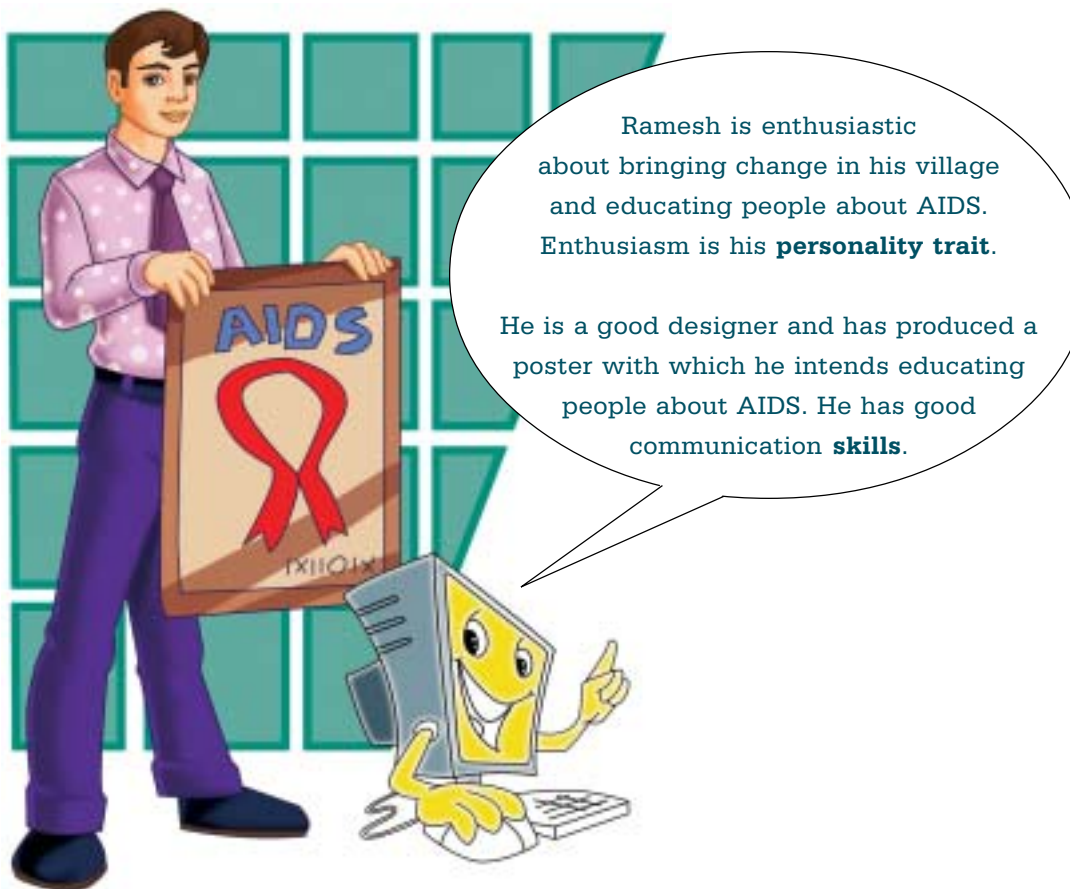
Source: Shital Kumar Joshi, Coordinator of VKC Sagroli, District Nanded, Maharashtra 431 731, www.ssmandal.net

Being an info-mediary

In the previous segment, we have discussed who an info-mediary is and what his/her roles can be in the community. In this section, we will focus on the personality traits and skills required to be an efficient info-mediary.

A trait is a **distinguishing quality** or an **inherited characteristic**.

A skill is a **learned power** of doing something competently or a **developed aptitude** or ability.



The list given below has been put together by telecentre operators from across the country. However, all of them realised that while the list may be exhaustive, finding a person with all these qualities would be next to impossible. Therefore, it was agreed that it is important to come up with one's own *basic* list. It is important to note that while skills can be learnt, a trait is an existing quality which is difficult to change or modify.

PERSONALITY TRAITS	SKILLS
➤ Flexibility	➤ Communication skills
➤ Respect for community	➤ Domain expertise
➤ Dynamism	➤ Time management
➤ Enthusiasm/dedication/proactiveness	➤ Analytical/reasoning skills
➤ Non-judgemental/unbiased attitude	➤ Negotiation skills
➤ Patience	➤ Public speaking/presentation skills
➤ Empathy	➤ Facilitation
➤ Innovation	➤ Counselling
➤ Creativity	➤ Translation
➤ Attitude for life-long learning	➤ Planning
	➤ Leadership skills

What are these skills and personality traits?

Personality traits

- **Flexibility:** The quality of being adaptable to the environment. Able to effectively multi-task in the knowledge centre.
- **Respect for community:** The community in which the knowledge centre functions is the client group of the knowledge centre. Therefore, to be able to effectively involve them in development the coordinator has to be able to effectively communicate with them and involve them, which is possible only with respect.
- **Dynamism:** Energetic and enthusiastic, actively participating in everyday processes and coming up with new ideas and implementing them.
- **Enthusiasm/dedication/proactiveness:** The coordinator should be totally bound to the work she/he does and its fulfillment to his/her best capacities.
- **Non-judgmental/unbiased attitude:** The coordinator should not be partial, biased or prejudiced for or against any community group, thus ensuring maximum community participation.
- **Patience:** Patience is the ability and willingness to wait a long time or to carry out difficult or time-consuming tasks. It also means not easily getting angry or not showing anger in situations of human communication where the other is unreasonable.
- **Empathy:** Feeling of concern and understanding for another's situation or feelings.
- **Innovation:** Innovation is the introduction of

new ideas, goods, services, and practices which are intended to be useful.

- **Creativity:** Creativity is a skill of coming up with new functional ideas or concepts.
- **Attitude for life-long learning:** Since learning is not a one-time process, it is important that the coordinator is open to life-long learning, that is, an ongoing gathering of knowledge, information and skills.

Skills

- **Communication skills:** The set of skills that enables a person to convey information so that it is received and understood. Communication skills refer to the repertoire of behaviours that serve to convey information for the learner.
- **Domain expertise:** The centre coordinator is expected to have sound understanding and knowledge and skills specific to ICTs. This expertise is necessary to help disseminate information.
- **Time management:** Time management is a set of tools or techniques for planning and scheduling time, usually with the aim of increasing the effectiveness and/or efficiency of time use.
- **Analytical/reasoning skills:** These skills are those that enable a person to take informative and value-based decisions keeping the consequences in mind. These skills help the centre coordinator to analyse the situation at hand and take the best course possible using his/her skills.
- **Negotiation skills:** Negotiation skills are the ability to communicate, discuss and agree on something among people with different objectives and viewpoints.
- **Public speaking/presentation skills:** Presentations and public speaking have to be precise, concise and be able to effectively pass on information to the intended target group/audience.
- **Facilitation:** A process of decision-making guided by a facilitator (the coordinator) who ensures that all affected individuals and groups are involved in a meaningful way and that the decisions are based on their input and made to achieve their mutual interests.
- **Counselling:** A knowledge centre coordinator often has to deal with various problems of his/her audience. Therefore it is necessary that she/he has the skill of listening, analysing, understanding and effectively communicating various alternatives for dealing with the problems.
- **Translation:** Translation is the ability to translate content/exercises into the local language for maximum impact on the target group.
- **Planning:** The coordinator should have the ability to set organisational goals and targets that can be achieved. A part of planning also deals with developing strategic objectives that could help provide maximum benefit of ICTs to the population served.
- **Leadership skills:** It is a critical management skill comprising the ability to motivate a group of people (here the stakeholders) towards a common goal.

SUMMARY

- Information and communication technologies are new age tools that can reduce the impact of distance and end isolation, speed up developmental processes and enhance the overall quality of life.
- Technologies such as computers, radio and cellphones can help provide many developmental services such as those related to education, health, livelihoods, environment, etc.
- A knowledge centre is a model for providing such tools to under-served and marginalised communities in order to help them access relevant information and opportunities to better their quality of life.
- A knowledge centre has many functions and one of the main ones is to provide 'information services' to the groups it serves.
- In order to provide such services, the knowledge centre coordinator has to become an 'info-mediary' or a medium to pass on relevant information to communities as well as be a channel to pass information about communities and their practices to the world at large.
- An info-mediary can take on roles of an 'information agent' and a 'social advocate'.

Glossary

- **Information and communication technologies (ICTs):** There are various technologies that come under the purview of ICTs. They include telephones, cellphones, computers, Internet, software systems, etc. ICTs enable societies to produce, access, adapt and apply greater amounts of information, more rapidly and at reduced costs, and offer enormous opportunities for enhancing business productivity and economic activity.
- **ICT for development (ICT4D):** ICT4D is the general term related to the application of ICT in development programmes in countries facing problems like poverty, illiteracy and a general lack of development.
- **Knowledge centre/telecentre:** Knowledge centres are "a physical space that provide public access to ICTs for educational, personal, social and economic development".
- **Information services:** Acquisition of new skills and knowledge through ICTs to access better farming techniques, management of the environment, and health practices to improve the quality of life can be referred to as information services.
- **Info-mediary:** An info-mediary refers to a person who is the medium or channel for passing information.
- **Information agent:** This is a role where the info-mediary provides information of immediate relevance and demand in the community.
- **Social advocate:** In this role, the info-mediary has to proactively track social issues in the region, try to identify possible solutions and then mobilise the community to act upon these solutions.

EVALUATION

A. Questions and Answers

- a. Describe how different ICTs can be used for development.
- b. State the different kinds of information services that can be provided in a knowledge centre.
- c. Who is an info-mediary? What role can she/he play in a community?

B. Identify a major social issue in your community (one that is related to traditional practices but against fundamental human rights). Now think of a plan to tackle this issue sensitively.

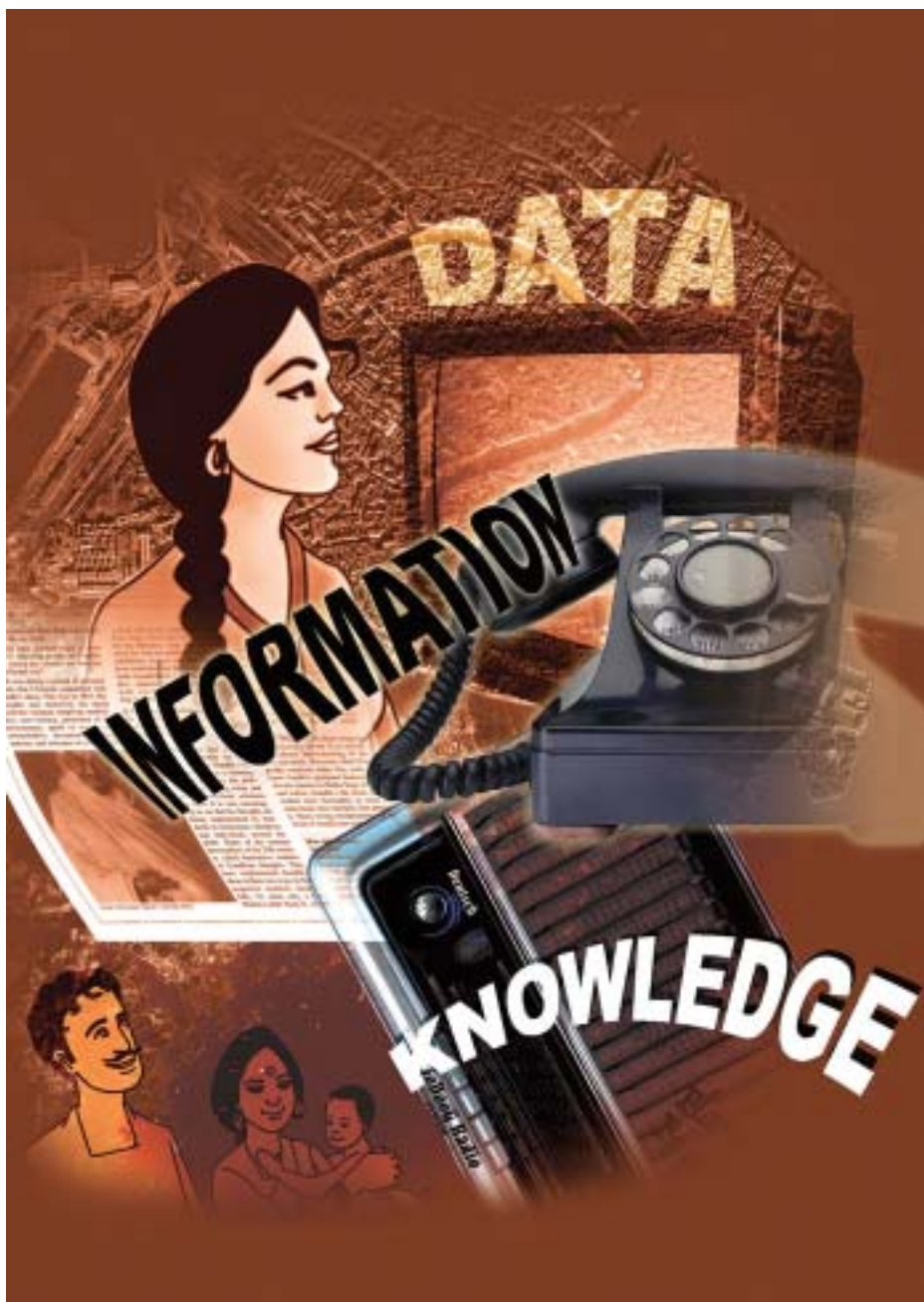
C. Exercise: Go through the list above and put together your own basic list of traits and skills for a good info-mediary.

End notes

1 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poverty_in_India

2 Sharing Knowledge for Community Development and Transformation: A Handbook. Written by Kingo J. Mchombu; DLR International in Canada for the Oxfam Horn of Africa Capacity Building Programme, with support of Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), August 2004.

3 Source: Merriam Webster Online Dictionary



Information and Communities

This chapter will help you understand the importance of information and its role in communities; the difference between data, information and knowledge; the importance of understanding a community's information needs; and establishing a two-way process to collect and disseminate information in communities.

By the end of this chapter, you would:

- **Have a clear understanding of the importance of relevant information to communities**
- **Have a clear understanding of the difference between data, information and knowledge**
- **Be able to develop a plan on how to gather the information needs of a community**
- **Be able to plan and put into operation a two-way information and communication flow between the knowledge centre and the community it serves**



Sikanderpur is an urban village on the Delhi-Gurgaon border. Despite being a part of the NCR, its inhabitants face many health problems. Mosquito-borne diseases are common in the monsoon months.

What can be done?

Raju is a bright 18-year-old boy. He lives in Siripur village in Orissa. He is the captain of the local cricket team and has organised many inter-village cricket tournaments. He recently appeared for his Class X exams; he has failed these. What are his options?



Ajit Gorde is a marginal farmer in Satara district of Maharashtra. Alongside his main crop he often grows vegetables such as tomatoes to sell.

Sometimes he gets a good rate, sometimes not. He wants to get the best rate for his vegetables every time. What can he do?

Shanti and her family are daily wage earners. She received a Summons (in the form of a letter) from the District Court of Chandrapur to appear as a witness for the prosecution for a case.

Shanti does not know which case they are referring to and why she is being called. Going to the district town will cost her a day's wages. What can she do?



What is the importance of information in communities?

A wise man once said, "As a general rule the most successful man in life is the man who has the best information."¹ Information can provide access to new learning opportunities, new ideas, services, products, to help people make their own choices. In addition, reliable and up-to-date information about government policies and programmes allows people to become better citizens. It is for this reason that information is considered equivalent to power.



In each of the above cases, the solution is a piece of information. Most of us possess this information. How can we reach it and provide it to uninformed communities?

WHAT IS INFORMATION?

Information could be:

- Knowledge derived from study, experience or instruction.
- Any kind of knowledge which is derived from study, study means by reading books, magazines, journals, newsletters, etc. Experiences which an individual gains with the passage of time, instruction which we get from our seniors or by reading something.
- Knowledge of specific events or situations that has been gathered or received by communication, intelligence or news.

Let us take one of the examples given on the previous page.

Every monsoon, the village of Sikanderpur faces many cases of malaria. This happens every year without fail.

While many community members in the village are aware that mosquitoes spread malaria, they are unable to think of what to do.



One of the first steps to address this issue is to make sure that all stagnant bodies of water are either removed or treated.

This along with other precautionary steps can easily help stem the cases of malaria and have a positive effect on the health of people in the community.

Information can be on any topic under the sun – agriculture, fishing, soil, education, vocations, economy, nuclear science, nanotechnology, etc. However, in our context, we will focus only on the kinds of information that can help members of our community improve their lives or lifestyles. Relevant information in our context would refer to anything related to agriculture and agribusiness, child and maternal health tips, soil condition, weather, crop prices, condition of roads and transportation, vocational courses, rights of the girl child, schemes available from the government, awareness about HIV/AIDS, procedure for grievance redressal, etc.

There are two kinds of information:

- A more or less **static** base of information such as agriculture and agribusiness, child and maternal health tips, soil condition, vocational courses, rights of the girl child, schemes available from the government, awareness about HIV/AIDS, procedure for grievance redressal, etc (although new developments, research and changing cultural notions do not make these kinds completely static). The validity of such information lasts longer.
- **Dynamic** information such as weather information, crop prices, examination results, classified or yellow page type information, job vacancies, etc. The validity of this kind is very short, as it can frequently change.

Are information, data and knowledge the same?

We often use these three words – data, information and knowledge – inter-changeably. While this is largely acceptable, it is important to note the differences as they apply to our context.

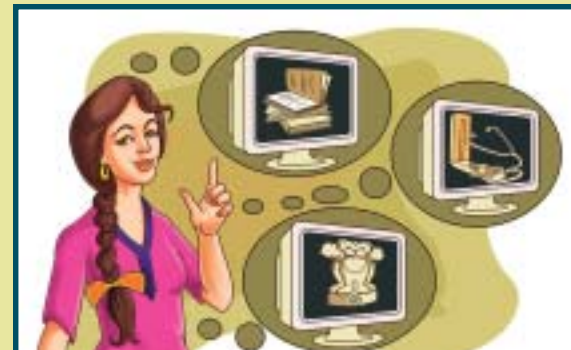
The whole purpose in collecting data, information and knowledge is to be able to make wise decisions. Let's understand this with an example.



Sunita knows that in 1998 there were no computer centres in her village or block town. In 2000 one centre was started in the town. In 2002 there were two centres. At present there are seven centres in the block town, her village and surrounding villages. **This is data.**



When Sunita and her community members start to realise that the definite increase in computer centres is a pattern and many people are getting employed. Some of these centres offer more than computer education. **This is information.**



Apart from a being a source for jobs, ICTs can facilitate services in other areas such as medicine, business, agriculture, education, health and governance. There is more to computers than merely computer education. **This is knowledge.**

In this example, the journey from data to knowledge took a few years to evolve; it may take place faster in other circumstances. The role of the knowledge centre coordinator is to keep abreast of the latest relevant information and knowledge in the outside world and keep relaying this to her/his community. However, how will she/he know what information is relevant to the community? What steps can she/he take to find out the information needs of the community?

In simple terms

DATA is the basic unit of information

INFORMATION is the basic unit of knowledge

KNOWLEDGE is the basic unit of wisdom



What information is relevant to communities?

When we talk of rural development and leveraging the power of ICTs, one needs to understand rural demographics. In a country like India, the existence of a huge infrastructural gap and a total lack of governance practices – such that after more than 60 years of our independence we are still struggling to provide for proper drinking water – are stark facts of life in rural India. Further, there is a lack of basic health facilities and proper educational facilities. Our challenge is twofold: provide a platform to bridge the digital divide as well as act as a facilitator for proper holistic development of the areas.

As a knowledge centre coordinator, you probably already base your work decisions on what you know about your community's needs. If you are involved in

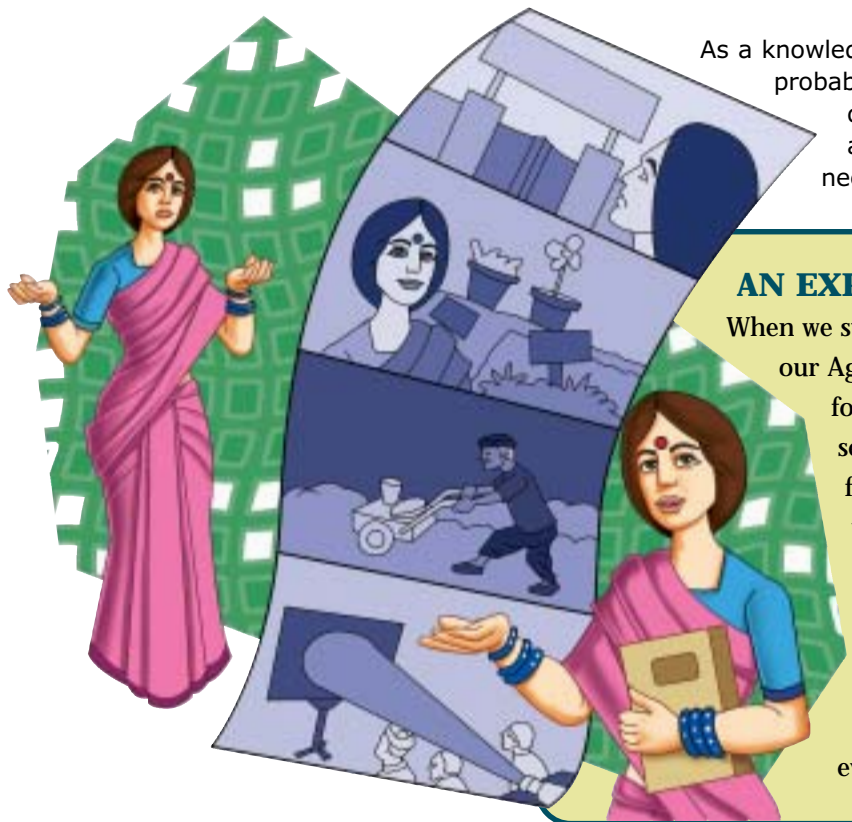
community activities and events, you will be familiar with your locality's socio-economic make-up. A full-scale needs assessment, like the one outlined in the module on Community Development, will probably not be necessary. However, you may find it useful to familiarise yourself with the process. Should you feel that there is a need to carry out a needs assessment, this section helps you decide how best to go about it and what you can expect to gain from doing one. By following the steps outlined here, you can help organise your study and reduce both time and costs.

Knowledge centre coordinators who will be manning such centres in rural hinterlands of the country need to start by understanding and identifying the local user needs before embarking on a process of establishing a knowledge centre. The process of understanding community needs can be done through the following steps:

- Assessing community information needs; and
- Gathering information on knowledge needs.

AN EXPERIENCE: Anita Jadhav, Satara, Maharashtra

When we started our centre we had to face a few social and economic problems. We had to start our Agro Clinic and for permissions we had to do many rounds of the district administration for the license. We started our nursery and here we also had to take proper care on the seed sowing process for proper results. Later, when these seeds were planted in the farmers' fields we also kept a watch over the way the plantings were done. When we were able to demonstrate the proper use of modern technology to the farmers they started to come to us. After the nursery we started the agro clinic and we also conducted awareness meetings along with the Agriculture Department under different government sponsored schemes for the clinic to take off in a proper manner. We also used films and CDs to convince the farmers on the use of modern technology. It took some time as there was apprehension on the realistic returns as shown in the films but eventually we were able to demonstrate results and convince them all.



Assessing community information needs

Communities are socially, economically and culturally heterogeneous. This diversity in the social fabric needs to be understood. Therefore most telecentre projects try to recruit local people who are already aware about neighbouring conditions. Local coordinators are also aware of the most influential members of the community who can be tapped to promote the knowledge centre and spread awareness about the potential of the centre. Later in the chapter we will talk about how this can be done.

However, even if the coordinator is local, intuitively knowing the problems of the locality is one thing and expressing and prioritising them in a manner which would result in a solution is another. The module on Community Development explores in detail the different methods of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) which can be used to do a community needs analysis. In this module we will endeavour to give you handy tips to help you in the process.

In order to establish the information needs of the community, two points need to be kept in mind:

- **Access** to information so far unavailable, and the means through which this was done.
- Local **attitudes** must be factored because existing behavioural patterns resist change unless there is a direct perceived benefit (which may not always be possible to demonstrate in the short term especially with regard to social issues).

Two factors that will help coordinators blend in with the community are:

- **Ability** to cater to the diverse groups.
- A sense of **assurance** must be transmitted to local people to provide them with a feeling of comfort and buy-in with the project. This can only be done if one becomes a part and parcel of the local community.

CASTE AWAY: The Sisu Samrakshak case

UNICEF's Sisu Samrakshak is an ICT-based child and maternity training tool. When this was first piloted in Karimnagar district of Andhra Pradesh, caste equations in a particular village were initially next to insurmountable. To begin with, coordinators, set up different time slots for different caste groups in order to avoid conflict. With time and dedicated work by the coordinators, different women's groups were brought together and their common needs overrode caste barriers, leading to no further problems.

Gathering community information needs²

Identifying needs can be helpful at almost any point in your initiative. In fact, it can be done on an ongoing basis throughout your initiative. There are many ways to identify local needs and resources. You can interview key people, hold community meetings or focus groups, or follow one of a number of other methods. The most important part of identifying local needs and resources is listening to the insights of group members, community members, leaders, and others while incorporating community data and history into the analysis.

Phase 1: Brainstorm!

Before you start the needs assessment process, take some time to think broadly about what you're really after. Are you interested in finding out the health needs of the entire community, or are you going to focus on the services that a targetted group is receiving? Determining the focus of your area of interest is a key first step to putting together a usable plan. Ask yourself:

- What are the top five or 10 pressing issues facing my community?
- What are the priorities of the local people?
- Which issues, questions, and behaviours are of particular interest to our organisation, and why?
- What don't we know about these issues, questions and behaviours?



- What questions do we need to answer?
- What outside resources can we tap into to help us understand the issues?

For example, your organisation may be interested in the issue of health care in the community. But this is actually a very broad topic. Do you want to look at the whole, overarching issue, or would you prefer to look at preventive health care in particular?

Once you've chosen a specific area to explore, you can narrow it even further – do you want to identify and tackle the root causes of water-borne diseases? Or vector-borne diseases? Or immunisations, etc?

Phase 2: Start with what you know.

After choosing an issue to focus on, you may find that you are aware of many possible solutions. For example, if you're working on water-borne diseases, you may know the sanitation programmes being carried out in your region. Identifying what you know about an issue also helps highlight what you don't know. What you *don't* know will form the basis of the questions you will ask when you survey the community members.

Ask yourself:

- What do we already know about the needs and available resources around this topic in our community?
- Are there a few selected experts in the community who can answer some of our questions before we finalise our questions? (Their input may narrow the remaining questions you need to ask other community members.)

Phase 3: Decide what you still need to know, and finalise the questions you will ask.

This is the time to review the questions you created in brainstorming sessions and in initial inquiries with

colleagues. But before going out into the community with the newly formulated questions, run them by your group one more time to make sure that they will clearly convey your interests. Also, talk to a couple of influential people outside your organisation, and refine your questions with the help of their edits. Once this process is complete, your group should have a set of questions to ask the designated community members.

Phase 4: Identify your target population.

Who in the community has the information that will help you answer the questions you have formulated? Probably, a wide range of people can help answer the questions; you will want to identify those who will provide the most useful information. For example, if you want to learn why drains are clogged, you will need to talk to Panchayat members. However, the Gram Sevak and the Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM) may also be excellent resources.

Once you've identified your target audiences, you may wish to revisit the questions you plan to ask and make sure they're appropriate for each group. For example, community members, Panchayat and Primary Health Centre (PHC) officials will all have slightly different perspectives on the problem of water-borne diseases, and will likely identify different problems as the root cause.

Phase 5: Decide what methods you will use to collect information.

The next step is to determine which method you will use to collect information. For example, individual interviews followed by a survey is an excellent combination if an organisation has a large enough budget, but maybe not so in the case of your small telecentre. Calling influential community members then becomes useful if the issue is acute or if you are already knowledgeable in the area.



Regardless of the method you choose, it is important to take into account:

- The amount of time available
- The number of people assisting you
- Available resources
- The size and characteristics of the target population(s)
- Your relationship with the target population(s)

Volunteers from the community provide several advantages in helping with the needs assessment – they don't cost anything (or very little if you offer them a small stipend for their time), and they save telecentre staff time. One of the disadvantages in using volunteers to help with needs assessments is that they may present a biased interpretation of what the community needs; thus, it is important to select volunteers who reflect a broad array of the community. In addition, it may be difficult to find volunteers who are willing to devote their time to this process and who have experience in performing research and would also need to be trained.

Some options are given below:

- **Listening sessions:** Listening sessions are public forums you can use to learn about the community's perspectives on local issues and options. They are generally fairly small, with specific questions asked of participants. They can help you get a sense of what community members know and feel about the issue, as well as resources, barriers, and possible solutions. For example, informal gatherings in the village square.
- **Panchayat meetings:** They tend to be both larger in number of participants and broader in scope than listening sessions. They are gatherings where citizens discuss important issues at a well-publicised location and time. They give people of diverse backgrounds a chance to express their views, and are also a first step toward

understanding the community's needs and resources. A good public forum informs the group of where the community is and where the members would like to go.

- **Talking to community 'gatekeepers':** Key informants of the community (also known as 'gatekeepers') are people who hold socially responsible positions (such as teachers, public officials, priests and business representatives), or are active in community events. Key informants, by virtue of their positions in the community, have wide contact with people in the community; typically community members turn to key informants for help in answering their questions. By interviewing key informants, you can get a better understanding of the needs of the community. However, this method provides subjective data since it is based on opinions that may not reflect the needs of the entire community.



Phase 6: What is missing? What are the limitations of the assessment or study?

Once you've identified your questions, your audience, and your data collection methods, you're almost ready to implement your plan. But first, it's a good idea to review your plan and then identify and fix, to the extent possible, its limitations. Taking a look at the weaknesses in the method you are using can strengthen the study or prompt supplemental ideas. Evaluate the effort that you have put together, and build from what you find.

Phase 7: Determine whether you have the resources to conduct the study.

Make sure you have the resources to conduct the study. This is something you should have kept at the back of your mind throughout the planning phase; now that you're ready to implement your plan, it's time to focus on the cost. It should go without saying that



Using Information within your Community

before you begin a full-scale effort, you should be sure your organisation can afford it!

But keep in mind that even if you are not able to conduct an assessment right now, you can lay out your ground-work with a strong plan. With a plan in place, you have a better chance of obtaining future funding, since you have established contacts out in the field and have brought to the forefront issues that are important for the community. Developing a plan for identifying needs and assets in the community is also a great way to expand your knowledge of the community and see what others around you have to say, piquing interest for future efforts.

Phase 3: Decide what you still need to know, and finalise the questions you will ask with your colleagues.

Phase 2: Start with what you know.

Phase 1: Brainstorm!

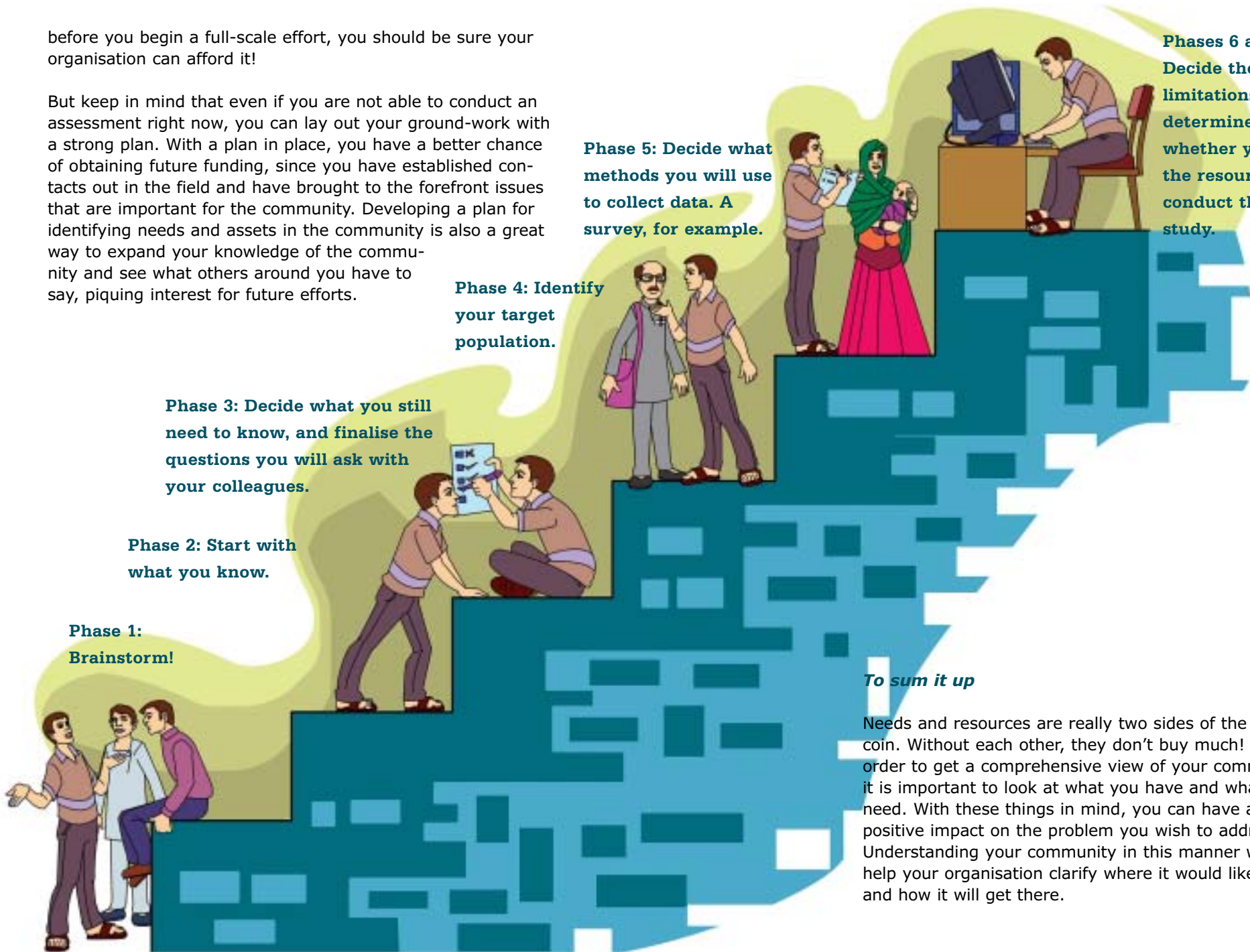
Phase 5: Decide what methods you will use to collect data. A survey, for example.

Phase 4: Identify your target population.

Phases 6 and 7: Decide the limitations and determine whether you have the resources to conduct the study.

To sum it up

Needs and resources are really two sides of the same coin. Without each other, they don't buy much! In order to get a comprehensive view of your community, it is important to look at what you have and what you need. With these things in mind, you can have a positive impact on the problem you wish to address. Understanding your community in this manner will also help your organisation clarify where it would like to go and how it will get there.



WHAT KIND OF INFORMATION WILL BE COLLECTED?

If the needs assessment is being done for the first time, it is sometimes a good idea to collect general information about the community as well.

- **Historical development:** To help you understand how the community became what it is today and to provide insight into the kinds of resources to collect and weed out;
- **Geographical and transportation information:** To help you understand your community's growth patterns and population distribution;
- **Political and legal factions:** To help you decide strategies for community-based selection;
- **Demographic data** (for example, age characteristics, size, race, and transitory nature of the population): To help you recognise the demographics of your community and identify population distribution changes;
- **Economic data:** To help you identify your community's economic base;
- **Social, cultural, educational and recreational organisations:** To help you determine your community's values and social patterns.

On finishing the information needs study, you must:

- Rank the needs expressed in order of priority expressed by the community.
- Take into consideration what issues can be addressed given limited resources, urgency of the problem, etc.

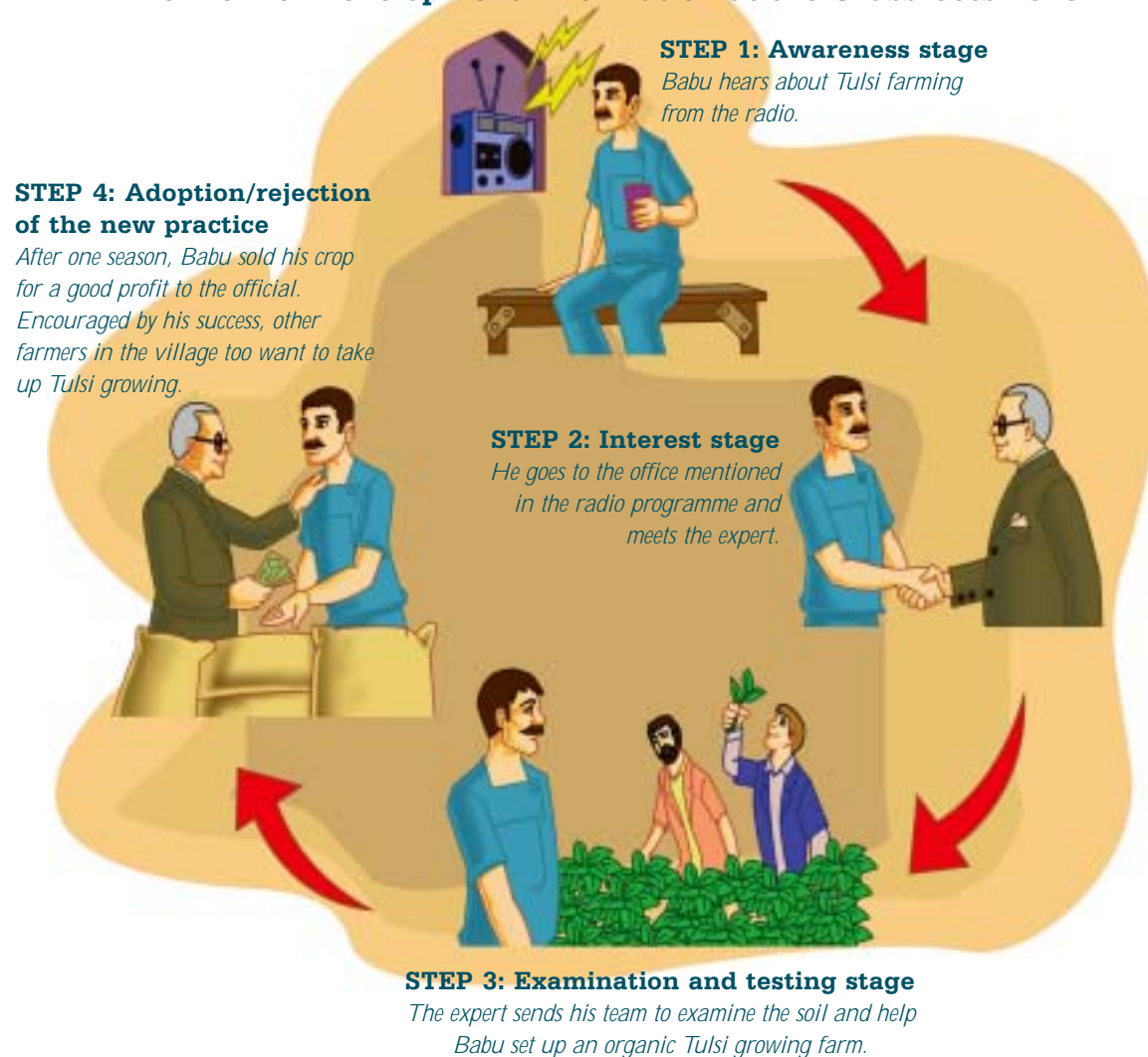
At the end of this process, it is a good idea to share your findings with the community in some way, such as by holding a group meeting, or creating displays in the centre.

Understanding the information process³

Rapid human development depends on the creation of a strong civil society. Community members build their capacity for integrating information and knowledge into various development activities. Such capacity empow-

ers people to intelligently solve the problems that exist in their community. The spread of new information (also called innovative ideas) in society follows a four-step process: the awareness stage; the interest stage; the examination and testing stage; and the adoption/rejection stage.

The Flow of Development Information at the Grassroots Level



STEP 1: Awareness stage

In this first stage, individuals in the community get information on a new idea or useful practice. This new information creates an environment that allows people to start thinking about the new practice. Examples of such innovations may include, for example, a new hybrid seed, soil conservation, or use of condoms to combat HIV/AIDS. The first stage implies that the information is provided in such a way that people are able to understand the new idea/practice. They understand the language, the format and the steps to be taken in adopting the idea/practice.

STEP 2: Interest stage

Most information flow models show that a few individuals in every community are quick to take hold of new ideas. These people pass on these ideas to the rest of the community. These individuals are often called information 'gatekeepers' or, sometimes, opinion leaders. They also act as role models by adopting new ideas quickly, so that other members of the community can imitate and learn from them. Many members of the community may be afraid to adopt new ideas/practices. They fear the risk involved. They may sense that they lack adequate information about the new idea/practice to feel confident about its value. If the new practice is attractive because it addresses a need in the life of an individual or community, people may start to develop an interest in it. They will try to find out more about the idea/practice. This may lead to a search for more information. Those seeking more information become excited and interested. They

stimulate the rest of the community. Conversation and discussion play an important role at this stage.

STEP 3: Examination and testing stage

In this stage, the idea that passes the interest stage is tried out on a small scale. There is some evaluation and consultation to see whether the idea/practice is worth trying out. This could involve physical or virtual tours. For example, in the case of certain agricultural practices, people may be taken to see a new crop/plant at an agri-research station, or to see what happens on a farm plot where manure has been applied. Alternatively, films or CD-ROMs on the new technique or idea may be shown to interested groups.

STEP 4: Adoption/rejection of the new practice

After the three stages have been completed, a decision may be taken to adopt or reject the new idea/practice. Some of the factors to influence the decision are:

- Levels of disposable income available versus those required for the new practice.
- Risk involved or anticipated in the new practice.
- Individual / community priorities (depends on new topic introduced, that is, if it is a new agricultural practice, individual farmers may be motivated to start it; however, if the topic introduced is more social in nature such as child marriage or girl child empowerment, community attitudes determine success).
- Self-confidence is important if individuals are to successfully adopt a new behaviour or implement a new practice.
- Successful role models set a good example.
- Good leaders, who encourage and reassure people about what they can achieve if they work together in the community, are extremely important in taking on challenging development tasks. This would mean recruiting influential people in the community into the project early on.

New ideas/practices are likely to be adopted if they have the following characteristics:

- **Relative advantage:** This term is used to define the extent to which the new practice is seen as better than the one it is replacing. If the new idea is either risky, harder to implement because it requires too much work or expensive, it may not be acceptable for adoption by the community. Risks may be financial or may involve the lack of adequate information. The relative advantage of a new idea needs to be communicated within the community to create an environment that allows the rapid spread of new ideas.
- **Compatibility/suitability:** This term is used to define the extent to which the new practice is in harmony with the needs, values, cultural system, and power system of the members of the community. If there are too many changes required to be made by members of the community, in order to accept the new practice and make it compatible with the existing cultural and value system, people may resist adopting the new idea/practice.
- **Complexity:** This factor refers to how difficult it is for people to apply the new practice. If applying the new practice is found to be too hard for members of the community, individuals may find it impossible to follow it. If the new practice has too many steps to follow, this may also limit its popularity in the community and hence its application.
- **Observability:** This factor refers to a possibility of testing out the new idea/practice on a small scale at first. If the results can be seen and be proven (demonstrated) to potential adopters in the community, they will want to adopt it.

The process of adopting new ideas can be speeded up through the participation of members of the community. They will then know what to adopt. It will be easier to decide. They will feel free to express their knowledge and information needs, and other needs they have, to build capacity to deal with the expected social changes. Wider participation by members of the community may also help in identifying other limits that prevent the adoption of new practices. Examples of limits are shortages of land, financial resources, transport or marketing information. The community can address these problems in order to support the adoption of new practices. People need both technical knowledge and awareness-raising information.

These types of information/knowledge are not separate from other areas of life. They are part of the development process. In the process, information and knowledge become a development resource. This information resource gives the community power over their environment and life in general. In some cases, the development of rural people is not a priority for experts, top politicians and civil servants working from the capital cities. It is, therefore, important for rural communities to take up the responsibility of organising themselves and ensuring that their community has access to adequate supplies of information and knowledge to support their development. In many cases, if rural people do not take up this challenge, there is no one else who will do it for them.

SUMMARY

- Knowledge can be derived from
 - study, by reading books, magazines, journals, newsletters, etc;
 - experiences which an individual gains with the passage of time; or
 - instruction from seniors and elders.
- Information can be both static and dynamic.
- Data, information and knowledge are often used interchangeably but have different meanings.
- In order to provide relevant information to communities, one must do an information needs assessment.
- It is important to understand the four stages of the flow of development information at the grassroots – awareness, interest, examination, acceptance/rejection. Keeping this model in mind, one can plan to provide information services to grassroots communities.

Glossary

- **Data:** Factual information (as measurements or statistics) used as a basis for reasoning, discussion, or calculation, but that on its own may have little significance.
- **Information:** A collection of data or facts derived from study or instruction which can be of some relevance.
- **Knowledge:** Facts or ideas acquired by investigation, observation or experience which can be applied in multiple situations.
- **PRA:** Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) is a label given to a growing family of participatory approaches and methods that emphasise local knowledge and enable local people to make their own appraisal, analysis and plans. PRA uses group animation and exercises to facilitate information sharing, analysis and action among stakeholders.⁴

EVALUATION

A. Answer the following questions:

1. Give examples of static and dynamic information.
2. What is the difference between data, information and knowledge? Substantiate with examples.
3. Describe the steps involved in studying the information needs of your community.
4. What are the problems due to which a new idea may be rejected by the community? What can be done to avoid such pitfalls?

B. Conduct an information needs analysis in your community. Write a report on your findings and send it back to your trainer. The report must contain the prioritisation of the needs expressed by community members.

You could also discuss the report with the community to see how accurate it is. Community members may agree or disagree with what you have found in your analysis. Discuss then how you can make your telecentre address the needs prioritised by the community.

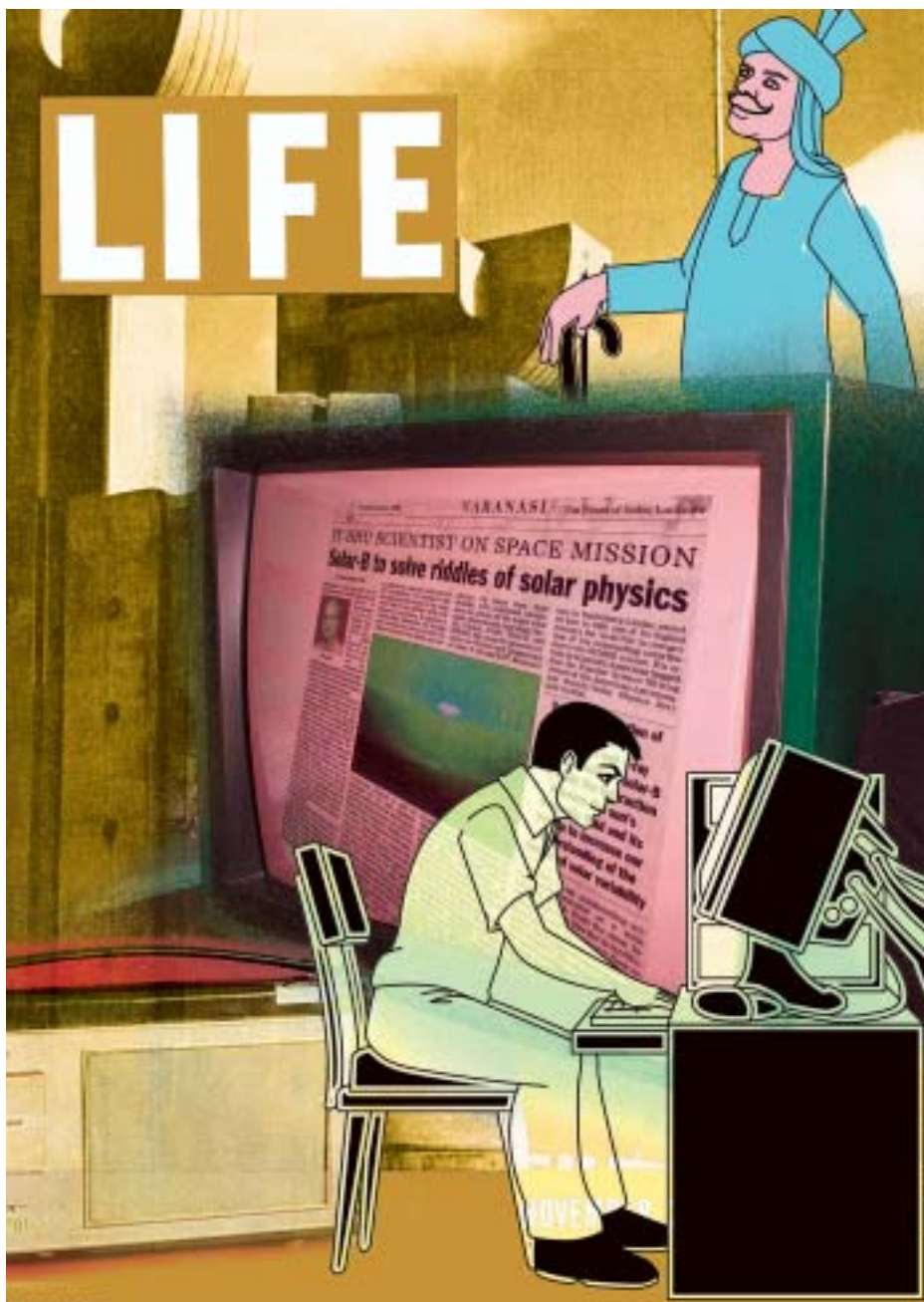
End notes

1 Benjamin Disraeli (1804 - 1881)

2 This section has been adapted from Community Tool Box: <http://ctb.ku.edu>

3 Adapted from: Sharing Knowledge for Community Development and Transformation: A Handbook; Written by Kingo J. Mchombu; DLR International in Canada for the Oxfam Horn of Africa Capacity Building Programme, with support of Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), August 2004

4 <http://www.worldbank.org/wbi/sourcebook/sba104.htm>



Locating and Collecting Information

This chapter will help you identify sources to collect information from both internal (within the community) and external (mass media, institutions, experts, etc) sources. It details the relative advantages and disadvantages of the various sources and provides handy tips to the knowledge centre coordinator.

By the end of this chapter, you would:

- **Be able to list sources – internal and external – of information.**
- **Have a clear understanding of how to go about collecting relevant information for the community.**
- **Have a clear understanding about the ethics involved in information collection and dissemination and relate to the reasons to abide by them.**

In the previous chapter we discussed the importance of information for the development of communities and for providing a wide variety of opportunities to people. In this chapter our focus will be to understand different sources where telecentre coordinators may be able to locate relevant information for communities. In addition, we will discuss the relative advantages and disadvantages of these sources. A handy list of government websites providing key information about schemes and projects is appended.

Experience on-the-ground has shown that most people (often, many telecentre operators) think that all the information needs of the community can be met by external sources such as mass media and government sources. This is completely untrue. Apart from the gatekeepers of the community, village elders are often a key source of information on indigenous knowledge. Such traditional knowledge – with respect to agricultural practices, health, medicine, handicrafts and other areas – is available within most communities. It is important to tap such local sources for two reasons: (a) to meet information needs in related fields; and (b) to capture such dying practices for the sake of history, to preserve our national heritage.

To sum up, there are two sources of information:

- **External sources:** Mass media, experts, government institutions, etc.
- **Local sources:** Influential people in the community or 'gatekeepers', local markets, government functionaries in the village community, keepers of traditional or indigenous knowledge, that is, village elders and specific families or groups that practice certain crafts.

EXTERNAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Information from the world at large is available through many different types of media – people, institutions, books, government bodies, newspapers, radio, television, the Internet. This can sometimes be overwhelming, especially for new telecentre coordinators – where does one look for information on new schemes?; where can one find ideas on new agricultural practices?; students in the village are asking about higher education courses and about scholarships that they can avail; and so on. Here's a handy guide to help you get started.

➤ Education

- **School education:** Village education committees, Education Officer at block/taluka level, State Council for Educational Research and Training (SCERT).
- **Tertiary education:** Newspaper advertisements, websites of the All India Council for Technical Education, University Grants Commission and Ministry of Education.
- **Scholarships for backward communities:** Newspaper advertisements, Ministry of Education offices and websites.

➤ Health

➤ Preventive health

- ⇒ *Immunisations and inoculations:* Newspaper ads, radio announcements, local Primary Health Centre (PHC), village Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM) and Gram Sevaks.
- ⇒ *Public hygiene and sanitation:* Local PHC, village ANM and Gram Sevaks.

➤ Health system and grievance redressal:

Local PHC, village ANM and Gram Sevaks.

➤ Agriculture and allied services:

Agricultural extension offices and extension officers, sales agents of agri-based companies, agricultural experts.

➤ Self-employment:

Banks and micro-credit institutions.

➤ Jobs:

Employment exchanges and websites of Prime Minister Rozgar Yojana.

➤ Marginalised groups:

Can get additional information from representatives of the Tribal Welfare Department, Gram Sevaks, etc.

It is important to remember that this is a guide to gathering information and is by no means either comprehensive or exhaustive. You may need to look for information in other locations as well.

While information may be more or less available in the above-mentioned sources, it is up to the person seeking the information to sift through the available sources to locate valid, relevant and useful information. In rural communities, where information is a scarce commodity, this task often falls upon the telecentre coordinator.

Begin with questions concerning the source of the information. Does the source come from a national or

international organisation? Does it come from an educational institution? The way to know if the online source comes from a national or international organisation is often found in the Web address, such as .edu or .gov. The best online sources will give information about the organisation concerned. Look at the online information. Does it clearly state who is sponsoring the website? Is there a link to a page stating what the organisation is? Can you verify the legitimacy of the sponsor? Most dependable websites will have a date and the name of who wrote the article. It is the same as with dependable written sources, which should have the name of the author and their credentials about the topic.

When new knowledge centre coordinators set out in their work they are full of energy and passion. Once they start work, however, reality becomes apparent and many a times, disillusion sets in which ultimately affects their work. It is therefore important to take cognisance of the challenges lying in one's path so that one is better prepared to tackle them. Given in the table alongside is a list of challenges along with possible methods to tackle them.

Online sources

Online sources of information refer to Web-based information, primarily available on relevant websites, but telecentre coordinators could also refer to information gathered by sending emails to relevant sources such as experts at institutions and organisations specialising in the area in which information is needed.

CHALLENGE	POSSIBLE SOLUTION
Human intermediaries , that is, employees of different organisations and institutions (government and sometimes private) are not always keen to extend all possible support to the common man. Many ask for bribes while others are simply not keen to work or put themselves out.	Form a rapport with key functionaries at the village and taluka level. Your village's 'gatekeepers' might have useful connections which might be tapped.
Datedness, such as when schemes and projects are discontinued when a change of government takes place, but information is slow to trickle down to the grassroots.	Check and double check with the human intermediaries involved. Check date of printing / publishing (in case of newspaper or Web information).
Validity of information: Not all information appearing in mass media are valid or true.	Check author and his/her expertise on the matter. Run a check on the publisher of the information as well.

The Internet as an environment for finding information

This section is taken in its entirety from mmtk_searching_handout.doc; available online from <http://www.itrainonline.org/>

There are several distinguishing features about mapping and navigating the Internet that are worth bearing in mind before we embark on our journey to find the information we seek:

- As content is being continuously updated and added, there are no accurate current statistics concerning the amount of information accessible on the Internet.¹ It was estimated in 2001 to contain 3 billion documents.
- These documents are not indexed with any standard system. Unlike most libraries with their indices of subject headings, authors and titles, the Internet needs us to guess at what words will be in the pages we want.
- It is not possible to search the Internet directly. Your computer cannot find or go to all the web pages that reside on computers (or 'servers') all over the world. What you can do through your computer, using the skills we will be developing in this unit, is access some of the many search tools available, and get them to do the work.
- A search tool lets you search its database or list of sites – this is a relatively small subset of the entire Internet. The search tool gives you hypertext links to other pages, along with their 'URLs'.² By clicking on these links, you can retrieve documents, images, sound and more from individual servers around the world.

Behind the mechanics of how the information is stored and distributed, lie people who have produced it – people who are just as flawed as the ones who produce printed information. The existence of information on the Internet makes it neither more nor less accurate than if it were published somewhere else. Likewise, content will only exist on the Internet if some person has seen fit to publish it there. An idea cannot make its way onto the Internet without the backing of a human being – however valuable and sought-after that idea is.

Getting started – choosing the right search tool for the job

There are dozens of search tools accessible on the Internet. This brief tour will introduce you to the basics of the tools available, but a deeper understanding will only come from practice and actually using the tools.

Search engines

Search engines work by searching through an index from a database which is automatically compiled by 'spiders' (computer-robot programmes) – not people. The search engine tries to match your searched-for keywords with words in the text of selected Web pages.

The amount of content that search engines search through varies from those which are small and specialist, to those covering over 90 percent of the indexable Web.

Getting good results from search engines is just as much about *your* familiarity with the features and syntax of the search engine you are using, as

it is about the size of the search engine's index.

Good for: When you can be precise about what you are looking for.

Not good for: When you need help with finding a path that leads through different subject areas that you may not have been aware of at the outset of your search.

The major search engines include

Google: <http://www.google.com/>

alltheweb (previously called "Fast Search"): <http://www.alltheweb.com/>

AltaVista: <http://www.altavista.com/>

Google has the most comprehensive search engine database, but no single search engine is likely to find all possible information on a topic.

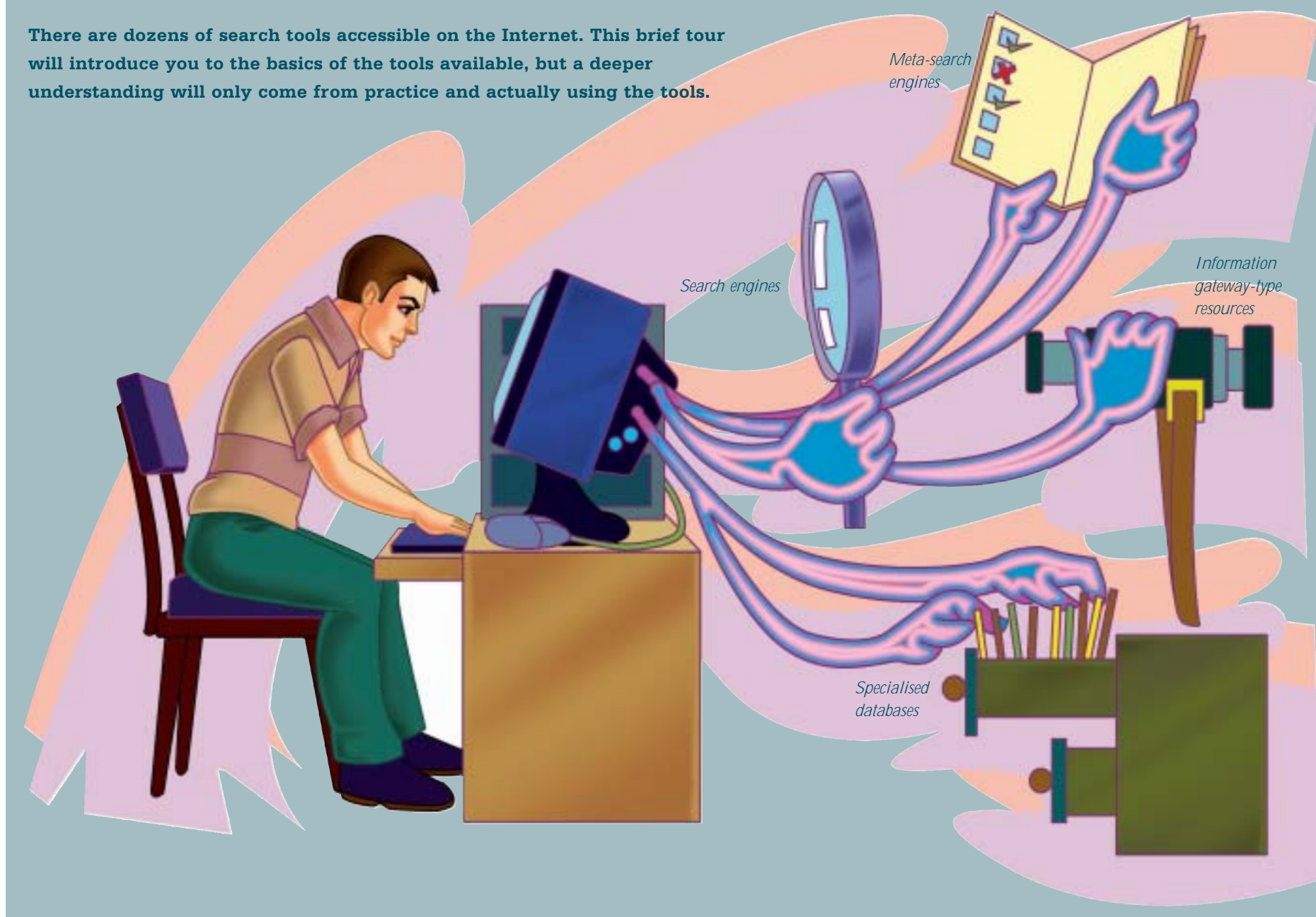
Meta-search engines

Also relevant here are meta-search engines, which can quickly skim-search several individual search engines at once (they usually reach about 10 percent of search results in any of the search engines they visit). This means you cannot benefit from using the more advanced search syntax of any one search engine. You are best sticking to simple searches, which use a single term or phrase.

SurfWax: <http://www.surfwax.com/>

Ixquick: <http://www.ixquick.com/>

There are dozens of search tools accessible on the Internet. This brief tour will introduce you to the basics of the tools available, but a deeper understanding will only come from practice and actually using the tools.



Information gateway-type resources

These may be called *Internet catalogues*, *subject directories*, *virtual libraries* or *gateways*. They specialise in resources from a particular field, and tend to be searchable as well as organised into a hierarchical format. Some of them work like a catalogue resource for a particular field, whilst others are catalogues of catalogues. They are always compiled by people (rather than indexed automatically) who organise information according to a classification system. This means you can expect the items that are listed to have been sifted and evaluated for their relevance and quality. Examples of gateway-type sites are:

ELDIS

The ELDIS gateway to Development Information serves as a central access point for resource guides, country profiles, news, jobs, and other resources.

<http://www.eldis.org/>

World Wide Web Virtual Library

The World Wide Web Virtual Library describes itself as “the oldest catalogue of the Web, started by Tim Berners-Lee, the creator of the Web itself. Unlike commercial catalogues, it is run by a loose confederation of volunteers, who compile pages of key links for particular areas in which they are expert; even though it isn’t the biggest index of the Web, the VL pages are widely recognised as being amongst the highest-quality guides to particular sections of the Web”. The library can be browsed alphabetically or by category and is also searchable.

<http://www.vlib.org/>

SOSIG, Social Science Information Gateway

An educational and research service giving access to high-quality sources for social scientists. Information is arranged in subject sections, which can be browsed and searched.

<http://www.sosig.ac.uk/>

Specialised databases

There are many databases of information which are accessible by Web users but not by the robots that compile the indices for search engines. This type of information forms what is known as the ‘invisible Web’. It is not contained in conventional Web pages but is dynamically generated content which gets powered into Web pages by databases when it is called for. It is called ‘invisible’ because it is out of the reach of the ‘spiders’ and their search tools. You may find links to this kind of content in subject directories, but you need to know where to access the databases themselves to find information within them. They are generally searchable using standard search boxes, and vary in how advanced and elaborate your search can be.

Good if: You know where to find one which deals with your area of interest.

Not good if: You are searching more broadly than the scope of the database concerned.

Learning to use the tools appropriately

We are going to adopt a strategy that will clarify your thinking about your topic, help to achieve good results and should save valuable ‘online’ time, too. This strategy works through the following seven stages:

Stage 1. Unpacking the query: make it clear

Ask yourself questions to make the query clearer. For example: If you are interested in information about migrant labourers, ask yourself relevant questions such as:

- Are there any states that are particularly relevant to migrants?
- Do I want to know about services available to migrants, legislation affecting them, organisations campaigning on behalf of them or general research in the area of migrant labourers?

Try putting your query into one sentence, for example,

- Rehabilitating migrant labourers in Orissa.

Split your sentence into concepts:

- Concept 1: Rehabilitation
- Concept 2: Migrant labourers
- Concept 3: Orissa

Be aware of other terms that could also be used to describe the concepts. These may include different spellings and synonyms.

Stage 2. Phrasing your query: an introduction to search syntax

Search syntax is the method we use to link the concepts together appropriately for your search. Different search tools offer different options for refining searches, and may use different search syntax or languages. Some search engines allow you to refine your search by selecting from a number of natural language options such as 'find all words', 'find any words' or 'must not include'. Others need you to use either 'search mathematics' or Boolean logic to refine your search. By learning and applying these basics, your search becomes considerably more powerful.

The basic principles are the same for most search engines, but they may use slightly different versions of the search syntax. When in doubt read the help page of the search tool you are using. Bear in mind that although most search facilities are not case sensitive, a number of them are.

Many search engines by default ignore common words such as 'the' 'and' 'in' etc. These are known as 'stop words'.

Search mathematics

This refers to common mathematical symbols as a way of refining searches:

Use **+** (plus sign) in front of each term which **must** appear in your search results. For example, if you are looking for information about how the price of coffee is impacting on coffee pickers' wages

+coffee +pickers +price +wages

will make sure that the results all include all the terms: *price, coffee, pickers wages* – not coffee shops, cotton pickers, or Price Waterhouse accountants' wages.

Use **-** (minus sign) in front of every term which **must not** appear in your search result. Using the same example as above, you could enter

+coffee -cup -cotton

Use " " (quotation marks) around words you want to mark as a **phrase**. For example,

"coffee pickers"
"somali refugees"
"emperor penguins"

Use the wildcard * (asterisk) for **truncation**.³ For example if you want to search for education, educators, educate, etc, enter

educ*

Boolean logic

Some search engines use the Boolean operators **"AND," "OR" and "NOT"** for the refining of searches. Boolean operators should generally be written in capital letters. Use **AND** to require that more than one term appears in all search results. For example entering

emperor AND penguin

will find pages with both terms.

Use **OR** if you want all your search results to include either term (or both). This can be useful if there are alternative spellings, (for example, organization and organisation) or synonyms (brinjal, aubergine) for terms. To find all pages that contain the word 'brinjal' or the word 'aubergine' (or both), enter

brinjal OR aubergine

Use **NOT** to exclude terms you don't want to appear in your search results.⁴ For example, if you are looking for information about "elephant ivory" rather than ivory-coloured paint you could enter

ivory NOT colour

Some search engines also allow the use of the "proximity operator" **NEAR** as well as the three Boolean operators. Where a search for

south AND africa

may lead you to a page with "south" at the top and "africa" at the bottom, entering

south NEAR africa

will ensure that the terms appear close to one another. Not all search tools allow this; check the help page of the search engine you are using.

With your search query much clearly phrased now, we can now proceed through the next stages of the search using the table on the facing page.

Stage 3. Categorising the query

Stage 4. Matching the tool to the query

Try to match the right tool to the type of search query you are working on. Think about the way that the tool will work on your query and rephrase the query to get the most out of the tools. Try a variety of tools.

Type of Search Query	Examples	Search Engine	Subject Directory	Specialist Database
Includes clearly distinctive words or phrases (about which there can be no misunderstanding).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Black history month" • "Sleeping sickness" • "Robusta coffee" • "Fair trade" + chocolate 	Place the words or phrase in speech marks (""), to make sure that the search engine looks for those words strung together exactly as you have specified.	Try and think <i>around</i> your phrase – look at the available categories and identify which one(s) it may belong to.	If you are searching for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data • Facts • Statistics • Schedules • Maps, etc then specialist databases can help you with any of the example search queries. Use a subject directory or a search engine as your starting point to find the right database – that is, start with the visible Web and use it to find a signpost to an entry point into the 'invisible Web'.
Includes common or general terms that seem to get numerous inappropriate results.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekend break • Taj Mahal • Campaigning techniques • Study abroad 	Think about which terms might develop your query to remove the ambiguity. Go back to the lists of concepts you made in Stage 1 and try making them more specific.	Use the subject directory's pre-defined subject categories to guide you and help create a clearer search query.	
Looks for a broad overview of a subject area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afro-Caribbean diaspora history • Intellectual property rights • Lone parenting • Rain forest ecology 	A search engine is inappropriate for this type of search.	Best results will be achieved by finding a specialist subject directory that covers your area.	
Looks for a narrowly focussed part of a broad subject.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistics on domestic violence in Soweto • Migration patterns of Emperor penguins in the Antarctic • Grass-roots ICT projects in Africa 	Think about re-phrasing your query into a structure that includes Boolean search terms – AND, OR, NOT, etc. These will help the tool focus the search and deliver less junk.	Look for a subject directory that covers the broad subject and move through its hierarchy of categories to home in on your specific query.	Be imaginative about the routes you take through info on the Internet.

Table continued on following page

Table continued from preceding page

Stage 3. Categorising the query

Stage 4. Matching the tool to the query

Type of Search Query	Examples	Search Engine	Subject Directory	Specialist Database
Could be spelled or phrased in a variety of alternative ways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · "Falkland Islands" OR Malvinas · "New Zealand" OR Aotearoa · Cassava OR manioc · Aubergine OR eggplant OR brinjal · "Freedom of speech" OR "press freedom" OR "anti-censorship" OR "1st amendment" · "Female genital mutilation" OR FGM OR cliterodectomy OR "female circumcision" 	Use the Boolean search term 'OR' to enable searching for information under alternative labels.	Specialist subject directories may accommodate alternative labelling, but the more general ones are likely to be inappropriate for this type of search.	

Stage 5. Ask a human being!

If you can't find what you want from a search tool, ask a person. Remember, the tools don't have brains – people do! If you have found a specialised subject directory on your topic, but it doesn't contain what you want, look for an email link to a relevant resource person, or the author of a good page you find. Alternatively, ask a discussion group or expert.

This five-stage strategy is a powerful way of approaching Internet searches and is certain to lead you along information routes that take you closer to what you are looking for.

Stage 6. If at first you don't succeed – try again!

Don't feel disappointed when your tool of choice doesn't lead you to the results you want. Becoming a skilled information gatherer on the Internet is about retracing your steps and looking for turnings you may have missed, or rephrasing or even rethinking your search query altogether. You will quickly become skilled in adapting your queries for the tool you are using.

Stage 7. Evaluating search results

"Think before you click"

The culture of editorial control which seeks to set standards in the print world, is often absent on the Web. While it is the freedom of the Web which makes it so rich and rewarding to us as information gatherers, it is that same freedom which must alert us to the need for questioning the accuracy and validity of everything we find.

This takes us onto the next part of the search strategy.

Looking intelligently at the URLs in the results that the search tool finds will enable you to make

more relevant selections from the list, making the search altogether more efficient.

We need to start by understanding the URL:

http://www.hrw.org/press/2003/02/powell20303.htm

http:// The kind of protocol: in this case **hypertext transfer protocol**

www. Indicates the **World Wide Web**

hrw.org The **domain name** of the website

press/2003/02/powell20303.htm Shows the **location**, or 'pathway' to the page. This page is inside a folder called 02 which is inside a folder called 2003 which inside a folder called press. That folder is in the root folder of www.hrw.org. A "/" is used to separate different levels of information storage (folders) in the website.

/powell20303.htm The page's computer **file name**.

htm The **file extension** showing what type of file it is – this one is htm (hypertext mark-up language, which can also be specified as html).

What's in a URL?

Domain types

The domain that a website uses can indicate the appropriateness of the content for your search.

- Government sites: look for .go, .gov, .mil
- Educational sites: look for .edu, .ac
- Non-profit organisations: look for .org

So if you are looking for the voices of dissidents in Indonesia, you are unlikely to reach the heart of your query from pages with a URL that uses a .gov or .mil domain. But those pages may still contain relevant peripheral information for you.

The domain may also contain a country code indicating where the website content is drawn from and/or which language(s) you can expect the content to appear in. If the same site seems to appear in several different results, look for the one which has the most appropriate country code for your language needs.

Publishing source

The publishing source of a page is often named in the URL, either in the domain or in the pathway (folder). Ask yourself the questions:

- Have you heard of this source already? Is it reputable?
- Does it fit with the name of the website? Does it need to?
- Does the URL have a personal name woven into the domain of a commercial (Internet Service Provider) ISP or other provider of Web hosting (like aol.com or geocities.com), following a tilde (~), a percent sign (%), or the words 'users', or 'member'?

This is usually an indication that the page is a personal (self-published) page and you should investigate the author carefully, as there is no publisher or domain owner vouching for the information in the page.

Building up a personalised well-structured bank of links

Each successful search should make a contribution to your subsequent searches. By using the *Bookmarks* or *Favourites* feature of your browser, you can collect a databank and benefit the next time around.

All Internet browsers have a version of this feature, with very similar functionality. It gives you the opportunity to record the URL of any page you view. On visiting a page which you think may be valuable for future use, you simply choose 'Add...' from the relevant menu bar in your browser. The URL is added to a list and is usually presented on that list as a page name (which you can edit if you choose).

At its simplest, this is an easy-to-reference address list of your favourite pages. But with a little more attention, the list can become a valuable personalised resource bank – your very own information gateway. By making thoughtful use of the filing tools – folders and subfolders, you can organise your references into a logical system that makes swift work out of finding pages.

One site which provides an exhaustive list of government sites of interest to knowledge centres is

<http://www.karmayog.org/govtschemes/>

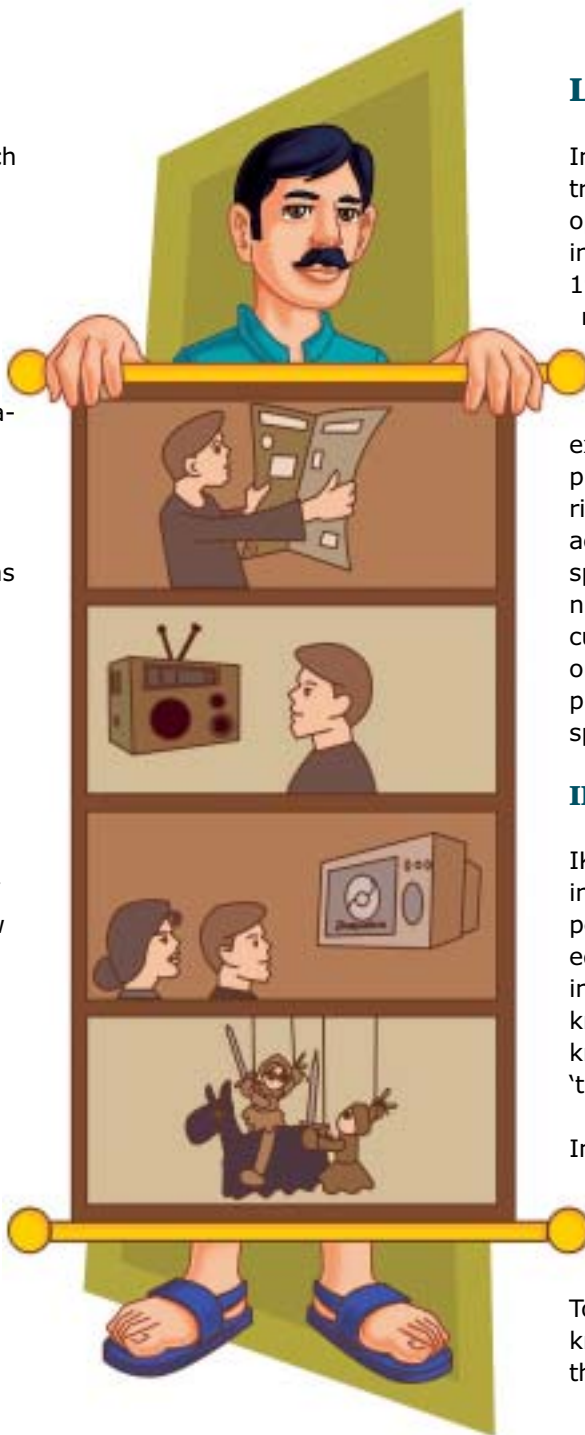
Offline sources of information

There are plenty of offline sources of information, such as:

- Traditional media
 - print (newspapers and magazines)
 - electronic (radio and television)
 - folk media (drama, folk songs, etc)
- Subject matter experts

Newspapers and journals are good sources of information for announcements of different job vacancies, schemes, ideas and projects. In addition, journals often provide case studies of successful projects in detail. Radio and television are often used by the government for making public announcements such as on immunisation campaigns, disaster warnings, and relief for people affected by disasters and information for family members.

Subject matter experts such as agricultural and allied sciences, education and other fields are available in many institutions and organisations. Many of these experts are open to providing their expertise to communities who require their help. Many organisations have successfully been able to set up 'Ask the expert' services in their telecentres. More information on how to do this is provided in the next chapter.



Local sources of information⁵

Indigenous knowledge (IK) refers to the unique, traditional, local knowledge existing within and developed around the specific conditions of women and men indigenous to a particular geographic area (Grenier 1998). Such knowledge systems are cumulative, representing generations of experience, and trial and error experiments.

IK is stored in peoples' memories and activities. It is expressed in the form of stories, songs, folklore, proverbs, dances, myths, cultural values, beliefs, rituals, community laws, local language and taxonomy, agricultural practices, equipment, materials, plant species, and animal breeds. IK is shared and communicated orally, by specific examples and through culture. Indigenous forms of communication and organisation are vital to local-level decision-making processes and to the preservation, development and spread of IK.

IK and ITK

IK is not confined to tribal groups or the original inhabitants of an area. It is not even confined to rural people. Every community possesses indigenous knowledge – rural and urban, settled and nomadic, original inhabitants and migrants. Other names for indigenous knowledge (or closely related concepts) are 'local knowledge', 'indigenous technical knowledge' and 'traditional knowledge'.

Indigenous technological knowledge (ITK) is of a practical nature, concerned with operationalised local thinking in such fields as agriculture, fisheries, health, horticulture, and forestry.

To understand indigenous practices, one must have knowledge and understanding of the concepts on which they are based (both content and context). This is

particularly relevant in cases where intervention or improvement of indigenous practices in changing ecological and economic scenarios is aimed at social sustainability.

Indigenous versus scientific knowledge

Indigenous knowledge is often contrasted with 'scientific', 'western', 'international' or 'modern' knowledge – the knowledge developed by universities, research institutions and private firms using a formal scientific approach. Because indigenous knowledge changes over time, it is sometimes difficult to decide whether a technology or practice indeed is indigenous or adopted from outside, or a blend of local and introduced components. For a development project, however, it does not matter whether a practice is really indigenous or already mixed up with introduced knowledge. What is important is that instead of looking only for technologies and solutions from outside the community, we first look at what is in the community. We then use whichever knowledge is found to be effective. It suggests that IK and scientific knowledge need to fuse in terms of knowledge, practice and internationally accessible knowledge pool.

Importance of indigenous knowledge

Indigenous knowledge has two powerful advantages over outside knowledge: it has little or no cost, and is readily available (Kothari 1995). Indigenous knowledge systems and technologies are found to be socially desirable, economically affordable, sustainable and involve minimum risk to rural farmers and producers, and above all, they are widely believed to conserve resources. There are situations in which modern science is not appropriate, and use of simpler technologies and procedures are required. Thus IK provides a basis for problem-solving strategies for local, and especially the poor, communities.

IK and Extension

Identifying, documenting and incorporating IK in agricultural extension organisation is essential to achieve sustainable agricultural development. IK systems provide a frame of reference for strengthening agricultural extension programmes and this leads to reorganisation of interventions made by extension personnel. The participatory technologies that are developed through IK integration will: (a) 'provide diversified technological options', which enable farmers to choose using their own decision-making systems; (b) originate from the farmers' own knowledge; and (c) use diversified sources in active participation of research-minded farmers (Rajasekharan 1993).

Extension strategy should now focus on improving the current benchmark of IK practices. The strategy should also concentrate on facilitating skills to build capacity of producers of innovations to formulate questions, which they use to engage specialists or to utilise information systems.

Documentation and dissemination of IK

IK is predominantly tacit or embedded in practices and experiences. It is commonly exchanged through personal communication and demonstration: from master to apprentice, from parents to children, from neighbour to neighbour, etc. The World Bank states that IK systems are 'at risk of becoming extinct'. Unless IK is properly documented, analysed and disseminated, there is a risk that within one generation the knowledge could be lost forever. Databases and resource centres would help to exchange IK from one community to another and promote integration of IK into the development process. The process of IK exchange comprises the following steps:

- Identification of IK can at times prove difficult. It may be embedded in a mix of technologies or in cultural values, rendering them unrecognisable at

first glance to the external observer (technical and social analyses may, therefore, be required to identify IK);

- Analysis of IK for scientific background and relevance (to solving problems), reliability, functionality (how well does it work?), effectiveness and transferability;
- Recording and documentation is a major challenge because of the tacit nature of IK (it is typically exchanged through personal communication from master to apprentice, from parent to child, etc). In some cases, modern tools could be used, while in other circumstances it may be appropriate to rely on more traditional methods (for example, taped narration, drawings);
- Storage in retrievable repositories: Storage is not limited to text document or electronic format; it could include tapes, films, story telling, gene banks, etc. It includes categorisation, indexing, relating to other information making it accessible. This involves electronically stored and indexed abstracts, directories of experts or applications.
- Transfer of IK goes beyond merely conveying the knowledge to the recipient; it also includes the testing of the knowledge in the new environment.
- Dissemination to a wider community adds the developmental dimension to the exchange of knowledge and could promote a wider and deeper impact of the knowledge transfer.

Documentation and networking efforts

A growing number of formally established indigenous knowledge resource centres are being established worldwide with an objective to provide an instrument for exchange of information, as well as a platform for debate on the concept of IK. The Internet is extensively used to share IK for development activities and extension. The following are some major resources.

The Centre for Indigenous Knowledge in Agricul-

ture and Rural Development (CIKARD) of Iowa State University.

CIKARD is the foremost research and knowledge collection organisation in this field, and frequently publishes in the *Indigenous Knowledge & Development Monitor*. This organisation focuses its efforts on 'preserving and using the local knowledge of farmers and other rural people around the globe.' It acts as a global clearinghouse for collecting, documenting, and disseminating information on indigenous knowledge of agriculture, natural resource management, and rural development. In addition it formulates agricultural and natural resource management policies and designs technical assistance programs based on indigenous knowledge.

The Centre for International Research and Advisory Network (CIRAN).

This organisation hosts pages for the *Indigenous Knowledge & Development Monitor*, online version. In addition, CIRAN hosts the 'Indigenous Knowledge Homepage'. This is a site that searches indexes and makes available all relevant information on the Internet pertaining to indigenous knowledge, including papers, journals, mailing lists and Usenet groups.

The World Bank Indigenous Knowledge Database

aims to 'increase and improve the available information on indigenous knowledge, its collection and classification' as well its application. It seeks to facilitate better adaptation of global knowledge to local conditions, to design activities to better serve the country needs and to share IK through 'South-to-South' exchange. The Internet site lists 50 documents detailing indigenous practices and asks for further contributions, comments and criticisms. (<http://www.worldbank.org/>)

The International Development Research Centre. (IDRC).

The mandate of IDRC is to 'help researchers and communities in the developing world find solutions to their social, economic, and environmental problems. IDRC connects people, institutions, and ideas to ensure

TYPES OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

IK is more than just technologies and practices. It includes:

➤ Information

- Trees and plants that grow well together.
- Indicator plants (plants that show the soil salinity or that are known to flower at the beginning of the rains).

➤ Practices and technologies

- Seed treatment and storage methods.
- Bone-setting methods.
- Disease treatments.

➤ Beliefs

- Beliefs can play a fundamental role in a people's livelihood and in maintaining their health and the environment.
- Holy forests are protected for religious reasons. They also may maintain a vital watershed.
- Religious festivals can be an important source of food for people who otherwise have little to eat.

➤ Tools

- Equipment for planting and harvesting.
- Cooking pots and implements.

➤ Materials

- Housing construction materials.
- Materials for basket-making and other craft industries.

➤ Experimentation

- Farmers' integration of new tree species into existing farming systems.
- Healers' tests of new plant medicines.

➤ Biological resources

- Animal breeds.
- Local crop and tree species.

➤ Human resources

- Specialists such as healers and blacksmiths.

- Local organisations such as kinship groups, councils of elders, or groups that share and exchange labour.

➤ Education

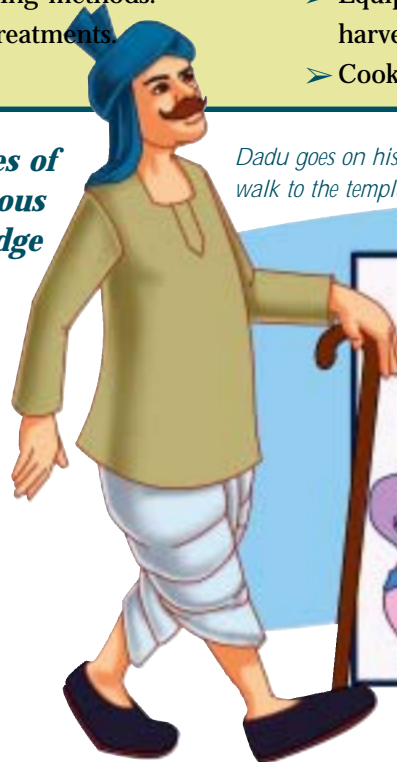
- Traditional instruction methods.
- Apprenticeships.
- Learning through observation.

➤ Communication

- Stories and messages carved on palm leaves.
- Folk media.

Instances of Indigenous Knowledge

Dadu goes on his morning walk to the temple



He tells an injured Mukesh how to apply a tourniquet



He recites a poem to kids he meets



Warns Dudhiya about a cow disease



Speaks to Ramlal about crop prospects



At the temple, he discusses the dates for his son's wedding with the priest.



that the results of the research it supports and the knowledge that research generates, are shared equitably among all its partners, 'north' and 'south'. IDRC and its collaborative networks offer access to a huge amount of information on IK.

The Centre for World Indigenous Studies. This organisation is 'dedicated to wider understanding and appreciation of the ideas and knowledge of indigenous peoples and the social, economic and political realities of indigenous nations'. It also operates the Fourth World Documentation Project (FWDP) whose aim is 'to present the online community with the greatest possible access to Fourth World documents and resources'.

The MOST (Management of Social Transformations) Programme of UNESCO has created the Best Practices Database. On the basis of the four criteria for Best Practices, MOST is collecting information from all parts of the world about a variety of projects, policies and strategies related to the eradication of poverty and the reduction of social exclusion. At present, the MOST Database provides examples of Best Practices for policies and projects in Poverty Eradication, Social Exclusion/Integration, Women and Gender Equality, Homelessness and Housing, Economic Development, Community Participation and Urban Governance, and Crime Prevention. (<http://www.unesco.org/most/index.html>)

Society for Research and Initiatives for Sustainable Technologies and Institutions – SRISTI – is a grassroots non-governmental organisation (NGO) working primarily in arid and semi-arid areas of Gujarat. SRISTI has developed a national network of NGOs, local communities, local government, scientists, as well as state administration and forest department officials working towards conservation of biological diversity and indigenous knowledge. SRISTI has initiated a global network of grassroots organisations and individuals via the 'Honey Bee Network' which is

operational in 71 countries to date. Through the Internet as well as otherwise, member organisations and individuals have contributed to the database on indigenous knowledge and provide information on developing resource management strategies, techniques for value addition and marketing. etc. SRISTI believes that adding value to indigenous knowledge will help local communities co-exist with biodiversity resources by reducing primary extraction, generating long-term benefits, and thus enhancing sustainable use. SRISTI has developed a rich database of information on biodiversity as well associated indigenous knowledge, innovations and common property resource institutions. The database on indigenous knowledge and innovations contains thousands of uses of plants by farmers, pastoralists and others for crop protection, medicinal use and veterinary disease control, among others.

In Sri Lanka, **ECO**, an independent institute, is promoting a consortium of NGOs to work on eco-agriculture. This group includes representatives of government extension services, universities, banks as well as regional development authorities. A documentation of indigenous farming knowledge, including technical and spiritual practices, is in process and an astrological farming calendar is being compiled (Upawansa 1999).

Gujarat Grassroots Innovations Augmentation Network (GIAN) is a not-for-profit society. Its aim is to promote, organise and conduct programmes, schemes or activities to scout, document, augment innovations by small farmers, artisans, pastoralists, etc, primarily in disadvantaged rural areas. IIM-Ahmedabad is providing institution building support to GIAN and SRISTI is providing access to its database of innovations and also other logistical help.

Conclusion

Though IK has gained importance in all development activities internationally, certain critical issues need to be answered which are very fundamental to development of indigenous people. The important questions are: Whose knowledge? For whom? Who will benefit? We should not fail to mention the methods of providing indigenous people access to the documented information. Unless these questions are answered, the current concern for IK will be rhetoric by the outsiders, for the outsiders.

For more information go to <http://www.manage.gov.in/managelib/faculty/chary.htm> and <http://www.unesco.org/most/bpikpub.htm>

Ethics of information collection and dissemination⁶

The role of telecentre coordinators entails an inherent measure of power. This power is rooted in the coordinator's ability to almost instantly locate, access and retrieve information using resources located, quite literally, at his or her fingertips. Telecentre coordinators, as well as those who rely upon them to provide a wide variety of information, must recognise and understand the responsibilities associated with this power. Even those who use information obtained in a responsible and ethical manner face continual struggles in a society in which the capabilities of technology often outpace full comprehension of its moral implications. Some issues related to ethics in information services relate to:

- Individual's privacy versus the public's 'right to know'.
- The extent to which a coordinator may have access to the community's records, e-mail, self-help group (SHG) accounts, and other confidential information.
- Increased need for security of information content and systems to protect against terrorists.
- Using other people's work (articles, etc) as one's own, especially by students.

SUMMARY

- Sources of information are to be found both externally and internally.
- No matter what the source of the information, it is important to validate it. Some key indicators:
 - Author's expertise
 - Date of publishing
 - Publisher/sponsor
- External sources can be both offline and online.
- Content is being continuously updated and added online and it is a good source for varied information. However, one has to know where and how to look.
- Offline information is available in a variety of mass media and also through subject matter experts in institutions.
- Indigenous knowledge systems are cumulative, representing generations of experience, and trial and error experiments.
- The role of telecentre coordinators entails an inherent measure of power. This power is rooted in the coordinator's ability to almost instantly locate, access, and retrieve information using resources located, quite literally, at his or her fingertips.

Glossary

- **Search engine:** A search engine is an information retrieval system designed to help find information stored on a computer system, such as on the World Wide Web, inside a corporate or proprietary network, or in a personal computer.
- **Meta search engines:** A meta-search engine is a search engine that sends user requests to several other search engines and/or databases and returns the results from each one.
- **Database:** A structured collection of records or data that is stored in a computer so that a program can consult it to answer queries. The records retrieved in answers to queries become information that can be used to make decisions.
- **Boolean logic:** This is a system for logical operations and is used in Web searches to optimise search results.
- **Indigenous Knowledge (IK):** Refers to the unique, traditional, local knowledge existing within and developed around the specific conditions of women and men indigenous to a particular geographic area (Grenier 1998).
- **URL:** A 'Uniform Resource Locator' (URL) formerly known as 'Universal Resource Locator', is a technical, Web-related term. It is a uniform syntax for global identifiers of network-retrievable documents – which was the core idea of the World Wide Web. URLs are typically entered into the address or location bar of a Web browser.

EVALUATION

A. Questions and Answers

- a. Where would you look for information for impending disasters?
- b. Describe how you would look for information on building 'smokeless chulhas'.
- c. What keywords would you use to find information on the Internet about undergraduate courses offered by Baroda University?
- d. Are you aware of any indigenous knowledge in your community? If not, how can you go about finding such information?

B. Project: Pick any one of the topics that had emerged as a priority in your community and short-list three ways of collecting relevant information about the same. Implement your plan and write a brief report for yourself on your results. You could also send the report to your trainer.

End notes

- 1 The Internet, Web and the World Wide Web (www) are, for all practical purposes, the same thing.
- 2 URL means a 'Uniform Resource Locator', formerly known as 'Universal Resource Locator'. This is like a unique address which identifies a specific page on the Web.
- 3 Not all search engines permit wildcard truncation. Check the help page of the search tool you are using.
- 4 Some search engines use AND NOT instead of NOT. Check the help page of the search tool you are using.
- 5 This section has been taken from <http://www.manage.gov.in/managelib/faculty/chary.htm>
- 6 <http://www2.sis.pitt.edu/~ethics/index.html>



Providing Information Services to Communities

This chapter helps the learner understand the kinds of basic information that knowledge centres must possess, learn tools on how to engage the community in a meaningful 'information flow dialogue' and, in general, provide information-based services that will address the needs of the community.

By the end of this chapter, you would:

- **Have a clear understanding of the basic list of information that a telecentre must possess**
- **Understand the importance of establishing a feedback loop to measure the impact of the services provided**
- **Have a clear understanding of the importance of indigenous and local knowledge and the need to take that to the rest of the world**
- **Be aware of at least two or three methods by which local information may be published**
- **Have a clear understanding of the personality traits and skills required to be an efficient 'info-mediary'**

The previous chapters spoke in detail about the purpose of knowledge centres and the role of info-mediaries in communities. Sections were dedicated to understanding how to assess community information needs and then locate relevant information to meet those needs. We also dealt briefly with the importance of ethics in information services and the delicate role that an info-mediator has to play in being both an information agent and a social advocate.

In this chapter we will focus on the importance of disseminating the information that has been collected from the outside world and publishing local information to the world at large.

Defining your target audience

In order to provide relevant information to the community your telecentre serves, it is important to understand what constitutes your community. Typically, any village will have women and children, the young and the elderly, different kinds of occupational groups and different castes and religions. It is up to the knowledge centre coordinator to make sure that as many people as possible from these groups use the telecentre facilities. Some, such as the youth, are generally the first to explore the telecentre and learn what it offers them. However, reaching women, the elderly and children is the hardest and this is where telecentre coordinators must put in extra effort. The starting point of a good programme for information communication, processing and sharing in the community is an accurate idea of the information seeking patterns of community members. It is important to understand the use of information by different groups in the community. Some of the elders in this group will be “experts” and rich sources of indigenous knowledge. It is very important not to regard the oral information system as separate or opposed to the print-based information system. A lot of the knowledge needed by the commu-

nity will be found and taken (or ‘mined’) from the oral information system.

Women play multiple roles in society. As a result, they find it difficult, as a group, to participate fully in information-sharing activities. Most women work on the farms with men. When they return from farming, women have to prepare food for the family, and quite often fetch water and firewood. They look after young children and do other household chores. These multiple social roles leave women with little time to participate in the structured information and knowledge exchange activities of a telecentre. In some cases, women have additional problems because their activities outside the household are limited by husbands and by age-old customs. Women and girls may have to ask for permission to leave their own compound. It is assumed that ‘a good woman does not wander around aimlessly in public’. In some places, young unmarried women walking to an information centre alone risk abduction, rape, and other forms of harassment by men in the community.



Engaging your target audience

Make sure women are involved as recruiters, trainers and supervisors – basically in all of your centre's areas of operations. In fact, these rules go for ensuring the participation of any group, be it youth or people with disabilities. The most important thing is to get people involved!



*Our telecentre
takes care of our
different needs*

HOW TO INVOLVE WOMEN AND GIRLS

●
Be sure to have women represented
on committees and staff, not as
token members, but as full
participants

●
Involve women and girls in
planning all aspects of the
knowledge centre from
programming to the physical layout
of facilities

●
Be sure to have women's
programmes as well as sections for
women-oriented digital resources

●
Have 'women-only' times at the
telecentre



Physical access to the knowledge centre

As in any community, there are groups, which are marginalised on the basis of gender, caste, disability, etc. Therefore it is extremely important that special attention is paid to the needs of people who face particular barriers to access. Some examples are given below:

- **People with physical disability:** Design of ramps, rails, and low tables
- **Visually challenged:** Specialist text narration software, speech recognition software and Braille print in text material
- **Illiterate people:** Multi-media content
- **People with hearing impairment:** Easy-to-read documents and multi-media content

The community as a stakeholder

When we talk of information dissemination among communities for enabling and empowering them towards a better life, we should realise that we have to create an environment where local people act and work with the knowledge centres in such a way that it becomes an integral part of the community. We need to generate their interest and involvement in the telecentre. This can be done through the following ways:

- Creating a sense of ownership with the knowledge centre.
- Involving stakeholders with identifying needs, creating a basket of information and knowledge dissemination services catering to their interests.
- Changing attitudes to bring about change and overcoming fear and resistance to change.
- Overcoming fear and resistance to change by continuous access and guided counseling towards a better informed society at large.
- Taking care not to antagonise stakeholders by overreaching and over-committing on non-viables or non-deliverables.

- Influencing stakeholders in a realistic manner
 - Resource and mandate limitations
 - Viability and feasibility
 - Ground realities

Establishing a feedback loop

So far we have seen that it is important to understand the needs of the community in order to meet them best and to engage the local populace in the activities of the telecentre. The question then is: Why is this necessary?

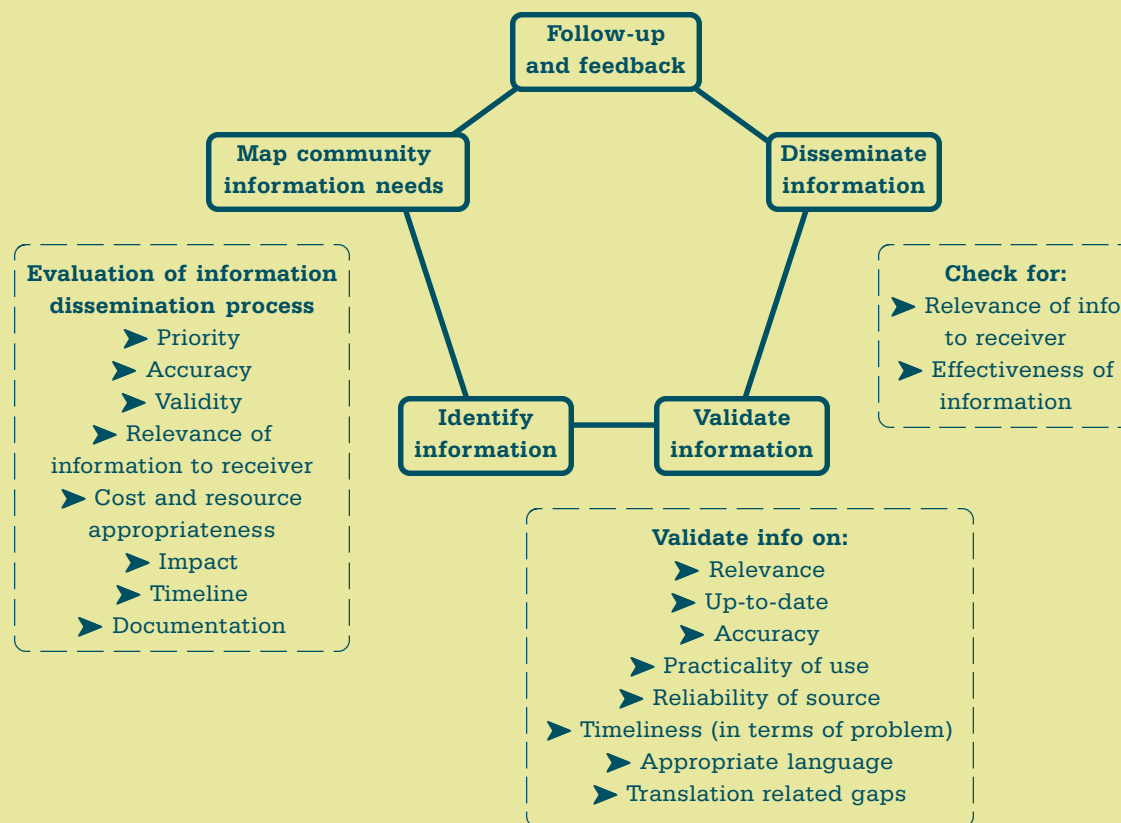
- For the long-term sustainability of the centre.
- In order to measure the efficacy of the services provided at the centre.

In this section, we will focus on the second point, that is, measuring the efficacy of the services provided. Through a participatory process, we have created the model at right which will help ensure that the community's needs are well understood by the info-mediary and are therefore easily met.

INFORMATION DISSEMINATION PROCESS

The dashed boxes contain the 'information filters' through which one needs to put the information one is providing to communities. The information flow from the knowledge centre needs to be managed such that the centre becomes central to the life of the community. Some points that need reiterating:

- Capturing data and information on local community needs.
- Adapting, adjusting and content-matching service delivery with community needs.
- Periodic reviews on service delivery based on feedback.
- Maintaining good relations within the community for integrating knowledge platform with community needs and life.



WHAT THESE TERMS MEAN...

A glossary of terms is provided below to understand the model on the previous page better.

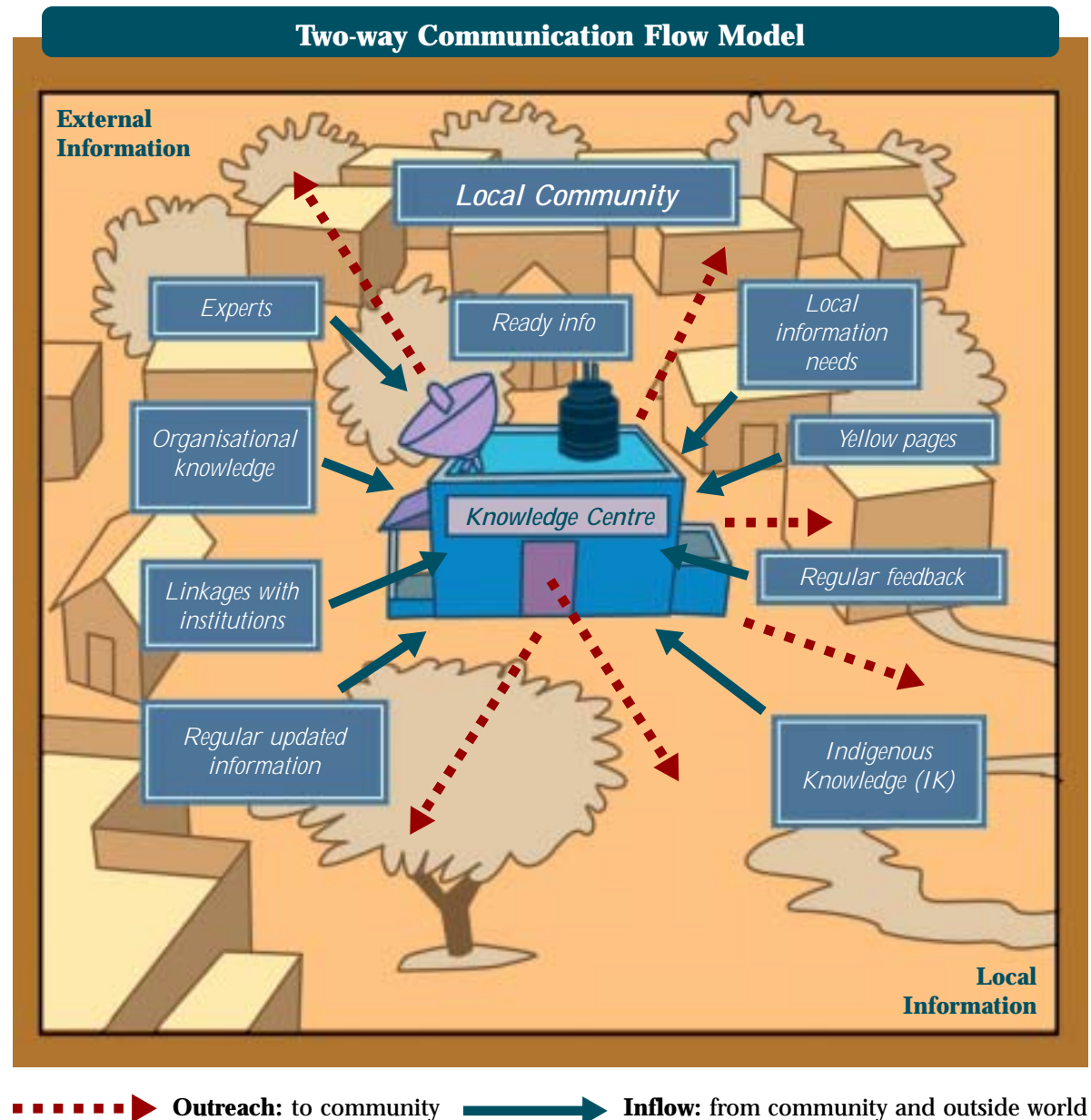
Validate information being passed onto community and coming from community on the basis of the following parameters:

- **Priority:** in terms of community's requirements and based on the time frame for achievability.
- **Accuracy:** the veracity of the information, that is, does it actually work?
- **Validity:** well-grounded or justifiable, being at once relevant and meaningful; appropriate to the end in view.
- **Relevance of information to receiver:** for example, talking about growing medicinal plants as an alternative livelihood to school children might not be the best way of spreading awareness in the community.
- **Cost and resource appropriate:** Proposed 'solutions' must be put through the classic filter of '*sasta, mazboot aur tikaoo*' (which translates to 'inexpensive, sturdy and durable'). Another question to ask is how many people the proposed 'solution' will impact.
- **Impact:** whom will it impact, and how?
- **Timeline:** is the time frame for delivery in keeping with the importance of the issue? For example, if mosquito-borne diseases are a problem in the village, then the time frame for a solution cannot take more than a week to find and implement.
- **Documentation:** this is important from the point of view of future work, to avoid repetition and increase accountability.
- **Up-to-date:** many types of information become out-of-date from time to time. This is especially true for health and medicine related problems and technology. It is therefore of utmost importance that the latest (and wherever possible expert) help is sought.
- **Practicality of use:** 'solutions' must also take into account the practicality of use. There is no point in thinking of a nuclear power plant to solve one village's power situation.
- **Reliability of source:** the source must be verified, especially in the case of Internet-based information. This will ultimately affect the accuracy, validity and practicality of the 'solution'.
- **Appropriate language:** any information that is text- or audio-based must be in the local language for the receiver to make the best use of it.
- **Translation-related gaps:** there are often gaps in translation because many words and phrases cannot be literally translated. These must be taken into account.

Two-way communication flow in a knowledge centre

When we think of information services, the first thought that comes to our minds is that rural and under-served populations are largely information starved, especially in relation to the world at large. While this is true to an extent, the reverse is also true. Very few people in urban areas and from privileged backgrounds are aware of the scale of knowledge and practices that exist in our country and that a significant portion resides in rural and so-called backward communities. If one does not mine this information urgently, a large portion will be lost forever.

We have already dealt with the concept of indigenous knowledge in chapter 3. In this section, our focus will be to establish the need for two-way communication in the knowledge services system to increase the efficacy of the services provided.





Methods of outreach in the community

Information campaigns

The concept of campaigns refers to focussed and intense information exchange around a specific issue, for a specified period of time. This type of communication helps to create the needed social climate for the development and adoption of new ideas on a particular topic. Information campaigns may be organised around topics, such as family planning and the use of contraceptives, HIV/AIDS awareness, equal rights for girls, tree planting, environmental awareness, and literacy, to mention a few examples. Campaigns may be also needed to support services being offered by some other agency or programme.



Training workshops

Structured training activities in the form of short workshops and seminars are important for the rapid acquisition of knowledge and skills. For example, a group of small farmers can learn together how to grow tomatoes and other horticultural produce. Then they discuss how best to apply the ideas in their community. The small farmers can also carry out experiments (or pilot projects) to test their learning. Experiments serve also to build confidence to enable the group to go beyond rote learning. Resource persons may be invited to participate from extension services, partner institutions, NGOs, donor agencies, government departments, educational institutions and farmers' groups.

Field visits

Throughout the country (and in neighbouring countries), other communities, NGOs and government departments deal with problems similar to the ones the community is trying to address. A field visit to a nearby village can turn the community members into independent (or self-reliant) knowledge seekers. Through the experience of a visit and exchange, they can look at what others have done, and decide which of the practices can be adapted in their community. The role of the knowledge centre is to first identify potential places for field visits. Then, if it seems a good idea, the workers could discuss the goals of such a visit with the community. If the place is far off, raising some funds may be needed. After a field visit, several things should be done:



- The participants in the field visit should make a detailed report of what they saw and share their views on what can be usefully adapted in their situation with the rest of the community. A discussion should follow and some form of a decision made on an action plan.
- If applicable, experiments (or pilot projects) can once again be carried out on a small scale, in order to test the idea and its possible adaptation in the community. During the pilot project, it is possible to find out if there are potential problems that were not evident during the short field visit. The principle, in this type of activity, is to strengthen the community's capacity building to evaluate and adapt knowledge from the outside world to suit its own social situation and values. This action places knowledge and learning in the hands of ordinary men and women. Taking ownership of the knowledge empowers them and builds their self-confidence.



Community newsletter

A newsletter serves to inform the community about what is going on and what is planned in information-sharing and exchange activities. The newsletter could be issued every second month or more frequently when there is important news to share. We suggest that you choose a local name that means 'news from the village'. Put copies of the newsletter on notice boards at the information centre and in other public places, including churches, mosques and shops.

Internet services

The most exciting tool for communicating information is the Internet. The Internet is a vast network of computers linked throughout the world through telephone lines or telecommunication satellites. It provides public access to large stores of information. As a communication tool, the Internet allows communities and individuals to do the following:

- Exchange messages through electronic mail for which they need an e-mail address;
- Search information on the Internet, using the World Wide Web (www); and
- Put up their own information on the Internet, provided they have a Web address or home page. A few examples of information which a community can put on the Internet include: the newsletter, products they produce and want to sell throughout the world, and tourist information to attract visitors to the community.



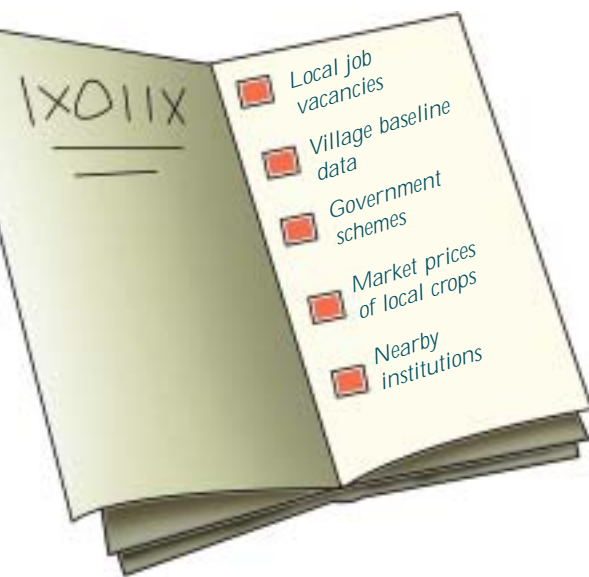
Expert Q&A service

With the help of the parent NGO/organisation, the knowledge centre coordinator can liaison with an academic institution or government body for support on expert help based on the community's info needs. For example, there could be a tie-up with nearby agricultural colleges/universities and government extension centres, etc. Apart from face-to-face interactions, email interaction, video conferencing and telephone-based support could also be organised – all depending on the capacity of the telecentre, the resources available to it and the organisation it links with.



The most important facet of the two-way communication flow is to establish an **inward** flow of information from the community. This can be done through the following methods:

- Community meetings with the specific agenda of bringing up issues regarding the working of the community telecentre.
- Formal or informal surveys conducted by the staff of the knowledge centre among specific community groups to find out if their needs are getting addressed.
- Feedback register and/or drop box for anonymous suggestions, comments and complaints.
- Focussed group discussion with specific target groups.
- Village elders are a good resource to find out whether the knowledge centre is seen as beneficial or not. In addition, they are also in general storehouses of indigenous knowledge.
- PRA techniques.



Information a knowledge centre must possess

The entire info-mediary skills module was developed in a participatory manner with the help of knowledge centre coordinators from across the length and breadth of India. The one thing that emerged in almost all the workshops was that each telecentre must have a basic list of information which is relevant across communities.

Given below is such a list that was prepared over three workshops by telecentre operators:

- District government offices and officers' details.
- Emergency numbers such as local hospitals, fire brigade, police station, etc.
- Local job vacancies.
- Village baseline data.
- Information regarding government schemes.
- Market prices of local crops.
- Details of local institutions (education and health).
- Information on NGOs and their activities.
- Agri-related information (based on local crops and cropping patterns, allied occupational groups such as animal husbandry, pisciculture).
- Gram Panchayat contact details.
- Banks and post office details.
- Information on basic rights and legal literacy.
- Vocational guidance.
- Transport information (bus routes, timings, etc).
- Village maps.
- Tourism-related information.
- Basic information regarding health and first aid.
- Details of local volunteers.
- SHG-related information.
- Indigenous skills and crafts.

PUBLISHING LOCAL INFORMATION

As mentioned in the earlier section, local information needs to be published to the world at large. This can be done by creating websites of one's village. Several resources are available for learning how to design and launch a website. Two examples are:

- <http://www.unesco.org/webworld/publications/ictlip6/index.htm>
- <http://www.ichubknowledgebase.org.uk/helpgroupsplanwebsites>

In terms of where you can upload your site, some options available are:

- Yahoo Geocities, a free website which helps you build your own Web page.
<http://geocities.yahoo.com/gcp>
- Open eNRICH is a generic and yet easily customisable browser that acts as a gateway to a community's own world of knowledge, communication and empowerment.
<http://enrich.nic.in/>
- CDAC's ECKO is a Community Information System (CIS) that helps in the establishment of a generic e-community in a geographically closed region.
<http://www.ncb.ernet.in/ecko>

SUMMARY

- What constitutes your community? Typically any village will have women and children, the young and the elderly, different kinds of occupational groups and different castes and religions.
- Women play multiple roles in society. As a result, they find it difficult, as a group, to participate fully in information sharing activities.
- Some of the elders in this group will be “experts” and rich sources of indigenous knowledge.
- Be sure to have women represented on committees and staff, not as token members, but as full participants
- It is important to engage the community for two reasons:
 - For long-term sustainability of the centre; and
 - In order to measure the efficacy of the services provided at the centre.
- The information flow from the knowledge centre needs to be managed such that the centre becomes central to the life of the community. Some points that need reiterating:
 - Capturing data and information on local community needs;
 - Adapting, adjusting and content-matching service delivery to community needs;
 - Periodic reviews on service delivery based on feedback; and
 - Maintaining good relations within the community for integrating knowledge platform with community needs and life.
- There needs to be a two-way flow of communication in the knowledge centre and activities need to be specifically designed to encourage both.
- There are several options available to publish local information on the Internet.

Glossary

- **Target audience:** The groups that one serves in the community.

EVALUATION

A. Questions and Answers

- a. Why is it important to define target audiences? Describe the different groups in your community and mention their needs according to you.
- b. What are the methods by which marginalised groups can be made to access the centre?
- c. What is the relevance of ‘information filters’? Describe the most important filters according to you.
- d. Describe two each of ‘outreach’ and ‘inflow’ communication strategies and how you would use them in your knowledge centre.

B. Make a plan to disseminate information about key sanitation practices in your community.

Feedback Form for Info-mediary Skills on Telecentre Management

Your feedback on this module is very important to our efforts to continually improve its content and presentation style. Please take a few moments to complete this questionnaire.

Your name (optional):

How many hours did it take you to complete this module?

Please send us your feedback on the various aspects of the module by placing a (✓) mark in the column that best describes how you feel – choose from

- 1 which means strongly disagree;
- 2 which means somewhat disagree;
- 3 which means somewhat agree; or
- 4 which means strongly agree.

Statements about the module	1	2	3	4
1. The objectives of the module were clearly stated.				
2. The subject matter of the module was new to me.				
3. The subject matter of the module was relevant to me.				
4. The module was written in a manner that is clear and easy to understand.				
5. The treatment of the module topic was adequate.				
6. The module's level of difficulty was just right.				
7. The module provided me with new ideas, insights or perspectives.				
8. The module increased my understanding of major concepts and principles.				
9. The module provided me with new knowledge and skills that enhance my job performance.				
10. The examples and/or case studies in the module were relevant.				
11. There were too many learning activities and exercises.				

Please answer the following questions on the back of this page.

1. What did you find most useful in the training? (Please explain your answer.)
2. What did you find least useful in the training? (Please explain your answer.)
3. On what topics, if any, would you rather have spent more time – whether or not they were addressed in the training?
4. On what topics, if any, would you rather have spent less time?
5. What suggestions do you have for improving the module?
6. Any other suggestions or comments you may have.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please tear it out (or photocopy these two pages) and send to:

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This manual on Info-mediary Skills that forms part of the set of *Telecentre Management Training Manuals* prepared and peer-reviewed by telecentre.org's five valued partners in India highlights the role played by telecentre operators as channels between those who seek information and the sources of that information. The module helps to sharpen the learner's skills in using information and communication technologies to collect, manage and disseminate information.

Mission 2007 partners



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