17. Aurora Enterprises

A. Define the term informal communication.	2

Ways in which communication is disseminated in a casual way that does not go through official structures of institutional communication or through a formally defined path.

B. Explain two barriers to communication that exist at Aurora currently.	4

Answers may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Differing use of communication methods: Most people use the communication app, but others don't. Even app users may use email or phones from time to time. Confusion over which communication method to use can slow down and hinder communication.

- Misuse of communication methods: Reply all is just one example, which could create barriers because it makes people more likely to instinctively delete emails thinking that they're going to be irrelevant, or ignore them entirely. Misuse of meetings as a form of communication can also hinder better communication through other methods because it sucks up time and energy.

- Conflicts over people's time: Basically the same answer here as what I said above for misuse of meetings.

- Fear of technology or poor understanding of it: We don't necessarily see this directly in the case study, but some people could be misusing or not using certain communication methods because they don't really understand them, are intimidated by the learning curve, and so on. Realistically the more widespread use of the communication app could help Aurora, but some people probably aren't using it because of hesitancy to adopt a new technology.

C. Other than what is shown in the case study, explain two methods of formal communication that may be appropriate for internal communication at Aurora.	4

Answers may include, but are not limited to the following. Basically all of these could apply to any company, so for a case study connection a student just needs to explain why it could be beneficial for Aurora to use them:

- Presentations: There are times where something could theoretically be communicated in an email, but an email would be far too long, poor at giving people nuance and context, and not allow for interaction and questions between presenter and the audience. There are plenty of things like training, reports, etc. that Aurora would want to communicate in the form of presentations.

- Letters or memoranda to employees: This typically isn't much better than email, but there are times where leaders may want to do this and have a method of physically giving it to employees (mailboxes, at their desks, etc.) because they're more likely to open and read it

than emails. It's less routine and thus maybe more likely to be noticed, and for certain types of communication it just adds a nice personal touch.

- Notices: There are often legally required notices that need to be posted within a workplace for people to easily see, such as workers' rights, safety policies, etc. Notice boards can also be used to sort of internally advertise for something.

- Company reports: Whether financial or otherwise, from time to time, companies need to disseminate official info to people through a report. These may be listed on their website, emailed to them, delivered in printed form, or summarized in a presentation.

- Posters or other visual displays: You'd probably want to keep this to a minimum to avoid workplace clutter and only put up info that you want to be relatively permanent and want to continually be reinforced among employees. These could be Aurora company policies that are meant to sort of inspire or guide people, or remind employees of how things are done there.

D. Evaluate leaders' plans to cancel all meetings for a week.	10

Benefits may include, but are not limited to:
- It would kill a lot of meeting time that is ultimately unnecessary for the participants, freeing up time for them to focus on much more important tasks and to have more unbroken chunks of time to focus. This reminds me of "Bartleby's Law" from the Economist newspaper - *80% of people's time is wasted 80% of the time in meetings.*
- It can decrease conflict and resentment among employees, especially those who are frustrated by having their time booked by others because of the calendar system. - It would force more communication via email and/or the app, which means that it could be viewed asynchronously as people find the best time to engage with it rather than forcing everyone to view it at the same time.
- Forcing more email/app communication can also mean that communication is reduced to be more efficient and targeted. You can't say everything in email that you would in a meeting, so it focuses your attention on cutting it down to the most essential bits.
- It can also force the firm to get the most out of its communication app. A few companies have actually done a week of canceled meetings recently and they found that it helped them to get the most out of platforms like Slack and Microsoft Teams.
- It can let people get to work that otherwise would be put off because it's lower on the priority list, but in fact is very important to enabling other types of work. For instance, workers in the above-mentioned meeting cancellation companies found that they were able to spend some more time working on their own personal productivity systems and organization methods. This was something that they'd never really gotten around to but then enabled them to be more efficient with the rest of their work.

Drawbacks may include, but are not limited to:
- Quite obviously, some meetings are important and really should be conducted in person or via video.
- They are right to believe that people will be concerned about it disrupting important timelines and deadlines. There's a very real possibility of this happening.

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- If not done properly, it can just end up with meetings being pushed to the next week or two,

overloading people in that week. The businesses that have tried this made sure to emphasize that meetings were CANCELED, not postponed.
- There's already a problem of miscommunication and duplicated communication; taking away meetings could exacerbate this.
- It robs people of face to face interaction that can help develop relationships and get people talking and thinking in ways that they wouldn't if they're on their own or only interacting with a small group of people.

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18. Hamn Roasters

A. Define the term internal communication.	2

Communication within an organization.

B. Explain two possible barriers to communication between lower-level workers and Hamn's managers.	4

Answers may include, but are not limited to:

Cultural: We don't even know what country the refugees are from or whether they are all from the same country or different ones. Regardless, they are new to the country and all of the rest of the workers are probably Swedish. There are countless ways in which cultural differences may be misinterpreted, such as body language, vocal tone, communication method, etc. that could present challenges.

Linguistic: If Babacar had to hire translators, this would obviously mean there would be communication barriers between any of the refugees and other workers.

Internal politics: Different loyalties, rivalries, groups/cliques of people, etc. can lead to all kinds of communication barriers that lead to rumors , misunderstandings, or hesitance to talk with certain people. It's also possible that there could be some immigrant vs native internal politics going on.

Time and/or physical space: Managers don't have an infinite amount of time, and the physical distance between people in the production facilities and offices can make it difficult to communicate. We tend to communicate far more with people who are in close proximity to us.

Differing uses of technology: Babacar, for instance, really likes in person communication and phones. We don't know what his lower level workers and managers prefer, other than seeing the fact that some want the meetings to be more concise and have an agenda ahead of time. There could be plenty of managers who really just prefer an email, a text, or something else that is written and doesn't necessarily need to be real-time communication, and we don't know what kinds of communication technology lower level workers prefer or need.

There are a bunch of different ways in which the firm could have barriers to communication that are theoretically possible, and so I'm not going to list every single possibility here.

C. Explain two possible barriers to communication between Babacar and external stakeholders.	4

Again, there are tons of different hypothetical possibilities, so here are a few: - <u>Differing uses of technology:</u> Though Babacar prefers in person and phone communication, he can't do this with all of his external stakeholders. Suppliers and purchasers, for instance, probably communicate a lot through email and filling out order forms and other official documents. They may also prefer to do any needed meetings with Babacar through video conferencing, which he may not prefer.
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- <u>Linguistic barriers:</u> Babacar is a non-native speaker, and even if he has mastered the language, there are probably a lot of technical terms in his business field that are challenging for him to master because they don't come up in conversational Swedish that much. There may even be times where he and a stakeholder need to converse in English. Most Swedes speak pretty good English, and it's possible that Babacar learned it growing up as well, and depending on each party's level of English, in some circumstances it may actually be the easiest form of communication. *I would put cultural barriers in the same basic category here too. Things like body language, tone, the way of asking questions and responding…all of that may have important differences between Babacar and outside parties that disrupt communication or understanding/interpretation of communication.*

- <u>Different schedules:</u> Babacar is managing a lot right now, and the time he has available and the time he takes to communicate with external stakeholders may not match their availability and communication needs all that well.

- <u>Distance/location:</u> By definition, the external stakeholders are external, so Babacar is going to have far less ability to communicate in person with them, which is his preferred method.

D. Explain an advantage and a disadvantage if Babacar were to use video conferencing with external stakeholders.	4

Advantages may include, but are not limited to:
- It's harder to have things lost in translation because you can see someone's facial expression and just have a better connection with them than if you only hear their voice. For Babacar it could also be beneficial just to be able to see someone's lips moving too as he is a non-native speaker and this may help him to not miss some things that are said.
- It can allow Babacar or external stakeholders to visually show something too, like if the stakeholder needs to see something in Hamn's production facilities and so on. - Because of the above points, it can really reduce the need for travel to have face to face meetings, saving time and money for both parties.

Disadvantages may include, but are not limited to:
- We've all lived through the pandemic and suffered through far too many video conferences. Thus, we all know the annoyances that come along with them, like technology not working right, people not muting themselves or leaving themselves on mute when they're talking, people having a hard time having fluid conversations, etc.
- It depends on a solid internet connection, which shouldn't be a big problem in Sweden, but is never a guarantee.
- It's just not the same as a face to face meeting as far as building relationships, fully

understanding each other, etc., right?
- It can lead to too many meetings because it lowers the barrier to doing so.

E. Discuss the benefits and drawbacks of Babacar starting to use more formal methods of communication to run Hamn.	10

Because this question doesn't specify the exact method of more formal communication, there are a ton of different possibilities for pros and cons here, so again I'm not necessarily listing out every single possibility.
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Advantages may include, but are not limited to:
- It can free up time for Babacar. He already has managers saying that he's stretching himself too thin, so formalizing communication could help him manage his time more. - It probably would require him to delegate more authority and communication to subordinates, which may empower them and again reduce his workload.
- An example of lack of formality is Babacar not having an agenda. If he formalized this by sending an agenda ahead of meetings and having managers contribute to it, it could make the business more focused on the more important topics/tasks, and let his managers contribute more.
- It can clarify and standardize messaging to make sure everyone has the same understanding.
- It can help to make sure Hamn is following all government rules and regulations, because there are many things that need to be formally posted or communicated in other ways according to the law.

Disadvantages may include, but are not limited to:
- It can cut down on the amount of helpful spontaneous conversations that Babacar has with workers of all levels. A lot of businesses try to think of ways that they can encourage random informal communication between workers because it can help generate ideas, clear up misunderstanding, etc. Babacar values different perspectives, and the more formal communication is, the less he's getting this.
- Thus, it can lower personal connections between Babacar and other workers, and between those workers themselves. This can leave the workplace seeming overly formal, too strict/rigid, etc.
- It may leave people without enough context, explanation, and chance to respond. Informal communication can be much better at helping people to understand viewpoints, reasons, and the details of what is being communicated.