

**FIGURE 5.4** Barriers to effective communication.

- Stereotyping
- Past frames of reference
- Selective listening
- Value judgments
- Source credibility
- Communication overload
- Semantic problems
- Filtering
- In-group language
- Different statuses
- Time pressures
- Noise

communication actually has taken place. Ultimately, the goal of communication is to obtain a shared understanding of the same information between the sender and receiver.

## MODELS OF COMMUNICATION

Several theoretical models can be used to flesh out this definition of communication.

The *Shannon-Weaver Model* stresses that message senders should consider the effects of interference or “noise” on message receivers. Noise is anything that is not part of the original message that the sender intended to transmit. Noise may include job pressures, personal distractions, past experience, timing, or environmental setting, and it can have a strong negative impact on communication.

The *Osgood and Dance Circular Model* suggests that communication is a constantly revolving spiral of sending a message and receiving feedback about that message. That is, the more often a sender and receiver complete this cycle, the closer they come to achieving understanding and the more their communication improves. Consequently, receiving feedback, and, if necessary, refining the message based on that feedback is an integral part of good communication.

Finally, *Schramm’s Model* emphasizes that every message receiver has a frame of reference or an experience level that shapes the reception of that message. Because this “sphere of experience” directly influences the receiver’s understanding of the message, total rewards professionals need to be sensitive to employees’ prior experiences throughout the communication process.

For example, imagine an organization is communicating the introduction of a cash-balance pension plan. The receivers of the message may have prior experiences with traditional pensions or already-formed opinions about cash-balance plans. Considering the media’s post-Enron focus on the funding and security of high-profile company pensions, employees are constantly exposed to information about retirement plans. These experiences would affect employees’ interpretations of the message introducing changes in retirement benefits.

Because the purpose of total rewards communication is to influence employees to behave in ways that support the organization’s goals and values, it also is important to keep this behavior pyramid in mind.