

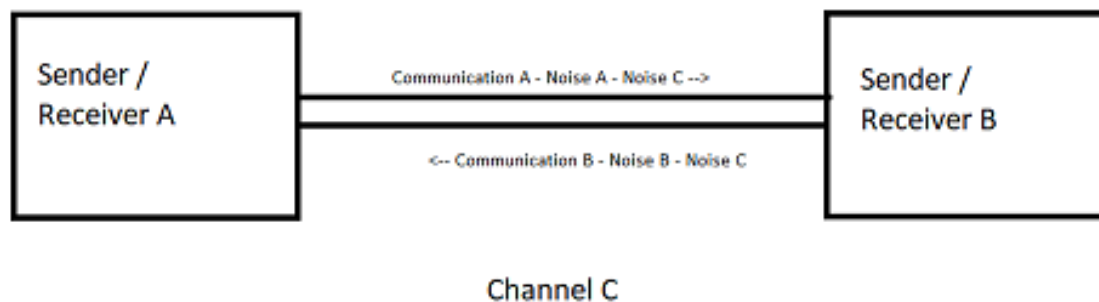
Communication Impossible

Nobody asked but ...

“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place,” said George Bernard Shaw.

No matter how voluntarily we enter a relationship that is dependent on clear communication, we have also voluntarily entered a world of noise. Noise is the cumulative countermessage that accompanies the message. Depending on what kind of noise it is, we are more or less able to determine what the clear signal might be. Sometimes, we must rely on relatively constructive noise (context) to make sense of otherwise clouded content. Sometimes, context may mislead us.

A great deal of the problem arises because of where noise resides. Despite the best efforts of A or B (in the simplified chart below), neither is able to dodge noise from the other, from the channel, or from itself.



An example of this in action would be to try to watch two basketball games at once on two televisions. To concentrate on either requires that you treat the other as noise, non-communication. To be sure, you can switch back and forth, but you can never understand either game as though you were watching it exclusively. Much power is falsely ascribed to multitasking. To whatever degree, one pays attention to one thing, to that same degree, one disregards all other. You need to know this as you voluntarily pay your attention.

— Kilgore Forelle